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Intro to Writing

20 September 2011

Diving Into the Ocean

You know those awesome glow in the dark stars that people glue on their ceiling? Everyone had them at some point. You were either really poor or your parents didn't love you if you never had glow in the dark stars on your ceiling. Anyways, my boyfriend had these stars on the ceiling of his room. Some nights we would lie in his bed and look at the "stars," while talking about us and our future. Sometimes we wouldn't talk at all. Sometimes I laughed so hard under those stars that I thought I would never recover. And other times I wondered if we would ever break. And we never did—never break, that is. We broke up, but we never broke. I loved him as I said goodbye, and I cried as I broke his heart. It wasn't easy, but then again, it wasn't hard. Perhaps it wasn't hard because I knew—deep down—that I would be back eventually, and that we were still in love, and always would be. But maybe it wasn't hard because I broke up with him for someone else. Maybe he wasn't my true love after all. For nearly three years it was embedded in my mind that he was the only one out there for me. I believed in the idea of "one true love" without a doubt. Now, however, I am not so sure. Is there really only one person out there for each of us? One who we are destined to be with, forever?

The question of true love entered my mind recently, as I had just broken up with a boy I had been dating for three months—not the one described in the introduction, but rather the one I broke up with him for. There was nothing wrong with that three month relationship, though. It was actually quite enjoyable, and I was content as could be. The problem was this: I had remembered feeling something much greater than contentment in my previous relationship; a

feeling that swallowed all other adjectives for happiness in an indescribable way. But was there something more in that contentment, perhaps something that could have lasted forever? That is the ultimate question: could you be truly happy for the rest of your life settling down with another who made you feel content? Is it really necessary to feel that powerful mind-blowing type of love in order to be happy for the rest of your life, and to feel as though you found your match? To further my knowledge on the subject, I conducted a number of surveys and interviews.

Responses from my Facebook survey blew up my phone screen within seconds of posting it: “Do you believe in a destined ‘one true love,’ or are there perhaps multiple people out there with whom we could live happily ever after?” I asked them to send me back either a yes, for the one true love theory, or a no, for the multiple person theory. Out of the fifty people I surveyed, thirty-three believed in a destined one true love, while seventeen believed that there were multiple lovers possible. The results were closer than I imagined they would be. Even though most chose to believe in true love, there was still a considerable amount of people who did not. I had also asked all responders to share their view if they wanted to, and I noticed that most of the people saying “yes” did not explain. I wondered if this was because they were unsure of the reasoning behind their answer or simply because they did not know how to put their feelings into words. Interestingly enough, the explanations following the “no’s” were in great abundance.

Taylor Perry, a friend of mine from high school, explained her yes answer by relating it back to God. She wrote, “Yes. God will lead you to the one you are destined for and will make you the happiest with that person.” Several people agreed with this viewpoint, and it is understandable. Spirituality serves as a way to make sense of life, and I found myself desperately wanting to believe in her answer. I believe in God, and I would like to believe that he has

reserved one special person out there just for me. I trust in God's judgment because He makes no mistakes, but I am quite nervous about my own. It's not that I don't believe in myself; it's just the simple fact that I know I am only human, and that I can mess up sometimes. My friend Mary Margaret explained her "no" answer by relating it back to God as well. Her response reinstated my fears about my fallible decisions. She believes that "you could easily marry someone who wasn't 'destined' to be yours. We have free will and may choose a different lifestyle than what God originally planned for us." These two contrasting viewpoints pulled me in different directions. I still had no idea what to believe.

Each person who responded "no" to the survey explained their view in an interesting and logical way. All responses were unique, and narrowing these responses proved difficult. I was tempted to include them all. A close friend of mine, Courtney, responded by describing her idea of love. She wrote,

"No. I believe that love is a relationship that grows from getting to know that person. You have similarities with them and they make you happy. There is more than one person out there that you can grow to love and be happy with for the rest of your life. Depends on the time and place of everything."

Aha! A small light bulb flickered in my crowded mind. Time and place being factors of true love was a great point. I wanted to explore this area further.

To get a better idea of how love was affected by time and location, I interviewed my friend Mackenzie, a sophomore here at UCA, who has been dating her boyfriend for the past four years without a single breakup. They attend different colleges, and I asked her how this affected their relationship. She replied, "Honestly it's not that hard. We are good with giving each other space but in a way it hurts us because we both live our lives separate and they don't really merge

too often.” I then asked her if she thought they were meant to be together. She answered, “I’m not really positive. I wish I was, but I’m not. I do believe there is one true love for everyone; I just don’t know who it is yet.” She also mentioned that she had doubts about him, but no regrets.

This intrigued me. Four whole years of dating and she still wasn’t sure that they were meant to be? And yet, she did believe in the concept of one true love. I wasn’t sure what to make of this, so I reflected back on the answers from my survey. My friend J.B.’s response caught my eye. He had responded “no” to the question, and explained it as follows:

“There could be 45 possible wives for me up here at Fayetteville or maybe none. I could go to Europe and find a girl from each country who could be my life partner. I think you have to try people out first though. Hit and miss is good so you know what you like. And you definitely have to do it for yourself or the whole thing messes up. Necessary selfishness. I think that there are always multiple possible people to pick from but getting it right takes time and luck if you want to be happy until death.”

The phrase “necessary selfishness” grabbed my attention. Perhaps the reason Mackenzie was so unsure of her relationship was because she wasn’t doing it for herself. Maybe she was doing it for her family, or her friends, or whoever else. But being selfish made sense. In order to find a one true love—if there is such a thing—you have to disregard what others may think, and simply listen to yourself alone.

The task of listening to yourself—“following your heart” per say—is not as easy as it sounds. It’s seemingly impossible, really. How can one ignore the loud opinions of their friends and family? It doesn’t matter how many times I tell myself to “listen to my heart,” I still feel as if they are inevitably going to have some amount of influence on my decision. It’s hard trying to please everyone, but one will always take into consideration the opinions of the ones they love.

My single friends tell me to forget my past relationships, but their empty eyes suggest that they wish they had someone to love. Sometimes, when my roommate thinks I am asleep, I can hear the sound of her soft steady tears floating down from the top bunk, and I know she is thinking of her long-term boyfriend in the military—the one she broke up with when she moved to college. She does not know that I have heard her cry, and I do not think that it would be right to tell her. She gets along just fine, putting on a smile and acting as if she's having the time of her life every day—even though she might be dying inside. She's one of those friends who encourages me to date around. And she's one of those friends with the empty eyes. My family, on the other hand, tells me to look back to my past relationship; to give everything I can to reestablishing that certain relationship that they saw as perfect—the one mentioned in the introduction. My grandmother, who has been divorced and lost a second husband to death, encourages me to stay single and to live life to its fullest while I have the opportunity. Being pulled in so many directions, I sometimes feel like a rope in a tug-a-war. Tightly wound with layers upon layers of strong fibers, but steadily unraveling as I am tugged back and forth between opposing opinions. Maybe it *isn't* impossible to shut them out, though. Perhaps I just have to unravel first.

In order to explore this perplexing question within myself, I reflected on my own relationships, which come to a grand total of precisely two: a three year relationship with the boy from the introduction versus a three month relationship with the boy who came after. To understand my thought process, it is necessary to know a little history behind each.

Remember the silly relationships you had at 15? No, you probably don't. They were generally trivial and dramatic, usually ending in childish fights or text-message breakups. Mine, however, was a different story. On July 16, 2008, I “officially” started dating a boy who would become my best friend for the following three years. His name was Taylor Malone Hoyt. I

remember everything from that relationship—every tiny little detail—and the flashbacks that consume me often seem as vivid as the real thing.

I was sitting in the passenger seat of a burnt orange GMC pickup truck. Windows down, hair blowing, country music blaring from the radio as I smiled at Taylor in the driver's seat. His camouflage cap shielded his gray-blue eyes from the sun. I never liked it when he wore hats; it kept me from running my hands through his soft, dirty blond hair, which I would do often as he laughed and rolled his eyes. He looked over to me so that the light from setting sun in the driver's window outlined his handsome and gentle face. He smiled that goofy grin; he had such a nice smile. It was one of those days when I felt like the happiest person in the entire world. Not a single worry. Everyone should envy this, I thought. Everyone should want what I have. I was going to marry him. He made me giggly and silly and I was so in love, and I was going to marry him. We were going to have three children, two boys and one girl, and we would be wonderful parents. We would live in the country, and raise our kids right. He would take them hunting and fishing, and teach them how to drive a standard. I would cook delicious meals every night and make everyone sit around the table and talk about their day. Come Sunday, I would drag everyone to church. There would be a cuss jar. There would be a dog and a cat and a goldfish. We would be happy and stay together forever. But that was then. And this is now.

Somehow, Jesse stole my heart in a few short days. He was such a heartthrob. His natural tan accented his soft black hair and his white, welcoming smile was contagious. And over his deep brown dancing eyes sat the longest, darkest eyelashes. Before I knew it, I was lying, faking, forcing my relationship with Taylor. It was so wrong, what I did to Taylor. I never technically cheated on him by definition, but I was not exactly truthful. Sure, I would tell him that I was hanging out with friends, but I never mentioned the fact that Jesse was one of those

friends. When he would ask who I was texting, I would lie about that, too. Eventually he found out though, because what goes around always comes around. I still remember that fatal phone call as if happened yesterday; the night I broke his heart for the first time. His voice, cutting into me like knives. Stabbing my ribs and my lungs and my heart, “Andrea. Andrea, just tell me who you’re cheating on me with.” Three hours later, we hung up the phone. Click. Just like that. Click. We were done. And then, I cried myself to sleep.

The big, blaring question in everyone’s mind seems to be the only question I can’t answer; if everything was so great—if I was *so* happy—then why did I break up with Taylor? I have thought about this question for a very long time now. The obvious answer is that someone else came along. But why was I distracted by another, if I had everything I had ever wanted in my relationship with Taylor? I have suspicions, but I simply cannot find a blatant answer. I didn’t even have an answer when it happened; it just, happened. I blame most of it on the fact that I am only human; that I can make mistakes, and that I can give into temptation. The temptation in this experience was Jesse’s attractiveness, however strange that may sound. He was so, so handsome. And god, that sounds so shallow—to ditch a long-term boyfriend because someone cuter came along—but that’s what I did, isn’t it? From this experience, I found that looks aren’t everything. I’m going to say it and I don’t even care how cliché it is: it really is what’s on the inside that matters the most.

In our relationship, Jesse treated me like a princess. He surprised me with small gifts, took me out to dinner and movies frequently, and showered me with sweet messages and phone calls. Our personalities and senses of humor were almost identical. We were that annoying couple who finished each other’s sentences. Most would say that he was the epitome of a perfect boyfriend. But yet, something was missing. There was something—or someone—in the back of

my mind at all times, a soft-spoken voice warning me that it wasn't meant to be. What was it—or who was it? Could it have been Taylor, or even the voice of destiny? Eventually that voice became louder and louder, until I feared that my eardrums would burst from the weight of the sound. I was left with no choice; ending the relationship was inevitable it seemed. And so it began.

Several nights of crying followed this realization. More crying came after the breakup, too. Jesse was so heartbroken. He didn't want to give me up, and he swore that there was no one else out there comparable to me. He wanted to spend the rest of his life with me, he said, and he knew that he would never be happy with anyone else. He called me his "one true love," and I hated that. Throughout our entire relationship, I had developed the idea that a one true love was not possible. In my mind, love wasn't written with the ink of destiny. I enjoyed him, and he enjoyed me. We made each other happy, and trusted each other beyond a doubt. And this was all that was required in order to maintain a lifelong relationship I thought. But if this was the case, then what was my reasoning behind the breakup? There could not even be a tiny excuse for ending such a perfect thing, unless it simply was not meant to be.

I called my close cousin Abby, who is a friend to Taylor, Jesse, and myself. I asked her if she believed in such a thing as a one true love. She responded, "I think you can be happy with more than one person, but I also think you will always compare your relationships to one relationship you had with one person who you were happier with than others." Yes! That made perfect sense to me. It meant that I could possibly be happy with Jesse forever, but I would always compare him to Taylor, which would cause me to feel as if something was missing. Why was this the case, you might ask? Because I desperately want to believe in true love. And I

honestly think that most people do. It's a longing shared by all humans, but some choose to ignore it or push it away because there is no proof or logical reasoning behind it.

When I started writing, I did not believe in a one true love. I thought the idea was quite absurd, actually. I silently rejoiced when the "no" answers from the survey came in, supporting my own opinion. But somehow, I think I have written myself into the opposing view. Perhaps there really is a one true love for me out there, although I still don't know how to explain it. I understand now why the explanations for the "yes" answers were so sparse. How does a person provide reasoning for such an abstract feeling, such a crazy belief that has absolutely no logical reasoning behind it? Maybe it is the lack of words to describe such a feeling that make it so amazing. Or maybe, it's even the lack of experience I have with love and hurt and people and time, as an eighteen year old. All I know is what I feel; I don't have the life experiences to disprove the theory of a one true love, so why wouldn't I believe in it?

I am a bit of a twitter addict, and as I was taking a break from writing this paper I stumbled upon an interesting 'tweet.' It read, "If two past lovers can remain friends, either they were never in love or they still are." I thought long and hard about this quote, and about how my own relationships were a perfect illustration of its meaning. I thought of how Taylor and I had always remained friends after our breakup, and even throughout my entire relationship with Jesse. How we had talked on the phone weekly, and made time to see each other. How we probably confused a lot of people who saw us out together, but how we simply could not fade away and disintegrate into nothing. Being best friends for three years, there was some sort of unbreakable, invisible bond that held us together. Something even we could not control. And then, I thought about Jesse. How with Jesse, the same sort of thing happened, but in a very different way. How we remain friends, but how I don't go out of my way to see him, and how I

don't have that longing to hear his voice as I had always felt with Taylor. How, when I hear the gentle buzz of my phone in my back pocket, I hope it's Taylor. And how I'm disappointed if the name "Jesse" scrolls across the screen. Looking back, it's quite simple. I was never in love with Jesse. I was always in love with Taylor.

I am currently single, but I find myself calling Taylor every day. Wanting to know how he is doing, what he is doing, and simply enjoying the happy feeling that accompanies the sound of his voice reaching my ears. He makes me want to believe in true love more than anything in the entire world. I recently took that familiar trip from Conway to Morrilton to see him and talk about things in person. One look into his eyes, and all of a sudden I was transported back to four months ago, before the breakup. I couldn't resist smiling, and just like that, he took me up into his arms. We shared more words in that embrace than we had in all our phone calls over the years. Since that trip, we have seen each other numerous times. We talk almost every day, see each other on weekends, and are slowly reforming our friendship. One night, I asked him if he believed in a one true love. And he said yes. Whether that turns out to be me or someone else, who knows. But I do believe that there is such a thing. And I do believe that he might just be the one for me. And sure, we might get distracted along the way—because after all, we're only human. But I have this crazy feeling—this gut instinct that I cannot explain—telling me that eventually, we will be together. And, interestingly enough, Taylor feels the same way. Now whether he tells me that to shut me up or if he truly feels that way is a mystery that only time will solve.

Again, I ask: is there such a thing as a destined "one true love?" I believe the answer to this question lies in the deep recesses of our hearts. Underneath the layers of lies and tricks and manipulations there is something much greater, much purer than we could ever imagine. And

that is the ability to love, and be loved. It is the ability to believe in the concept of “one true love.” Whether that concept may indeed be true, we might never know. I had to learn the hard way. Like water gliding over pebbles in a stream, that silly three month relationship was so easy. But it was a stream, not an ocean. There were pebbles where there should have been boulders, although I didn’t realize it at first. It wasn’t until I remembered diving into the ocean that I knew I was dancing in a stream.

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