

28th October, 2008

THE SEPARATION OF AN UNLIKELY PAIR!

DEAR DIARY, my friend Paul has emigrated to Australia. Boooooo!!

We've been friends for about five years, but when we first met, because of what we'd heard about each other, we took an instant dislike to one another.

We were called upon to work together in an off-site office in Liverpool Street as a departmental experiment. I had concerns about working with an Essex boy who only seemed to be interested in getting plastered at the weekend and days in between. I also heard he was a violent football hooligan. On top of that, rumour had it that he was part of the **British National Party** which definitely meant we wouldn't get along.

He in turn was apprehensive about working with someone who Diva'd her way around the office. I also heard that Paul had said he thought I was common because I was a single parent and he said all black people carried knives.

So when we finally started working together, we came together full of prejudice with our swords drawn.

Before the first day was out, he put me straight about getting drunk and football. Yes he liked getting drunk, yes he liked football and supported West Ham and in fact played in goal every Saturday for his five-a-side team and he had no personal membership with the BNP although his dad was a supporter and his mum had no choice but to go along with his dad's point of view or she'd get a smack. He also admitted that he thought all black people carried knives – he said his dad told him so.

I told Paul that I'm not a diva but if I had the opportunity to live like Naomi Campbell or maybe even Chaka Khan, I would. I also explained that I was a single parent because my children's father was as mad as a crack-house rat and made my life a misery. I told him that not all black people carry knives and maybe some of his dad's BNP material was brainwashing him. By the end of our first day together, we established that we got on like a house on fire and I can't tell you which one of us was more surprised.

The AUGUST MAYFIELD Diaries

When Friday came around, we'd been out to lunch to shop, drink wine and chow down at Wagamama's!

Myself and Paul's friendship started rumours of a relationship but that wasn't possible. Paul's gay! In fact, when he told me he was gay I laughed my head off because I thought he was joking and then I laughed even more at the idea of Paul chasing men. I really thought he fancied Kylie Minogue. He had all her albums and her picture as a screen-saver on his mobile.

Anyway, me and Paul soon found that we had something in common. We loved to have too much fun at work which was frowned upon by anyone by the name of supervisor, team leader and manager! Lucky for us, we were away from the main office; we were supervised by phone, email and the occasional spot-check. Spot-checks were quite awful because most of the time, we were caught in the middle of some sort of misdeed. I was caught with my curling tongs on the desk, they were plugged in, red hot and ready to go, Paul was caught wearing jeans and not wearing a tie, I was also caught playing Biggie Smalls really loud on the work PC, Paul was once caught sleeping in the print room! Before we both left the company, we had five warnings between us.

If we completed all of our work early, sometimes we'd go into the meeting room with chocolate biscuits and tea and I'd paint my nails and we'd gossip until home time. If my children had an after-school activity, we'd go out for a quick bite to eat.

Paul used to buy me presents from Accessorize and I'd buy him breakfast so that he had something to eat when he got to work.

So when Paul told me he was going to go travelling for six months, I was heart broken! But Paul, being 10 years younger than me with no children needed to see the world because the world didn't begin and end outside our 9th floor Liverpool Street office window.

When Paul returned from back-packing, he told me he found love with an Australian and he was emigrating and off he went.

He's become an unlikely friend who, if it were not for the work place, I would never have gotten to know him and he would never have become friends with someone like me.

The AUGUST MAYFIELD Diaries

Paul's been living in Australia for two years now and we're constantly in touch. This morning, I received an invitation to attend his Civil Partnership, so I guess my next trip abroad is to Australia with a box of confetti.

August Mayfield