

SHYVON + FRANCESCA

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Kesha Lambert Photography*

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It's June of 2013 in sunny Puerto Vallarta, Mexico where Shyvon and Francesca are attending a destination wedding. For Shyvon, one of the brides is a former connection found on a dating website - nothing romantic ultimately came from their meeting but a good friendship was formed. Francesca at the time was in a relationship coming apart at the seams. She was the plus-one of her then girlfriend who was a friend of the same bride as Shyvon.

Most of the wedding guests were direct friends of both brides, many of whom were part of the LGBTQ community. Everyone was staying at a beautiful LGBTQ boutique hotel with the exception of Shyvon, who elected to stay in a separate hotel by the beach out of love for beach views.

Both Francesca and Shyvon distinctly remember noticing each other - a sudden gravitational pull instantly drawing them together. Francesca fondly recalls how unforgettable Shyvon looked in a white dress, and how she was "immediately attracted to Shyvon's energy, kindness, and charisma," not surprised to later learn, due to her "lovely and comforting disposition," that Shyvon was a nurse. Over the course of the next few days of the wedding trip they quickly became friends.

For Francesca it was all so bitter-sweet as her and her girlfriend at the time were barely interacting, a divide forming between them, leaving Francesca with feelings of rejection. After witnessing a series of their "tense interactions," Shyvon approached Francesca telling her how she had noticed the harsh treatment and that "if you were my girlfriend, I'd never treat you that way..." In that moment they both realized it was more than just a consoling statement, the feelings behind Shyvon's words were genuine, and a seed of possibility was planted in their minds that refused to stop growing...

Francesca and Shyvon's feelings and attraction for each other continued to grow as they spent more time together, enjoying great conversation over long walks on the beach. Nevertheless,

as difficult as it was they continued to keep a certain level of emotional distance between them seeing how Francesca, regardless of its conflict, was still in a relationship.

Those difficult moments before leaving for the airport weighed heavily on them both, Francesca seeking out Shyvon to exchange contact information - looking for any excuse to remain close to each other...

In the time after Mexico the succession of everyday life re-absorbed Shyvon and Francesca who remained in sporadic touch through social media. Francesca still tried to make the most of things in regards to her relationship but ultimately it would go no further than a few months following their return from Mexico. It was just a few days before New Year's Eve that she informed Shyvon of the breakup, Shyvon offering some much-needed comfort. They began speaking more regularly, often daily over stretches of time, but only as friends...

Neither had truly confessed the depth of their feelings for the other, and now that Francesca was finally single, and she and Shyvon were in consistent communication, Shyvon was now in a relationship of her own. They both continued to struggle with the emotional weight of it all, regularly fantasizing about being in a relationship together. Francesca attentively listened to Shyvon's desires to end her relationship, and though her heart screamed "yes, leave her and be with me," she couldn't bring herself to say the words aloud... Out of respect for her relationship with this other woman, and since they were too close for her to disappear without notice, Francesca did what she felt was her only option, and told Shyvon over the phone, hoping to hide her sobs, "Shyvon, in all this time that we have grown close, I have developed strong feelings for you. When I'm over it, maybe a month or two, I will reach back out and we can resume our friendship..."

Immediately following their conversation, Francesca began to grieve the loss of her best friend and the only woman she felt so