

How Jellyfish Make Love

by Lori Kozlowski

It was 1986 when I met you. We both lived on Decatur Avenue in a tank that had enough room for you, me, and all our fake plastic accoutrement.

I was 30 years old -- really old for a jellyfish. Some people thought I'd die sooner. But I knew better. I was waiting for you.

They added you to the tank on a Thursday when all the businessmen came in for long lunches. I saw White Hat lift you up and plop you down that day. The first time I saw you, I thought: She's beautiful.

Your arms were so long and lovely. You floated in a way that I did not. With a grace that I aspired to, but I was always more of a hard-edged guy. My movements could almost be shark-like. Very unlike a jellyfish. But it was my one trait I was sort of proud of.

But you -- you were billowy and see-through. I loved your color -- a clear pink that blended into a purplish red on the tips of your lower body. I wanted to touch you.

Recently, I found the Big Confession I made to you before we were really truly together. Here's how it went:

I know we've been flirting for a while and been out a couple of times. But let me just get some thoughts out in the open. I'm not one for games, so here goes nothing.

There are thirteen things I have to say to you. And I want you to know them now.

1) The first is that when we make love for the first time, I want to touch. I want our arms to be intertwined around each other and for us to be in the tightest embrace. I want to feel as if I am you. And you are me. Is that okay? I mean, is that asking too much?

2) Another thing. I like modern furniture. There is something about it that just speaks to my general aesthetic. There's something about it that's the opposite of who we are—simple, uncomplicated, all clean lines, and geometric measurements.

I think I am drawn to Eames because it offers something that's solid and straight-forward. I just wanted you to know that up front, in case this goes any further.

3) Also something for you to note: I do not like Barry Manilow. I know, this being Vegas and all, that's pretty controversial. But he's not something I can get into. That voice and the hair. I don't know. They play that shit in here all the time, and I wish they would shut it off. Let's just say I'm glad your name's not Mandy.

4) I want you to know that I'm not greedy. I like my share of food and sex. But I'm a giver. Deep down. Really. I mean, you say you want it, and I'll give it.

5) Small confession: I've tried speed dating. I know. It's not my proudest moment, but you know, I was at a low-point. I had just gotten moved into captivity, and I was really missing the open waters. Just wanted some companionship. I ended up messing around with this jellie with no tentacles. She was hella weird. Got all psycho on me. Hope you don't go that route.

6) My mom was a bitch. I'll just get that out there right away. I mean, I know I have issues because of it and everything. But you know, I grew up on my own pretty much, and I think I turned out okay.

7) Sometimes I wish I could use these damn tentacles for something more useful than swimming. Like writing a beautiful poem about you. I could go on for paragraphs. Lots of sentences like this:

There is nothing in the world but you and me. As you swish your sexy purple tentacles near my face, I think, wow, she is something that I crave. Something that I have never seen before, or will again. Something that becomes me. Something that I want to be. My desire for you is beyond longing. Every time you sail past, I think: I want to have her, hold her, and be inside of you. Know you from the inside out.

8) You know I have no blood or brain. You don't either. So we're pretty even in that regard.

9) One day you came near my plastic tree, and you were glowing a little differently than before. I thought it was cute. Almost like you were blushing. I knew I made you feel something. And I delighted in that.

10) But one time you whispered in my direction: "You are the best. I love every part of you. But I never want to touch you. Touching is just...well, frankly, it's gross."

You thought I couldn't hear you. But I could. And you thought I didn't already know, but I did.

11) I knew you had already had babies with someone else. That pretty much crushed me. I mean, I only wanted you to be a mom with me and my sperm. Not with some other freak. It really hurt my feelings. Seriously.

12) It should be pretty obvious from this list, but I'm not a game-player. Never have been. So, you know, if you have something to say, just say it. I don't like the quiet types.

13) Lastly, I'm kind of old-fashioned, and I like kissing, okay? So, none of that "just friends with benefits" stuff. That's bullshit, if you ask me. I mean, if I'm gonna make love, it better be with some tenderness on the other side. You know what I'm sayin'?

Let's face it: Size matters. I know your former guy was bigger than me. But he can't do what I can do with my tentacles. Just sayin'.

Age matters, too. I mean, our kind has been around 650 million years, so I'm pretty sure our kids are safe in this world to live on. So, when you're ready to procreate, say the word. When we finally make some kids, I want them to have everything. I want them to be excited about life.

Do you even like this tank? 'Cause I don't. I think it sucks pretty much. They don't clean it out enough. White Hat only comes around every couple weeks, and when he does he's really sloppy about it. Usually handing off the job to some other dudes with nets. I guess I'm just complaining because I want you to know that you deserve better. You are beautiful and I want you to be my wife. I want us to live in our own private tank without stupid angel fish watching us all the time. I won't put hokey shit in the tank either -- no fake plastic anything. Only real coral and rocks. I want our friends to be impressed.

We will look out through our tank windows and see just open road. Maybe I could swing a tank in a sweet lobby of a new hotel, though the mortgage on a tank like that must be -- God, I don't know. It must be a lot. But whatever it takes, baby. I will make it happen for you.

For now, you're over there. And I'm here. And I just wish that we could be closer.

I just wish through all of this that you would let me touch you.

I was zipping around the tank that fateful day that you reached out a single tentacle. A small gesture, and yet something that I would never forget.

I looked at you and wished so much that we could get lost in a kelp forest together. So far away. Alone.

Once we were alone, I'd look at you and see if it was okay to kiss you. It's a hard thing to

gauge -- a first kiss. You are so looking for all the signals that say: Yes, please, enter my personal space and put parts of your body on my body. You are seeking some sort of validation. And since, truth be told, I have pretty low self-esteem, it is hard for me to tell usually.

The thing is, with you, I didn't care. That's not to say I didn't care about you. It is really to say that -- come hell or high water -- I was going to touch you. And somewhere in the process, I hoped that you would like it.

I know that our species has this weird aversion to touching. But it's just down right wrong.

Anyway, you know how I am by now. Neurotic and exacting. I'm sorry. In advance. I am really sorry.

But here's the thing about having sex and the touching stuff: I am really clean. I'm frickin'

immaculate, frankly. If I was one of these geisha girls that are always running through this restaurant, you could eat off my body. I'm that clean.

I wash my junk every day. And you know, I don't get into the mud and rocks. I stay in the clean water.

It's really you that I should be worried about. You've already got kids. You've already gone ahead and done that. But you know what -- I don't care. There's something just perfect about you for me. And I want it. I want all ten of your arms all around my head and legs, and as we get confused about whose arms are whose, we'll laugh. And we'll see people in this restaurant watching us through this thick

glass. And they'll ogle us and giggle and ask each other: What are those two jellyfish doing? And you and I -- we'll laugh. And in my loudest pretend human voice I'll yell out: We're having sex! Why don't you film us and put this on YouTube, you big pervs!

And then you'll laugh, and water will be between us, but love will be there too. And in all the bliss of my arms and the spectators and the laughter, you will realize that this was worth it.

I'll get a little cocky about it, no doubt. I'll be proud that I bedded something so pretty. And in front of others. But I won't tell a soul. I'll just hold that pride inside my heart, knowing that you are mine.

Anyhow, I guess instead of fantasizing all day long, I should just go up to you and get your number or something. Though I don't have a phone or know how to use one, so maybe I'll just swish some water in your face. Then you'll notice me.

