

It's Not That He's Just Not That Into You, It's...



lady about town

BY DANIEL BORGEN

I lived with my parents during my early twenties, fresh off a tour of California—part confused, half-assed stab at bible college (*really*), part tour de San Diego, where I soaked up the gay in Hillcrest. My family lived in Clark County's most mundane suburb, Orchards, surrounded by miles of tract housing, odd mixes of old and new construction, gun-toting country boys who measured manhood with chewing tobacco, and teen pregnancy. I cycled through lovers quickly, never lingering long, lest some eager courter get too attached for comfort. Besides, I hadn't yet come out to my family, so the prospect of waltzing around Vancouver, boy on arm—I couldn't fathom it. I'd save that for reprieve-filled jaunts to Portland's gay triangle.

I dated older then, choosing suitors years my senior—at 21, you can have your pick. Stunted by a religious upbringing, I craved experience, so why not from mature men who (I naively thought) had seen and done everything? Frank, one of them, grew quite fond of me; we even graduated to using the word "love." One evening, at dusk, I arrived home from a rigorous day of jean-folding at The Gap, sauntered into the kitchen, finding my mother frantically scrubbing already-glistening, clean dishes. Next to her, on the counter, sat an envelope—adorned with hearts and various garish love-themed décor. I recognized Frank's handwriting.

Face toward the sink, pulled-back hair bobbing with every syllable, she nearly hissed: "Who is *Frank* and why are there *hearts* all over that letter?" I explained the letter was from an overly aggressive coworker who mistakenly heard I fell ill—enough to temporarily dissuade my mother's big gay fears. This wasn't the first time I cooked up a big gay lie—earlier that summer I returned home from concert-camping in the Gorge, covered in hickeys, courtesy of a nameless, handsome stranger. My tall tale: Some helpless girls needed their tent pitched, and they were overly grateful. Willful ignorance on my family's part, they accepted any excuse I offered. I could come home covered in blood, holding bags of cash, police sirens wailing in the distance, and I'd say, "So strange, these bags were just sitting outside." My mother would nod, replying, "You should find the bags' owners. And take a shower." After the letter scare, I stopped returning Frank's calls. Too close for comfort.

Fast forward to now. I'm at Café Nell, my

friends' de facto meeting spot, with Kevin, talking men. Nell's coziness makes it ideal for catching up, or warming up for events like Cafeteria. Kevin, made-for-TV handsome, spoke of his most recent dating adventure. He and his latest enjoyed lovers' dinners together—complete with lengthy conversations, handholding, under-the-table foot games. The inaugural sleepover came; Kevin and his man held back, saving sex for later. His date's "I'll call you tomorrow" became "I'll call you never. Made plans became unmade. As we poured liquid therapy down our throats, Kevin lamented getting his hopes up: "The worst part? I liked him so much I didn't care we didn't fuck." Momentous—because we love sex.

My turn. Last Fat Tuesday, a gentleman approached me at Silverado (bad start, I know). I usually pay no mind to sloppy, drunken gropers there. This one, though, I didn't recognize. Incredibly cute and charming—he even proved interesting. He pledged to find me. We didn't exchange numbers, be-

cause apparently today's protocol entails lengthy Facebook stalking beforehand. Phone numbers mean business. He and I went on a few great dates—roller skating, cocktails, impromptu bar crawls. And, in a situation eerily similar to Kevin's, we had a mostly nonsexual sleepover, which resulted in next-day plans—which, similarly, morphed into non-plans. And canceled dates.

Why so abruptly cease communication, sans explanation? Are we more upset when someone else ends things because we prefer to first—or are we perpetually chasing first- and second-date butterflies? Are we truly disappointed by lack of possibility or, instead, lack of control? Do years of experience cripple us, or make us better, more ready for prime-time love? Perhaps our earliest experiences forever brand us—and we're destined to relive our past dating lives. To paraphrase Christopher Hitchens: There is no *closure*, for that would mean a very important part of us died. So each person we care for carves a niche in our heart. I can live with that. A few weeks ago, I ran into love-letter-writing Frank at the supermarket, who predicted I'd be terrified to call him. He gave me his number. I still haven't called. I will, however, always remember that letter. ☐

Yes, I have read *He's Just Not That Into You*. Stupid book. Email daniel@justout.com.

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