

Will the Night

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It was my first date with a girl named Ripley, on a chilly mid-October Monday evening. After we hugged hello on the streetcorner, I leaned in conspiratorially to point out a panhandler who'd been annoying me. Ripley thought I was angling for a kiss, and she moved her head accordingly to catch it, seeming a little flustered when the expected kiss didn't happen. But there was a charge in the air, and she hooked her arm around mine as we went into the restaurant.

She was my height, thin and five years older than me, with longish hair dyed black and bright red, gaunt cheekbones, and lined eyes. Over dinner we brought each other up to speed on who we were, holding hands across the table. Ripley had the advantage, having been to two of my readings and seen me as a pony at the Castro Street Fair, while I didn't even know she existed until the week before.

The extent of our real-world interaction had been at the Queer Open Mic the previous Friday, when we spoke for about a minute and a half under my girlfriend Vash's disapproving gaze. Vash and I had an open relationship, and she'd been seeing someone else seriously for over a year, but she didn't trust Ripley and asked me not to date her. I did anyway.

I trust my intuition, and I'd like to think I read vibes well. Ripley's were friendly and inviting. Which isn't to say that I haven't made mistakes or misjudged compatibility, but it generally feels like the right thing to do at the time, and that's all I can do, be true to

myself in the moment. My truth in this particular moment was saying *yes, go there*, and it is so very, very rare that a girl who encapsulates so many of my physical attractions makes the first move.

The euphemism is “meeting Perdita.” It was coined when a girl named Hayley and I were on our first of two dates. We were sitting at the bar at Divas, me on my second White Russian and Hayley on her third of whatever she was drinking, and we were talking about cats. I told her about my cat Perdita, and Hayley said wistfully: “I want to meet her. I want to meet Perdita.” So we'd returned that night to my apartment so Hayley could meet Perdita, and so Hayley and I could have fantastic sex.

So Ripley and I returned last night to my apartment so Ripley could meet Perdita. And Perdita was happy to meet Ripley, yowling with that extra crack she gets in her voice when there's someone new, another hand or two to pet her. She gets her affection-starved nature from my side of the family.

I turned on my blacklights. They're are considered the height of dorkiness these days, but I like how people look in blacklight, what it reveals in the skin and eyes, how it turns them into an alien just like me. If I had to analyze it beyond that, I'd trace it back to my first kiss, when I took my first girlfriend Kim into my brother's blacklight closet just to show it to her. In her own words, Kim was overwhelmed, and the next thing I knew her hand was on the back of my head and she was kissing me, not a chaste peck but the real thing with penetrative tongue and all. Ever since then, I've liked blacklights. I'm a Pavlov case study.

In addition to the glow it gave my dreads, which are constructed partly from blacklight-sensitive material, Ripley was intrigued by how it brought out the otherwise subtle freckles on my shoulders and my face. Sitting on the couch, we finally kissed.

Couch to floor to bed, a well-tested pattern. We clicked, we clicked something fierce, both of our tendencies towards fierceness finding a kindred soul and a kindred flesh in the other. Her sharp bits in my soft parts and vice versa, the way her appearance chameleoned when she simply tied her hair back, sometimes looking like the rank stranger she had been a week before and sometimes eerily familiar, the raised skin, scratching and biting and trailing along what little uninked flesh remained on her back and all over her front, leaving mini-nebulae and galactic clusters, flecks of skin and blood under our nails, her deep/sharp gasps when touched or bitten or twisted just so, the sheer amount of sweat we generated and shared and mixed, her intoxicating scent, and around half past midnight, brief sleep: her cuddling my leg, murmuring with little tremors passing through her body as she dozed off, a mid-coital pieta.

I napped as well, and we both jolted awake a little after one in the morning. Her staying the night wasn't a practical option on several levels, and for the next few hours we were conscious of the fact we both had to work the next day and that she needed to go home, but we kept at each other all the same, energy levels dipping and then spiking again, the green and purple fog beginning to glow, the tenacity that comes with the thrill of discovery, and most of all of impermanence, that this is it, right now, this moment, and every moment comes to an end. *and now the longing begins.*



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