

*“If you pressured me to say why I loved him, it was because he was he and I was I.”*

Being in a couple isn't cool these days. Even though finding a boyfriend is the life-goal of many a gay man, it is also seen as the kiss-of-death for the days of free-wheeling single excitement and hanging out with your single friends. Taking our cue from the protagonists of 'Sex and the City' (who are, at their hearts, gay men) and the lead sluts of 'Queer as Folk', it would appear that being single is the only way to live a life of fulfillment and happiness. Relationships are processed and discarded in lightning-speed time, suitors are sized up and dismissed as soon as the slightest flaw surfaces, and "falling-in-love" is a mushy cliché to which everyone is too cool to succumb.

I've never been one to follow this school of thought. A hopeless romantic since I was a little boy, I'd always believed in love and romance and my own happily-ever-after. Visions of roses and gardens and Victorian kisses danced in my head. A vague visage of the handsome ruggedness and smoldering self-confidence in my dream guy slowly came to take shape in my mind. He would be soft-of-heart and kind-of-character, but he would have a crackling wit and an abundance of common sense. He would sweep me off my feet and carry me away to a kingdom and a castle with a Norma Desmond staircase and a wardrobe to match. The man of my dreams was out there, and I was hell-bent on finding him.

For almost a quarter of a century I searched for my elusive intended. Kissing frogs, blowing buffoons, and fornicating with freaks, I paid my dues. A few good ones swam by ~ and for a while we paired off and made each other a little less lonely. But my search was stilted. It was too forced. You can wish and hope for something just so much, until finally you have to give up and leave it in the hands of some other force ~ fate or destiny or the universe ~ anything to alleviate the gnawing fear that maybe, just maybe, it is you who are the problem.

The ruthlessness of the gay dating scene was having its way with me. The dream was fading, my hope was dwindling, and my notions of romance were falling by the wayside. Yet even in my darkest hours of cynical sluttiness, when I moved from bed to bed and man to man with reckless abandon, I always harbored a secret hope that someday my prince would come.

Then, as most things of this nature tend to do, when I gave up the last remaining vestiges of finding true love, he arrived. Once I stopped looking and yearning and hoping, he found me. Whenever anyone asks for advice on finding a boyfriend, I offer the only thing that has always worked for me: Don't look for one.

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Two years later, Andy and I are still together. We've seen each other through difficult and happy times, we bought a house together and made it a home, and we still enjoy each other's company. Neither of us is foolish about it. There is still a jaded bit of me that doesn't believe anyone is perfectly destined to be with anyone else, that relationships will always require work, that effortlessness is not realistic (and if it is effortless, is it really worth it?) and that the ideal dream guy is the stuff of made-up fantasies and never-to-be-realized romantic novels. But even if these are the harsh realities of the world, so what? There can still be love and happiness and contentment. There is safety, warmth, comfort, and protection to be found in the arms of another, and that is what I have in Andy.

I love him because he is kind. He cares about the well-being of others, especially his friends and family. I love him because of his integrity. He has firm beliefs ~ in spirituality, in love, in loyalty ~ and he is always true to himself, no matter how uncool or unhip that may seem to others. I respect and admire that, and in that respect and admiration there is love. I love his commitment to our relationship ~ the way he defends me no matter what. I love the respect he has for me, and the pride he feels for me. I love that we can do our own thing and still crawl into the same bed at the end of the day and cuddle and have everything at that one moment be absolutely perfect, even if the outside world is completely wrong. I love that he is such a refuge for me. I love the calming effect he has on those around him. I love just hanging around him, laughing and enjoying each other's company. I love that he cooks me dinner, makes me lunches for work, does the laundry, cleans the house, takes care of the pool, takes out the trash and never complains. I love that he wears clothes from the Gap and refuses to yield to my not-so-subtle suggestions in fashion. I love the way he smells. I love how he genuinely loves my family and gets along with my parents. I love the serenity and happiness he has brought to my life, the way he has grounded me ~ always allowing me ample room for my

creative outlets and expression. I love his smile. I love his laugh. I love when he gets really excited about something like a car or other thing I usually consider foolish. I love him for all these things and yet it still doesn't go half-way towards explaining why I love him.

We work hard at our relationship. We make compromises, we help each other, we argue, we forgive... this is the stuff of life. And it's good stuff. In the end it is worth it, at least for us. I can't imagine my life without Andy ~ I wouldn't even want to try.

You might always wonder if he is "the one". I don't think we can ever know that for sure. But I know Love, and I know Beauty, and I know Goodness ~ and the rest just isn't that important. You can do it alone ~ there's nothing wrong with that, but as the great Winnie-the-Pooh once said, "It's so much friendlier with two."