

FEET OF CLAY

It was 11 o'clock or so on a rainy, uneventful Sunday night in Los Angeles. My friend Nicky and I were driving the unglamorous surface streets from pseudo-down-to-earth Venice to nowhere-near-earth Hollywood searching for what any decent, evolved human being who has the audacity to be out after 10 o'clock in this town longs for: food, comfort, kinship and an extra dirty martini.

When we spotted "Blair," a cozy, candlelit bistro on an obscure side street in Silver Lake, my heart jumped a little, providing a mood-spike comparable to the feeling I might have if my talent agent were to call with news I'd booked a guest-starring role on the sit-com "According to Jim." So now you understand the level of my deprivation.

Anyway, I couldn't bear the thought of going home. Not yet. It had been six weeks since I'd heard from Mr. Unremarkable, a dull, but nice enough guy who, aside from his nondescript features and utter lack of spirit or ambition, showed me a small measure of kindness--in stark contrast to the brutality I'd experienced at the hands (and other appendages) of Selfish-Prick-Complete-and-Total-Asshole Guy. When Mr. Unremarkable ended our two-year rock-solid

relationship in less than a day without a whisper of warning, I was, to say the least, devastated--much moreso than the heartwarming Saturday evening when Selfish-Prick-Complete-and-Total-Asshole Guy informed me he would be spending the night with a girl he'd met while playing piano on the road, and then responded to my hysterical sobbing with, "Can I hang up now, Mother? You're ruining my date."

At "Blair," the hostess led Nicky and me past the small, busy bar where we immediately perceived that our beautiful dining oasis was currently filled with couples. Mostly male couples.

"Shit!" Nicky moaned. "The only fucking restaurant in fucking shit hole Los Angeles open past the fucking bewitching hour of nine fucking o'clock, and it's fucking gay!"

Nicky likes to say fuck a lot.

But...gay? Wait a second! Not that cute, sexy guy sitting in the corner with the caramel-colored suede jacket, unfussy brown hair of medium-length, and intriguingly supercilious manner. That's what I wanted to say, but I refrained. I refrained because it was Nicky's firm conviction that I needed to take a boyfriend sabbatical. "You shouldn't even be thinking about dating for at least six months."

Fine. Thank you, Nicky. (Don't you hate it when your friends are right?)

But even though all I could see of this guy at "Blair" were the backs of his shoulders and a hint of his profile, he seemed

special. I couldn't imagine walking away from the man of my dreams simply because I was honoring some made-up silly rule about the appropriate time-line required for getting over some Docker-wearing dork -- Mr. Unremarkable (surprise!) -- whose impact, thought it seemed significant at the time, in the grand scheme of my life, would ultimately register a couple of notches lower than that of the roaches that invaded my kitchen in the summer of 1987.

So...sorry, Nicky. You want me to take a boyfriend sabbatical? Too late. I was fixated. I couldn't get enough of the unassuming, natural, yet still superior manner in which my Prince Charming du jour bantered with his irrefutably heterosexual friend, or of his genuine, hearty laugh, or of the way he held his wine glass (firmly--by the bowl and not by the stem). I was sure that this was an individual who played, as they say, "on my team."

I wanted to approach his table and engage him in light but piquant conversation, but before I could make a move, Nicky headed to the bar to chat with Marcus, the owner.

I believe it was the embarrassment I felt while standing alone in the middle of the room that prompted me to join Nicky where my martini, in a chilled glass, awaited.

While we were getting an earful from Marcus about the inspiration behind his fig-infused grilled baby lamb chops, I looked up just in time to see the caramel-colored-suede-jacketed man of my dreams disappearing out the restaurant's front door. I

was paralyzed. "What do I do?" Luckily, the jacket's owner paused, but only long enough to make sure his shirt collar was properly layered over his jacket collar. Walter Raleigh should be that suave. When my white knight glanced back toward the waiter station, we nearly made profile contact. And that was all I needed to confirm my conviction that this casually-groomed, elegant Silver Lake bar hopper was definitely "the one."

"Don't let him leave!" I urged myself. "Go out there and talk to him! Girrrrrlllll, you got to follow your heart." But just as I bounded out of my seat with the zeal of a preliminary-round "American Idol" contestant, Marcus's girlfriend, a wanna-be, never-gonna-be actress, blurted, "That was Keanu Reeves!"

I collapsed back onto my barstool. "What? No! Not Keanu Reeves! Oh, God, please--don't let the man of my dreams be Keanu Reeves!"

"He comes in here all the time," Marcus confirmed. "Tonight, with that guy he co-starred with in--what was the name of that piece of shit?" Then everybody got involved in a big discussion about what a stupid movie "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" was, trying to recall who the hell played Bill and which one played Ted. I certainly couldn't remember. I did remember, though, Keanu's performance. Christ, I haven't seen such bad acting since my mom tried to help me with my "Diagnosis Murder" audition. But still, I was putty in his hands. How could this be?!

"I didn't fall in love with Keanu Reeves the actor," one day I'd make it a point to tell "Vanity Fair" when they came to interview me about how Keanu and I met. "I fell in love with a guy at "Blair" in a caramel-colored suede-jacket...who just happened to be a Hollywood superstar!" Then, I'd put my head down, giggling like a teenager.

Yes, I was out of control. As hard as I tried to remind myself about how much I'd pooh-poohed this mediocre thespian for his countless empty performances, innumerable awkward interviews, startlingly self-evident and repeated manifestations of a staggering lack of intelligence, I couldn't drive this ridiculous fantasy out of my head.

I imagined the two of us nestled in a hammock on the veranda of Keanu's ocean-view hideaway in Monterey. His manly hands (his hands are manly, right?) working their way through my long, luxurious hair. Mesmerized, we'd look into each other's eyes... overcome with passion, our hearts palpitating, bodies quivering, hips--um--undulating. Then, just before our lips touch, a quiet whisper: "I want to spend the rest of my life with you." Keanu would confess. "Marry me, dude."

Lips and limbs enmeshed, we'd tumble onto the oversized floor pillows (in what I now visualized as a large, exposed-to-the-elements Moroccan-style living room), and then, without losing eye contact, we'd tenderly remove each other's stylish, overpriced

garments. Then, the inevitable: our bodies intermingled, intertwined, our minds...well, not quite in sync. Nonetheless, we hungrily, feverishly make love. For hours. Days. We are, more than any book or movie or People Magazine has ever described -- deeply, madly, truly in love.

Tantalizing images of Keanu and me would appear in popular magazines around the world -- the two of us canoodling at a Lakers game, romping with our Rotweilers in Central Park, hosting political fund raisers both in L.A. and D.C., dinners at Arianna Huffington's house to discuss fair workers of third-world, anti-corporate, economic-global-trade...something. The headlines would read, "Keanu Reaves Finally Meets His 'Excellent' Bride."

I'd be adored by Keanu's agents, publicists, managers, lawyers. None of their best wishes would ever be sincere, of course...but so what? They'd made me believe I was important, and after all, isn't that what's important? This business about living for the truth, Art for Art's sake, and the rest of that Buddha crap has left me nothing but lonely. Lonely--and penniless. I assure you, I have received no rewards from refusing to compromise. Thanks to Keanu, I'd reached a new plateau: I want possessions, trappings--everything that Ralph Waldo Emerson despised...and Ralph Lauren stands for. Fuck you, too, Thoreau. Simplify, simplify, simplify this! I want abundance, indulgence--depravity. I love Keanu and he loves me! Integrity--KISS MY ASS!

"Keanu fucking Reeves. Who gives a shit?" Nicky blurted, jarring me back to reality. "Besides, he's gay."

"What? No, he's not!" I, of course, wanted to protest, but refrained. "He can't be! We were going to be married!"

"Anyway, what difference does it make?" said Nicky. "He's a fucking horrible actor."

"I know. I know," I thought. Please stop, I wanted to beg, but she continued to fire away.

"Plus, he's an idiot. And so fucking boring! Have you seen him on a fucking talk show?"

Nicky really likes to say fuck.

"Well, I'm sure he has some good qualities." I said, trying to mask my defensiveness. "Like...I hear he's nice."

"Of course he's nice," Nicky retorted. "He has to be. He has no fucking talent!"

Nicky, once again.

Anyway, on the off-chance my Keanu fantasy might miraculously come true, I couldn't admit to Nicky that I agreed with her a hundred percent. I'd have to make up some story about how at first I thought his acting was deplorable, but now that I know him "intimately," I realize he's much more gifted than any mere mortal could ever hope to comprehend. "Keanu humbles me," I'd confess. "And that keeps me grounded."

Eventually, the conversation came to an end, and so did the evening. Nicky drove me home, and I promised again that I wouldn't call Mr. Unremarkable. No problem. Still high off my fantasy future with Keanu, I had nothing else on my mind but visions of how amazing it would be to come home to our four-acre estate in the Palisades -- north of Sunset -- rather than to my unsprawling 900-square-foot, one-bedroom walk-up in Koreatown.

Inside my messy, but cute and eclectically decorated apartment, I sunk into my bed, turned on the T.V., and, as luck would have it, came upon a rerun of Keanu Reeves on Letterman.

"I understand you traveled this summer." Letterman said. "Italy -- it's just beautiful."

"Oh...I love Italy, Dave," Keanu answered. "That country is totally excellent!" Then he did that little shake of his head and shoulders like a surfer dude the way he does.

"Please say something clever." I prayed. "Be genuine."
But...nothing.

Satisfied, I turned off the T.V., rested my head on my comfy pillow and closed my eyes...grateful for the bullet I'd just dodged.

Then I had another thought: I wonder what John Stamos is up to now that he's divorced.