Chapter 16: Third First Date

People on first dates love to ask whether you believe in second chances. I've never had a good answer. I might be about to find one.

Remember the girlfriend from Japan, the one who stepped out of my life after my episode? We ended up meeting again.

It was after my ex-wife and I separated, in the middle of the drinking phase of my grieving. I was out with my guy friends. I call them the Beach Bros. They're friends, but we're not very close. I wouldn't expect a deep conversation about life from them, but they're a great time if you want to drink or go out.

That night we were at Aldeia, a popular Sunday spot in Lagoa, or at least it was at the time. Every time I go out with the Beach Bros, I have a nice time, but I always catch myself judging them a little. The antics guys get up to when they try to meet women are entertaining, to say the least.

At one point I was wandering off to get another drink when I noticed a woman standing a little apart from my friends while her friend talked to them. She was secretly judging them, exactly like I was. After a longer look, I realized it was her. I laughed, because I always judge my friends when we're out, and in that moment I thought we had that in common. Honestly, even if it hadn't been her, I would have walked over and made a comment about it.

So I walked up, made a comment about what my friends were doing, and started talking. She didn't realize it was me at first. It took her a second to figure out who was standing there. Then we said hello, talked about life and caught up, and exchanged numbers again. When we first dated, she was still learning English. By the time I ran into her at Aldeia, she had improved a lot. We never re-followed each other on Instagram, which is where she blocked me in the first place. It's a small detail, but it's one I noticed.

We went on another date a few months ago, and it was nice. We had a great time. We went out a few more times, and then I could tell things were getting serious faster than either of us could handle after reconnecting for such a short time. So I pulled the plug and stepped back. Maybe I was still hurt by how things ended during my episode. Maybe it was just too much, too quickly. I had just gotten out of a serious relationship, and I didn't want to rush into another one, even though we'd known each other a long time and had a really good connection.

Fast forward to today. I'm going on a date with her again. This will be our third first date.

I reached out because I wanted to have a really good conversation with someone. Somewhere along the way I realized I'm kind of over the endless chasing-women thing, and I'd like

something more serious. The guy who's mostly harmless is ready to be a little more than that.

Before tonight, I sent her the Japan chapter. In it I wrote that I stayed silent to protect her, and that she heard silence and left. The last time I said nothing, I lost her. This time I decided to say everything, and I wasn't going to sit across a table from her with that unsaid. She hasn't responded yet, so I imagine it might come up over dinner.

I'm not sure what to expect, but I have hope. I won't pretend there's a cathartic scene coming where she explains everything and why. I don't think that matters. What matters is that after all this time, and everything we've been through, we're sitting across from each other again, and I think we're going to have a nice time. I'm excited to see her, and to talk with her. I'm also curious how much she's speaking now. I'm assuming she's basically fluent at this point. I'm even a little excited to talk about the book, though I haven't decided if I will.

I bought a new shirt, and I even ironed it, which says a lot, because I don't like ironing. I managed to trim and shape my beard without incident, which is more than I can say for the last time I tried to groom for a woman. I accidentally trimmed off my eyebrows while trying to manscape, right before a trip abroad with a girl I was seeing. This time, I kept the clippers far away from my eyebrows. I'd like to say I got a haircut, too. I wanted to. I didn't have time. So tonight, the shirt and the beard will have to do all the work.

We're having dinner tonight. I'm going to finish this chapter so I can go meet her. Wish me luck.