

Great Catch

When Pietro Gatto first spoke to Julie Rojas through his art blog two years ago, he had no idea how much of a wonderful impact she would have on him and his life.

“She’s just a great person—an incredible person,” he says with a sparkling gleam of joy and love in his eyes. “We have an incredible time together. I love being with her, I love when she smiles at me, I love the way I feel when she hugs me. I feel like the luckiest guy in the world.”

After communicating for a few months through Facebook, Pietro and Julie decided to meet face to face. They set the day, the place, and the time: July 6, Starbucks at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, California, 5 p.m.

But things didn’t go so smoothly.



Julie Rojas is “the greatest thing that has ever happened to” Pietro Gatto.

When Pietro arrived at Starbucks, he didn’t see Julie anywhere. So he sat down, relaxed, had a latte, waited a while and just hoped she’d arrive.

As he waited, Pietro noticed a guy staring at him from across the room.

“That was really strange,” he says. “I was just

minding my own business, but every time I looked up, he was staring at me.

“I was saying to myself, ‘What’s up with this dude?’ I was sure he was either going to jump me or ask me out,” Pietro says with a laugh.

“I’ll tell you this much – I was freaking out.”

But just a few moments passed before Pietro spotted Julie coming around the corner with her girlfriend. His blood pressure rose.

“She looked awesome,” he says. “I was so excited to meet her.”

After greetings were exchanged, Pietro discovered that the guy staring him down was Julie’s girlfriend’s boyfriend.

“I wanted him to check out Pietro to make sure he was normal,” Julie says with a laugh. “When he texted me saying, ‘He’s ok – he doesn’t look too shady,’” that’s when I came around the corner.”

“I thought the whole thing was pretty funny,” Pietro says.

There is a lot of laughing in Pietro’s and Julie’s relationship.

“She’s hysterically funny,” Pietro says. “That’s one of things I love about her.”

Julie has a knack for perfectly mimicking other people, particularly from television shows, “which really cracks me up,” Pietro says. “When we were watching *American Idol* once, this girl started crying and Julie began crying just like the girl on *Idol*. It was a perfect imitation. I was laughing so hard I almost started crying.”

Talk about laughing: One night at Julie’s place, they were sitting at the dining room table eating spaghetti when Pietro began telling a story in his typical fashion – his hands flying all over the place.

“I tend to use my hands a lot when I talk,” he says. “So there I am telling this story to Julie, getting all worked up and excited and I accidently hit the fork on my plate and the spaghetti and fork fly through the air, across the room, and *splat* -- they both hit the wall and fall to the floor.”

There was a moment of stunned silence as Pietro looked at Julie and Julie looked at the spaghetti and sauce dripping from the wall. Then they turned and looked at each other square in the eye and ... “And

we just busted out laughing,” Pietro says.

“It was incredibly funny – like a scene from a movie.”

What may have been even funnier is when they were eating dinner at The Castaway in Burbank, California. They had been dating for three months and Pietro wanted to give Julie a gift – a heart for her necklace.

“I wanted to play it real slick and cool when I gave it to her,” he says, “so I decided to distract her and then put the heart on her plate.”

When Pietro said, “Hey Julie, look over there,” Julie quickly looked in the other direction as Pietro reached into his pocket to grab the heart and ... and ... he dropped it on the floor.

“I looked like a deer in a headlight,” he says, laughing. “When I dropped it, I tried pretending I was itching my leg, but Julie immediately knew what was going on.”

There have been many unforgettable moments in the two-plus years they’ve been together, but perhaps the most special one of all for Pietro was his birthday last year when Julie surprised him with an aquarium.

“It was great,” he says. “A few months earlier, we were at a pet store and I said, ‘It’d be so cool to have an aquarium,’” he recalls. “And she remembered! And she planned it all out so perfectly and even got into my house to set up the aquarium.

“When I walked into my place, it was the coolest thing ever. I was speechless when I saw it.”

No wonder Pietro adores Julie so much.

“She’s the greatest thing that’s ever happened to me,” he says.

“The absolute greatest.” ♥

—By Rick Weinberg, Editor, StoryCentral