



# Love In NYC? Here's Proof It's Possible



"I was terrified, because I knew this was the moment where my life would change— if she said yes, of course."

♥ Michael



ILLUSTRATED BY CAITLIN OWENS.



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## Michael Chernow, Co-Owner Meatball Shop + Donna Hemmingsen Chernow, Model

"Donna and I went to Europe in 2005 for a three-week trip. Our first stop in Italy was in Catania, Sicily, where we stayed with a buddy of mine Ricardo for a week. Catania was beautiful, but after a few days we became a bit bored. On top of that, I was looking for the most beautiful place to ask Donna to marry me. I told Ricardo about the plan, and the last day we were in Catania he took us an hour north to Taormina. As soon as we got there, I knew this was the place. I set up a hotel room for that night with dinner reservations at what was supposedly the most sought after restaurant in the region. We went back down to Catania, packed our bags, and shot right back to Taormina.

"That evening, we both got dressed up, headed out to dinner, and I had the ring (in the classic box) stuffed in my right boot. I made a late reservation, outside under the stars, with hopes to be alone in the restaurant toward the end of the meal. But, just as we finished our entrées, a family sat right next to us, kids and all. I was shattered. I excused myself to go to the bathroom, and ran to speak with the maître d' to ask for a suggestion for a place to do the deed. He directed me to a path along the cliffs that looked out over the Mediterranean.

"I began to sweat. I was terrified because I knew this was the moment where my life would change — if she said yes, of course. As we were walking along the cliffs, I began to tell Donna how much I loved her, and how special she is to me. How she has helped me understand the meaning of love — yada yada yada — when all of a sudden she turned around and said, 'HOLY SH\*T! IS THAT MOUNT ETNA ERUPTING?!' Lo and behold, a little way off on the skyline, the volcano began spewing lava. We could even hear it, and it was beautiful. If this wasn't a sign, well then I don't know what is. It was as if I had called the man upstairs to set this up perfectly on time with the moment when I was to ask the woman of my dreams to marry me. I got down on one knee, pulled out the ring and asked her to marry me. She began crying, asked me if I was crazy, and said yes. I was also tearing up a bit and was overwhelmed with love and joy. We kissed, and I screamed over to a couple walking passed that we just got engaged. We walked to a nearby café and had a big cup of hot chocolate and went home to the hotel for some loving. That was one of the best days of my life. And, I still can't believe the volcano." — Michael