

In Providence: Say it like you mean it

They met at the Hotel Providence.

“We didn’t meet there. We agreed to meet up there. He was visiting from Chicago for a wedding and we matched on Tinder. He asked if I wanted to come to his hotel. He was honest about the fact that he was only going to be in town for the night, because he was going to the wedding the next day, and then he was going right to the airport after the reception. This was going to be a one night stand.”

She had never had a one night stand.

“That’s not true. I had one night stands, but not one night stands that I knew in advance were going to be one night stands. I had been ghosted before, but this was a guy being upfront about his expectations, and I was willing to go along with it.”

Being newly broken up with might have helped get her to that frame of mind.

“Oh yeah, for sure. I was game for anything. I just didn’t want to get killed or wind up dead, so I stalked his Instagram and I told one of my friends where I was going, and she told me to text her when I got there, and isn’t it so f__ed up that women have to do this when all they want to do is have a fun night to themselves?”

Was she judging herself for it in the moment?

“No, and I’ll tell you, I went all the way in. I put on the heels. I put on the tight dress. I was just going to go for it. I said, ‘Let’s do this.’”

So she did.

“I get there and he looks like his photo. We’re all good there. I text my friend and I tell her I’m feeling good about this. We have a drink in his room. He had a bottle of wine. He was very charming and handsome and I felt great about the whole thing. I thought, *Good decision. No regrets.*”

Then he made his request.

“He wanted me — while we were having sex — he wanted to say *‘I love you’* and he wanted me to say it back.”

Remember, she had never met this man until that night.

“I thought it was strange, but interesting, because it’s not gross, right? He’s not asking me to beat him up with a paddle or anything. He wants to do this emotional role-playing that I wasn’t expecting for some guy who’s trying to have a one night stand with me.”

She asked him about it, and it turns out, this is his version of reckless abandon.

“Think about it for a second. You have to unpack it. Think about how dangerous this is. Think about how dangerous it feels to tell someone you love them. On top of that, think about what it takes to say that to someone for the first time while you’re having sex with them. In the middle of sex. He wanted me to look right at him and he wanted to say *‘I love you’* and he wanted me to say it back, knowing that neither one of us really felt that way. It was all fake, and we would know it was fake, but he wanted to do it anyway.”

She agreed to it.

“No, it’s not that I agreed, it’s- I didn’t see the harm. Again, I was expecting way worse when somebody asks me if I can go along with this thing they do that freaks some people out. You’re thinking the worst of the worst, and so when he tells you what it is, and it’s that, you do think it sounds weird, but it also sounds sweet. He just wants to feel loved. So sweet, right? Why would I say ‘No?’ What’s the harm in it?”

Then it happens.

“We’re in the middle of it, and he looks at me, and he says it. Then, uh, like we talked about, I said it back to him. And — Kevin, the rush I got? It was like nothing I’ve ever felt. Because, I’ve said that before to boyfriends when we’ve been intimate, but it was after I’d already said it to them in a less intense situation — like we were at a restaurant first, and we said it, and then we said it later in bed,

but I'm not one of those people, and I've never been with one of those people, who blurt out *'I love you'* when they're having sex, because they're overcome with emotion. That's just not me."

But it was her now.

"It felt so bad. I mean, it felt good, but it felt like we were doing something really bad. Something, uh, like it was forbidden. Because we're doing this thing that should just be physical and then we bring this word into it that changes that. Because you feel it, when you say it, it's hard to look right at someone and say, *'I love you'* while you're that close to them and not get that rush you feel like you get when you mean what you're saying."

So did she understand why this was something he got off on?

"Yes. I've thought about doing it again, to be honest with you. I just- I can't tell you how good it felt. And it doesn't hurt anybody, right? As long as you both are on the same page that it's just play. That it's not real."

Luckily, it didn't mess with her head.

"I wouldn't say it didn't mess with my head. I left there and- I was definitely turned around by the intensity of it. It felt so intense. I know it wasn't just the sex and the casualness of it, because it wasn't casual. That's the point. Afterwards, he was very nice, and we talked for a good hour, and exchanged numbers, even though neither one of us was planning on keeping in touch, but he was obviously trying to be polite, and I appreciated that. But I just felt like something was there, because we had brought it there. We had taken it there. I never thought about words having that kind of power, but there was something there. It was like we cast a spell or something. That's the only way I can describe it."

As she left the hotel, she found that she was starving.

"I wasn't starving, but I hadn't eaten all day, and I didn't want to go home and pass out on an empty stomach."

She walked to Saki's on Weybosset and ordered two slices of cheese and a Diet Coke.

"I sat down and just started laughing. Like, I couldn't believe what I had just done, and then, to say, 'I love you' to him like that? I said it a lot too. Once we started saying it, we didn't stop. It was '*I love you, I love you, I love you*' over and over again."

It was late, and there was nobody else in the restaurant but her and college students — a young man and woman — who looked like they were on a date.

"They must have thought I was- I'm there in my black dress, my make-up is all f__ed up, I've got my heels on the table, because I had to get them off, they were killing me, and I'm laughing to myself and saying '*I love you*' under my breath, because I can't stop saying it."

Of course, it's possible they didn't think anything of it at all.

"No, they definitely thought I was nuts."

But stranger things happen in Providence all the time.

"I should text that guy and see how he's doing it."

It's just one more thing to love.