

They Met at a Party

Most love stories start with the couple's first date, to signify their "love at first sight" moment. But I'm starting this story with the couple's first encounter. I specifically chose the word encounter because it wasn't a date, nor was it the time the couple fell in love. Love at first sight only exists for shallow people. Real love evolves and grows. Being in love and loving somebody are two very different entities. Keep that in mind while reading. Now, let's get sappy shall we?

She was a dancer and He wasn't. I know it sounds cliché but it's true. It was at a high school house party that they first encountered each other, the Kesey's to be precise. It should be noted that He saw Her first. Immediately noticed the girl whose skin said hispanic but eyes said Asian¹. Whatever she was, she stood out from the Irish-Catholic girls that had monopolized the flip cup games but never veered over to the dance floor until they had hit double digits in shots. He only told his mom this, but He always preferred ethnic looking girls over the cream-colored prep schoolers with small butts and big bank accounts. His mom said it ran in his blood, her brother married a black woman from Maryland whose in-laws didn't allow her at Thanksgiving dinners until 2002. Anyways, our young man was instantly mesmerized by Her movements, and the way She didn't seem to care that She was the only one dancing. Her body moved effortlessly, and Her lower half seemed to be controlled by an act of god, swaying and shifting to whatever beat was blasted through the cheap speaker. Not in a provocative way, but also not in a way that your friend Chad's mom would approve of. Still, it took him 3 or 4 more drinks to muster up the courage to talk to Her. With the odor of cheap beer and mint tic tacs wandering out of His mouth He broke the ice.

"You're pretty brave to be dancing by yourself"

Instead of answering She continued to dance, encouraging Him to start uncomfortably swaying his body. His skinniness, lack of rhythm, and Italian background didn't bode well for His dancing abilities, but slowly He began to move with her. Not as graceful, but who cares.

Jason sat on the musty, leather couch that wreaked of Mr. Kesey's cigarettes whispering to Alison about the emerging couple on the dance floor. They both laughed at His awkwardness, but secretly admired the courage it took to reveal yourself at a high school party.

She grabbed His hands and said with no accent at all,

"You move pretty well for a white boy"

"Geez, how much have you drank tonight?"

She let out a high pitched laugh, that gave him goosebumps. As mentioned earlier, I don't believe in love at first sight. However, I do believe in love at first sound. Because when He heard Her laugh, He was a goner. He would be sent even deeper down the rabbit hole that night when She said his name for the first time, even deeper when She said "I love you" 3 months later, and was officially pronounced missing when He heard Her cry for the first time at the 6 month marker.

¹ Before you call me racist, you should've seen this girl. I could give you ten tries and you wouldn't be able guess where she was from, I swear. It's like when you go to McDonalds and you get an onion ring in your set of fries. You notice it, but you still eat it.

Now that you got the important part of the night, I don't feel it necessary to tell you the rest. Did they hookup? No. Could they have? Probably. Why didn't they? No clue. To be honest, I think both of them knew this wasn't going to be a Brooks and Catherine type situation, where you hook up once at a party, and then awkwardly have to sit behind them in math class, both of you avoiding the fact that you've shared saliva. Now Brooks is failing math because he uses to ask Catherine for paper but now it's too weird so he can't take notes which means he doesn't know anything for the quizzes and now Brooks is trying to explain to his parents that the reason he's failing math is because he got head from a random girl a month ago at a party. You get the point, drunk hookups have repercussions. But I digress. Anyways it makes you happy, He got her number. Although, She didn't ask for his number, so He had to text first. A sneaky move, but one that He respected. But He did wait a couple days to hit her up, wanting to seem all nonchalant. When He finally did, He asked Her about the name of a song that played at the party, even though they Both knew He remembered the title of.² She responded quickly, and soon They were getting yelled at by their parents for texting at the dinner table, and questioned by their friends over why they kept smiling when their phone vibrated.

Within a week He asked her out. They went to the movies, corny, but His dumb ass didn't think He could talk to her over a dinner, and well mini-golf was just too cliché. He picked a horror movie, because She teased Him about being scared of them. Turns out they couldn't see it anyways, it was Rated R and She was only 16. Instead they saw a sci-fi movie about monsters or aliens or anything in between. To be completely honest, I don't think either of them could describe the plot to you. It's pretty hard to pay attention to a movie when you're in another person's mouth (no handplay though, they were raised better than that). Afterwards, they went for ice cream, and she played him her favorite Kanye song. It was his 3rd favorite but he didn't care. To make things even more corny, He gave Her his sweatshirt as they sat on the shoulder of the road, eating cheap ice cream at 9 o'clock on a Sunday. He drove home that night smiling, cold, but smiling.

Thus bringing us into what I like to call the "Pax Romana" of their relationship. For those unfamiliar with the term, it is a phrase often used to describe the Golden Era of Ancient Rome, when peace was commonplace and sadness eluded even the poorest of the peasants. In the context of His and Hers relationship, the Pax Romana was the first seven months. They both couldn't get enough of each other, meeting families, telling secrets, proclaiming it on social media etc etc. They even lost their virginities to each other, a 45 second endeavor in his bedroom that was $\frac{2}{3}$ him trying to put the condom on and the other $\frac{1}{3}$ saying "Does this hurt? Are you ok?". The awkwardness only brought them closer together, as they now connected in yet another facet. Teenage innocence combined with the recklessness to not think twice about falling head over heels created a drug they both fed on, a bond with a single heartbeat that oozed elation. It was the love that adults were

² Fellas, never start a conversation with "Hey" or "What's up?". Girls want to feel like you want to text them, not like it's a chore. Talk about something you guys share or a joke you heard that day. Anything that will make her feel like you were thinking of her.

jealous of and other kids didn't understand until they felt it for the first time. If you had looked up young love in the dictionary during those 7 months, I would bet it would just be a picture of them, probably holding hands or doing some cute shit that the old Him would beat the new Him up for.

Then it all ended. Not suddenly, but a slow decline, like a rollercoaster in reverse. There comes a point in every relationship where the initial spark begins to peter out and the intense, passion that was felt at the start begins to fade. To most people, this is a common occurrence, something that everybody that's been in a relationship knows is coming. But maybe some of you have never been in a relationship, and don't understand how a love like theirs could ever lose its fervor. So I'll describe it in an analogy, using Star Wars, specifically the Empire Strikes Back. Even if you haven't seen the Empire Strikes Back, you know Vader is Luke's father because you've been on the internet and don't live under a rock. But imagine not knowing the relation between Luke and Vader and watching the movie. You would freak the fuck out, right. See, our young boy was exactly like those clueless moviegoers, he had no idea the relationship would change. So when it did he shit his pants. It was an M Night Shyamalan plot twist. In just a couple weeks he went from checking to see what showing of Spider-Man she went to with her family so he could measure out when he could text her to not even asking how her day went. He did a complete 180, jumping to conclusions about his relationship, completely disregarding the past 6 months and falling into a love tortured depression. He figured this was a sign to end it, end the relationship that would unanimously be voted "Couple to get married" by their peers, end the relationship that used to keep him up at night because he was so anxious to see her in the morning, end the relationship that even his middle school sister thought was cute, and that bitch thought the mailman had cooties. He ended all that shit, and for what? Because he didn't want to fuck 24/7 anymore, because he got reasonably mad that she wore his favorite flannel sometimes because he was cold, because fucking Kenny told him, "You know, it's impossible to stay together during college". All of that was bullshit. He should have just asked himself one question: Did he still love her? Yea he did, of course he fucking did. But he let her go, with a fucking phone call. In early June, just after school let out, when high schoolers are at their most vulnerable, waiting for the freedom of summer to to make them forget exams and angry teachers. And what's worse, is that he completely avoided her in the prior weeks, so she knew it was coming. Didn't stop the tears.

She was a wreck for weeks. Cried when that Big Sean song they both loved came on, wept when he deleted pictures of her from Instagram, bawled when her mom asked if everything was ok. And just when she thought she had gotten over him, maybe a little bit, she saw him a month later. With a fucking hickey on his neck. I know, this fucking guy. With a senior to, a Hispanic girl who didn't talk much but said a lot by just looking at you. One of the few girls that made our damsel in distress feel insecure and made our ignorant prince charming look like the town fool. What she didn't know is that the hookup wasn't even good. A drunken one night stand, that sobered him up it was so bad. You know you've fucked up when you're angry at your dick afterwards.

When school started again, it was fucking awkward between them. Not the cute awkward they had on their first date. The gross awkward that even a clueless person like Dennis could notice.

But He convinced himself He had done the right thing. A cavalier attitude mixed with the confidence of a good looking upperclassmen who could get any girl in the school was a dangerous concoction, that left him more depressed than happy. It was a month in when His buddy told him “Yo I think She got with Ryan last night”

“Haha good for Ryan”

He pushed the emotions deep down, down into the ocean floor of his soul, where it swam with regret and guilt. It would take months for him to dive down and discover these species, but by then it was too late.

The two continued to drift apart, hooking up with other people, exchanging blows like heavyweight boxers in a fight that could never proclaim a winner. Not that they never “encountered” each other again. The sexual attraction was always there, even he could admit that. A hook up at a party here, a booty call there, led to a confusion of emotions that only put more strain on their relationship. Neither knew what the other thought. He didn’t know that She cried in the bathroom for hours after He cuddled with a sophomore at a party she was at. She didn’t know He still had the Valentine’s Day card she gave him in his glove box, reading it when his parents fought or the depression hit him like a tidal wave off the coast of Hawaii. But then it all came to a climax.

It was the night after He had won the divisional championship in basketball. She had always had a thing for athletes. Ryan had a party at his house, a vintage high school party that movies always try to replicate but can never do. Luke-warm beer and vodka chased with waters flooded the bloodstream of partygoers, everybody in jubilation over not only the victory, but just to be alive. It was about halfway through the party when our boy had to pee³. Foreign to Ryan’s upstairs living spaces, he flung open a door to reveal a black leather couch, a widescreen TV, artwork that was mainly framed records from the 70’s, and His ex on top of Gabe, the starting power forward on the basketball team and His best friend. It was one of those moments where you’re so in shock you don’t really know what to do. A culmination of emotions that turned into a single, “fuck” uttered from his mouth as he slammed the door on his way out.

He drove home drunk that night, angry at Her and Gabe but more confused as to why he was angry. He had broken up with her, gotten with other girls, laughed at Her getting with other guys. So why was so he so fucking mad. Yea, it was his best friend, but he aligned himself with other selfish-guys so he wasn’t surprised at Gabe. I mean he didn’t talk to him for a week and to this day distrusts him, but that’s a story for another time. The matter at hand here is why was He fucking punching walls at 2 a.m. crying over some girl He had dumped in June. There’s a famous quote that goes “Out of chaos comes order”. Well out of this fucked up situation came clarity. He still loved her. Had been this whole time. Maybe not the passionate, “this cloud reminded me of you” love, but a deeper one. One that He finally understood was the foundation for a healthy relationship.

Now He didn’t say this to her right away. Actually the complete opposite. Told her “to stay the fuck out his life” and that “He never wanted to talk to her again”. Yea like that was going to last.

³ I can’t speak for girls, but peeing while drunk is ⅞ of an orgasm. Look it up, it’s true.

He had a party the next week and goddamn invited her. Figured it to be a power move, but really He just wanted to see Her. And guess what. They hooked-up. Fucking rats I know. Then they went on a date the next week. Then the next week. Then they texted every day for two weeks while She was halfway across the world in whatever country that had produced those sweet eyes of hers. You could tell this was different than the flings they had in the fall, where it was merely a relationship between his dick and her vagina. This felt like old times. He was finally committed again.

The problem was She wasn't. Who in their right mind would be? This boy had broke her heart too many times to count, that it almost seemed like a trap to get back together with Him and She was smarter than that. Still, She also loved him, and nothing compared to when they hung out with each other. Their laughter echoed the thin walls of her house and He didn't have to ask which side of Her bed to lie on, or whether to kiss the upper or lower lip. She liked both and so did He. But there was an underlying hesitance on her part, that you would only notice if you payed attention. She never told her parents they were seeing each other, She hid him from Her friends, they barely talked at school, and they never, ever were partners in beer pong.⁴ But they were happy, especially Him. He was riding such a wave that He even helped His sister with her math homework. Only once, let's not get it twisted He's not fucking Mother Teresa.

They continued on this path through the road bumps, regaining the closest thing to the connection they had a year ago. However, they both knew with college on the horizon, this was a temporary thing. When the topic of college came up, she went ahead and said it,

"I think we should go in just as friends"

Crushed, but understanding her rationale, he respected Her decision. You would think that with an expiration date on their love, it would fizzle out right? Complete opposite, it only bloomed. It was like that one time of year when the peaches are so juicy it runs down your mouth, on some Call Me By Your Name shit. You know these peaches aren't gonna last, but instead of crying over it you stuff the succulent fruit down your throat and bask in the sweetness. They basked in each other that summer, making up for the time lost last year. Neither of them mentioned it, but they knew it was His fault they weren't going to last. I mean who knows, even if they had never broken up they still might have split up before college. But it wouldn't feel as rushed. It killed him too knowing this, and She knew it killed him. Maybe they were finally even.

Then came the last day of summer, a day they both knew was coming but neither wanted to acknowledge. They were sitting in her room wrapped up in each other, knowing this was quite possibly the last time His arms would be under Hers and Her legs enveloped in His.

"I love you _____. I always have. I fucked up and I hate myself for it."

"I know you do. I forgive you, I always have."

⁴ Fellas, another pro tip for you. If you ever want to flirt with a girl at a party, team up with her in beer pong. Nothing makes a girl more insecure than making fun of her beer pong shot, and for some reason you guys feel so emasculated by making the ball into the cup, that your confidence will shoot up enough for you to put your arm around her or ask her to kiss the ball before you shoot.

Funny thing was, they hadn't said I love you too each other all summer. Didn't have too. Actions speak volumes but the way they looked at each other spoke dimensions.

It's interesting to look at why people break up. Some are catastrophic, neither person liking the other and glad the hurricane is over. Some involve one person being heartbroken, like the first breakup of our protagonists. Then there's the other breakup, where neither person ends it, but a situation does. This was the happenstance for the second breakup. This is the saddest one, because as an outsider, you can't believe they wouldn't be together. Maybe they'll get back in each other's arms, maybe they won't. I don't trust fate, but I trust in love. There's not one person that's going to fall in love with you, but there's one person that gets you. But you can't go looking for them or you'll never find them. This doesn't mean that you can't find someone at a young age, at a private school with a class of 50 kids and the odds of finding your soulmate is 1 and a million. The phrase "you'll know when you feel it" is horseshit. It takes years to know someone, and even longer to know that they know you. When you do find that person, don't be scared if the passion fades. Wait. See if the passion turns to compassion. A deeper caring for their well-being. Think about how you feel with them versus without them. Then again, what do I know. I fucked up the best relationship a guy could ask for and I kick myself every day for it.