

The only person you will ever love has just broken up with you.

- You:
- (a) Act relieved, as if you were going to break up anyway.
 - b) Tell all your friends that you were the one to break up.
 - (c) Wallow in self-pity for as long as humanly possible
 - (d) All of the above with great emphasis on (c) before slipping into an incredibly vengeful period as seen when you listen to Dinah Washington's "I Wanna Be Around" over and over again.

"Oh no, no... I'm fine - really. I'm feeling much bitter... better now thank-you."

You are now about to enter a period in your life so painful that it will make everything bad that you have ever felt... EVER... we're talking since you began to have memories here... everything bad that you've ever experienced will begin to seem like...

The day when you were late for work and you couldn't find a pair of pantyhose without a run in them, and then TA-DAH! you found the magic pair of pantyhose that lives in the bottom of your drawer, and you wriggled into them and were just dragging them up your thighs when the nail of your middle finger caught and made a big run all the way from your thigh to ankle...

Now remember, this experience is what you used to consider bad. Bad is about to look pretty good.

You've had bad, you are now about to have... "MORE THAN BAD." You've had the being depressed, weepy, eating an entire Sara Lee Chocolate Cake by yourself bad. You are now about to experience the wanting to carve your heart out of your chest with the first thing you find in your utensil drawer to stop the pain bad.

I have experienced "MORE THAN BAD." I was in love with someone once. Let's call him, oh I don't know, how about SCOTT? Like he'll ever hear this. Anyway, Scott and I fell in love. It wasn't supposed to happen. We were supposed to have great sex for a month and then end it there. I'd be his love slave for a little while, no emotional involvement. You know, your typical 90's relationship. But then he tricked me.

Half way into this whole sexual bonanza thing, he confessed that he loved me. And he started using words like "forever" and "always." And I, fool that I am, believed him. I'm sure that at the time, Scott did actually love me. He still may. Anyhow, after listening to him for a while, I started to

think that I might love him too. Go figure.

And then I started to get scared. I mean, love is a scary thing. Very scary. It makes your palms sweat, you get queasy if he looks directly at you. You smile a lot. Your feminine radar goes off-line. You know - the radar that lets you know when there is a remotely attractive man within 10 km. This doesn't work when you're in love. Attractive men will jump out of moving vehicles, and cross eight lanes of traffic to give you flowers and you won't notice them.

And here I was, having all of these symptoms, and refusing to admit to being in love, because well... I was afraid to. Not me, unh-unh - I couldn't possibly be in love. You get hurt when you fall in love. Or worse, you act goofy when you fall in love. You talk about him all the time and drive your friends crazy. You begin to doodle. And not just any doodling. When you're talking on the phone, you begin to doodle his name. And your name. And perhaps both your names - together. Like Mr. and Mrs. type doodling. That's what happens when you fall in love. And I certainly didn't want to be party to that type of crap. So of course, that couldn't have been what I was feeling.

I found myself standing above an abyss, teetering on the edge of "love." Looking down and seeing nothing, not even blackness. Scared shitless to jump. Feeling terrible most of the time and weepy when I didn't feel terrible. I was convinced that if I admitted I loved him that he wouldn't love me any more. But when my mind told me to run away, I couldn't. I felt like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming pickup truck. I was mesmerised. Scott had mesmerised me - just by loving me. Scott was my oncoming pickup truck of love. And then one day I jumped into the abyss. I said I loved him. I was in a free-fall waiting to hit bottom. Waiting for the abyss to swallow up all of his confessions of love and forever and always. But bottom never came. He was still standing there, loving me. How the hell was I supposed to react to that?

When I finally admitted that I loved him, it was very easy to be in love. I was so happy, it was revolting. I spent almost a week over at his place, and it was wonderful. It rained nearly all that week, and I loved the fact that it was raining. But then I loved everything that week. I loved the way the carpet felt beneath my feet. I loved lying on his bed. I loved sitting outside and gazing at him as he cleaned the swimming pool. I loved us snuggling on the couch while each of us read a book. I loved washing up the pots and pans after dinner. I loved watching him brush his teeth. I was floating, skipping, singing - suspended in air. I was in love.

One of the things that I remember most, was the sound of the rain falling against the sky-light in his family room. Lying down on the couch with my head on that part of a man's chest that, and I'm convinced of this, was specifically made for women's heads to rest on. This spot gives a woman comfort and security - just by leaning against it. And I remember Scott reading poetry to me before I would fall asleep.

The sleep part was what really got me. You see, up until Scott, I couldn't sleep comfortably with a man. I could never actually relax. I was always tossing and turning. My subconscious was always reminding me: "Psst. There's a man in the bed." And no matter how much I tried to pretend that it was my Mom I was sleeping with... I'd turn my back to the guy... he just didn't breathe in that same

Mom way. And he could never snore the way that she did. My mother has this very distinctive Harley Davidson purr.

My running joke was that if I found a man who I could sleep with - just sleep - I'd marry him. And here I was sleeping with Scott. Sleeping. Dying when my head hit the pillow. Crashing and burning. That kind of deep sleep where drool seeps from the side of your mouth. I WAS SLEEPING WITH A MAN! I'd found THE ONE. Maybe that was half my problem. I mean, good sleep habits aren't something to base commitment on. But to me it was like a sign from God.

"Heather... Heather... This is the one... Cleave unto him..."

After this whole admitting I was in love thing happened, Scott went away for a month to travel the wilds of Canada. I could have accepted it had he ended it there. I really could have. I was prepared for it. Even expecting it. But I received letters from him. Beautiful letters. Letters full of romance and promises. "I miss you, I love you" letters. They made me cry. They were so... nice.

And if there had been any doubt that I loved him before, when I got these letters, I was lost. I fell. I fell hard. I fell into a bottomless pit with walls covered in pink fur cut into huge heart shapes. A pit that had schmaltzy 1920s songs playing continually, and complexions without zits.

And I was happy - and terrified and confused and worried and nervous and weepy and I loved every second of it. And I counted the days until he came home. And when he did, we were both a little shy and nervous. All I could do was look at him. Look at this man I loved.

And we're not talking Adonis here. Thinning hair, skinny, goofy-looking - but absolutely beautiful to me. He had eyes that were, in the right light, and wearing the right shirt, turquoise. They were TURQUOISE! Eyes are my downfall. I mean, the guy can look like a troll, but if he has beautiful eyes, I'm his.

So we were both captive in the incredible tension that comes from not knowing what to say or think or do when you're in love and haven't seen each other for a month. And then we had sex on the kitchen counter, and that seemed to ease the tension a bit. Just to clarify - I was the one on the counter.

So he was back. Gone for a month and now back. And I was happy. Glowing. Doing that female "My man is back" (SIGH) thing. Me, the happy camper with my heart zinging all the time. "He's back. He's back, he's back, he's back, he's back. He's back, he's back, he's back. HE'S BACK! And he's..." acting a little weird.

I'll define weird.

Scott would not sleep over at my apartment because, he said: He didn't want a pattern developing where we'd always be sleeping over at each other's place, because if that were to happen, we'd be

spending so much time together that we might as well just move in together, and then from there it was just a small step to MARRIAGE (dun, dun, dun, dun).

Oh, no! Not Marriage! He couldn't possibly want that, now could he? (Not Scott, the one who had been writing me letters about the future. Oh no, no, no. "I meant forever and always in a platonic sense Heather.")

So he was being weird, and because he was being weird, I got nervous. And then he got nervous because I was nervous. And after a week of this whole nerve thing, I made a decision.

Figuring that maybe he'd gone a little coward on me, I thought: Okay. Let's just see how things go, and if after a year (I was thinking of us in terms of years here), if after a year, I wanted more - I would ask for it then. But until then, I'd relax and just enjoy being with the guy. So I tried my best to be Deanna Troi and said: "Look, it's okay to be scared. I'm scared too. Let's just admit it, face it, and then we can be scared together, alright?"

And this for me was one helluva step. I mean, when I left home, I wanted to be married and have the kids, and I wanted it so badly that if it'd happened yesterday, it wouldn't have been fast enough for me. "I'll take unrealistic fantasies for \$1000 Alex." And now, here I was, letting things ride and relaxing and being logical - which, any of my friends could tell you is a FIRST for me.

And then it happened. One Saturday around noon, Scott came over to my place. I hadn't bothered getting dressed because I figured that I'd just have to get redressed after he ravished me. When I'd talked to him the night before on the phone, he'd said: "I think that before we do anything else tomorrow, we need to have sex." So me, being the accommodating person that I am, put on a silk robe, met him at the door with a brilliant smile and said that we couldn't have sex on the living room couch because Meg, my roommate, said that she didn't want to walk in on us. And Scott had just returned my kiss and was hugging me when he said:

"I have something to say to you and after I've said it, you probably won't want to sleep with me again."

Whenever anyone says "I have something to say to you" while hugging you, you might as well start crying then.

We sat down on the couch and I put my head on that wonderful place on his chest, the comfort giving, secure place, and he said: "I can't date you any more." And when I regained my breath after my lungs had collapsed in a valiant effort to induce immediate and complete death, I said:

"Oh? Why?"

No crying, no recriminations, just "Why?" I didn't even raise my voice.