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# All About Love

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How do you know if you've ever been in love? Most people would argue that although being in love with someone is non-tangible, there is absolutely no doubt in their mind of it existing. In fact, if you are questioning whether or not you are in love, then you are most certainly not.

While I do not doubt for a second the existence of being in love (albeit being one of those sad individuals yet to experience it), I am somewhat perplexed over our perception of what constitutes humanities most sought after experience.

For me, falling in love with someone is a decision made based on the successful matching of ones own predetermined criteria or preferences.

I fondly refer to the preliminary stage of partner selection as the 'terminator glasses' phase, since it filters through a potential mate's attributes and matches them off against our own unique preferences.

On the New Years Eve just passed I went to meet friends at a bar where we would be celebrating the evening. There, waiting at the door with my friend, I saw HIM for the first time. I did a quick terminator scan:

Height: Around 6 foot. MATCH.

Build: Not too skinny, not too fat, not too buff. MATCH.

Hair: Short dark brown. Not over the top alla David Beckham. MATCH.

Complexion: Dark olive. MATCH.

Lips: Plump. MATCH.

Smile: Oh my God. MATCH.

Eyes: Big, brown, expressive, with long thick lashes. MATCH!

Stance: Gentle, not cocky. MATCH.

Nationality: Clearly foreign, probably Brazilian. MATCH.

With the terminator glasses still firmly planted on my face, the confirmed Brazilian was permitted to move onto the second part of phase one: interaction. This is often the most fatal part of any potential relationship, since every sentence uttered, every look given, and every movement is put through the filter of the terminator glasses. Any miss-match could lead to premature relationship death. Very little is forgiven during this part, especially if one's program is set at 'long term mate'. In saying this, it is also my favorite part of the process as it is the most fun. I see it as a game we both know we're playing, but refuse to acknowledge as existing. One can withdraw from the game at anytime without repercussion (that is, of course, when both parties are working under the same set of rules. If this is not the case a few unwanted phone numbers are collected, followed by a few awkward conversations. And depending on how weak one is - unwanted dates followed by unwanted kisses, possibly ending in unwanted sex!).

Stage two, 'the rose coloured glasses' phase, is extremely dangerous and not usually approached with caution by either candidate. Depending on the impact of stage one, bombs warning 'relationship doom' could be dropped right in front of ones eyes, yet getting let go un-noticed. Everything appears and is, invariably, utterly workable. Despite my cynicism, this stage is defiantly more exciting than the terminator phase, albeit being laced with the fear of it all ending. The premature 'I love you' could escape ones mouth, falling like a ball onto a roulette table. The stakes are high, but it could also very well pay off and pass you onto stage three. Or not...

Declaring the title of stage three is difficult. And the truth is, I don't know what to call it because I'm usually making my way to the green exit sign above the fire escape before you can say 'marry me'.

My experience with stage three is that I usually realize Mr Perfect is human. I resist accepting him just the way he is, and try to point out where he is lacking (he is usually not so open to my constructive criticism. I wonder why?).

This of course does not lead him to change his ways, but firmly ground himself in them (and resent me in the process). Love and commitment gets swapped with fear and dependence. Some stay to battle it out to the very end, most head straight for the green exit light.

People claim at this point that they have 'fallen out of love'. My argument is that they were never in love in the first place. One of my favourite movies, 'Moulin Rouge', melodically states, "The greatest thing you will ever learn, is just to love, and be loved in return". I believe this is what we think being in love is all about. Yet being loved in return implies that there is a condition to your giving love. So romantic love is conditional love. If romantic love only goes one-way, it is termed unrequited love or even 'desperate'.

What if I said that true love can only be unconditional? And inside of that, true love can only mean 100% acceptance of the subject, just the way they are and just the way they're not. What if love, real love, is just ?

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