

Save the Drama

By Alan Bennett Ilagan

Everyone loves a bit of drama – admitted or not. From the emotional extremes of break-ups and break-downs to the giddy heights of frenzied happiness and fairy tale weddings, we all seek out excitement now and then. Such fantasy is fine fodder for fleeting flights of fancy, but far too often we are groomed to expect that excitement on a regular basis, particularly in our romantic relationships.

The trajectory of a typical romance starts out dizzyingly high. A first glance, a first kiss, a first good-night – each is imbued with heady import and heart-fluttering exhilaration. Both parties can do no wrong. Soon, however, the thrill invariably diminishes. The initial intensity grows faint, the fireworks fizzle, and the ferocity of those first few moments fades. At this point the love you share will either deepen, or grow tiresome.

While talking with a friend – a great guy who has been without a boyfriend for a while – I asked if he minded being single. (It's one of those awful questions that is asked of single people, even if in this case judgment was entirely unintended.) My friend is a successful, handsome, charming guy with a great personality, a kind heart, and a down-to-earth mentality, and I was just curious as to how he felt about it.

He replied that the only hard part for him was waking up alone – after that everything was fine. It seemed like such a small, simple answer – sweetly sad in its humility, but powerful and all-encompassing in its own way. He did not say it with any bitterness, and he has never once complained about being single - he only missed sharing that first moment of the day with someone else.

For him the small things are what matter in a relationship. It's not constant mind-blowing sex. It's not earth-shattering passion. It's not shooting-stars, explosive fireworks, or romantic destiny. It's the simple day-to-day goings-on that form the basis of many successful partnerships. When love is true, there's no need for drama.

Most people don't mention thrilling nights in Paris or glamorous black-tie evening events when asked about what they would miss most if they didn't have a

partner. It's great if one is lucky enough to have those memories, but the majority of us find happiness simply being with the person we love. Sometimes it's not a great undying passion we want – sometimes it is simple companionship. That's what wins out in the end.

A best friend who offers unconditional love, the person who rolls over in the middle of the night and puts his or her arm around you out of love and habit, a man or woman who knows exactly what you like and want ~ these are not the things that are always celebrated in greeting cards and romantic comedies.

The entertainment proffered today idealizes love and romance in unrealistic ways that lead inevitably to disappointment and disillusionment, all the while discounting the real interactions that make up our actual relationships. In some ways, that idea of the perfect love is all but impossible to reach, and when we fail at it we are so quick to break up or halt all our efforts at making good partnerships work.

Sometimes we forget the simple joy we once found in each other, the way every little idiosyncrasy elicited amusement and wonder. Those quirks can become tiresome and tedious if we let them. It is then that we have to remember that some people would be happy just to greet someone first thing in the morning, or share a cup of coffee with a partner, or kiss someone good-night.

There is a certain contentment that comes from comfort. It is a contentment that makes up for the dull, wearying drudge of everyday life. It's easy to fall into ruts, to take things for granted and begrudgingly muddle through a relationship without seeing what good stuff we have. Too often we miss the precious nature of those simple daily moments, searching instead for the dramatic emotions of the first flush of romance. It's good to be reminded that some people would be happy just to wake up with someone's arm around them, and to know that someone is there at the end of the day. It may not be earth-shattering, but it's real, and more powerful than any dramatic pyrotechnics that could ever be mustered.

There's a drama queen in each of us. Be wary of letting her rule your life.