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DIFFERENT ADVENTURES ON PLANET EARTH...



BY MICHELLE JANSSEN

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I'm really good at Hollywood

My second day of travel in LA began with going to a breakfast buffet at my hotel.

Waiter: My ex girlfriend and first love, from when I was 20, lives in Sydney! I mean, I love my wife and stuff, but I made such a mistake breaking up with her. I still talk to her sometimes.

Me: Ummm should you be telling me this?

Waiter: It's fine, I'm never going to see you again after this week.

Casual talk of infidelity over breakfast. Pass me my 5th hashbrown please! Later that morning, I wandered up to Hollywood. Whatever. I spent the morning BOMBARDED by character actors, musicians, retail assistants, all standing along the strip working for tips. It was overwhelming. I think I would have easily spent at least \$40 tipping people out of fear of saying no.

A man called Mr Muscles, chased me down the street (no, really) and said, "Let's get a photo!" I thought he must be bored, so I indulged this, instantly feeling like a good person for supporting the struggling, arty folk of the Boulevard. I also made the HILARIOUS comment that 'our muscles are pretty much the same size'.

He did not laugh.

On completion of photos he said, "Okay, so where's your donation?" He hadn't outlined these terms at the start, but if you'll recall from earlier, his name is Mr Muscles and I think I know who'd win that fight. Obviously me, but I didn't want to emasculate him etc...

Another \$5 wasted. Later, someone asked me to a party at Sunset Boulevard. I didn't go. Too scared.

In HOLLYWOOD BABY

I'm not tipping him!

I thought I would be really nervous about going overseas on my own, but I only checked my packing list, to do list and budget about 873 times before leaving for the airport.

I waited in the pick up area at LAX and about 17 shuttle buses went by before mine got there. Then when he finally arrived, it looked like I was going to be the only one on the bus. "Great," I thought, "Now I'm going to be stuck alone with the bus driver who was probably late because he was disposing the bodies of other Australian girls travelling on their own". And so began my journey to Downtown LA with five middle aged, very Australian (read:bogan), possibly drunk-on-cask- wine women.

With their jewellery clattering away (I think they were wearing ALL the jewellery they owned) and sporting far too much perfume to cover up cigarette smoke, the ladies began analysis of 'When is it right to tip?' I sat silently with my \$10 tip in hand for the rest of the trip and listened to this conversation:

Bogan Lady 1: We've already paid for this trip. Why should I tip?

Slightly Less Bogan Lady: Because that's what they do over here Sharlene/Darlene/Sharon/ (didn't quite get the name)

Bogan Lady 2: Well, you don't do it in Australia, so I'm pretty sure I'm not gonna do it here.

Bogan Lady 1: Yeah, I'm not f****n' tippin' him.

Poetry. I finally jumped out of the bus and the driver left me with the parting message of, "Don't go too far east at night. It's like a whole other world out there".

In Los Angeles, CA

I lost my job

I lost my job a week ago. I was working for a call centre. No need to go on? Well, actually, the calls and the customers themselves weren't bad at all. It was the people and the work environment that was HORRIBLE. They played music, in an attempt to be and I quote, "The kind of office that isn't afraid to let its hair down". It was SO loud that I had to hold my head set close to my ear just to be able to faintly hear the customer on the other end. You know when you've stayed TOO LONG in a sticky, smells of vodka & vomit, touch- something- and- you'll- get -an- STI nightclub? When it's 2am and you already feel hung over? When angsty, "what's the matter with my life?" songs are playing that bring nostalgia and depression in one shot? That was my work environment. I should have known better than to stay. But I needed the money. One evening close to the end of a shift, the guy who hired me took my phone off me, and started going through the songs on my iPod. Just a warning, what he said is GROSS so if you don't want to keep reading, STOP READING... he got to a slow song, and said, "Does this get you wet? Do you go home and rub the bean to this?" In one reaction – I gasped and laughed and nervously said or did NOTHING. I awkwardly said "no". SO... that's the work place that didn't want me there anymore.

For full story visit - <http://michellejanssen.wordpress.com/2013/06/06/i-lost-my-job/>

Ignoring of Elephants

I think I am the Queen of avoiding conversations I don't know how to have. A little while ago I made out with a friend of mine at a party. Okay, woah. No need to call anyone a slut. We'd been friends for ages and like any alcohol-influenced decision, it seemed like a good idea at the time. What I didn't think through is that we'd have to have a follow up conversation.

If you are good with reading comprehension, you will remember from the earlier sentences that I am not good at such conversations. To avoid direct face to face contact, we communicated after our makey-outy exchange via facebook. But he decided we should have coffee and discuss properly. WHAT? WHY? But I thought to myself, "Self, you have limited people you actually like hanging out with. Best to maintain this friendship". We had coffee on a hot, Sunday morning. Nothing says relaxed like sweating in a crowded restaurant. So what did we talk about you ask? We talked about the Sunday Mail articles, our mutual friends, work, I said funny things my Dad had said that week, bit more of work, ohhh it's getting a bit weird...back to the Sunday Mail.

Half an hour later, we got up to pay for coffee and he tried to pay and it was AWKWARD because I already had money out and then I ended up paying for our pseudo date.

Clutching my sweaty Sunday Mail under my arm, we waved (yes waved) goodbye and I sat in my car for a while waiting for the air con to work. I didn't know what to do. So I got out my phone and sent him a Facebook message

General Purpose Spare Room

It's pretty common that most 'kids' or 'adult kids' are staying at home longer. Some of my friends in their mid to late 20s are STILL at home and haven't even thought about leaving. This can obviously be the best arrangement for some people, but I think most parents start to drop subtle hints if their child is moving into their 20s and not moving out.

My mum decided I should be a grown up independent lady, pretty much from my last day of high school.

Well that's what she meant, except, she didn't really phrase it like that. She was very creative in her strategies to get me to leave home. One time I was walking out of the shower with a towel around me, (ooo stop it, sexy) and Mum said, "Oh sorry Michelle, I just washed the dogs with that towel you're using".

She didn't seem very sorry. More laugh-y.

Or traditionally, when a kid leaves home it then becomes known as the Spare Room right? Or at best, say, "Michelle's old room"?

My mum simply started calling my room 'the spare room'. While I was still living there.

This clearly confused people. "Oh, I'll just put this stuff in Michelle's room" and my mum would be quick to jump in with, 'that is the spare room, you'll be putting that stuff in the spare room'.

Her strategy wasn't a great success.

So she upgraded it to GENERAL PURPOSE SPARE ROOM.

She took the bed out, put in a computer, a bean bag, a keyboard, and a drum kit (none of us can play the drums).

I started to get the hint and moved out a year later.

Positivity only works when you're happy

Positivity is all well and good until you have to put it into practice. Recently I came from a trip to Sydney. Getting off the plane, I was all positive and sh*t, and then here are some things that happened:

- * My luggage was lost
- * I opened my emails and had a MASSIVE phone bill after coming back from overseas
- * I got a speeding fine AND a parking fine AND an overdue toll notice AND rego renewal on the same day
- * I tried to be organised and get my taxes done so I could look forward to my tax return but instead I got a tax bill.

Now I'm not saying any of things are the worst things that could happen to someone, and I fully accept that most of the above items were my own fault.

BUT...

How do you actually remain positive when the lovely warm, glowy feelings of being somewhere new and exciting wears off? You know, kind of like how people who have waited until they're married to have sex and then start thinking, "oh is that all it was? Disappointing. Should have been doing that for years!"

The hard thing doesn't seem to be knowing that thinking positively is the way to go, it's actually behaving to a different way of being that's the tricky bit.

Maybe making fun of serious things could be a new wave positive approach. I could start my own speaking business, "The Michelle Janssen How to Be a Sarcastic Yet Positive Bitch" method.

I'm not saying I'd help people, perhaps I'd make them feel ripped off and like they'd wasted money, but hey, it would certainly be an opportunity.

Sexy Dreams!

Last night I had a dream that I was dating Russell Brand. As it turns out though, I've even let my sensible, logical self into the arena of dreams. Sexy sabotage, if you will.

Here's how the dream went:

Michelle Janssen, famous and successful in her own right so she is equal to her partner, drives along with Russell Brand, comedian and general sexy man.

As they're driving, Russell says, "Okay, darling. I'm about to get on a plane to Australia. Isn't it so sad that you can't come with me, when that is your homeland? So cruel!"

I expressed my disappointment by making out with him.

Then, instead of driving to the airport, (in LA, I've been there so I accurately picture it, whatever) he drove to a spot by some sort of lake with candles and you know other such romantic hoopla.

Russell: "I have to say that I cancelled my trip to Australia and I am in love with you".

(Here's where emotionally disabled Michelle, even in her DREAMS, comes out)

Michelle: Ooh, ah. Okay.

Cut to Michelle and Russell on a bench, on a busy city street, outside a well lit convenience store.

Michelle: Look, Russell Brand. I just think this is too soon after Katy Perry.

Russell: I know, but I'm just trying to express how I feel.

Michelle: I know, but look where that got you. Let's not make the same mistakes.

Russell: You can't go living your life constantly suspecting people, you will miss out on genuine opportunities for love.

Michelle: This is true and everything you do is amazing.

END DREAM.

Disappointing

Most Unromantic Lady

I've been seeing a guy for a little while now, and I noticed that I'm one for 'realistic' rather than 'romantic' scenarios.

The other day I would have spent two hours imagining what our break up lunch would be like. Like, not a whole two hours in one sitting, I'm not crazy- but across the day, as a running total, yes around two hours.

I imagined what I would wear, where I was living, what I would eat (medium rare steak with mushroom sauce) and whether I would be seeing someone. Then I thought, "Ugh, crazy. Of course you would at least be pretending to see someone, just incase he was. Idiot!"

People have started saying I'm unromantic, and this has started to make me think....maybe...I'm unromantic.

I was telling the boyfriend (casual drop in there) about my imagined break up scenarios and I went on to say in a half-serious, half joking way, "Your next girlfriend is going to be so lucky after all the time and effort I've put into you..." Then I think he was trying to be nice, and he said, "Well, that's crazy because I know I wouldn't have the same love I have with you..."

And I said back, "Well, no, no one would compare to me, but it would be a different kind of love. An inferior one". (Humour and realism blended together there). For some reason, as 'into' someone as I can be, and as much as I want it work, there is always a creeping thought, "But, you know, you're too young to have found someone forever so it probably won't work out". Does anyone else struggle with the romance?

The pain of compliments

Getting a compliment is really hard.

You would think it would be really easy, lovely and a happy time but generally it is very uncomfortable.

I have no idea how to genuinely accept praise. I mean sure, I've got a pretty good idea of when I've done a decent job at something, but I'm more, "Please criticise me further".

Here's one way to handle a compliment:

Compliment Giver: Hey, here's a compliment about you and your abilities.

Me: *sigh* I know.

Saying "I know" deflects away from the compliment and then forces people to ponder whether you're serious or joking. This could also potentially lead to them thinking you're a bitch, but it's a risk I'm willing to take to avoid knowing how to deal with follow up praise. And this is why I have limited friends.

My go to moves/sayings when accepting a compliment, are usually accompanied by thoughts like these:

- Do you really mean it?
- What are you really trying to say?
- You probably say that to everyone
- What do you want really?

I do realise though that people don't HAVE to say nice things. Particularly people who are well respected in their field and if they wanted to, they could just not be bothered and say nothing. Also, if someone isn't being genuine or they're being fake, I think it's usually quite easy to spot if their comments are just bitchy.

Having said that though, accepting a compliment is probably one of the bigger challenges you need to confront in life. #FirstWorldProblems

First Times

I was at a house party on the weekend. In Sydney. I know, I'll stop bragging now. You already think I'm cool. (There were cheese platters!)

The conversation turned to the first time you were ever drunk. Everyone recalled tales of being 15 or 16, stealing mum's alcohol and skulling too much wine and then vomiting.

The first time I was drunk was at my 18th birthday party. *cricket, cricket*

I don't know why it took me so long to bow to peer pressure. Well, actually not even peer pressure. I bowed to the fact that I was 18 and it was now legally sound to steal mum's alcohol and vomit. I blame my lack of underage drinking on Oprah and self help tapes, to be honest. My Dad was obsessed with both of these things. So by the age of about 9, I could articulately and rationally explain why underage binge drinking could lead to disastrous consequences. (Read: pregnancy, murder and aids).

No, I didn't have a boyfriend in high school, why do you ask?

So, now, I've done the whole go out every Friday/Saturday AND stolen Mum's rum. But I've still got a bit of that Oprah, "What about the consequences?" voice in my head.

At the aforementioned house party, we decided to walk up to the local bottle shop to get more drinks. One of the guys with us carried his beer with him in PUBLIC and then continued to drink in the store and then walked out. No one said anything. Talk about rock and roll!!

I was just happy it was a Liquor Land so I could use my Fly Buys card.

About Author

Michelle Janssen

In her 20s, Michelle is a modern woman walking confidently about town, casually using her fly buys rewards card to feel like a true grown up. Her goal is to be a combination of Oprah & Tina Fey.

Why is the website called bytestories.com?

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