

The Would Be Lovers

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Paul was smitten. One look at her and he knew she was the one. He has just boarded the ship in Barcelona and took a stroll around the deck to get his feel of the vessel and to confirm that he could indeed survive on the floating city for a fortnight. The thought was foreign to him until his daughter Carey suggested the Mediterranean cruise for their summer vacation. Not wanting to disappoint her, he had agreed. He arranged it all. Domestic flight to Philadelphia. International flight to Barcelona. Cruise van, and viola. He's here. Abelard Cruises. Barcelona to Venice. July 2013.

His first glance of her was by chance. He smiled. She smiled also.

He said "Hi."

She responded "Hello."

And like the first sun on an early spring morn, her radiant smile filled the room. Gentle emitting rays of sunlight that warmed his heart and caused his stomach to tense with the fluttering of a thousand butterflies. For a moment time stood still. He was smitten.

Carey pulled his hands away. The ship was departing and she wanted to enjoy every moment of the spectacle. He turned again but his dream lady was gone. He hadn't learned her name. He hadn't learned anything about her. But he knew her face. He knew her voice. And He knew her smile. It had burned an impression on his mind.

Day 2 couldn't arrive fast enough. He was up most of the night. Thinking of clever lines and introductions for their next meeting. Each line was declared unsuitable. Too clichéd. Too clever. Too this or that. Eventually he gave up. And his eye lids, seemingly with a mind of their own, closed for good and forced some well-deserved sleep.

He took his breakfast on the main deck. He wanted to eat. Sun. Read. And watch Carey, as she played with the other teens that had taken over the small pool area and were determined to have the times of the lives. And he hoped for another glance at his bewitching being. He had finished the introductory chapter when he felt eyes, boring into him like hot knife through butter. He slowly raised his head. It was her. Smiling, as she made her way to her table. He allowed himself to stare. But just for a moment. Not wanting to be too obvious, he looked away as she sat down and looking his way.

He took a deep breath and tried to remember the lines he practiced. But he couldn't. Maybe he was too tired. Or perhaps too excited. So he waited. And he read. And he looked again. But she was gone. She was nowhere to be seen. So he settled for lunch. And then dinner, and the midnight buffet with its endless delights. But without seeing her again. Without another glance at her beauty.

And so it was throughout the cruise. He would glance her way as he was engaged in one of the many activities that Carey had cajoled him into attending. Or he would catch her eyes as she headed to places and events that were unknown to him. Each time they would smile, or wave, but more often, just settle for a glance which was all that their circumstances allowed.

Then they arrived in Venice. It was their last day at sea. He got an early start to see the sunrise. And he hoped to see and finally meet her. So he showered. And shaved. And donned a new outfit for this their day 13. Carey grabbed his hand as they made their way to breakfast.

“Daddy let's take this table. All my new friends will be here soon” she said.

And so he did. And he ate. And he sunned. And read. And watched. And waited. And then he saw her. And she was as lovely as the first day. Perhaps more. Tanned. Well

rested. Truly a sight to behold. And only fifty feet away. Only fifty feet to his destiny. All he had to do was make his way across the deck. And Around the pillars. And avoid the kids who were playing, and screamingly, and running rambunctiously. And so he did. He moved slowly. Cautiously. Hopingly.

“Hi. I’m Paul,” he said.

“Hello. I’m Jamile,” she replied.

“I’ve been meaning to come over before but my legs didn’t work.”

“I’m glad they do work now.”

“So, where have you been all my life?” he asked.

“I’ve been working in Frankfurt,” she responded. “I teach and restore art.”

“But off course. It would take someone this beautiful to make art return to their splendor.”

“Thanks. Where have you been all of mine?” she asked.

“New York. Miami. Charlotte most recently. Chasing a dream that no longer feel right.”

“What was the dream?” she asked.

“Fortune. Fame.”

“And, what’s wrong with fortune and fame?”

“It was missing something important. It didn’t have you.” And so he said it. He uttered those fateful words that he had fretted about through the fortnight cruise.

“But I am going home to Frankfurt tomorrow,” she said.

“And I to Charlotte,” he replied. “But we have today. Tonight. Let’s make it ours.”

And they did. Gondola ride for four in the noon time sun. Florentine pizza for lunch. Shopping and sightseeing in St Marcos Square. They did it all. And as nightfall descended, they both knew they didn’t have enough time. So they threw a penny and wished for more. More time to fill the gaps in their knowledge. More time to harness these feelings they had. More time to confirm it was for real. But alas time had become dear. And with much packing to do and sleep to be had, they said and kissed their good byes.

The End.