

An actor. Female. About 30.

Right:
First off:
This isn't a true story.
It's not real.
It didn't happen.

I mean, it's not exactly *fiction*, exactly.
But...

And it's not an original story by any stretch of the imagination.
No.
It's ten-a-penny.
Twenty-a-penny.
If I had a penny for every time I've heard a story like this, I'd have...
Fucking...
Loads of pennies, man.
Jars full.
Too many pennies.

But...

It's "*relatable*".
I think.
It's something probably at least 90% of people have experienced.
Felt.
Survived.
No, not -
Endured.
Endured's better.
Much less dramatic.

Slightly less dramatic.

I mean it's not like anything all that bad even happened.
To these, um, these *people*.
No-one dies.
In this...
Story.

"Or do they?"

(fucking stupid)

So basically you're about to listen to some made-up bullshit you'll have heard a million times before.
Which is shit for you, but...
You've already pressed play, so...

Here we are.

Mellow bossa-nova riff.

Two people meet.

Hit it off.

Drink.

Kiss.

Change.

Live.

Die.

Easy.

Done.

Neeeeeeever as easy as all that, is it?

"Course of true... whatever".

So, yeah.

You're smart.

You get it.

This is a story about love gone -

Except not love.

No.

That thing that happens before actual love happens.

Jane Austen would've probably called it "infatuation".

But I hated having to do her at uni.

All those massive sentences about swooning or whatever.

And I read something on Vice that said she was a fucking Nazi or something, so...

Y'know.

Fuck 'er.

Basically, right:

Simple story.

Boy meets girl.

Bossa-nova riff.

Cut off early by -

Now if you're listening and you're gay or bi or trans or whatever:

Sorry.

It's just the most relatable story.

Don't blame me: blame society.

Just do what you always do and pick one to be.

The one you want to fuck least.

Go along with it.

I mean like I said none of this even actually happened so it doesn't even fucking matter.

Don't touch that dial!

Don't be a dick.
Stay.
Listen.
Please.

Cue music:

She cues the music.
Bossa-nova instrumental underscore.

We'll call the boy "The Boy" and "Him".
And she'll be "Her" and "The Girl".

Or... "The *Woman*"?

Nah, that makes her sound like his mum.
Like Doreen off *Birds of a Feather* or something.
"The Boy and The *Woman*"?
Fucking rank.

The Girl isn't old.
She's in her twenties.
Still.
Just.
And she's not cougar at all.
If anything, she dresses like a big toddler.
Dungarees and shit.
She's not mutton dressed as lamb.
Not even close.
She's mutton dressed as... baby mutton.
She's a lamb dressed as a twinkle in the dad-sheep's eye.

Ram.
Dad-sheep are rams.
With horns, and...

And she doesn't dress like a huge infant to be *quirky* or *edgy* or *hip* or anything.
She's not a try-hard.
She never tries.
She just fucking likes dungarees.
Even though they're murder to go for a piss in.

He.
The Boy.
He is a try-hard.
He's got one band tattoo that he pretend's he's embarrassed by of fucking like New Order or some shit.
Something wanky but not that obscure.
Says he got it when he was seventeen, but it's not even that faded.

It's huge and rank.
And it's on his *thigh*.
His thigh, I mean...
Christ.

He's about the same age as her.
Their birthdays are exactly eleven months apart.

Music stops.

Maybe.
Give or take.

She cues the music.
Bossa-nova restarts.

And he's -
Actually, no, that's really distracting.
Stop it.

Music stops.
She thumbs-ups.

He dresses and acts like he's just been turned away from Berghain.
Black T. Black skinnies. Black fucking mood all the fucking time.
You know the type.
We *all* know the type.

He has a Jewfro *and* a foreskin.
Fascinating.

Wait:
No.
Getting ahead of myself.
Sorry.

Let's say they meet through a mutual friend.
We'll call her [the actor's name].
Because that's her name.

And let's be real,
Meeting through a friend is like about the most romantic thing that can happen these days.
So they're both on a night out.
In a Mexican pub in Fulham that isn't there any more.
Sombros, tequila...
Desperados.

That's what they were drinking.
It's not a description of him. Or her.
But it is bitterly ironic, now, looking back.

Anyway, they hit it off.
There's definitely something there.
He's dorky and unintentionally offensive but then really bashful and apologetic
So you know he didn't really mean to call you chubs.
He's just a bit of an idiot.
And it's endearing in the most frustrating way possible.

She. She knows. Her.

And *she* is just charming as fuck.
Cos she always is.
She's brilliant.

He keeps looking at her mouth.
She does the same.

I mean she looks at *his* mouth.
Not her own.
Cos...
She'd look insane.
If you're anywhere near a mirror, try to look at your own mouth.
Or get your front-facing camera up.
Go on:

See?
Mental.
She didn't do that.

And then just as the night's about to end and she's almost about to feel brave,
Her drunk fucking embarrassment of a mate swoops in and gets his number.
For him-
For *herself*.
Because while The Girl and this other this other, um, *girl* are best mates and all that shit
As soon as men become involved he -
She is a fucking viper.
A textbook prick.
A big... cockgobbling harpy.

That's not fair.
I mean, it's true, but...
It's not nice.

Anyway:
She leaves.

Bit gutted.
Bit dejected.
Bit convinced she's gonna die alone and that no-one will ever love her.
Standard Sunday night.

But *then*:

*Facebook Messenger *ping*.*

He found her.
On Facebook.
Through Katy the mutual friend's Mutual Friends.
Which is so stalkery and weird it's actually dead romantic.
And he says that the number was meant for her
And that her slut of a dickbrained mate intercepted it -
I'm paraphrasing -
And would she like to go for a drink sometime?
Because he would like to go for a drink sometime.

And it's...
You know in films when people do proper big heavy drugs or...
Or on the Simpsons when Bart has the really strong Squishee?
Pupils dilate, blood pumps faster, like...
As if someone turned the saturation up on the whole fucking world?

Yeah.
That.

She has a feeling.
About this one.
He's *something*.

She thinks.

Play a bit of it:

Bossa-nova riff.
She smiles.

That's enough.
Thanks.

Could end the story there.
Happy ending.
Simple. Neat. Clean.
But...
There's more.

If you even so much as thought about rolling your eyes there.
Sighing. Skipping.
That's really fucking rude.
This isn't easy.
It's...

So.
They do go for a drink.
Three weeks later.
And he's charming and daft but also really weirdly morose.
Like if Winnie the Pooh and Eeyore had a baby.
Which...
I mean, don't linger on that image.
Cos it's...
Fucking horrible.
But that's what he's like.
Adorably miserable.

And she was fucking on form.
Because she always is.
As I might have already mentioned.

They have a great night.
Mouths smile. Eyelashes flutter.
Hands drift.
Back to his.
They sleep together.
Nothing more.
Literally just sleep.
And that's enough for her.
Cos he's quite cold but she's got great circulation.
So she warms him up.
Feels him breathe.
She sleeps horrendously cos she's weirdly fucking nervous and terrified.
She's shattered in the morning.
But it was worth it.
Because she was there.
With him.
To keep him warm.

The next *eleven months* pan out much the same.
She messages.
Asks about his day.
His work.
Sends him funny YouTube shit.
He says "haha" and "lol" and every single sad emoji.

Meet up once a month.

On his terms.
He'll pop up and she'll drop everything.
And he's always on the cusp of the flu.
Or dysentery.
Or cancer or cholera or HIV or whatever.
And she's there to dry his eyes and stroke his hair and warm him up...
Because she cares about him.

But some people can't handle warmth.

Last August.
She starts to begin to tell him how she feels outside Charing Cross station.
Once she's had enough beer to be honest.
She's to the point.
She holds his gaze.
And she almost tells him how much she cares.
How much she wants him to be happy.
How much she wants to *make* him happy.

He cries.

It's weird.

He says he's "incapable of love."
He "doesn't know what it means".

You can't help but take it personally.
Because now you know it's a no.
It'll always be a no.

Some people can't handle warmth.
They prefer the cold.
And that's...
That's just how some people are.

At least you tried.
For once.

He ends up moving back down South.
And he says "you should visit".
And you say "Yeah, I'd love to".
But he doesn't want you there and you're fed up of hating yourself.
So you don't.

Just before Christmas, he sexts you.
Mostly his arsehole with a bit of dick thrown in.
Which you definitely still regularly wank over
Because you were sort of dating him for a year

And you never even got round to actually fucking,
So you feel you've earned it.

Oh.

Right.

Yeah.

So you've probably gathered this *did* actually happen.

I've not been very subtle.

Yeah, I lied about this not being true.

It's 100% -

Well, 95% -

Well, actually, there's really no such thing as a true story, is there?

Cos if you asked him what had happened

Between us

I'd probably sound like some weird fucking Kathy Bates cunt who wouldn't take a hint.

Knotting his pubes into lockets and howling at the moon.

But that wouldn't be true either.

I can't be objective.

But neither can anyone.

So the truth's always somewhere in the middle.

You know?

But it's as true as I can make it.

Oh, but the tattoo was on his calf, not his thigh.

And the pub was in Battersea.

So yeah.

This happened to me.

Oh, not *me* me.

The actor me.

Not [actor's name].

Writer me.

Felix.

The guy who wrote the thing you're listening to now.

Written months ago about things that happened months before that.

And I know this is a massively convoluted way of just telling a fucking boy-meets-boy story.

Without the actual fucking, obvz.

Just a human hot water bottle, really.

Nothing really happened.

Just one of those things.

No-one died.

World spins on.

And why the fuck I went all heteronormative is beyond me.

Seems unnecessary, in retrospect.

FELIX O'BRIEN

SECOND PERSON

But sometimes you need a bit of distance to say shit properly.

To be clear.

To be heard.

Sometimes it's easier to pretend your life's just some fucking daft made-up story.

Sometimes that's easier than looking someone in the eyes

Their glassy, moss-green, hopelessly hopeless eyes

And just saying

To them:

"I love you."

"Don't go."

She cues the music.

Bossa-nova plays.

END