

Forever is Overrated



by Terri Trespicio for GalTime.com

...unless you're a vampire

In the final scene of *Breaking Dawn, Part II* (trust me, this is hardly a spoiler), our immortal lovers make out in a field of daisies, promising they will love each other forever. As the scene fades to black, the word "forever" burns across the screen.

After watching *Breaking Dawn* one night, it occurred to me why we love these two wan-looking lovers: They are never ever breaking up. Ever.

And it occurred to me shortly thereafter, in the bathroom at Davio's, staring over my knees at the polished marble floors,

that this is why we love these two wan-looking lovers: They are *never ever* breaking up. Ever.

Of course, that's pretty easy for them to do, right? They don't have to work, sleep, eat, or pay bills. All they have to do is raise their daughter for a few weeks until she's full grown, hunt the occasional mountain lion, and have crazy hot vampire sex in a cottage designed by Thomas Kinkade.

Imagine that: A true love that could last for centuries, untested by pestilence or famine, financial woes or demanding careers, age or exhaustion. For many, that would be ideal. For others, a kind of hell.

True Love is Forever, Right?

The idea, brought to you again courtesy of Hollywood, is that true love is impervious to boredom or strife—and that it never, ever ends. And while the *Twilight* series is hardly a dictate for modern mortals, it promotes this idea that anything worthwhile lasts, period. And anything that doesn't is a failure, or makes you a failure. Prioritizing the 'forever' over the 'now' is one of the reasons why you stick with and struggle in a relationship that isn't working, for instance. It's choosing a fairy tale future over what's right in front of you and plain as day.

OK. So, let's look at another, and arguably far superior film, sure to sweep the Oscars this year: *The Sessions*, starring Helen Hunt and John Hawkes, which tells the poignant story of real-life poet and writer Mark O'Brien who was confined to an iron lung after contracting polio as a child.

At 38 years old, O'Brien knew what he wanted: to experience physical love—now, before it was too late. And he does. Sex surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene exposes him to intimacy for the first time, and changes his life. He goes on to have a romance with a woman named Susan that lasts until he dies at 49.

He was not focused on whom he'd be with 30 years from now; it didn't matter. He wanted to love *now*, and he took brave measures to give himself that opportunity. Are you?

Get Out of Your Iron Lung

We're not that different from Mark O'Brien, you and me. We're weak, scared, desperate to love and be loved. We may not need apparatus to survive, but we live in an iron lung of our own making, a machine that runs on conjured ideas about how life and love should be. We hide inside its protective armor, rather than venturing, vulnerable and breathless, into the world like he did. Maybe you're paralyzed, too—by your own fears about love and intimacy, and think if you only “knew” for sure something would last, you might have the strength and fortitude to pursue it.

True strength lies in an awareness and acceptance of our vulnerability, not the lack of it—and that means doing what feels right to us, regardless of what the future holds.

Rethink 'Relationship'

If the *only* successful relationship is one in which they pry you from your dead partner's corpse, you are limiting your potential to love and be loved. Because sometimes things end—and that doesn't mean the relationship didn't serve a rich and vital purpose.

I don't take commitments, especially marriage, lightly. But if you only make decisions based on some image you have of yourself 50 years from now, you're not acting in real time. And it's hurting you. And you know it.

One woman told me her ex-husband was the perfect person for her to marry when she did—and the perfect person to divorce. They have children they adore, and no regrets. Wouldn't it be great if marriages lasted forever and people stayed happy? Sure. Does it always happen? Nope. Does life go on and do people

play vitally important roles at different points in our life?
You bet.

How many times have you gone out with someone or found yourself interested and then wrote it off because you're sure it wouldn't last? Or, the opposite: Started every new relationship thinking that THIS would be IT—and it would surely carry you the very end...and when it didn't, thought you made a mistake?

Love makes us feel immortal and so we think we should be impervious to everything. But we're not. And we need to get over this idea that forever is the only thing that matters. All you can do is the give to and nurture the relationships you have as long as you have them. Forget forever. For now.