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Personal Experience

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Life’s One Big Lesson

My mother had always told me that boys generally do not grow up until they are in their 40’s, and even then they still have no clue as to what’s going on in the world, let alone have a clue about girls. And I had never questioned her; I just thought I would find that one exception to the rule. My goal had always been to find my knight in shining armor, even though, in reality, he probably doesn’t exist.

Love is a very powerful word. It takes courage to even come out the mouth with those 4 letters, and as a young teenager, I was told I should never say it until I truly felt it. When I think of love, I think of smiles, butterflies, red faces, and intimacy; only those two people understands and can connect with on a deeper level than just friends. I mean, what 13, 16, or even 18 year old knows much about real love? I was always told it’s something you’re supposed to grow to know, or as my mom puts it, something that just feels right. So then, is love a feeling? That firework sensation, the trembling of the hands, sweaty palms, and a stuttering voice that makes someone say, what did you just say?

I’ve only had one other serious relationship. A short guy, a short Jewish guy, who had a lot of cats and a bunch of puppies running around his house, was my first. He was my first for a lot of things, but also my last. When you get the courage to open yourself to someone you trust, even possibly care for more than you know, a lot can happen. But when you get the courage to walk around, even after it’s all over, to say you suck in bed and you have a fat thigh, that’s where a line is drawn, and the end is over for good and the book is properly placed in the shredder and blown to nothing but a million bazillion tiny little pieces so you can happily get up, walk away, and never look back. It lasted five months, and I thought I loved him; turns out I just loved the idea of him. But then, does that make love an idea? Does love only happen in our thoughts, minds, and imaginations? Does it play mind tricks on us to confuse us? Granted, I’m only 19, and I haven’t experienced life, as my grandfather would put it. “You are only 19, what do you know of love? You haven’t seen the world yet; I guarantee you that he’s not sitting here in Frederick.” I guess that means I still have lots to learn.

At 18, I met a very special person; rather, I reconnected with that person. Middle school is a time to grow into you as a person, and I might not have ever had a full conversation with this person, but I knew that he was there. And we all know that poking someone on Facebook is very childish, and I’m very much aware of that, but I decided to do it anyway. And that’s where it all began. Yes, it all began on Facebook, but I think it’s a cuter way to start a story, rather than once upon a time, because not everyone can be Cinderella where her knight saves her from her evil step mother and sweeps her off her feet and they live happily ever after. “I can see this turning into a poking war, therefore I forfeit and you win,” is what he said to me after we poked each other twice. I immediately messaged him saying, “I poked you by accident, I am so sorry.” Clearly a lie, but he bought it for a little bit. And that little white lie, made what looked to be my fairytale begin to write its own story.

No story is meant to last forever, unless you live forever, which is impossible, especially since the fountain of youth is still an idea for most. My story is special, because I discovered love. I felt the sweaty palms and the hairs on the back of my neck stand up every time I was kissed, and every time I was touched. And I knew it from the moment it all happened. I had no words the moment our lips touched; skin to skin contact between the pair of us was very powerful because it would give me the chills, bring a smile to my face, even on a bad day, and making-love opened my eyes to a whole different world. 18, what girl feels that at 18? Or even at 19? But I can honestly say that I did. The way we looked into one another’s eyes and could see how one another felt, knew what one another was thinking, even without spoken words. And even then, I could never understand why he would just stare at me or look at my eyes. I’d always turn my head and ask what he was looking at. He’d say, “You, am I not allowed to look at my beautiful girlfriend?” I never had anything to say after that.

I never thought of myself as beautiful, cute, gorgeous, or even sexy. In my eyes, I looked like an average girl. I even thought I looked like Sid the Sloth from Ice Age the movie. My eyes are so far apart, and I have a roundish nose that’s on the bigger side. I had my insecurities, but he made those disappear, as if they never existed. He’d laugh and say wait, have you not seen my nose? I have a large pointed nose, and when we kissed for the first time, it got in the way of it. It would bring a smile to my face, because he would play off the way I felt, just to make me feel better. He would always tell me how beautiful I was, even when I wore no make-up and dressed like the biggest bum ever. Sweat pants and a sweat shirt isn’t necessarily the best look out there, but he told me every day we spent together, how beautiful I was…and eventually, I believed him. And the insecurities went away and I started accepting myself as a unique individual.

We shared many things together, including: Being Italian, majoring in communications, our love for food, music, people, our families, our potential careers, and even our lives. We even considered living together, and at one point, at least on my end, marriage.

A lot can happen in nine months, and a lot did happen in those amazing, memorable nine months. We built a strong friendship, an unbreakable bond, and a solid foundation to our relationship. But that foundation was crumbling underneath of us slowly over the past month, I just tried to repair it as it cracked, and Band-Aids are okay for the first few hours, they are only temporary. Before I knew it, I was sitting on the phone at 11 p.m. trying to comprehend what he wanted, what he was doing. The end to our story was drawing very much near. By 1 a.m. the next morning, I had cried enough tears to fill two large glasses and I watched my storybook slam shut. I screamed, cried, threw up, and even woke my entire household up, all for what wasn’t supposed to happen. What I never saw coming.

I sat in bed all night, pondered what just had happened. Was I imagining this? Was it even real? 3 a.m. and I was still sitting there, trying to make sense of why a relationship with someone I loved more than words themselves, could just end with a single phone call. I always told him that I loved him to the moon and back, I guess on the way back, I lost him. “I could never love you the way you love me,” was all that was running through my head. Shaking, trembling, and sobbing, with just one thing on my mind, why? Was this permanent? Temporary? I wasn’t sure, all I knew was that I couldn’t put into words what I felt; let alone what I wanted to say to him.

My mother told me that night that I needed to collect myself, get some sleep, and come to terms with that it was not meant to be. But it hurt, so bad; and I refused to believe that it was not meant to be. I think I literally felt my heart rip into two large pieces that night, and I couldn’t come to terms with shutting my eyes and getting sleep. I did, however, go to school the next day, and every time someone asked me if I was alright, I would lose it and cry hysterically all over again. And I did that for four day straight, eventually I became numb. I no longer cried when someone asked if I was alright, my appetite was slowly returning, and I started to come to terms with the fact that the story was over. The story was over for the time being, and it was our job to determine if it was over forever. No more pages could be written, scribbled out, or even re-written. It was time to take the book off the table and put it away on the shelf to not be looked at for a very long time.

Falling in love at 18 and 19 taught me so much about who I am, what I deserve, what I need, and even what I don’t need. No longer will fireworks spark from my body every time I’m kissed and no longer will butterflies flutter through my stomach with the anticipation of seeing him again, and in the end, that’s alright. I learned that love is not a thought, it is not an idea, or even a dream; it is however, very real. And everyone’s experience is different, unique, and special, that’s what makes true love. While I don’t think love will write another story with me for a long time, I do know that it will eventually be another experience to be had, and it will be even better than the last. Whether it is with him, or not, only time will determine that, it is all in our hands.