

SANDY DAYS, SALTY NIGHTS

Long-distance romance

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"hry swtz," begins the instant message conversation, the light at the bottom of my laptop screen flashing. I take a second to decipher its meaning, "Hey, sweets."

I type back a hello, "heyy yu . . . how wad work todayu/?"

Over the course of the last month, I've grown increasingly immune to typos and incorrect grammar, good punctuation and proper spelling having fallen victim to the necessities of hurried computer conversations. It's one more frustration on the list of aggravations of maintaining a long-distance relationship.

"hld on . . . nik's heer"

"Hold on . . . Nik's here," he tells me, and I wait in front of the blank screen for 10 minutes. Finally, I can't hold out any longer and have to head to dinner. "I'll be back in 45 minutes," I tell him. By the time I come back to the conversation, he's already gone to bed, the five-hour time difference wreaking havoc on our available chat window.

When I met the Londoner at the end of October, the experience was intertwined with all the magic of India's tropical coast. We walked along silvery, moonlit beaches that blushed a pearlescent pink with the first caress of dawn. Music stirred the air

and incense perfumed the warm, salty breezes.

From the start, it was impossible not to be taken with him, with his confidence and intelligence, his gentle demeanor, his witty sense of humor. I liked the way his eyes darkened when he



talked about something serious, becoming fiercely, intensely black, and how he took my hand in his, without hesitation, when we were alone.

On the last night, as we both felt the unraveling of the magic that the wedding had woven around us, he pressed my hand and said, "I hate goodbyes. Let's say 'I'll see you' instead."

I nodded, daring to hope it was more than an expression.

Back in our separate homes across the seas, our emails were interlaced with muted longing.

A hurried "I miss you" found its way into a conversation on books, a barely registered "I hope to see you again" fell into a talk on the latest Bond movie. Finally, inevitably, the conversation turned to London.

"Do you think . . ." he asked one night. "Do you think you would ever come to London?"

I smiled at my computer screen and wondered if his eyes had darkened as he typed.

The next morning, I emailed my friend that had gotten married, now living in London, the one whose magical wedding had first brought the Londoner and I together. The message read:

- 1) Can I stay with you?
- 2) Am I insane?
- 3) Will he break my heart?

She wrote back, "Please come. Of course you can stay with me." I bought my tickets that day.

Now, as we eke out an itinerary over the Internet, digitally bridging the divide that separates us, I wonder if maybe I am insane. For all its conveniences, email is a poor substitute for conversation, and I feel my patience wearing thin with each misspelled "hold on."

There are times, though, that catch me unawares, when he will type, "I miss holding your hand in mine," and I will draw in an involuntary breath, shocked and touched by this voiceless tenderness. Then, I think perhaps my worries are misplaced, and maybe I should be more concerned about him breaking my heart instead. ■

Contact Artis
>>>Send your dating tips, questions, and disasters to sandydays@florida-weekly.com

Have Plans For New Years Eve?

-Antipasti-

Duet of Bonzi and Spicy Crab Rolls...\$10

Seared and Smoked Diver Scallops
Lemon Confit, Melon & Shaved Proscuitto,
25 yr Old Balsamic...\$13

Sweet and Salty

Foie Gras Blinis topped with Crème Fraiche & Caviar,
Bacon Wrapped Dates with Whipped Brie & Fig Syrup,
Fleur de Sel, Micro Chive...\$15

-Salads- Greens

Red Romaine, Frisee, Avocado, Goat Cheese, Candied Pecans
Blood Orange - Pomegranate Vinaigrette...\$10

Vegetable Terrine with Lobster Aspic
Mache & Dandelion Greens, Truffled Pesto Croutons, Tempureed Crab...\$14

- Intermezzo- "Limoncello Ice"

-Entrees-

10 oz Filet Mignon
Blu del Moncenisio, Grilled Asparagus, Au Poivre Sauce...\$40

Grilled Veal Chop
Dijon Roasted Fingerling Potatoes,
Wild Mushroom and Roasted Garlic "Forrestiere" Sauce...\$60

Hudson Valley Moulard Duck Breast
Seared Foie Gras, Turnip Confit, Crispy Leeks,
Syrah-Fig Reduction...\$32

Pan Flashed John Dory
Watercress, Sunchokes
Lobster Vichyssoise and Black Truffle Essence...\$35

**Add Lobster Tail...\$24 **Add King Crab...\$18

Sides Available Upon Request

-Dessert-

Buttermilk Panna Cotta
Lemon Soaked Sponge Cake
Blackberries and Saba...\$10

Milk Chocolate Soufflé Cake
Macadamia Nut Brittle
Espresso Crème Chantilly...\$12

Dinner Seatings From 6pm-9pm
Live DJ from 10pm-1am
Drink Specials All Night Long
Complimentary Champagne Toast
@ Midnight

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