

**ABOUT A**  
**BED**

**Michael Harren**

# ABOUT A BED

text by Michael Harren

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I arrived in New York City on New Year's Day, 2007 with just the suitcase I carried on the plane from the commune in Georgia, but that's a story for another time. I stayed with my sister and brother in law for the agreed upon three months, plus the additional three months it took me to still not find a reasonable income, but instead an arrangement with my friend Eve. Eve is a composer, and now dear friend, who needed someone to watch her West Village apartment for the summer in exchange for a small room with a little window that looked out over 6th Avenue. It worked out perfectly

because, although my sister and her husband were hospitable and patient AF, I'm pretty sure I was wearing out my welcome.

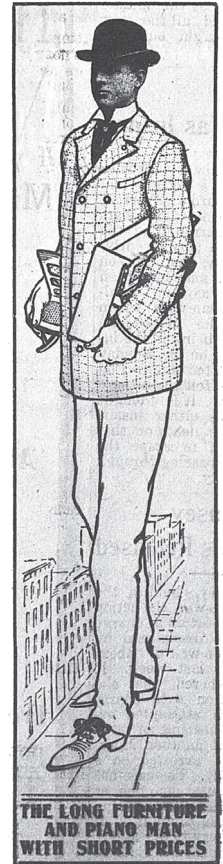
After that summer at Eve's place, I found my first legit, I'm-paying-for-it-myself, I-have-a-roommate-and-we-are-splitting-bills-and-everything apartment in Jersey City. This was also the place where I had to buckle down and buy my first New York City bed.

When I left Houston, I was so overwhelmed by the idea that I was abandoning my lifelong hometown for New York City, with a four month stop at a Christian Intentional Community in rural Georgia, no less, that I spent my last month binge watching *The Office* and eating fast food until maybe three days before I was supposed to move across the country. I looked around my full apartment and thought, "Oh fuck, I have to do something with all this shit."

I talked to the maintenance guy at the apartment complex behind my Montrose duplex and asked him if any of his tenants might need some of my stuff. That afternoon, a ragtag assortment of people came in and picked over my belongings, clearing most of it out. Including my bed. I stood there telling people, "Yes, yes I really mean it. Take it. It's free. Just get it out of here!"

It was a nice bed with a great story behind it, but that's another tale for another day.

I bought a new bed at Sleepy's, which felt like a really New York thing to do at the time. The bed was delivered, and I slept on it in



Jersey City for about 8 months until I fled, realizing that the neighborhood was neither up nor coming as the realtor had promised. I moved that bed to Brooklyn with a guy I hired on Craigslist. He managed to cram all of my belongings into a pickup truck with about 25 bungee cords and a prayer. The new apartment had a little sleeping loft that was just right for me and my bed, and we stayed there for a good 7 years. I had to move rather hastily into my next temporary place, a room in a shithole I now refer to as the "klonopin castle." From there, I landed in a pretty sweet basement apartment that sometimes flooded but holy shit what a great deal for a big place I could live in by myself. Luckily, my bed survived the occasional floods and made its way down the street to where I live now with my super cool roommate and my cat, Tigger.

This bed. I love it. It's the place where I read, and surf Facebook till way too late at night. It's the place I've recovered from illnesses, and two surgeries. The place I swiped endlessly on Grindr, Scruff, or OKCupid thinking it was time to open my heart, until giving up, shutting off the phone, jerking off, and going to sleep. I sobbed in that bed more deeply and primally than I knew I could in the weeks and months after my mom died, and it's the place I realized that her death could also remind me to cherish being alive. So many nights of sleep, and sleeplessness, and longing, or blocking all of it out. Alone. All of these nights, and years of singlehood while just out of sight was the nagging question, "You know, you're a grown man. Isn't it sort of weird that there has never been someone in this bed with you?"

Until tonight.

# OSTERMOOR

BETTER  
THAN  
HAIR



BUILT  
NOT  
STUFFED

# MATTRESS

It's been three months and a couple weeks since our first date. I realized last month, though, that you might not need to know that I keep track of this, so I'm glad I didn't mention to you the fact that this anniversary is repeating indefinitely every month on my iPhone's calendar. So unless you're keeping track too, I'm the only one who knows that the anniversary just passed fourteen days ago, and that the next one is only about sixteen days away.

Yeah, you don't need to know that I'm thinking *that* much about *this*.

The point is, that we're here. You're in this bed with me and it's the first time I have had another body here besides my cat's. It's so beautiful and foreign, just like the place I carved out for you in my atrophied heart. The heart that peers at the light of love with squinting, mole-like eyes that can not bear the burning light, yet craves its stinging rays. Every yes, every no hurl me into a disaster

of light and dark and all of this shit that makes no sense because this is the core of *everything*, right?

But this isn't that. This isn't the ghosts that broke our hearts before this moment. This is not last month when I walked down 2nd Ave sobbing with no idea why. This isn't the misunderstood texts, my anxious sleepless nights over made up failures, or whatever it is that you go through that I have yet to know.

This is here. Upon my sheets, these clean ones I put on today for you. The wrinkles, the drool, and crusty eyes, the skin on sweaty skin and this warmth I feel from you that melts the other shit away. The closeness of your morning breath, and how it reads as sweet because it's part of being with you. This is waking up in moments through the night still clung like baby monkeys—you kissing my face in your sleep. This is you and me and how our bodies feel: slack and prone.



Tomorrow, I'll be here alone. Your memory will lie next to me and I'll cradle the remains of you. I will toss and kick and curse the day I cracked my calloused heart to make a space for you. I love this raw honied openness, but when you're away it oozes from my chest with nowhere left to land. I don't know how to contain its runny sweet madness, so it pours out upon these sheets in late night sessions of wonder and projected despair. Were you here at all and are you here when you're gone? And how can I ever be alone now that you have held me in your arms. Those nights I lie entombed in viscous sickly sweet too thick to breathe.

But now. You are here, and so am I. My honey  
sweet finds its place colliding with yours and  
we are one. One of two, still one. On these  
sheets, your hand in mine, our legs entwined,  
and we are not alone, for now.

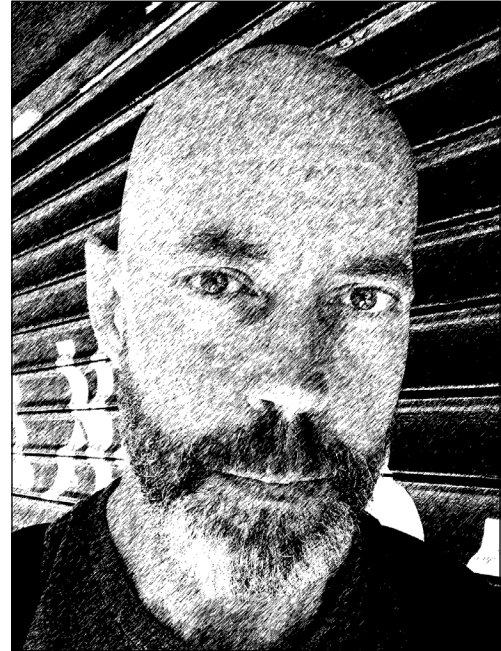
This is just this moment

And this breath

And this: Peace.

This bed. I love it. It's the place where I read,  
and surf Facebook till way too late at night.  
It's the place where we slept together and I  
found some new space in my heart.

This bed might be too small for me now.







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nyc



MICHAEL HARREN