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Love life waiting for takeoff

I neared 2017 destined for another year of dating letdowns.
Planes led to a new flight path.



All my life I have loved airplanes. Growing up in the San Fernando Valley I was fortunate to be within driving distance of Van Nuys and Burbank airports. Attending air shows at Edwards Air Force Base in the Mojave Desert and Point Mugu Naval Air Station in Ventura County was an annual retreat. So I was looking forward to attending **Live on Green** in Pasadena, the free family festival that leads up to the Rose Bowl each year: There were activities to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force.

What wasn't on my mind that Saturday morning was dating or lack thereof.

My dating life up until New Year's Eve 2016 was nearly nonexistent. I had dated someone at university but that relationship ended after graduation. Spending two years abroad, then bouncing around with various jobs between Los Angeles and San Francisco meant one thing for this "digital native": dating apps. I must have downloaded and uninstalled Tinder, OK-Cupid and Coffee Meets Bagel at least a dozen times. Not one break. I couldn't believe that after investing so much time in these dating apps, putting my best foot forward and taking a dive into the digital realm of dating, I couldn't even manage a second date. I also had very few matches. Why? What was wrong with me? Why was L.A. so challenging for someone who wanted to be in a relationship and experience love?

So it was at the Pasadena Convention Center on New Year's Eve that I met Meg. She was there as a volunteer for the Pasadena Humane Society; I was there to check out the buzz surrounding the Air Force celebrations (remember, I was there only for the planes). We were both strolling around an area of the convention center that displayed memorabilia of yesteryear Rose Parades and Rose Bowl games. I figured she was from out of town, here for the parade, the game or just as a holiday tourist. Thankfully, she was none of the above. To my surprise it turned out that she was a born and raised Angeleno just like me.

Somehow, I managed to strike up a conversation with a general comment about the Frank Sinatra and Shirley Temple posters that were hanging nearby. That somehow led us to discover a surprising number of shared interests. We both had spent time traveling in Asia; we both attended UCLA; and to her surprise, I knew exactly where she had grown up as it's the same community where my grandparents had lived for more than 30 years. Despite our conversation being time constrained as she had to get back to her booth, I was blown away at how genuine,

personable and beautiful she was. I seized the moment and asked for her number.

Then what?

When should I text her?

Given my track record, I did not want to screw this up.

We decided to meet at a coffee shop in Old Pasadena a few days later. It was within walking distance of both our apartments. I arrived 10 minutes early and was already nervous. I had just come off a marketing contract, and was in between jobs, with nothing lined up. There I was, unemployed and embarrassed about it. Meg also had no clue that my occasional stutter was unfortunately permanent. (I had hoped she had seen the film "The King's Speech" because I like to joke that I trained actor Colin Firth how to stutter.)

After she arrived, we each settled into conversation, picking up from where we had left off.

I again found myself enthralled by her. Despite several instances of stuttering, I ended up chatting with her for more than two hours.

With the first date in the books, I was confident that Meg would be interested in going out with me again — despite my being jobless.

Sure enough, we met up the following Friday in Old Pasadena for happy hour at Edwin Mills.

Discussing our favorite television shows, going back and forth in answering funny icebreaker questions and eventually closing out the evening with a surprise stop for Mexican food at Frida Tacos, I was on cloud nine.

Two dates later and much texting in between, I was sure I had met the right person.

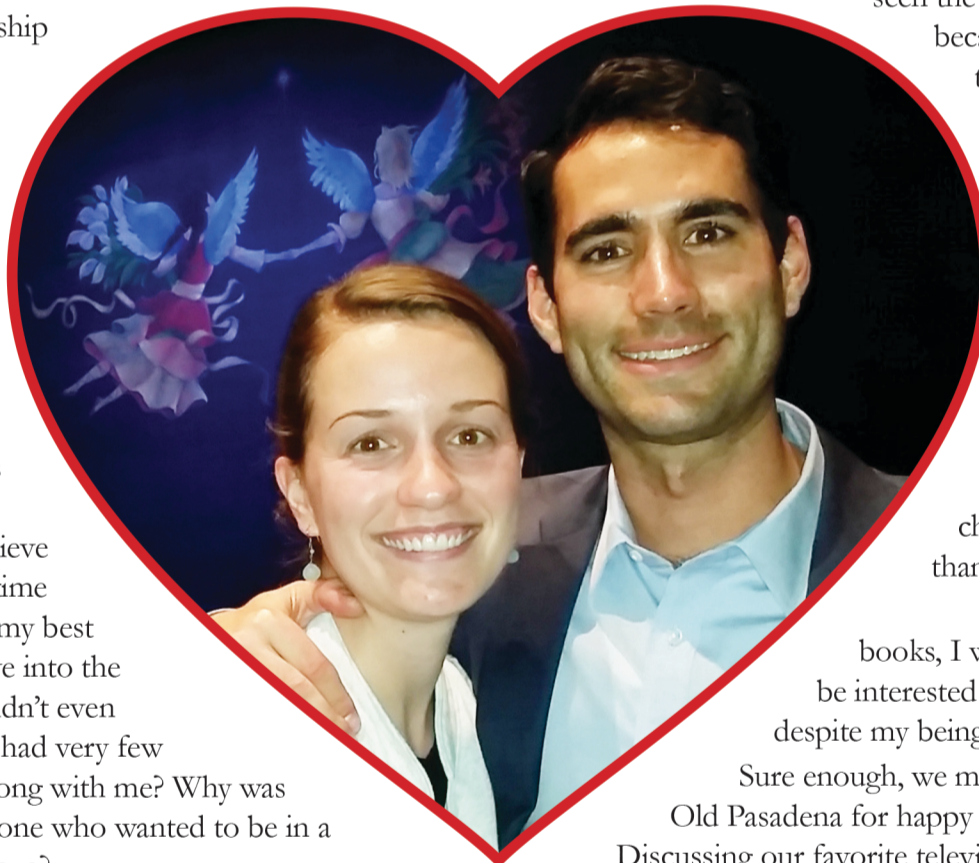
From then on our dates progressed to home-cooked dinners, outings to Santa Catalina, Venice Beach and Manhattan Beach, hiking around Griffith Park and the Observatory, and brunch at Alcove in Los Feliz.

Two months into the new year, Meg and I became "official."

Thanks to my love of airplanes, I was in the right place at the right time on New Year's Eve.

Before the start of 2017 I felt destined for another year of dating disappointment.

Boy, was I wrong.



Brandon Black is a writer living in Pasadena.

L.A. Affairs chronicles the current dating scene in and around Los Angeles.