

Relationship Advice: Are You Ready For Storybook Love?



By Elaine Taylor

A couple of decades ago, my dog was sprawled out snoring on the sofa, belly on a pile of unfolded laundry, tail stuck in an empty Ben & Jerry's tub. I was slouched beside her stroking her hindquarters, glumly ticking through the carcasses (figurative, not literal) that made up my dispiriting trail of my relationship roadkill. I had recently completed a reverse sprint down the aisle (not my first) with Peggy Lee's, "Is That All There Is?" echoing through my disenchanted heart.

Was I ever going to find a true love who didn't walk on four legs and woof for his breakfast? Here's what I found in the way of [relationship advice](#).

Desperate for an answer, I took a jaunt into California woo-woo: went to see Allie B, astrologer/psychic. She closed her eyes, did that deep-breathing, blahblahblah chart-reading thing and assured me I was destined for the kind of love about which stories are written.

"But," she said, "not until you're ready."

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Ready? My mani-pedi was fresh enough you could still smell the polish; I'd had a Brazilian so recently you could ... well, I'll let you come up with your own image. My roots had been darkened, my highlights brightened. How much more ready could one woman be?

"What the heck am I doing wrong?" I whined.

"Guess what, chickie-poo. Wrong question. Try asking, 'Why do I keep doing it wrong?'"

"OK, why?"

"I'm a psychic, not a mind reader. Go sort it out with your therapist."

Seriously? Ugh.

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With teeth-grinding resistance, I trudged off to sit on Julia's couch and ask my why question. She countered with, "Do you love yourself?"

Uh oh ... Strong stench of psychobabble. I tapped my finger on my bottom lip. "Hmmm. Do I love myself?" Was I supposed to? The concept alone made me squirm.

So I yuck-yucked and went with a wise-ass, "Oh, you mean self-love. Like they do in porn films. Kinda personal, don't ya' think?"

Julia gave me that undeterred shrink stare. I knew she could outwait me; and I definitely did not want to go where she seemed to be trying to lead. So I canned therapy and took another run at California woo-woo.

Allie B said, "You want storybook love? Start with these three things."

1. Understand that emotions are an all-or-nothing deal: "You want the light, happy ones—like true love and contentment—you have to embrace the heavy, ugly ones. Heartbreak. Fear. Jealousy. Shame—the whole shtick."

2. Examine, from a different perspective, the stories you've always told yourself about the people who did serious damage to your little-girl psyche. "Those adults with all their human flaws? Their little-kid psyche was wounded, too, by someone who was supposed to love and protect them."

3. Knock down that barricade you built around you heart: "Confront the abandonment and betrayal and loneliness of your redneck-Texas, girls-aren't-worth-a-damn childhood." (*Oh brother, not that cliché childhood thing, again.*) "Unless you do all that," she said, "you won't be able to forgive. If you can't forgive, you'll never heal the wounds of the past. Until you heal the wounds the past, Prince Charming ain't GPS-ing you."

I argued, I fretted, I weaseled. But a few months later, my devoted four-legged love was diagnosed with cancer and soon after departed my world. Heartbreak, fear and loneliness crashed my heart defenses. I was on my emotional knees. I crawled back to Julia's couch and began to clean out the hurts and betrayals of the past. Both those done to, and by, me.

Over a years-long process I discovered three critical truths:

1. It is not possible to find long-lasting, deeply satisfying love until you believe yourself worthy of it. (Yes indeed, I had to learn self-love.)

2. As a woman clawing her way in a man's world, I defined "emotional strength" as all sharp-edges and impenetrable boundaries. I had to relearn that tenderness and vulnerability are the DNA of true emotional strength. When the time came, I used that strength to love Jake, a Ferrari-driving doctor who had once broken my heart. A man who, then on his deathbed, desperately needed to receive love, even as he could not return it.

3. I accepted and found peace with the fact that Allie B might be wrong. I might never have that storybook life hiding in her crystal ball. So what would I do with all the love my newly opened heart yearned to give? I stopped focusing on what I did not have . . . and sought a way to offer compassion and caring to those who needed it most. I began to volunteer at a homeless shelter for families—the kind of place that, but for the grace of God, I could have landed in my early, below-the-poverty-line, single-parent years.

As for that long-lasting, deeply satisfying storybook love? The psychic foresaw that it would come via a "karmic pact" between me and Jake, that dying man whose hands I cradled as he breathed his last breath.

Two years after his death Allie B said, "I was channeling Jake. He's sending someone who will love you for the rest of

your life. Someone who will love you the way you deserve to be loved.”

Ten days later I was introduced to a man whom I never would have met had I not reopened my heart to Jake. This year we celebrate our fifteenth Valentine’s Day together.

Thankfully, I was ready for love—I was ready for him ... when he found me.

*Elaine Taylor is the author of **KARMA, DECEPTION and a Pair of Red FERRARIS: A Memoir**. She is a former IT headhunter and Contingent Workforce Management consultant. She served on the Board of Raphael House in San Francisco. She can be found at www.KarmaDeception.com.*