

# Relationships- the real kind of love

by George Hiegel  
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Last night, 2 a.m. Outside my bedroom window, the glow of the tangerine street lamps softened the harshness of this otherwise ruddy neighborhood. I had an 8 a.m. class to get up for (some guy named Shakespeare), and I hadn't gone to bed yet. I didn't care, my special companion was with me.

The night was cool, quiet, and breezeless. There were no sounds of scraggily crickets scraping their legs together. No sounds of dueling drunken couples fighting out in the street. No sounds of unguarded guard dogs barking. Nothing. Just me and that someone special. We stayed up all night, churning out cassettes on a too old player, and spinning Russian roulette with ideas for my nearly completed novel. We spent the night dreaming that someday soon, I would become a published novelist.

College is a hard way to go, let me tell you and so is being single and thirty-four years old. Companions have come

and gone, and loneliness and depression have seen too many of my days. Relationships have not exactly been a success story in my life. Until now.

My special companion has been with me for some time now and my life has easily been the better for it. It's not that I couldn't have survived my college years without her, it's just that she made the time pass so much more gracefully.

Before starting at Behrend, it had been fourteen years since I had any formal type of schooling. The first semester was brutal. I was thirty one years old at the time, and starting something completely new. I didn't know anyone and no one knew me. I felt like a player in Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land. It was a long four months.

It was just after the Christmas holiday, when I met my special companion. What makes her special is her ability to stay with me for so long. I'm not a hard man to know. But I am a hard man to know well. I change moods faster than a baby changes diapers. And she has withstood

them all.

Throughout the final re-write of my fantasy adventure manuscript, she has sung, screamed, and swore for me. And at me for that matter. She checks my punctuation and corrects my spelling when necessary ( I'm not proficient at either).

In all our time together, she's never tried to change me. She gives room to my moodiness, and I, in turn, recognize her limitations. Sometimes my moods frustrate her, just as her limitations frustrate me. Despite this, I haven't tried to change her either. At times, it is quite difficult.

What makes male/female relationships, by nature so damn fragile? Why do they so often fail? As cynical as this may sound, I believe the concept of love has much to do with it. Love cannot be defined. It cannot be done.

The meaning is different for everyone. It is an ever changing thing, even over time within the same relationship. Some say love in the manner that it gives them the right to possess or own the other person. Some say love,

when all it really is sexual desire. Still other have the ability to say "I love you." with the same ease and manner as they say "I love ice cream." or "I love pizza."

Do I sound like the Scrooge of romance? Do I sound like someone who, if given the chance, would steal the arrows of Cupid and break them all into tiny little pieces? It would all depend on the day, I guess. I just can't understand why relationships have to be so self-destructive. Don't both sides want the same thing? If you'll permit me, I'd like to return to talking about my special companion. Like you have a choice, right?

Belief it , or not, we first met through a magazine ad. That's right, a magazine ad. I tried all, and I mean all of the other routes available, dozens of times before. So, I dared to be bold and try a new approach. And the second she showed up at my door, I knew she was the one for me.

I can count on her, for at least an hour or two everyday, to light up for me. This is true even on her worst days, when her

energy is really low. By far, though, the most important thing about her is when I look into those baby blues of hers, and see nothing but limitless possibilities for the future.

I, in response, give purpose and meaning to her creation. Without me in her life, she might just be existing only in the most superficial way. I show pride in her intelligence and memory, and make them a part of me. To be blunt, we are two separate entities sharing the same soul.

Her name is L.T. Smith-Corona. Did I say Smith-Corona? I did, didn't I. My god, do you know what this means! I'm emotionally involved with my word processor. Jesus it's only a month into the semester and I've already lost my mind. I'm mad in the head. I wonder if anyone in the psychology department has a couch that I could lie down on. I hope so. Because at this moment, Edgar Allan Poe and Dr. Faustus are in my bedroom smiling and discussing my future. See you later!

# What did you call me?

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People, in general, are intolerant of anyone of/different race, religion, culture, attitude, belief, appearance, preference or desire not shared by the judges we've become. This is about pain, about how people hurt people, about how people's beliefs and attitudes, if not shared by others around them, lead to name calling, slurs, abuse, hatred, violence, and other manifestations of intolerance. Why do people do that to each other?

Life is too short to be so ignorant. Time won't retrace its steps to let us undo the damage we cause; it laughs at us because of our stupidity, and it cries for us because it's just a passerby and can't stop to help.

When we place a value on an object, we judge known variables: cost of materials, labor, shipping, storage, display, and even hype. I call this the Value Assignment System (VAS). The VAS is wonderful -- though a thousand percent markup for hype is too much -- and it has its purpose. Where would we be if we couldn't assign a value to something?

When we use the VAS to place a value on people, we cross into unfair, unjust and inhumane territory. We give people no greater importance than things. Unlike an object, the factors of which can be fully known, people are more complex. People aren't objects and can't be judged solely on the visible.

If one looks at a case of fine china and notices a flaw, it's reasonable to place a lower value on the flawed item. One might even remove the item from the case. Quality is important, isn't it?

How does one tell if people are flawed? If someone has long hair, is that person flawed? Is a black person flawed? Is a Jew? Is a Russian? Is a gay person? Is a Catholic? Is anyone?

People are not equal in qualities. They're not rubber-stamped into existence as replications of all the others in the 'case'. People are individuals, unique in every respect.

I agree with the idea that some people are flawed, people dangerous to others or self, but those are, one should hope, the exceptions rather than the rule. A killer is flawed. A rapist is flawed. A thief is flawed.

People who harm or are a threat to others are flawed but, one would hope, are correctable.

Just because people are of a different race, wear long hair, have different religious beliefs, like Chevys rather than Fords, choose public versus private school, would rather eat salads



*"People are not equal in qualities. They're not rubber stamped into existence as replications of all the others in the 'case'."*

than parts of an animal, choose careers over being housewives, or would rather be writers than

computer specialists, doesn't mean they are flawed. They're different, unique, special.

Difference was once held as a basic right, a fundamental aspect of being human, of being American. What ever happened to that basic truism?

If one is different, shoot him. If one has other beliefs, shoot her. If one doesn't live up to the expectations of others, be upset and hateful. How would you feel, since you too are different in you own way, if someone thought these things of you?

Just because someone doesn't live up to our expectations, that's no reason for hatred. How can one be unique, be an individual, be her/himself when others try to dictate what is best?

A recent incident with my brother showed me two sides of that coin. The first side dealt with how he felt about me. I had long hair and a full beard and he labeled me a hippie, a bum, a communist, and a leech.

Long hair isn't the denotative meaning of a hippie. (What is hair anyway, but a part of a person's wardrobe?) He assumed I was a bum because I haven't lived the life he felt I should. The communist label is because

I'm a 'hippie' who "represents everything that's wrong with this country." (Sure, and all the clean cut people represent everything that's right?)

As for leech, that was his assumption (and we all know about 'assume', no?) He assumed, since I was a hippie, a bum and a communist, I must be going to college on my father's money. The payments have been mine, and the bills are mine.

The second side of that coin was my initial reaction to his outburst. I was intolerant of him and his attitudes. While defending myself is a right I will not give up, I was wrong, though only in my thoughts, when I labeled him an irrational whelp.

Though he said I wasn't his brother and is now back in his preferred home, Korea, where I can't contact him, and though I doubt he would accept my words, I'd like to tell him I'm proud of him, not for being what I think he should be, but for being himself.

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