

Aphrodite in Ruins

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

It's been five years since my last fuck.

He was a former pilot from the Israeli army, with blue eyes. I met him at a coffee shop on Bleecker Street. It was a Craigslist thing. Not romance. Not initially. He needed an editor for his Yale dissertation; the shifting borders between criminal justice and the Internet. But the sex was inevitable. He was six two. I was blond. I don't think we liked each other very much, but that wasn't important.

I'd spent the last ten years of my life as a single woman in New York City. And that is a carnival of sex and love of epic proportions. It's not recommended for the faint of heart. But I was on a mission. Other people may have bought into the stereotype that I was fragile, slutty, looking for love, looking for marriage. But that was not how I operated. I could be my own person. I could be out to have fun. I could sleep with you, go home that night, and never call you again. I'm not saying that it wasn't lonely from time to time.

He'd call me in the middle of day. Ask me if I wanted to "get a coffee." I'd play along and say, "Sure, why not." He'd jump on a train at NYU, and I'd meet him at my Starbucks. We'd walk back to my place. Fuck from the instant we walked in the door. And then he'd go back to his library carrel on the 5th floor. I'd edit another twenty or so pages, email it to him. Or he'd call and say, "I'm done, you want to get a drink," which like coffee, was code for fucking, but more insistent. That was my cue to hop in a cab, and meet him in the West Village. But also kind of hating him and myself the whole time.

We favored the tiny little dive bars on West Fourth Street. The one's housed in decrepit 19th century townhouses, painted blue or pink. A little neon sign, almost hidden in the shadows, then, a sharp flight of stairs leading to a lower level. Inside and it was 1955 all over again. Old school cocktail shakers, wooden bar, turquoise banquettes, and place mats with drinks like Tom Collins and the Grasshopper. We stayed at the bar. I drank vodka, but he, a bit of a pussy, drank white wine.

We loved to talk about why we shouldn't be fucking because we worked together. That his dissertation was serious business. One night at Lucky's, he said, "What if you don't go as good a job because you're pissed at me? And I said, "What if you're overly critical of my edits because you're pissed at me?" Then he pulled my bar stool closer, and tried to kiss me. I pushed it back, said, "I'm serious. It's unprofessional." He'd say, "Ok, ok. No more fucking until we're done." That was the end of it. Until we stood on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Christopher Street, and he shoved me up against a store window, and kissed me.

But sometimes, I'd meet him, and he would be all moody and sullen and not wanting to fuck *for real*. And I'd be very charming and flirtatious, and try to get him to smile, but I never could. And other times, we'd meet, and I'd be all moody and sullen, and not wanting to fuck *for real*. And he'd try the same tactics. Which also never worked. There wasn't too much I liked about him except his body and his brain, and I think he would say the same about me.

And of course I had no idea that this was going to be my last fuck for five years. I might've done things a bit differently. The last time, in particular, he was zipping up, on his way back to the library. The same daytime routine. I lay there on the bed, the white sheets draped over my body, the bright afternoon, as he talked about the particular intricacies of using real time policing methods with online

crime. And as he was talking, for no apparent reason, I didn't hate him anymore. I just hated myself.

