

Bouncing on Beautyrest

By Lynn Rothenberg

During the early years of my relationship with Michael, he invited me to go with him to buy a new futon because his was no longer comfortable. He had in mind a particular futon store in Northampton, Massachusetts. Michael didn't sleep on mattresses because he preferred the way a futon felt and that it was more natural and harmonized with his lifestyle that included miso soup, brown rice, tofu and tahini.

On the morning of our trip, Michael staggered downstairs, pushing and dragging his son's single-size futon to bring along to provide the salesman with an example of what he was looking for. Standing in the driveway, I watched the unbleached white, all-natural cotton-stuffed bedding bumping into the porch post, walking towards me, guided by a disembodied pair of staggering legs. Michael flopped the futon against his red Golf diesel station wagon, which gets 45 miles to the gallon, and stuffed the bedding into the car.

When we arrived the owner said that, no, Michael could not bring his *own* futon into the store due to health laws. So he dragged it back to the car sorry to lose this important frame of reference.

An hour later, we walked out of the store with a new futon made with sturdy foam, which the salesman guaranteed would be comfortable. We tied it onto the top of the car, and with the old futon inside the car, we drove away in our diesel-powered futon transporter.

After two nights, Michael found the new bedding too hard so he carried it upstairs to the attic and laid it on top of a towering pile of aging futons and mattresses. He then put his old hard

futon back on the bed. Michael then reluctantly admitted that, perhaps, he would make the shift to a traditional mattress.

We went to a combination traditional mattress and futon store.

“We don’t carry mattresses at the store anymore,” the owner told us. “We would have to order it for you from our factory in Hartford.”

The next weekend Michael asked if I wanted to go with him to the mattress factory in Hartford, and I said, no, that I was tired of futons and mattresses and he should go alone and choose whatever he pleased. So he drove his motorcycle to Hartford where he met up with his old college friend, Art, and they spent the afternoon at the mattress factory, bouncing on mattresses and talking to the friendly, patient owner.

He ordered a mattress, which was delivered to his house one week later. That’s when we carried the old, hard cotton futon back to the attic and put it on top of the newest sturdy foam futon from Northampton.

That night as we lay on the bed, Michael bounced up and down a few times then paused. He bounced some more, then thoughtfully and guardedly looked at me:

“It feels different than it did at the factory. It feels lumpier.”

“Goodnight,” I said and rolled over and went to sleep.

After many nights of clinging to the edge of the bed to prevent rolling into the center, we let go and as we lay smashed together in the center of the mattress, Michael faced the undeniable truth: The comfort of the mattress bore no relation to the affability of the mattress factory owner.

Not long after, we saw a large SALE sign in the window of a combination mattress and television store. Unable to resist, we went inside and rolled and bounced from sample to sample, before finally and unanimously selecting the Beautyrest *Blandford Plush*. Several days later the

truck delivered our new bedding, and that night we both reveled in its comfort. When friends came for dinner we insisted they come upstairs to our bedroom and lie down on the *Blandford Plush*.

“Go ahead,” I told our friend Meg. “Try it. You won’t believe how comfortable it is.” She threw herself down, spread-eagled, closed her eyes in soporific ecstasy and declared: “Now, I could sleep on this,” confirming our excellent choice.

But as days passed, we began to oversleep. And we woke up feeling groggy and tired.

“It’s the mattress,” Michael said. “It’s too soft.”

Meanwhile, our friend Emily needed a new mattress *immediately* because her faithless husband had shared their bed with another woman while Emily was painting landscapes on Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine.

“I need to get that woman out of this house,” she told me and purchased the *Blandford Plush* at a deep discount.

Now we had no mattress.

We returned to the mattress store with the televisions and tried a Firm and an Extra, Extra Firm. Despite the salesman’s admonitions that the Extra, Extra Firm was *exceedingly* firm, and my hesitations because it did feel so hard, Michael was sure this was *it*. We bought it, and as soon as we got home (yes, by now it was *our* home), we slid the *Blandford Plush* into the spare room to await Emily.

“I feel like I slept on concrete,” I said the morning after the first night on our new mattress.

“It didn’t feel this firm in the store,” Michael said in familiar surprise. Then sheepishly: “Would you call Emily and tell her we need the *Blandford* a little longer?”

“You call her. You were the one who insisted on the Extra, Extra Firm.”

“I’m too embarrassed.”

I called. Emily laughed.

We shoved the slab off the bed frame, slid it down the hall into the spare bedroom and slid the *Blandford Plush* back into our bedroom.

The next night I walked by the room that held the Extra, Extra firm mattress and saw Michael jumping up and down on it, wearing only a determined look and sea green undershorts. At that moment, it struck me that mattresses are much like relationships. They need a lot of breaking in before they’re comfortable.

Four years later, we were still sleeping on the Extra, Extra firm, which, in the end, we decided to keep.