

MONDAY, JULY 12, 2010

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the...Football

I awake to a classic summer day, one filled with chirping birds, cloudless skies, and a very aggressive hangover.

Memories of the prior evening stream through my mind: the 45-year old doctor who wanted to take me out for Greek food near L'Enfant Plaza; a chaotic stroll through the carnival of Adam's Morgan; my self-restraint at 2am. Jumbo Slice called, and I didn't answer.

Amidst these recollections comes an extremely disturbing epiphany: Sunday, July 11, is not a typical trial in surviving the Sunday Blues. It is something infinitely more challenging. A test of the weakest of all my skills: my ability to feign interest in sports.

For yesterday marked an epic World Cup Championship match between Spain and the Netherlands, with extreme sportsmanship traditionally reserved for our international brethren. And yet, seemingly out of nowhere, Americans have joined the fan base. This is surely some cruel joke, or a feature on <http://www.stuffwhitepeoplelike.com/>.

Until now, I have managed to avoid watching, championing, or discussing the World Cup during my residence in the United States. While living abroad, I had to pretend to care about soccer, but I was able to ignore American football in a blissful trade-off that I presumed would operate in a parallel fashion when I returned to the Big-Gulp-loving USA.

I scroll through my phone, confident that at least one of my friends will boycott soccer in favor of Scrabble, coffee and a movie. Aha! A light bulb illuminates as I gaze out the window. I live in Dupont Circle, in the heart of the gayborhood, where show tunes and shopping consistently trump sports. This task will be easy.

Now grinning, and sipping my first cup of coffee, I reach for my phone and dial Scott, affectionately listed as "Diva" in my blackberry. He picks up. He's available, hungry and seemingly ambivalent about the course of the afternoon.

After a leisurely brunch and a stroll through our neighborhood, we turn towards 14th Street, where I aim to get gelato and inspired ideas from furniture stores that I can't afford, but Scott directs me towards U Street, where he plans to meet a friend. I'm naively anticipating a third shopping companion, someone whose attention to detail will far surpass mine and make my decorating project that much easier. Little do I know, Scott is leading me towards a sports bar, where the 2:30 start time, and incredibly attractive clientele, have many a sports fan drooling.

From the outside, Nelly's is just another run of the mill bar. Sports paraphernalia lines the windows and spacious rooftop terrace, and the sounds of boisterous fans emanate from within.

Upon entry, the scene is starkly different from the sticky-floored bars of my weekend ventures. As we make our way through the crowded downstairs of Nelly's, I realize that this is nothing like the testosterone-fuelled mayhem that one finds at a Texas football game. The men here are thinner, with decidedly better hair and accessories. They--immaculately dressed and mannered--will never meet my gaze, unless it's to inquire about my eye makeup.

I should be elated to discover such a handsome group of men gathered in one convenient location, like a crisp, colorful box of French macaroons ceremoniously delivered, but eye candy is a fleeting pleasure. Particularly when there's no possibility of realization.

On closer inspection, I take note of myself, the odd misfit juxtaposed against the pretty boys. I'm sporting the wrinkled Ann Taylor dress that I wore to work last Friday. My scraggly hair sits in a low, messy ponytail. I lick my lips and realize they're devoid of lipstick.

No, no, no. This simply will not do. The image of me, dressed like this, exhausted from the night before, would be fine were it to appear within the confines of my messy little apartment, but my presence here does a disservice to the image of "fabulous" single women everywhere.

With a few air-kisses, and one last saturating look around the crowded terrace, I exit. Gelato awaits.