

WoMan Chronicles #35

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Perhaps it's that I heard a male friend recently make the new year's resolution to find his "one" in 2003, or that one of my closest girlfriends will marry her own paramour this coming year, but I've thought a lot recently about the truth behind the "it" concept. What is "it"? I suppose it's that thing that guides people to the altar, the meeting that changes their lives, or that "one" who possesses the extra something that leaves them feeling like they have the strength to climb even the most treacherous of mountain paths. Or is it? The aforementioned concept seems simple enough, and yet I'm afraid we've lost sight of the "it" factor, or maybe it's simply been exchanged for something easier to come by. Does this sort of meeting have everything to do with accessibility rather than a deeply-rooted connection? You see, I have trouble with the idea that finding someone who fits like a glove is as simple as hanging out at your local brew pub or hot free lovin' singles joint. Are we so easily matched that we're okay with the notion that our "one" is living within a comfortable driving radius to our own homes? Could it be that we're simply settling for close enough to "it", rather than having to make that effort to extend our search beyond the county lines? Is it simply a question of laziness? One could say that love these days is so ephemeral that it really doesn't matter that we choose to settle for ordinary rather than holding out hope for that extraordinary someone we can say without doubt is our soul mate. The love that's here today is easily gone the next, so what's the difference? I could marry Harry tomorrow, and divorce him the next day, only to settle into another relationship with Tom two days later. Okay, perhaps that's a bit too capricious a notion, but you get my point.

The same laziness that causes us to settle for something convenient lends way to our throwaway attitude when it comes to relationships and marriage. Rather than the timeless commitment marriage should exemplify, it seems to have become an expendable institution. Is that because we didn't hold out for our true "one" in the first place, or is it simply that we are a society so used to being catered to, that our throwaway attitude has now permeated those institutions we once considered sacred? Where men are concerned, I think the idea that there exists just one person out there with the capability to make their hearts go thump in the night seems inane. Women spend years formulating an idea of the person they'll end up with. The invisible list of innate qualifications the perfect match will possess is established within our heads and we seek from there. As we grow older in singlehood, I think we give in to one of two options. We either make due with what's within our reach, or we open our minds to the possibility that our "one" may take a little work to find. Men on the other hand seem to jump into the game without that template from which to set their standards. They simply meet people in a game of trial and error, and eventually settle with the best of the lot from their pool of suitors. Maybe true love and the notion of "it" takes on a different meaning to different people. Do I simply hold on to a romantic idealism that's outdated in this day and age? In a fast food society of crass commercialism, is easy accessibility the favorable option? Or is the preponderance toward fleeting relationships and a divorce rate that makes marriage seem a pretty damned self-deprecating feat, carved from our own addiction to convenience? So many times I've heard people use the excuses of timing or distance as means to forego something that held the possibility for true happiness. Is it that distance and timing required an extra effort in making the whole thing come together? Forget the eliciting of strength to climb mountains, has true love now been diminished to that which comes housed pre-packaged for our "have it here, have it now" taste? Maybe we convince ourselves that love in all its goopy "I've found my one" and "He/She's It" glory is a foolish concept in itself, so that we are more apt to give in to mating with the first winsome cow that comes grazing through our pasture. We fool ourselves into ignoring our ideal, that mate who reads us like a book and challenges our inner spirit, so that it's easier to jump for the convenient choice when opportunity strikes. Have you ever stumbled across someone you found yourself crazy about in an instant? A person who seemed to illuminate your soul at first contact? Maybe it was that beautiful stranger you sat stranded with for hours at an airport layover in Houston, or someone you met on a summer holiday and decided to relinquish ties with because she went home to New York, while you returned to your roots in Oregon. Maybe you stumbled upon her at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro and she decided to take the less traveled, exceptionally rugged Lemosho route, while you took the highly populated Marangu path. Perhaps these encounters were your first and last brush with the "one", but because you let the details that divide you keep you from exploring the potential, you simply let it pass. Going home to that which lies conveniently within your grasp, even if it isn't as passionate or fulfilling as that chance encounter, you pacify yourself with thoughts that the opportunity you left behind simply would have been too difficult. The self described "priest of love", D.H. Lawrence once wrote in a letter to a friend, "I am in love - and, my God, it's the greatest thing that can happen to a man. I tell you, find a woman you can fall in love with. Do it. Let yourself fall in love…Nowadays, men haven't the courage and strength to love." A bit of the dramatist, not to mention the fact that his "one" was another man's wife, but he had a point. Love is akin to climbing that great mountain. It takes courage and strength. There may exist boulders and cliffs that from a distance seem too steep and dangerous to overcome in order to find that "one" true love waiting at mountain's summit. I mean, the view from the bottom of the mountain is fine and dandy, right? What's the use of making the climb to the top? The valley that lies before the mountain is a land you're familiar with. It's a land filled with niceties that leave you feeling perfectly content and safe. So what if you've caught a photographed glimpse of those breathtaking views from the top that made your heart want to sing, and flips the switch on feelings that you never knew you had the ability to feel. Wouldn't that climb to the top involve risk and leave you open to falling? Wouldn't it be terrifying and require having the patience it takes to make the journey? More than anything else, wouldn't it require having faith in the fact that the view that sits waiting for you after the long haul is completely worth the strength, courage, and self-sacrifices you had to make to reach the top? inlineAd(alRight); Maybe it's a matter of taste. The details that separate ordinary from extraordinary have never to me seemed that great a burden to overcome in order to feel truly satisfied. Given the option of hearing a play by play made

by others who had the courage to make the journey, or flipping through photos that give a one dimensional sense of the extraordinary world that lies atop the mountainous plateau, I'd much rather experience the climb for myself. Finding love in its truest "it" form is not an easy task. If you catch a glimpse of it, you must seek it out, for it is not meant to come to you without effort. In order to meet victory at her finish line, you must be willing to do what it takes to ensure the victory. Unfortunately, most choose to only dream of the kind of love to which I refer, rather than fighting to actually have it in their lives. Robert Frost said it best when he noted "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -- I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference". It's often the treacherous path that yields the most favorable outcome. In this vast world, it seems a narrow-minded view to hold on to the notion that "it" will be found just around the corner. If you want the kind of love that gives you the strength to climb even the most perilous of mountains, mustn't you be willing to make the journey it takes to get there?