

The Man of My Dreams Deferred

By Kimberly Diaz

WHY WE LIKE IT: *We like the foxy voice in this briskly paced 'chick lit' all grown up girl meets boy girl meets disappointment dramedy recap where romantic ideals clash with self-serving reality. A dry and not altogether self-deprecating humour and visible characterizations combined with dishy prose lifts 'The Man of My Dreams Deferred' above the crowd in an overcrowded and too often underwhelming genre. Quote: 'I have a strict rule NO SEX WITH REPUBLICANS. But actually it's just been NO SEX period for a very long time.' You go, girl!*

The man of my dreams is hurtling through the air 30,000 feet above me heading to a country on the other side of the world where the streets are clean, everything's orderly and efficient, and the people, he believes, live in peace. I looked it up online. It's a repressed population with the world's greatest income inequality. They can't afford guns to run around shooting up schools and theaters. And though it's free they really should not breathe the air there.

He texted me from his first class seat to tell me he was "as sick as a homeless dog in Africa." Is that even a thing? Are there a bunch of mangy canines puking all over the streets over there? I know there are a lot of people dying and starving and all. And was I supposed to feel sorry for him leaving me behind to attempt to teach the nation's zombie-eyed, video game-addicted children and eat frozen dinners while he was on his way to a five-star hotel in his idea of paradise?

He didn't even ask me if I'd like to go. I might have been able to swing it. Make some kind of half-assed lesson plans and find a substitute but really I'm not much of a traveler. I want to see the world –I really do--but I hate to fly. The minute I enter an airplane my body tenses up and I become hypersensitive. *What's that sound? Do you smell that? It smells like something electrical is burning. Is that a crack on the wing? Does the pilot look exhausted to you? Is that guy going to use the bathroom or kill the pilot?* It's nerve-wracking. I think, *Is it really worth falling 30,000 feet to my death to go to this place?* Usually, the answer is NO. I made an exception for Paris.

And what is he looking for in every nook and cranny of the globe? I'm right here. The one he said was "perfect" for him. The right age, shape, personality, and astrological sign. Even

our Chinese astrological signs were the ideal match. He said I made him nervous “in a good way” the first time I went to his place. He beamed at me in his kitchen, poured me fine wine (he’s got a hell of a wrist) and prepared a candlelit dinner for two with placemats and everything. I gave him a sweet lingering full body hug before I left. He told me the next day that when I hugged him it “did something to him” and invited me for dinner again.

He’d thoughtfully left his luxury condo door ajar so I wouldn’t have to rough up my delicate knuckles knocking on the door (or put nosy neighbors on alert) yet still looked shocked to see me when I strolled in wearing my usual jeans, heels, and black top. Sweet perfume. Choker necklace. Right away he wanted to show me some song lyrics that were supposed to send me a message about how he felt about me. I read the lyrics while he played the decades old tune on his laptop watching my face to see how I would respond. I cocked my head and blinked a lot. I had no idea how any of these words related to me. I couldn’t fathom it. It was a song about a stoned taxi driver. Huh?

He seemed disappointed by my reaction but we moved on and had another amazing meal. He served me Alaskan King crab legs, broke the shells apart for me, and removed the meat from them too. He lovingly placed the delicate meat on my china plate and smiled at me like he was in Heaven. I know I was. I sipped the yummy wine and dunked the crabmeat in the melted butter and thought maybe we were falling in love or something.

After dinner we got cuddly on his leather couch with a view of the bay and the city behind us and talked about Bernie Sanders for a while. He said he didn’t think Bernie had a chance. I got up to leave because I love Bernie but he pulled me back down and said, “Don’t go.” I pouted and squirmed a little but then he leaned over and kissed me on the neck and I swooned. Kiss me on the neck and I’m yours. Don’t tell anybody...

So naturally I let him lead me by the hand into the bedroom. I didn’t object when he pulled down the macho-looking gold and black-striped comforter. He gently pushed me onto the bed. Or maybe I jumped. We kissed a lot. We were making out but I knew we wouldn’t go too far. I’m not that kind of girl-this was only our second date- and I thought he might have Republican on his voter’s registration too so I really had no business even being there at all. I have a strict rule NO SEX WITH REPUBLICANS. But actually it’s been just NO SEX period for a very long time. Can I help it if he turns me on?

It wasn’t just a physical thing. He was into real estate, had a wine business, a couple of vineyards. There were millions, maybe even billions of reasons why a struggling teacher could find him attractive. I was tempted to excuse his fucked up political affiliation. In my wine-addled, turned on state of mind, I blamed it on him not understanding how the Republican Party had morphed from a party of self-serving assholes into a way more crazed, backward and dangerously evil one.

My black slinky blouse found itself on the floor, shockingly close to my black bra which was (gasp) soon topped by my dark rinse size 00 jeans. He kissed me on the neck again. Then lower and lower and lower. And I happen to have a somewhat short torso--I'm long in the legs. It felt so good. I was losing control. My rule, my rule was about to be broken. I couldn't stand it anymore.

"Fuck me!"

He looked kind of shocked and sort of jumped up then and said, "No, I don't want to get addicted. I'm not ready for that yet." I'd never heard anyone use having an addictive personality as an excuse before. Actually, I'd never had anyone use any excuse. It was usually full speed ahead. What was happening here?

I was disappointed but at least he sounded somewhat anguished about it. And I was flattered that he thought being with me might be irresistibly pleasurable....but I'm not sure if I just took it lying down. I might have tried to talk him into it a bit more, maybe I begged him. But we just got dressed again instead. My memory is a little fuzzy for some liquid reason.

In his kitchen, I asked for water and *that* he had no problem giving me. With ice even. I told him I should go on account of a pack of wild eight year-olds expecting me early in the morning. I kissed him goodbye and stopped down the hall to wave at him leaning in his doorway watching me walk away.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I actually wrote this during the 2016 election cycle and just tweaked it now as we are gearing up for another 'election'. At that time I was not only in the market for a lover/companion but after losing my house in the real estate market collapse, I was also longing for financial security. No luck on either front but luckily I'm an existentialist with an amazing capacity to be fairly happy no matter what. I'm still on my own, still in debt and working weekends to support my teaching habit, but that's the least of my worries now as I crouch down with my students to hide or run out of the building hands in the air during active assailant drills.*

In America, our lives are insane. We are not represented but ruled by corporate interests and religious nuts with more money than brains. It seems authoritarianism is spreading worldwide now. I'm desperate to get our democracy back so when I'm not working for chump change, I'm volunteering once again to help Bernie get the revolution started.

My all time favorite author is Stephen McCauley and I'm also a big fan of my playwright/screenwriter brother David Caudle's work. Other favorites include Augusten Burroughs, Armistead Maupin, John Nichols, Tom Perrotta, Dave Eggers, Ali Liebegott, Amy Tan, Al Gore and John Dufresne.

BIO: Kimberly Diaz studied Creative Writing at Eckerd College. Her works have been previously published in the *Eckerd Review*, *Enterese*, *the St. Pete Patch* and a few other newspapers.