

Holly Hughes

Love Matters

The only criteria I had for selecting him was making sure I fit into his pants. If he was thinner than me there was no way I'd consider him for anything long term. I should have known better when he confessed "I don't believe in the whole third date thing. I slept with my ex wife on our first date and we ended up married."

"How long were you married?"

"Six months," he said. "I'm waiting for the final papers now."

Three dates later in the Valley Village apartment he moved into after his wife left him I pulled his worn light blue jeans off the floor, past my thighs and over my ass. There was a fraction of wiggle room inside the denim. I took them off and slipped under the left side of his geometric patterned blue and green comforter. I looked at him sleeping and noticed his skin was oily. One month later we were living together.

We lived together for three years and were married for two including the six months we separated and waited for the divorce to become final. However I tell people that I had a starter marriage with the same man for five years – from the time I was twenty three until I was twenty eight years old and skip breaking it down into it's sealed with a kiss parts.

The berating started with little things, things that didn't make alarms siren or even buzz. He liked my hair when I blew it straight. He didn't like some of my clothes. He wasn't fond of my friends. I didn't listen to what he was saying. I forgot things. Over time these little observations of his were like water on stone, slowly eroding me. I began

hearing the negativity behind his words. Noticed his eyes weren't on me but the television. I was becoming invisible except for the things that I could do better.

I wanted to do better; I wanted him to see me. Each time he pointed out the negative my heart pinched slowing the blood flow through me. I'd get cold and nervous and not like what I saw in the mirror. My face was covered in soft fine fuzzy hairs that I couldn't rip out fast enough. I named the deepening crease between my eye brows my perfection line. Every morning it along with my jaw was locked. A hole appeared inside my lower lip where my teeth pinched it. I twisted in front of the bathroom mirror like spiral pasta seeing how my waist compared to my ass, making sure the proportions didn't change. I believed he knew better. He was older and if he thought he was right then I must be mistaken. He corrected me by pulling the hair off his face and shaking his head.

“Why can't you remember anything? I didn't want Minute Maid orange juice. I said I wanted Tropicana. You put too little salt on the turkey. And what the hell is that color you're wearing? Those shoes are horrendous,” he said brows furrowed, eyes locked on my offensiveness, nostrils flared to white.

But I knew it was over when we went to couples therapy. In therapy, on that safe place sofa covered in a gray African elephant pattern, sitting across from our therapist he was forced to look at me.

“Look at her and tell her what you feel,” she said.

He started to cry and I reached my hand out for his. He cowered from my touch and said, “I love you, but the best way I know how to love you is to ignore you.” I was done with him then. The formalities of the separation and divorce took another eight months to hammer out. Suffice it to say I saw Parker clearly then, a loser who

preyed upon people's weaknesses to make himself feel better. He went through all the drawers in the house and literally took half of everything.

I watched him rifle through the kitchen, pulling all the forks, knives and spoons out onto the counter and methodically making two piles by placing one then the other on either side of him. It was pathetic. I didn't care what he took; I knew I could replace everything.