

# MODERN BROMANCE

Today’s male friendships are not all fist-bumps and casual chitchat. Believe it or not, they’re as close as female ones



Ady and I had been up late partying in Nice in the south of France. It was summer; we were 18 and travelling around Europe after leaving school, seeking girls and hedonism. And we were rushing with the freedom of it all. There’d been a few arguments, over money and the urges to see different things, but we stayed solid, ironing out our arguments over cheap bottles of red wine and cigarettes. That particular night, we had nowhere to sleep so we took our backpacks and camped out on the sand, stars above, waves lapping the shore. And we talked. And talked. About our families, what we wanted our futures to look like, what we felt insecure about. And then for the heck of it, we stripped naked and went skinny-dipping in the Med. And at that point we didn’t give a shit about waving our bits about in front of each other, or getting caught by the beach police. We were connected. We’re still close 20 years later.

There’s a type of male bond the word “friendship” fails to properly encompass. It’s more homoplatonic than homoerotic, a space where men are able to grow as close to one another as women and can talk about their feelings. I’m not talking in the comic buddy movie type of way, or in the teammates-in-sport type of way. It’s deeper than that. And it’s not something most of us men feel comfortable expressing. But I think that’s changing.

This bond manifests itself at the most intense moments of our lives, high and low. It happened to me during the 2006 war in Lebanon. I was working as a reporter for a London newspaper, everyone had fled the city while the bombs rained down and another correspondent I knew was crashing at my place. Zeid. We would chase the story at all hours, drink copious amounts of vodka, and every time we separated to follow up a bomb attack, we’d embrace and tell each other “I love you man.” And it wasn’t just because there was the distinct possibility that something fatal might happen and we’d not see each other again. We meant it. Born out of our shared experience and understanding. I don’t know how it would have affected me if something had happened to Zeid. But I proffer, cruel though it may sound, that it would have hurt me a lot more than if something happened to the girl I was half-dating at the time.

He’s not the only male friend I love. There’s more than a few boys I grew up with from the age of three and still know, but I really only miss one of them if we don’t cross paths. When we do see each other, it just takes a single look in the eyes to know how we are feeling, if something’s up, and then we get down to discussing it all. We never talk about football in the kind of surface camaraderie so easy between men down the pub – not that there’s anything wrong with that.

I love my friend Jake who literally bear hugged me and didn’t let me go during a bad time at university. And I love my friend Angus for his sheer infectious joy when we go crate digging together and find a funk or salsa record we didn’t know, and play it that first time on the turntable. As the drum break plays or the guitar riff tweaks, we nod our heads, and his smile is one so pure and happy and beautiful my heart soars.

I long for those moments as much as I long for my lover’s kiss.