

BOI

NEW LOVE ON ICE

A made-in-the-Caribbean marriage gets tested in frozen Idaho. **BY TERRY WARD**

YOU CAN TAKE the man out of the Caribbean. I'd been working on it since I fell hard for a Cuban while vacationing in Jamaica. Our romance quickly gave way to a tidal wave of immigration paperwork, followed by Javier's stateside arrival.

But taking the Caribbean out of the man was another thing entirely, as I learned while trying to make my husband love something that I love dearly.

We had recently gotten married and had a newborn back home in Florida, and Javier had been in the country for just three months, when we landed in Boise for what I'd dubbed our "Welcome to the U.S. honeybabymoon."

His first time seeing snow! The great American West! It all looked wonderful on paper—and Instagram.

During our time on the beaches of Jamaica, I'd told Javier all about the counterintuitive delights of winter. Although I live in Florida, I love the cold. I've sailed to the Arctic and made annual winter pilgrimages to Scandinavia thanks to a passport and job that come with extraordinary privileges. Javier was approaching 40 and—with the exception of moving to Florida—had yet to travel beyond Cuba and Jamaica, due mostly to governmental and economic reasons beyond his control. Now, with a green card in his hand, we would go out into the world. Why not start with a beautiful U.S. state?

Things seemed promising as we walked from the airport through the icy air to the rental car. But some two hours later, after checking in to our hotel in McCall—an adorable town in the Sawtooth Mountains—Javier's enthusiasm had plummeted along with the mercury.

The Shore Lodge was my dream spot to bed down, a cozy property with a heated outdoor pool at the edge of Payette Lake, which was frozen thick for winter. A warm dip would be the perfect way to unwind after our travels, I thought, assuming Javier would be game. But as I was slipping into my bikini, he remained fully clothed and clambered into bed. "Para nada voy a salir," he said, which translates, loosely, to "You're *loca* if you think I'm going out in the snow to jump in a pool."

I begged, cajoled, told him how amazing the water feels once you're in it. "But then you have to get out," he said. So I gave up and swam alone. I might have enjoyed the solitude but for one worrying thought: Had I really just married a guy who wouldn't give winter a try?

The next day, while Javier remained fireside in the lodge, I skied alone at Brundage Mountain. When I showed him photos of the powder later, he just sank deeper into the du-

vet. Finally, cabin fever settling in, he agreed to venture from the hotel for a walk on the frozen lake. "I feel like Camarada Pechkin," he said in a convincing Russian accent, the fur-lined hood of his parka framing his face as I stared blankly back. It was another lost-in-translation moment.

Growing up in Cuba, he explained, he'd only seen one wintry figure, a Russian cartoon character on state-run TV. I got it: The Caribbean guy who could forage coconuts high on a palm tree with the trunk squeezed between his knees or spearfish our dinner was a fish out of water in Idaho. Who was I to expect him to like this experience just because it was new to him?

On our last day—buoyed by full-body snowsuits and balaclavas that left no sliver of skin bare—Javier agreed to snowmobile with me to some nearby hot springs. With more than 200 in the state, hot springs are to Idaho what beaches are to the Caribbean, I told him. Javier offered a game, "Camarada Pechkin, vamos!"

Twenty-three miles later, we arrived at a collection of log cabins at Burgdorf Hot Springs. The "lobster pots," two small pools on one end of the main pool, were built by miners in the 1800s, and underground waters pump into them at upward of 108 degrees. It was precisely the kind of epic winter experience I would never turn down, together or alone. But Javier surprised me, following me into the changing room to put on a rented bathing suit.

Flurries fell from above as we soaked. I felt cautiously awash in one of those buoying relationship moments, when it suddenly seems that everything might be okay after all. The vapor formed little frost crystals on his brow and I moved to melt them, then stopped. It was just a temporary fix. We'd have to step back out into the cold again sooner or later.

Then my Caribbean guy sank his whole body underwater. "My head was cold," he explained when he surfaced, "but my heart is warm." ▽



Burgdorf Hot Springs

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