

A Silent Romance.

By J.R. Evalangi.

You meet him like you met a lot of friends, in a pub, you are drunk and he is drunk and in the middle of drunk sincerity you discover you study the same career and start a diatribe about things no one else there understands. At first you are trying to impress the girl by your side, but when she leaves you have forgotten all about her in the heat of the discussion about some philosopher or another.

You don't remember most of it next morning but it is a bit difficult to ignore the body in your bed. He's asleep and he is terribly beautiful in that way that is strong and only men and sleeping lions can be. It takes you a bit to reconcile him with the boy you met in the darkness of the pub. You have been with men before, but you have never actually slept with one, it seems, somehow, too romantic for this type of relationship. You have it clearly worked out: You fuck both sexes but it is with women you have relationships, men's are just flings, with them it's about sex.

This time is different and it is also different when you wake him up and offer breakfast and before your coffee cup is empty he has made you forget about time telling you about last night's arguments and reassuring the discussion. You are late for work and you can stop thinking and rethinking about different time theories.

When the next day you discover him in the first row of tables in your history of philosophy class, a smile invades your face and you go and re-start the discussion till the professor that's only cut short by the professor's arrival.

You meet again for lunch and only then you learn his name is David, he asks for yours and the fact that it seems to mean something confuses you but you let it go, too entranced with Plato's theories to worry yourself over something as trivial as your voice's tone.

In a week David and you become friends and inseparable and you forget all about the sexual nature of your first encounter, he seems to do so too and you don't worry. But one day, weeks later, he accompanies you home since the two of you are unable to agree about your teacher's latest lecture's meaning and you make dinner without stopping the argument one second. And after dinner, a dinner including a bit of the cheap and hardly alcoholic wine you can permit yourself to drink everyday, he kisses you and you kiss back without a thought. You are both too sober to repeat the other day's performance and you discover he is too tentative to have had experience but you don't try to confirm your suspicions by asking because he is a guy and you think he will take offence. Instead, you go slow and give him time to stop you if he wants, it's useless as he seems completely entranced by your touches and reciprocates fervently.

When you go out together next Saturday and he doesn't drink more than Coke you discover he has practically no resistance to alcohol. By the end of the night he asks if he can go home with you anyway. When you accept is with little alcohol and a fair amount of lust in your system.

After that you speak daily and shag regularly and your acquaintances assume you are just friends and neither of you tell them differently. In your case because since you don't have romantic relationships with men, friendship is the strongest thing you can call the natural understanding that flows between the two of you.

You sleep with other people and never notice they are all women, making him the only man. As you don't notice he is the only one you sleep more than once. You also never notice that he doesn't seem to follow your example and while he doesn't mention your escapades, he neither does more than flirt with anybody else.

When you tell him over lunch one day you have started dating one of your classmates, Arlene, he shrugs and congratulates you, seemingly indifferent, and you assume he doesn't mind.

Then Arlene starts to join you at lunch time and he is polite and silent and not himself but your girlfriend exhausts herself filling the silence and you end up knowing a lot about her and never think how the situation changes your relationship with him. It's only later, when Arlene asks why you two are such good friends and you try to explain you can talk about anything with him, and she says he didn't seem like a very talkative, that you finally realise he is acting strangely.

The next evening is Friday and all of you go dancing at Arlene's and her friend Amy's insistence. Arlene and you dance but David politely declines Amy's offer and when you return to the table he is sleeping on it, empty glasses scattered around him.

He whimpers when you try to wake him up and the girls worry and you have to explain very slowly because of their nerves and very loudly because of the music that he has low resistance to alcohol and that he must have miscalculated. You know you are lying and that three glasses of whatever it is cannot be accidental when he became intoxicated with just two of light wine.

You say you have to take him home and Arlene, though annoyed about you leaving, seems to admire your loyalty to your friend. You get him in a cab and take him to your house, since is closer and you actually have keys to get in.

Though he murmurs incomprehensible things regularly, he doesn't wake. Not even when you take off his clothes and suddenly understand you are not supposed to touch him anymore or when you half carry, half drag him to bed.

You leave and return to Arlene and have some fun and when you get home again is almost daylight and he is in your bathroom, retching.

He apologizes profusely after you help him clean up and give him some coffee and clean clothes and you say it's alright and it is. It feels natural to help him. After a while your curiosity wins and you ask why he decided to get drunk like that, you expect some scathing remark about your lack of tact before the truth but he just gives you excuses and after thanking you again, leaves you alone to a day you had planned to spend with him. The day seems the longest one you remember even after sleeping till noon and the week that follows isn't any improvement.

Arlene is in a good mood that Monday but it helps little with your annoyance and by that evening she has picked up that annoyance at the world in general and cancels the outing to the cinema you had planned with a bland excuse about a surprise exam and you go find David to spend time with him as you always do. You find him, with a girl, they are only speaking but her intentions are clear, as is his discomfort. When he sees you he rapidly excuses himself and drags you out of her sight.

You ask why did he flee and when he looks at you oddly, you lower your voice and tentatively ask if he only likes men. He shakes his head and says he doesn't want to talk

about it. You stare at him, thinking. Don't we speak about everything? And then you make the mistake of saying that out loud and he looks at you with a resentment you didn't even know existed and answers cruelly that if the two of you speak about everything he must have missed a lot of it.

All of sudden he is trembling with rage and you are too stunned to react when he turns around and leaves.

It takes that incident for you to start thinking seriously about what possibly is making him so irritable of late and to realize he is still not dating or even shagging anybody else, and now, since you are being properly faithful, nobody at all. You think of the girl who was so clearly chatting him up and conclude she was ok, not pretty but good enough that you would have given her a chance.

On the way back home you wonder what is it you don't speak about, Your sexuality? Should good friends ask one another that kind of thing? You end up with nothing more than the vague notion that you should have noticed sooner he wasn't dating anybody and... that's it; maybe he just wanted you to notice? You decide to do your homework and then call him and apologize for whatever crime you have unconsciously committed but when you call he is not there and you leave your apology in the answering machine. Your message says something about him being your best-friend and you don't know what it is you did wrong but wanting to do anything to make it right. You miss routine being something enjoyable in his company and every instant being special just because he is there but you don't say those things because you may study philosophy and be bisexual but you are still a man and men cannot say something like that out loud without sounding outrageously gay.

He forgives you and everything seems ok again; you discuss everything from movies, books and mathematical theorems to political situations in the farthest points of the world.

One day he even confesses he likes girls too but prefers men and you don't find anything strange in the way he avoids your eyes. You go and explain to him your sex system and he asks why you don't have relationships with men and since you study the science of thought you are forced to find a valid reason.

You try first argue rather weakly that it would be awkward but he just has to raise an eyebrow to invalidate it and you, not willing to give in, expand saying that you wouldn't know how to act around a guy after having sex with him, you meet his eyes just then and he seems about to burst out laughing at the sheer ridiculousness of your statement. You smile a bit yourself and then, frowning, suggest public opinion and he asks serious but obviously confused if you cared about public opinion the other day when you fiercely defended the literary quality of comic books in the middle of a university level English literature class. He is quite right, you don't give a damn, you like to tell the truth and if that shocks people, even better.

You cannot understand how you had never thought of it like this before, but he gives you new perspectives in everything so it isn't that surprising. The thing is that now that you know you have to do something about it, to take a decision and maybe to change your rules.

He doesn't pressure or mocks you like he usually would, instead, he gets up and says he is leaving you to think it through. Which you do, because you cannot actually think of anything else. At first you try telling yourself you don't have "romantic feelings" for men like you do for women but the idea, for you, at least, seems awfully forced and you

rapidly discard it. With public opinion out of the game, and the meaning of bisexuality in a dictionary in front of you, is at first difficult and then plain impossible, to come up with anything convincing enough.

You sigh, get off the couch, shrug and go to the kitchen to get something to eat, all but forgetting about your great dilemma.

It takes David longer than in any other issue to ask and when he does you shrug again and admit he was right and since you are bisexual it should include relationships, as an afterthought you add you don't think you are very good at relationships, anyway. When he says you are a good friend you look at him weirdly and clarify you meant romantic relationships, he just looks sheepish.

In years to come you will remember very little of Arlene, even though she certainly enjoys speaking about herself, and even less of your break-up with her. Right now you just can tell very clearly that you don't feel crushed when she tells you she wants to let it be and you tell her it's ok, which seems to upset her a lot more than a messy break-up would, but again, you have never understood women much.

When you tell David the next day at lunch he stares at you for a moment and then smirks and sounding very pleased congratulates you for getting rid of the annoying self-centred bitch. You don't take offence, Arlene was nice as a novelty and got boring pretty soon for you that were shagging her, it's just reasonable she seemed more annoying to someone who didn't get that benefit.

David and you hang out together more and more but he never kisses you again like he used to do before Arlene became your girlfriend and when you notice you also realise you want him to kiss you. You are incapable of not touching him all the time, little things that could pass as male-bonding if they weren't so frequent.

One day you are lying in your couch watching a movie and you decide you have had enough and lean in and kiss him right on the mouth. He responds eagerly for about two seconds and then pushes you away, shaking his head.

“Why not?” – You ask, afraid he's with someone else or likes someone else or...

“I'm not interested in being your fuck-buddy and be discarded every time a pretty girl catches your fancy” – He answers firmly but he looks down before finishing.

“You are not my fuck-buddy!” - You protest indignant – “You are my best-friend!”

“One does not fuck their best-friends, Adrian!” – His voice is strained and he gets up from the couch and goes stand near the window, looking out – “Friendship is platonic in the very common sense of the word.”

“But...” - You start to say something, probably not a very sensible thing and then you understand another pretty obvious something: If you want to fuck someone you already have feeling for it's not friendship. And the second you realize that you may...be romantically interested in him, you panic because he probably isn't and is not like you can dissimulate now!

He turns around, looking angry and crossing his arms over his chest, a chest you are *not* admiring – “Do you get it yet?”

You nod, swallow and swear never to kiss him again.

He smacks his forehead soundly and sighs dejectedly – “God, I cannot believe you still don’t understand.”

You ask what he is speaking about and when he answer the annoyance and the confidence aren’t there anymore, he explains he won’t risk your friendship for just a fling because you are important to him and if you started having sex it would be riskier and...

You, being the most impolite person on earth, interrupt his confession without a thought and ask why things would be riskier if you already have had sex but his answer is a very definitive - “Just because”.

Looking at him you suddenly remember the feeling of his lips on yours and his hands all over your body and that emboldens you – “Are you saying a relationship would be acceptable?”

He looks you directly in the eye, you can see him swallow and you try hard to transmit the warm feeling that invades you, the protectiveness, the desire, the...love?, everything in your eyes, windows to your soul or whatever they are.

It seems forever and then, he nods.

Later the two of you would discuss who moved first, but now, you just rejoice in being in his arms once again and sink in his mouth with relish.

It’s the same physical pleasure you couldn’t forget and at the same time, very different because of the knowledge it won’t be just at night, just a secret, just a way to fulfill your needs. The knowledge you will be able to lean forward at the table at any hour and kiss him, that you will be able to lean on him if you are down and feel better because somebody is taking responsibilities away for a while. It’s different because that it’s him, his body, his mind, and his pleasure, it’s important. The fact that a relationship is a responsibility in itself won’t occur to you till much later, for now, you fall in bed, limbs tangled with sheets and a warm body and forget there’s a tomorrow or even a next hour, because love is a present and when he has got you, you can only live in the now.

Se Fini.

Author’s notes: Written: 2005. Corrected: 11/2007.