

The Other Half

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My suitemate has taken to counting the number of times a day that I emerge from my room in a different outfit, and she likes to let me know the numbers. The highest has been eight. I have begun to ponder the possibility of some deep, psychological meaning behind the fact that I change my outfit at least five times a day. I think I might fear commitment. Anne Bradstreet wrote an awfully horrifying poem that I cannot read without my mind going around in hundreds of conflicting, unwanted circles. This poem is called "To My Dear and Loving Husband." A husband seems like such a distant, abstract idea. I would like to fall in love, because that seems like it might be a little bit of fun, but I do not think that I would like a husband. The problem is that I do not see getting along without one either.

Somewhere in my crazy daydreams of what I would like my life to be, there must be a husband or at least a lover. For as much as I hate to be alone, I honestly cannot picture myself attempting to live this life without someone in my bed. Maybe he only shows up in the evenings, because, as a responsible person, he is at work during the day. He does not sleep through the day. Unlike me, he does not perpetually lose himself in his imagination. He does not sing and thumb through pages of sheet music all night while spastically typing a hopeless attempt at great literature. One of us would have to have some sense of sanity; I do not think two crazy hippies could take on the world together. The Lord knows that one of me is already more than enough.

In her poem, Anne Bradstreet describes a love she could never repay. But I wonder: what kind of sane person could want me? I am selfish and irresponsible; I have never balanced my checkbook, I have absolutely no idea how to work an ATM machine, and I do not have even the slightest clue what my pin number is. I simply hope and pray that no one else does either. Stumbling through life, I cling to existence by the threads of my being. Who in this world would venture to spend a lifetime with me?

I eat too many sweets and not enough vegetables. Being terribly shy, I do not talk enough in groups of people, but when I do talk, I talk too much. Chiefly rambling on about myself, I forget to realize that other people are probably not near as interested as I am. I drink entirely too much coffee, and I, for some strange reason, refuse to sleep. I take nothing lightly, and become extremely upset over the littlest incidents, only to discover that there never was a problem to begin with. In tears, I apologized to my father because I was entirely sure that I was going to flunk out of my first year of college. Instead, I made the Dean's List and received an invitation to the Honors Program.

I am a horrible listener. When a person comes to me for advice, my mind wanders into my office, where I peck at the piano while humming and gazing at an oil painting. I then give that person a template answer, because I honestly do not have the slightest idea what he was talking about. If only he could give me a brief summary or allow me to take breaks every few minutes while he spoke to me, I could then possibly comprehend whatever he is saying. I promise it isn't that I don't care. I simply have the attention span of a fruit fly.

Who could ever love me? I am rather annoying and entirely too honest. I will tell you exactly what I think, and when you seem offended, I will be surprised. When my first boyfriend and I broke up on February thirteenth, over the phone, I laughed and laughed. I told him that I felt one-hundred pounds lighter and that I was incredibly relieved.

"You are laughing," Adam said sadly, "You sound so happy, but I want you to be heartbroken! I want you to be in tears!"

"I'm sorry, but I'm just not," I replied. I was still laughing, but I suddenly felt a twinge of guilt. I sat down on the edge of the molding bathtub in my dorm; I couldn't believe this was finally happening. I felt dizzy, and I was momentarily speechless. My laughter, however, continued. I finally, for the first time in months, felt free. "Laughing is how I handle my pain," I explained. He did not believe me, and I do not blame him.

"I still love you..."

"No you don't."

"Yes I do—you are the most beautiful girl in the world!"

"Well, yes, but that doesn't mean that you love me." My affection for Adam had long since been exhausted, and I was therefore incapable of comprehending the fact that his attachment to me had not yet begun to dwindle.

"Abby..." he said softly. He sounded incredibly sad. Looking back on the situation, I can sense his depression resounding and filling the grimy bathroom in which I sat, but at the time, I was completely numb to his misery. I should have realized that he was extremely upset, because after an entire year of talking for hours almost every day, I ought to have known him better. I could not stop laughing.

I wonder if I will ever be capable of possessing the kind of love for a man that Anne Bradstreet expresses. In private, I criticize almost everyone and in person, I laugh at them. It is a wonder that I have any friends at all. Maybe it isn't completely hopeless; the other day my friend Thomas told me that when I am mean to him and laugh, for some reason, it simply isn't offensive. He laughs, too.

Although my behavior is abrupt and often rude, if you tell me exactly what you think, you will bring tears to my eyes because I am extremely sensitive. I forget that other people are sensitive too. For some reason, I do not think men have feelings, and that is why I am so horribly mean to them. Adam did not deserve to be treated that way. I knew he was sensitive, but I did not care. I was tired of him. I promise I do not try to be a terrible person. I guess it just kind of turns out that way. Be wary of me; I seem sweet and innocent, but once you get to know me, you will discover a vicious girl who curses horribly in private.

On the other hand, when I make fun of you, it is because I like you, so just laugh with me, and admit to yourself that you are funniest when you are not trying. If you buy twin bed sheets to give as a wedding present, you deserve to be made fun of. If you search your entire room for something that is in your pocket, you should smile. When I tell you that you are weird or call you a dork, what I am really saying is: I am incredibly fond of you, and let's laugh at ourselves together. I crave someone to laugh with.

I rarely think of the sort of love that Anne Bradstreet describes. She speaks of a love she prized more than "whole mines of gold/ Or all the riches that the East doth hold" and a love that "rivers cannot quench." To me, a love such as that seems a silly thing. I just want someone who won't mind when I laugh at him. I want him to laugh at me too. Apart from that, I guess it would be alright if he were my husband one day.