

As soon as my plane touched down at the airport in Branson, Missouri, where I was going to spend Winter Break, I felt strangely uneasy: the walls were slowly creeping in on me, (even when I was outside), my head started to spin and my arms & legs quivered en route to the baggage carousel. Once I had both of my suitcases, I passed out and came to my senses 10 minutes later. I then ran to the Welk Resort, where I'd be spending my weeks. I then checked in to my room, and as a hopeful way to cure me of my uneasiness, I went to bed with the curtains blocking the sunlight. I was asleep for 4 straight hours and felt so good afterwards that I continued doing it for a week.

Feeling much better than before, I went to the resort's Stage Door Restaurant for their Christmas Eve dinner. I was about to sit alone at a table when the manager dimmed the lights and the waiters placed candles in the centers of our tables. Once I opened my menu, someone behind me charmingly asked, "Pardon me, sweetie, but may I please sit with you?" Overjoyed about not being lonely for my first candlelight dinner, I turned around and nearly fainted at what I saw; an adorable brown-haired, blue-eyed man in a dark navy uniform complete with neckerchief and a garish row of ribbons as well as a medal that looked like the one that the Cowardly Lion received in the 1939 movie "The Wizard of Oz." I shook my head really hard, blinked 3 times and apologized, "Oh, sorry, sir! To answer your question, you may sit with me!" The man took my hand and politely gave me kiss before sitting down and opening his menu.

After we ordered, the man shot me a very recognizable gleam and asked, "Now, what's your name, Miss?" Surprised at the fact that he would call a lady at least half his age "Miss," I giggled, "My name's Lydia Brattin, Sir! What's your name?" A somehow familiar smile grew across his face as he answered, "I'm Clarence Brooklyn Doolittle, a retired 1st Class Navy Seaman." He then looked up and called, "Hey, Joe! Come over here, will ya? I've got someone for you to meet!" When Mr. Doolittle's friend came over to us, I nearly fainted again at the sight of a man who matched Mr. Doolittle in appearance, despite looking younger than Mr. Doolittle by probably a few years. As soon as Mr. Doolittle's friend sat down, Mr. Doolittle introduced, "Lydia, I would like you to meet my old buddy Joe Brady, a retired 2nd Class Gunner's Mate. Joe, I'd like you to meet my new friend, Miss Lydia Brattin."

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Lydia" Mr. Brady greeted as he removed his cap. The waiter came over, gave Mr. Doolittle and I our meals, and took Mr. Brady's order. Once the waiter left us, Mr. Brady asked, "Pardon me, Miss Lydia, but may I have a conversation with Clarence?" I

nodded and responded, “I don’t mind, Mr. Brady! Go ahead!” Mr. Brady turned to Mr. Doolittle and exclaimed, “Clarence, you’ve got quite a well-mannered young lady there! How’s the girl from Brooklyn?” I then saw Mr. Doolittle shed a couple of tears and Mr. Brady asked, “Is she dead?” As Mr. Doolittle nodded in response, I took a tissue out and gave it to him. He smiled and dried his eyes before continuing with Mr. Brady.

Once I finished my meal, the conversation was over and Mr. Brady looked at his watch and sighed, “Well, Clarence, I’ve a wife to surprise tomorrow morning! Nice seeing you again!” He then turned to me and, as he shook my hand, he inquired, “It was even nicer meeting you, Miss Lydia!” He then got up, saluted to Mr. Doolittle, and left. As soon as Mr. Brady was out of sight, Mr. Doolittle gave me another unusually familiar gleam and sang “The Charm of You.” After he sang, the manager announced that there’d be a Christmas Eve dance in the lobby. Mr. Doolittle asked, “Ya want to dance?” I giggled, “Of course!” as we ran into the lobby and waltzed for hours.

Near the end of our dance, the manager asked, “Does anyone have something Christmas-related to say as a way to close out the evening?” I gently pushed away from Mr. Doolittle, raised my hand, and called, “I do!” I walked toward the manager, took her microphone, recited “One Solitary Life,” and basked in the applause. Mr. Doolittle then came up to me and asked, “Ya want me to walk you to your room?” Strange for him to ask me such a question! Why would he want to walk me to my room if I didn’t have any alcohol? Anyway, I nodded and soon, we were in my room. Thinking that Mr. Doolittle would have to leave, I asked, “Don’t you have to go, Mr. Doolittle?” Mr. Doolittle smiled and said, “No Lydia. I hope you don’t mind me staying!” I giggled and exclaimed, “No, I don’t mind!” We then got into our nightclothes (his looked like the one from “Take Me Out to the Ball Game”) and went to bed. My room had two beds, so we slept in different beds.

I can’t quite recall all the details of that night’s dream, but at one point, I was standing on a hill and watching the sun sink into the snow. No sooner had the sun left my view, a legion of clouds floated in. Suddenly, some clouds became limpid, unveiling Frank Sinatra floating on another legion of clouds! He sang “You Walk By” and shot me a gleam like the one that Mr. Doolittle’s! Just as I opened my mouth to talk to Mr. Sinatra, my dream ended abruptly by Mr. Doolittle’s lips on mine!

“Merry Christmas, Lydia!” Mr. Doolittle sang as he sat on my bed and I sat up. Hoping to trip him up, I asked, “Mr. Doolittle, what was your birth name?” After 10 minutes of silent hesitation, Mr. Doolittle looked at me and sighed, “You've got me, Lydia! My name isn't really Clarence Brooklyn Doolittle, but Francis Albert Sinatra. You can call me Frank!” My jaw almost popped off and my eyes widened as he kissed me. Suddenly peeved at the fact that he lied to me at dinner, I rolled up my sleeves and Frank shivered.

“Why are ya doing that, Lydia?” Frank asked. I made my hands into fists and growled, “I knew it! I knew it was you all along!” I then reared back and aimed several punches at his chin. Quickly, Frank stood like a phone pole as I jumped around him and playfully taunted, “Why stop fighting, Frank? Come on!” Frank lifted his left arm and playfully bonked the top of my head with his knuckle. I lost my balance, my face blanched, and I fell onto the carpeted floor. Fevered, Frank picked me up and laid me on the bed. I opened my eyes, saw Frank next to me, and gasped, “Frank, you look different! Just 15 seconds ago, you looked like Clarence Doolittle and now, you look like Ricardo!” Frank chuckled and nodded as my face gained its natural colors and I sat up.

After a while, I asked, “Frank, do you know who introduced me to you?” Frank shrugged and I replied, “Not to be racist, but another Italian introduced you to me!” Frank's eyes widened as I told him about how Gianluca Ginoble of Il Volo introduced me to Frank by singing “Night and Day” during an Il Volo concert. I then told Frank as much as possible about Gianluca before he asked, “Lydia, have you ever met Gianluca?” As my shoulders sagged and my head hung, I sighed, “No, Frank, I haven't met him yet.” Frank smirked, snapped his fingers, and I heard a knock at the door. I walked to it and as I opened it, I squealed for there, in a black tuxedo, was GIANLUCA! As our eyes met, my heart skipped a million beats as Gianluca stepped forward and gave me the most wonderful kiss ever. As he backed away, I asked, “Were you in town before Frank snapped his fingers?” Gianluca nodded and led me to the bedroom window and exclaimed, “Look towards the Tri-Lakes Center: Our van's in lot. We'll be in town for 2 weeks.” I looked and sure enough, everything was the way Gianluca said. I turned toward Gianluca and giggled, “I don't think we properly became aquatinted, haven't we, Gianluca?” Gianluca chuckled, “Well, I only need to know yours, since you know mine already!” I giggled, “My name's Lydia Brattin, Gianluca!” We then spent four hours together. Frank silently watched us from the window all that time. After our time together, Gianluca gave me another kiss and

handed me a bouquet of roses. After kissing, he grinned and left the room. When he was out of sight, I exclaimed, "You're the most magical man I've ever met, Frank!" Frank turned crimson as he sighed, "No Lydia! Not really!"

I then noticed that it was 10 p.m., and Frank magically changed again from Ricardo to Joey (from "Pal Joey") within seconds. After his face's natural colors returned, he gave the room a little once-over before looking my way and stating, "Lydia, it was nice sharing Christmas with you! But now, I have to leave!" Frank then started singing "Last Call For Love" before giving me the biggest hug and I ever received. After embracing, Frank warned, "Now, Lydia, only tell folks you trust about what happened!" I nodded and led Frank to the window. Frank climbed onto the windowsill and I thought that he'd jump off and die, but just like in my dream the previous night, clouds appeared under his feet and he hovered away from the window. When he was two feet away from the window, he turned around and we sang "The Turtle Dove." Near the end, Frank blew me a sweet little kiss, playfully picked up the long part of his tie and waved it like a hand. I blew a kiss and waved back, and as he floated away, I turned, ran to my bed, and cried myself to sleep.

I woke up at 10 a.m., looked around the desolate room, and gasped as I saw a First-Class Navy Seaman's cap, a sombrero, and a fedora on the bed Frank slept on. I couldn't believe it; I spent Christmas with "Old Blue Eyes!" I got up and tried on the hats before getting dressed. While looking at myself in the mirror after getting dressed, I saw someone else as well: A man with curly brown hair and twinkling blue eyes wearing a long-sleeved, high-collared white shirt with an orange shawl on top and he was tightening his sombrero rope's knot. His sombrero looked exactly like mine! The man looked very familiar, so I asked, "Excuse me, Sir, but are you Ricardo?" The man nodded, leaned forward and gave my cheek a tender kiss. Then, to my utter bewilderment, he vanished.

On New Year's Eve, I watched the Times Square Celebration on television and as the last 5 minutes of the year slipped by, Frank sneaked into my room and tapped me on the shoulder. I turned, smiled, and hugged him, but he was so excited about seeing the ball dropping that he didn't kiss me when we hugged. I couldn't understand why he wanted to see the ball drop, but when the ball perfunctorily descended and Frank placed his lips on mine, "New York, New York" started up and it hit me: Frank wanted to hear his song! After kissing, we sang along to the

recording. After that, we turned off the TV and sang “Just As Though You Were Here” before Frank tipped his fedora and faded away.

On the morning of my “Sweet 16th,” I was at home and was looking at myself in my bedroom mirror while listening to the CD “Young Blue Eyes: Birth of the Crooner.” Suddenly, a rope flew in through the window from outside and as I opened my mouth to shriek, I heard, “Don’t worry, Lydia! It’s Frank! Mind if I come up?” I ran to the window, grabbed the rope, and giggled, “Of course you can come up, Frank! I’ll hold the rope for you!” Halfway through the window, he chuckled, “My, I haven’t heard these songs in years!” I giggled, pulled him in, and once he had both feet steady on the ground, I asked, “Do you want to dance, Frank?” Frank nodded and soon we were singing and dancing. At one point, I saw dad walking towards the bathroom to take a shower. I instantly pulled Frank towards the window and after a couple of minutes, I snuck to the door to check where dad was. Seeing no trace of dad anywhere, I tiptoed back to Frank, who had a bluebird on his finger, and whispered, “All clear!” Frank had me stroke the bluebird’s back before he blew it away and continued dancing with me. We then danced to every song afterward until I had to leave.

As I was leaving my room, Frank helped me put on my backpack (complete with my birthday balloon sticking out of the top) and kissed me on my way out. I came back after school and saw the rope still in the window, but no sign of Frank! I guess he watched me ride to school with dad and then vanished. After finishing all my homework, I finally pulled the rope up and saw a small, heart-shaped box attached to one end. I opened it and found a folded red velvet-like cloth carefully wrapped around a diamond ring. There was a note inside that contained the following poetic letter: “Dear Lydia, You’re the most beautiful girl under the sun. Being with you was so much fun. You’re sweet and funny and very bright. I’ll think of you day and night. With love, Frank.” I fell onto my bed and came to my senses 5 hours later.

Call me a loon and put me in an asylum all you want, but I know that Frank still lives! I don’t think that I’m fully cured of my uneasiness yet!

