

I met Katie the same day that I noticed the water in my toilet would get more shallow when it was windy outside. I don't know why I remember it exactly that way, but I do. She was more important of a discovery for sure. But the water thing was pretty damn interesting.

I woke up early even though it was my day off. Not something I do often but I just couldn't sleep anymore. I had the same recurring dream about me and the prom, circa 1997. Horrid tale. Needlessly flashy tux, red shoes, extremely trendy hairstyle. And no sex. But that was pretty much the whole of high school life right? Bad hair, bad skin and personal hygiene skills along with the only-slightly-improved-social-interaction-retardation with the opposite sex. Shaving and women were still novel ideas and our hearts were not yet jaded, let alone fully grown. Such nightmare fodder in seemingly innocent times. Interesting.

But then again women, at first glance, seem innocent. Then you look again and you're staring into a solar eclipse without those special black glasses on. Next thing you know you're being led through a store selling \$1,000 handbags and forking over your hard-earned money so she can keep up with the Hilton's (or whoever is on the cover of *US* that week). All for the chance that she'll let you have a peek at her Victoria's Secret emblazoned panties. Not that you'll be getting into them, but you can look all you want. Perhaps while doing her laundry. It is then you will notice just how many sets of matching bras and panties she has. And you'll compare that number to the amount you have actually seen her in and you will start wondering just how metallic a Remington shotgun barrel tastes and if it would spark as it rubbed your silver fillings of your back teeth. But as a wise man once said, sometime you have so many problems that suicide just wouldn't solve them all. So you just smile. And don't forget to add the fabric softener.

So anyways, I was awake. I didn't want to go back to sleep and risk picking up where I had left off, so I did what I always did when I'm upset: I began thinking about her. Even though she was why I was miserable, per usual, I couldn't (or didn't want to) stop myself from thinking about her. And there are always two, if not four, things I still think about when I remember her. 1. Her smile. Silly, I know. Cliché, I know. But the fact of the matter is that she had one of the all time top five smiles. Ever. 2. The way her hand lotion smelled. Not the body lotion or any of the other million and one lotions women use. Her hand lotion. I mostly liked it for what she could do with those hands. And what she would do with them after she applied the lotion. Sorry, getting off track.

As for three and four, they kind of go together. In fact I still keep them side by side in a box. It used to be kept on my night stand, but it has now been relegated to the hall closet. Back right. Behind the

photo album of people who still love and care for me and under the yearbooks of my Awkward Teen Years at Salinger High. Had I known then that these Awkward Teen Years would actually carry over into what I now call my Awkward Twenty-something Years, I may have had an objection of some sort. This box contains the whole of our relationship as I knew it. The two most important things to me in the entire time we were together. Possibly even before, come to think of it.

I walked to the closet and pushed the books out of the way. One of them ended up on my foot, but I was too intent on rehashing my past failures for the thousandth time that I didn't really care. I pulled down the tattered Vans shoe box and gazed at it as though I was Indiana Jones and it was a relic from the Temple Of Doom. I didn't want to open it too quickly. I never do. I wanted to reflect on how happy we were and how wonderful she was and how I wished she were dead. Maybe I'm still a little bitter. Then I recalled the smiles. Not just want old every day smiles, but the ones she reserved only for me when I would rub her perfect and very smooth feet. She wore a size 5. Her dainty little toes, always manicured (for me!) always had the scent of lilac. I never liked the smell of lilacs. Until Katie. Not anymore. Fucking lilacs.

When I came back to earth once more, twenty minutes had passed and I was still holding the box. I snapped myself back to reality and headed to my brown leather recliner, required furniture for a bachelor pad of any man below thirty years of age. I made a pit stop in the kitchen. I grabbed a Green Tea bag and a cup of hot water. I quit drinking a few months ago for her. Maybe I'll pick it up again. Back to the chair. I fell – no – melted into it.

It's just the effect her memories stir that I love. Even more than any bad thought are the millions of little things you don't even know you love about someone until you don't have it anymore. Crap. Another cliché. Well, anyways, it's true. I miss her. I miss her smell and smile, you know that already. But I was thinking about the little things. Like when she would take a shower before me she would make sure to leave the light on and put my razor back where she stole it from. She thought she was so sneaky. But every man knows that he doesn't own his razor when he lives with a woman. They become community property. So is everything else, for that matter. Including her. But I'm getting ahead of myself again.

After I was done melting, I placed the box in my lap and tentatively removed the top.

Lilac. Damn it.

Fucking LILAC.

One of the items almost jumped out at me.

The Letter.

The fact that I keep these things in a box, as opposed to out in the open, cannot be stressed enough. There are a lot of reasons for this, not the least of which is The Letter. It reads:

Hey you...

I guess it all comes down to a box of stuff, right? It doesn't matter how this ended or why. It doesn't matter who's to blame or who the other person thinks is to blame. I put all of your stuff in a box and left it on your bed. I was going to just pitch it but I didn't know if there was anything you would actually need. I hope we can still be friends. I will always have a place for you in my heart.

Thanks for everything!

Sincerely,

Katie

And that was it. As far as I'm concerned, it may just as well have read:

Hey you...

Love is a mind fuck.

Life sucks.

Buy a helmet.

Kiss off, you ass,

The Woman You Love

But Can't Stand You

Anymore

There was still one more item in the box, but I couldn't get past The Letter. As usual. And also as usual I put the lid back on and tossed the whole thing on the floor, making my cat dart across the room skittishly.

I stared out the window wondering how the sun could shine when I was feeling so crappy. I noticed a lilac in the neighbor's windowbox.

Fucking lilacs.