

DATING

POSTSCRIPT

written by Danielle Ma | September 29, 2015



I don't think I was breathing. I can't remember breathing. I just remember the bright lights of bodegas & bars, my eyes sweeping that familiar street in search for your silhouette, an outline I knew so well. Or did I? A lot could change in 3 months. Hell, we unraveled in 3 fateful hours. Who knew what 3 months could do to a person?

My eyes found you across the street, but I looked down. Forced a breath. I wasn't ready to have found you just yet. I looked back up, crossed the intersection, and automatically smiled in those last few steps between us. We hugged in greeting. Your arms dipped around me, our bodies remembering each other instantly; our brains lagged behind, unable to catch up. Your grip around me tightened, my breath caught in my throat, and I knew you were waiting for me to do—something. To flinch or pull away or protest or start talking about the weather. But my body took shelter in yours, and I knew I wouldn't move. I knew I would let myself be held by you. I knew you would kiss me.

And you did. Your lips found mine, and months of missing and longing and regretting and overanalyzing and wishing and healing and breaking all came to a head. You were urgent, and I was scared. You were sure, and I was surprised. You held me up, and I forgot how muscles worked. How standing worked. How anything but kissing you worked. I didn't understand what was happening, and I couldn't fathom how much sureness existed between us, how much muscle memory was built into our touch.

Finally, my thought processes kicked in, and a sentence formed.

"So. Where are we going?"

"Want to grab a drink?"

"Sure."

"K, let's find a place."

As we walked, you instinctively wove your arm around me. My arms at my sides, I didn't reciprocate. I couldn't process the absurdity of it all. I was mad. And confused. And full of want for you. For us. For the us that was the happiest version of me. Who did you think you were, kissing me like that? As if we had never broken up. As if we hadn't been in complete radio silence for months. As if we hadn't tried and failed miserably at friendship.

Why was that okay?

As we walked, my thoughts and feelings raced chaotically through me. I desperately grasped for stability, but your hold made that near impossible. Your eyes made it actually impossible. I couldn't look at you, at those crystal clear blue eyes I knew better than anyone's. Those that I used to love getting lost in now threatened danger, drowning. Our steps echoed on the pavement, and my anger and rational thought slowly started floating into the air with the noise, dissipating in each moment of contact with the hot, tired pavement. It wasn't long before we were walking in the only way we knew how—embraced, connected, and effortlessly in sync.

We got to the bar, and you ordered a beer for me, seltzer for you. You moved us from one table to another, purposefully choosing a spot with more privacy, less eyes on us. The choice was so very characteristic. You wanted me 100% of the time, and I you. We were always called out in public together. You also protected me instinctively and had a tendency to block out the rest of the world when we were together. Sitting across from you, I let you entertain small talk for about 25 seconds before cutting the bullshit. Finally letting myself sneak into your eyes, I said,

"Were you drunk when you reached out?"

Clearly surprised but well equipped for my bluntness, you replied,

"No. No, I wasn't. Why? Did you think I was?"

"Kind of, yeah."

"Why would you think that?"

"It was pretty late on a weeknight."

"I must've had a show that night or something. Definitely was not drunk."

"Okay, so why did you want to meet?"

You were your searching face, the one you wore when trying to answer something well. Hearing your intonation as you spoke was like hearing a song I had forgotten about but knew all the lyrics to by heart.

"Well, we spent a lot of time together. And I really care about you. This city is so crazy, you know? It's not often you grow close to someone, and I feel like you should hold on to that when you can."

As your words crashed into my heart, I knew in that instant that there was conviction in me. Conviction that I didn't know I had. For months, I had been living without you. Missing myself off your presence. In a vacuum, I set rules for myself—no texting, no drunk dialing, no communication. Period. But when you reached out, you broke the seal, and I broke my rules. I met you. And being there with you, with your familiar touch and intoxicating presence, I thought it would be impossible to find the conviction to say,

"We can't be friends. I'm not going to be your friend. It's just not going to happen."

Your blue eyes kept my gaze as unsmacked sadness flickered across your face. You nodded in understanding. You said nothing though, so I asked,

"Do you really think we can be friends?"

"No," you admitted easily, "There's too much chemistry."

And then we were kissing again. Already on this indulgent train to heartbreak, there was no point in stopping now. Tonight would have to be a write-off. For the next few hours, we staggered our serious conversations with laughter and kissing and catching up. Intensity punctuated with silliness—a balance we always struck perfectly together. You told me about your inauguration into stand up, and I told you that my parents had finally found my writing. We talked about the internal demons you were battling when we broke up. Demons I respected but deeply resented. Demons that caused us to end when we could've otherwise been forever. I had to ask,

"Are you ever going to want to be with me?" I looked up at you in the beats that followed.

"That's a really big question."

I laughed. It was the only thing left to do. "No, it's not," I countered.

"That's like asking me if I'm ever going to want to be with anyone."

"That's not the same question."

"Well to me, it is." There was resolution in your voice now. "I couldn't have asked to meet a cooler, more compatible person. To me, they're the same question."

Your earnestness was palpable. With a great wave of relief and incredible sadness, the truth of our "it's-not-you-it's-me" breakup washed over me. It was never about me.

Our lips found each other again. Hands, arms, bodies, souls intertwined, we kissed and kissed, and I remembered what exquisite passion felt like. But it was remembering from afar, knowing that it was a fleeting, unsustainable indulgence. I started to cry. The very second you noticed, you cooed,

"Hey hey hey." Lifting my face in your hands, you knew all the ways to make me feel better. No one had stopped my tears more often or effectively than you. You were a pro. And you hadn't forgotten how. In moments, my tear-streaked face was all with laughter.

Finally, our indulgence had to end. Out of the bar and onto the sidewalk, we journeyed back to the lives we had come from. The lives we lived without one another. As I walked home, I wondered how long this empty, nebulous chapter of our story would last. We were a tale that couldn't quite decide whether to end with a sensible moral or to live on into eternity, with an ellipse and a happily ever after.

You still reach out sometimes. You reach out when you travel. Because you want to explore with me; you want to go on adventures together, to share discoveries and laughter. When I close my eyes, I can actually picture us anywhere and everywhere. My hand in yours, my almost-black eyes and your crystal clear blue ones side by side, taking in the world together.

Image via Tumblr

BAR BULLSHIT CHEMISTRY DATE FRIENDSHIP LOVE MEN WOMEN

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Danielle is a passionate twenty-something living in New York City with too many interests and not enough time in the day. She works at a boutique ad agency next to her favorite building, the Flatiron, and spends a lot of time in parks with coffee. She frequents food festivals, listens to science podcasts, explores comedy clubs, and writes a lot. She diarizes the moments and conversations in her life, writing mostly about dating, love, and sex in the city on her blog, *Here's The Thing*.

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