

"Get another beer," Harry mumbled to the bar tender as he shuffled round in his seat, sliding some more money across the counter and turning to look at the door for the fifth time. Just as he'd predicted, she was late. He thought back to the vague, half hearted way she'd accepted the date in the first place, as if she was only really agreeing to it under duress and she wasn't actually that interested. At least, that had certainly been the way it appeared to Harry, which was why he was pleasantly surprised when, twenty minutes later than the time agreed, she walked in through the glass double doors of the bar and gave him a little wave, spotting him immediately as she wandered over to the counter, resting her elbows up.

"Caroline," he smiled.

She flicked back her hair, which seemed even more sparkling and shiny than last time. She'd obviously washed it. She was wearing make up too; not that she actually needed it. He'd told her before how pretty she was, and although she's shrugged it off and acted all coy and embarrassed, he wouldn't hesitate to do it again. There was no shame in telling the truth. Those piercing, beautiful blue eyes of hers held his gaze to the extent that he could barely turn his eyes away and back to newly poured beer that was waiting for him.

"Please," her cheeks tinted up a little as she shyly looked down at her lap. "It's Caro." That nervous manner of hers was utterly adorable, he thought to himself as he helped her off with her jacket. It was almost intolerably warm in there; always was at this time of year.

"Are you sure?" He asked. "I assumed nicknames would be a little too informal for a second date."

"Well yeah," she shrugged. "But...I already feel like I've known you for years, so..." She leaned over the bar and caught the young man's eye, ordering herself a drink.

"I'll get this," Harry offered, taking out some money.

"Nah, you're alright," Caro nudged him playfully. "You can buy dinner."

In an instant, he had already began to wonder what he'd been so worried about in the first place, but after so many failed dates and relationships that had gone wrong, Harry was wary and cautious, always on the back foot and expecting the worst from the offset. At thirty-six and without a solid relationship, he'd almost got to the point where he'd decided to swear off them forever, just concentrate on his career and his friends and enjoying his life, but then he'd met Caroline. She was different to any other woman he'd come across.

In many ways, she was one of the guys. She could joke around, be sarcastic and rude with the best of them, but she was stunningly gorgeous along with it, and not a tomboy by any means.

"Let's go over there," he suggested, once they'd got their drinks, indicating a table in the corner. It was quieter and cooler, right by the air conditioning and the single candle in the centre gave it the romantic, intimate atmosphere he was looking for. It was exactly the right location to woo Caroline a little further before taking her for dinner.

They sat down opposite one another, leaning in to chat, sipping their drinks occasionally and staring across the shimmering candle into one another's eyes, sparkling and illuminated by the flickering flame. The conversation was instantly relaxed and easy, punctuated by laughter and warm smiles. Although they had known each other barely over two weeks, the pair had already formed a strong and unusual bond that was surprising and unique to both of them. Caroline had had her fair share of bad luck with love too, and in Harry, she didn't just see a ruggedly handsome and charming gentleman with swarthy features and dark dreamy eyes, she saw a good friend and companion, someone with whom she enjoyed spending time with.

"You know I didn't even think you were coming," he admitted with a little laugh, sitting back and draining the last of his beer. The drinks had piled up on the table in front of them over the course of their enjoyable chat. Neither had been watching the clock; they had no idea how long they'd spent in the bar, how many hours had passed, and neither of them cared. Harry was vaguely beginning to think about dinner, but even that could wait.

"Are you kidding?" She asked, resting her arms on the table. She inched one of them forwards towards him, bit by bit, and Harry took the hint, moving his hand to hers and resting it down gently on top.

"Well, I dunno," he shrugged. "You seemed a bit...nonchalant. I thought you might have been like...a one-time date kind of woman. I've had a few of those."

"Oh God, tell me about it," she rolled her eyes. "But no, I mean, of course I wanted to. We've been texting each other all week, haven't we?"

"I know, but I thought maybe you just wanted to be friends or something."

"You are my friend, Harry, you're my best friend," Caro smiled. "But you're more to me than that too." She turned her hand over so that her palm was facing upwards, and gently intertwined her fingers with his, her initial shyness dissipated by the obvious need to increase his confidence.

"I feel the same way," he admitted in a low mumble, his stomach giving a little flutter of nerves as he considered his next move, and worked up the guts to make it. "How about we go back to mine and get takeaway?" He blurted out. "More private than a restaurant, more relaxed."

"Sounds perfect to me," she grinned, fluttering her eyes slightly as she looked down at her lap.

He stood up and offered her his hand, and the two of them walked out of the bar together, grinning from ear to ear.

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The coffee table was a mess of beer bottles and empty takeaway boxes as the pair of them sat together, full up and satiated, watching some old action movie that was on the television. Caroline had taken the initiative between them first, taking hold of Harry's hand silently, her thumb brushing over the skin, back and forth, back and forth.

Suddenly, he got the almost overwhelming urge to kiss her. Those perfect bow shaped lips of hers seemed to be even more enticing and inviting than they usually were. He'd been able to ignore them previously, but now, sat there on his sofa after a few drinks, they seemed impossible to resist and yet, it wasn't just a simple animalistic desire to dominate and have her, it was more than that. He liked her, genuinely liked her. The main reason he'd been ignoring his own desires was because he imagined that they would never be reciprocated but in the midst of all of these emotions, he noticed that she was doing the exact same thing as him; looking at his lips as if she was thinking along similar lines. He felt his heart do a somersault in his chest. Did she want to kiss him too?

He inadvertently squeezed her fingers through his nervousness and she brought her eyes up to meet his, smiling. Then she was back to staring at his mouth again and, within a matter of seconds, she had begun to move her head forwards, taking the initiative to take their successful date that one step further and give them what they both obviously wanted. Harry could feel his stomach tingling, the sensation spreading straight down to his toes and up again in a deep-seated, pleasurable shudder as their lips finally met.

His eyes immediately fluttered to a close, a natural reaction so that his body could concentrate on the enjoyment of the action, his lips parting and beginning to move in time with hers as they tentatively shared a

shy first kiss. It lasted only a matter of seconds, but before she pulled away, she rather confidently flicked out her tongue and ran it across his bottom lip. Then she sat back with a large smile on her face, looking at him for a reaction.

Harry was slightly breathless and blown away by the whole experience. He could already feel himself start to get turned on in a way that he knew he probably shouldn't do. Caroline wasn't like any of the girls he could pick up at the local bar room. He didn't just want to take her into the bedroom and make it quick, or have her right there on the sofa. She was different to those girls. She was special. He felt like she actually meant something to him, that he cared about her feelings and her future enough to want to take this slowly, whatever 'this' was. Caroline though, apparently had other ideas, and she obviously wasn't prepared to wait very much longer. It was their second date, after all. Perhaps he was just being old fashioned about it.

They had only been parted for a few seconds, just long enough for Harry to attempt to return his breathing to normal and to try and regain some kind of control over himself. Then she was coming straight in again, wanting more. This time, there was a fire and passion in the clashing of their lips that set his heart ablaze all over again. Her teeth grazed against his tongue, nibbling gently and kissing him with an expertise he hadn't imagined she had. His eyes closed once more and this time, his hand crept round the side of her waist to the back, holding her gently in place as he shuffled himself forwards, getting their bodies closer together.

Both of her arms came snaking up and wrapping themselves around his neck, cradling him as they continued to kiss, the pair becoming lost in the moment. The only sounds audible in the room now were the soft noises of gently smacking lips and the occasional quiet, suppressed moan that escaped the back of their throats when they were unable to help expressing the surprising pleasures such a simple interaction was bringing to them both.

The living room floor rapidly became decorated with discarded items of clothing, the pale and beautiful body of Caro beneath him as he bent to kiss and nibble at her neck. She tugged the back of his hair, giving a soft groan of pleasure, raising her hips to urge him onwards. She spread her legs apart and lifted them up, wrapping them loosely around her back. He was so close now, it would only take one gentle nudge and they would be making love. It was what they both wanted, clearly. Ten minutes earlier, he had been thinking about taking things slowly, but Caroline had led the way, guiding them into unexplored territory with enthusiasm and desire.

"Do it," she whispered into his ear.

He sat up on his elbows and looked into her eyes, still on the brink of stopping altogether if that was what she so desired.

"Are you sure?" he asked and then blushed. "I...I don't have a condom." He wasn't exactly prepared.

"Lucky that I have then," she smirked, casually sliding one hand out from where it was trapped beneath his chest and reached down to the floor to rifle amongst her clothes, pulling one out from the pocket of her skin tight jeans. Within a minute, she had expertly slipped it on with none of the embarrassing fumbling around he was used to with the annoying but essential rubbers.

She smiled and kissed his lips gently. "Now you're all ready."

"I am," he agreed, getting back into position.

"Please. I want you to."

And so, he did, taking in a sharp gasp of air as he rolled his hips into her, building up the pace until he was thrusting repeatedly, gradually getting faster and faster. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders to keep him close, and he tucked his own arms underneath hers, their bodies pressing tightly together as he led them gradually into the throws of warm ecstasy.

When it was finally all over, they clung to one another, breathless; their bodies glistening with a light covering of sweat due to the efforts of exercise in the prickly late night heat, even within the relative cool of the house.

"I love you," Caroline whispered tentatively.

"I love you too," Harry murmured back, surprising himself by how easily the words tripped off his tongue. He closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep, the warmth of Caroline beside him.