Getting Ghosted

The other day I had a good friend call me to tell me that he had been ghosted. I said to him “I have heard the phrase before, but I am not sure just what it means to be ghosted?”

He told me that according to Samantha Burns *Ghosting* is “when you go poof and literally disappear out of someone's life without a word or explanation.”

The informal Webster dictionary definition is “the act or practice of abruptly cutting off all contact with someone (such as a former romantic partner) usually without explanation by no longer accepting or responding to phone calls, instant messages, etc.”

I say to my friend “oh my gosh, I am so sorry that this happened to you. You must feel terrible. It is one thing to be dumped, but it is another thing to be ghosted with no warning or any explanation.”

The call from my friend got me to thinking about whether I had ever ghosted another person. I sure hope that I have not. I just pray that I have not ghosted someone.

Then I begin to replay in my mind whether I have ever been ghosted. As I think back on my life, I guess, now that I think about it, I was ghosted one time several years ago. Back then, we did not call it being ghosted. But, now that I think about it, I really got ghosted. Let me tell you the story.

Years ago, I went to my local, neighborhood grocery and wine store called Pete’s to pick up a few items that I needed for dinner. As I was scanning my items in the check out line, I noticed a woman facing me doing the same thing scanning her items on a register in the adjacent check out line. I immediately did a second take. The woman I was looking at stopped me in my tracks. She was stunning. She was beautiful. She seemed warm, caring, and yet capable and confident. Without ever having seen her before, I was dumbstruck. I knew she was “the one”. I knew this without ever having had even one word of conversation with her, without knowing anything about her. To recall a line in the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*, it was like magic.

I just instinctively extended my hand out across the machines and said to her “Hi, my name is Neil”. She, to her credit, responded by extending her arm and hand back, shaking my hand, saying “Hi, my name is Jennifer.”

After we had both scanned our grocery items and bagged them, we both moved to the end of our checkout aisles. I started a short conversation by saying “Do you live around here?” She answered “Yes, I live on a houseboat.” I quickly added that “So do I.” Then I added, “It was nice to meet you”. Jennifer said “Yes, same here.” And with that short exchange, we both left Pete’s and headed our different ways.

When I got back to my houseboat, I kicked myself for not asking for Jennifer’s contact information. I did not ask for her phone number or her email address. I asked for nothing. I just realized that I had no way of contacting her. No way to ask her if she wanted to have a cup of coffee together. Egad. I can’t believe that I did not ask her. Holy cow!

I say to myself that I need to find her, for she could be “the one.” So, I started by going to my computer and searching for Jennifer and houseboats in Seattle. This search produced absolutely nothing.

I started to think about how will I ever see her again. Since I met her at Pete’s, I might be able to see her again in the store, I say to myself. So, the next day, I go to Pete’s three times. Normally I would go to Pete’s maybe twice a week. But, now I will start going to Pete’s three times every day, picking up one item at a time, hoping that Jennifer is maybe shopping there at the same time.

At the same time I begin to talk to the employees of Pete’s, ones that I have gotten to know over the years. I ask them if they know a Jennifer, describing as best I can her height and hair. One employee tells me he knows a Jennifer and she is on the second dock just south of Pete’s and is the third houseboat from the shore on the south side.

Great, I say to myself, as I walk down to the dock and knock on the door of the houseboat. However, much to my surprise the woman that comes to the door is not Jennifer. You can imagine the awkwardness of the moment, as I try to explain that I am looking for Jennifer. She explains that her name is Jenny, not Jennifer, and that she is sorry but she does not know a Jennifer. Oh my God, I say to myself. How embarrassing. I look like a fool.

Nevertheless, I have not given up trying to find Jennifer. The next idea I have is to pin a notice on the community bulletin board just outside of the doors to Pete’s. The bulletin board is packed with notices about concerts and dog sitting and landscape services. All these notices are in black and white. So, to attract attention I prepare a post it note that is the bright color red, and I print on it “Jennifer, we met at the check out stand on May 4th. Neil xxx-xxx-xxxx (my phone number).“ I tack this on the bulletin board in the hopes that Jennifer will see it and call me.

While all this is happening I also start to search for Jennifer using my kayak. Living on the water, I can kayak in and out of every row of houseboats. There are 500 houseboats in Seattle.

My usual exercise routine then was to bicycle to Green Lake and back, which would take one hour and cover 10+ miles. When I would get to Green Lake, which is Seattle’s mini version of New York’s Central Park, I would stop and play two or three games of pickleball. Then I would get back on my bike and pedal back home. I would do this two days in a row.

Then, on every third day I would get in my kayak and paddle for at least an hour on Lake Union, located in the heart of Seattle.

So, every third day I started to alter my kayak route to try to find Jennifer. I would go in and out of row after row of houseboats, hoping to see here in a window or sitting on the deck of her houseboat.

I kept doing the trips to Pete’s three times a day, and the kayak trips every third day for the next 26 days. That is right, for the next 26 days. I was obsessed with trying to find Jennifer. All I wanted to do was ask her if she wanted to have a cup of coffee together, but I had to find her to ask her.

26 days.

On the 27th day, while paddling my kayak, I came upon a gentleman sitting on his deck of his houseboat. As I paddled by, he called out to me, “can I help you?” In frustration, I yelled back, “Yes, I am looking for Jennifer.”

To my surprise, he responded by saying “She lives next door” pointing to the houseboat right next to his. I could not believe it. Do you think this might be the real Jennifer, I say to myself, as I paddle back to her houseboat.

I look into the windows of the houseboat from my kayak and I see a young couple holding a tiny baby in their arms. I do not see Jennifer. Not wanting to interrupt or interject myself into this family happening, I paddle back to my houseboat.

The next day, the 28th day since I saw Jennifer in the corner convenience store, I take my usual one hour cycling ride, stopping to play three games of pickleball. Arriving back in my neighborhood of houseboats, I decide to stop at Jennifer’s dock to see if she is home. The fact that I am all sweaty from my cycling and pickleball does not seem to affect my decision to stop. Nor does the fact that I have not shaved.

Nevertheless, I am determined to find out if indeed Jennifer lives at the houseboat that was pointed out to me. I walk down the dock and finding the houseboat, knock on the front door.

Amazingly, I see a woman coming to the door. Yes, indeed. Unbelievable. It is Jennifer. I am amazed. Wow. After 28 days I have finally found her.

When she opens the door, I ask her “I don’t know if you remember me. We met at the check out stand at Pete’s on May 4th. I’m Neil.”

Jennifer immediately says “Of course, I remember.”

I then continue, “I have been looking for you for the last 27 days. The reason being I just wanted to know if you would like to have a cup of coffee together.”

Jennifer says without hesitation “I’d love to.” And then she adds, “Thank you for being persistent.”

OMG. I can’t believe it. Yes, I found her, I am murmuring to myself. Yes, I found her.

Fumbling a little bit, I say to her, “I don’t have my calendar with me. May I call you once I get to my houseboat to find a time that will work for you to have that cup of coffee?”

She says, “Sure. Let me get you my business card so you have my number.” She goes back into her home to find her business card, and returns, hands it to me, saying “Here you go.”

I say “Thank you. I will give you call shortly.”

I leave her houseboat, walk back down the dock to land, find my bicycle, put my helmet back on, and ride the short distance to my dock and my houseboat.

Once there, I call Jennifer and we decide to have breakfast together the next morning at 14 Carrots, which is my favorite local, family owned breakfast and lunch spot. It is within walking distance. We agree on 8:30 the following morning.

That evening I open my laptop, and start to do some internet research on Jennifer. Her business card has a business name that I can hopefully search for. Sure enough, she is the President of an accounting and tax firm. This is good. At least I know she is not a flake.

The next morning I am on my way to the our breakfast meeting at 8am when I get a call from Jennifer. She tells me that one of her clients has an emergency and that she will have to postpone our cup of coffee. No problem whatsoever, I respond. We will connect later today to reschedule.”

Later that afternoon I place a call to Jennifer’s cell phone. No answer, but I leave a message for her to give me a call when she can so that we can reschedule our cup of coffee.

I have never heard anything from Jennifer since. Not a phone call or message. Not a text. Not an email. Nothing.

I got ghosted. Really ghosted.