

Same Feelings, Opposite Times

Many things work as typical harbingers of autumn. Our summer vanishes in the blink of an eye, attention turns toward costumes and parties, daylight grows scarce—and all your friends seem to shack up, marking the official end to a season-long search for comfort and warmth during cold, wet nights. Add a Portland exodus that's gaining momentum (seriously, what's in the water?), and you've got a potentially disastrous end-of-year mix for the single ladies among us. Fortunately, there are ways to keep company—and survive—without renting U-Hauls. Call it an autumnal guide to dating.

Grindr, the grass-is-always-greener app your recently hitched friends covet more than ever, rarely fails. Your coupled friends snatch away your phone during dinner, demanding access so they can “see who's new, who's on, what's happening.” It's of little consequence your only “high teas” (euphemism) of late consist of multiple lunchtime rendezvous with a ruggedly handsome, seemingly partnered—maybe married—man who refuses to disclose his real name.

To satisfy curiosity, you might rifle through his things while he's showering off your DNA. *Faster, he just turned off the water.* You find nothing (not even a wallet), and before departing, he whispers this sweet nothing in your ear: “If you see me on the street, you don't



lady about town

BY DANIEL BORGEN

know me.” You do, naturally, see him on the street—in line for a queer film fest, actually—and kindly oblige. But you partake in seconds, thirds—determined to acquire knowledge. (And to keep him guessing, you like to leave last year's Red Dress getup, a camisole, on your bedroom floor.)

When electronic approaches bore, turn to reliable nights out—your favorite being once-monthly, last-Thursdays Cafeteria, the brainchild of an insanely talented LunchLady (who's also moving) held at the city's best dive bar, Vendetta. At Cafeteria, you see the expected droves of friendly faces, packed shoulder to shoulder, wall to wall; you're neck-deep in strong drinks and stronger music. There, a friend, who also happens to co-own the bar, introduces you to a boy who's new to town.

You engage, briefly, in small talk and your hopes creep up, so slightly—until the other gay piranhas smell blood and converge *en masse* onto the new boy from the eastern part of the state. As you're elbowed and shouldered away, trampled beneath a horde of ravenous men intent on being the last ones aboard the remaining lifeboat, you momentarily bemoan the loss of a

chance. But you remember there's always Matador—just a few days away.

Sometimes you don't have the energy for long, intellectually rigorous conversations on Grindr and you need refuge after dance-heavy late nights. Enter the gymnasium: the best stress reducer not involving soda water and lime wedges. After months of flirting, you've embarked on a meaningful courtship with weights and entered a part of Gym you've never really explored.

While deciphering foreign, nuanced weight room code, you're wondering why the cute guy you danced with at Cafeteria is so boring and aloof—and uninterested—at the gym. You lament when the chasm between drunken, affected personality and sober counterpart is so damn wide. (And you wonder about yours.)

Maybe it's supposed to be all business; pressing meaningful conversation there is like trapping your neighborhood barista behind the counter. Everyone just wants to move along and get home. So perhaps it's futile wondering why gentlemen decide to stretch right next to you or climb onto the elliptical right next to yours when there's plenty of other

space available—it's all chance, everyone's merely engrossed in the work-like tunnel vision Gym evokes.

Recently, my mother told my friend—who cuts her hair—that I am prone to giving way to complacency. Before you go accusing my mother of not loving me, let me elaborate: She says dedication to familiarity makes it challenging for me to alter my routines (euphemism). I think she was talking about work. Regardless, I wondered how this applies to my adventures in dating. Has an infatuation with routine, with comfort, hindered my man-related fortunes? Why can't I pick up and try new cities like my more adventurous counterparts?

Elizabeth Gilbert—of *Eat, Pray, Love* fame—contends everyone's like this, consumed with emotional landscapes, consciously and subconsciously wondering about connections missed and made. Perhaps she's right. Regardless, I find solace in the fact that most everyone I know stumbled into their pairings, a dearth of concerted effort. Dumb luck. Of late, in my periphery, serious relationships have emerged from Grindr dates, online hookups and casual introductions at parties (the latter prompted a move). So perhaps a fair amount of complacency—let's call it ease—isn't so detrimental after all. **JO**

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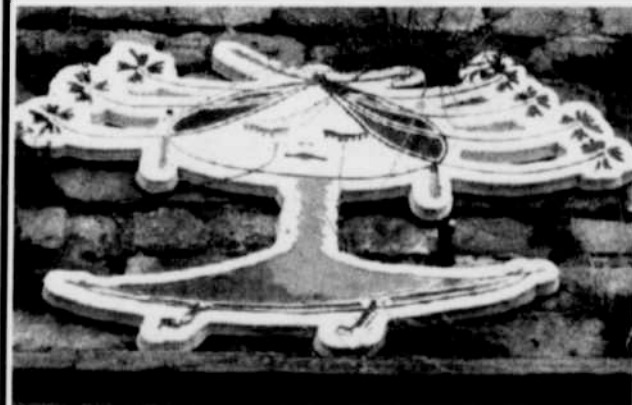
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