



The Hairpin

Allowances



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by Arianna Rebolini





1. I allowed Brian to import the entirety of Eminem’s discography to my hard drive because when he came over he liked to listen — really *listen* — to it.

“Did you hear what he just did there?” he would ask, pulling his head back mid-kiss.

“Yep!”

“Are you sure, though? Like, did you catch the way he continued that rhyme into the next line?”

“Yeah, no, totally. So good!”

“Shh-shhh,” he’d say with his hand up, using his index finger to trace the imaginary line of poetry written in the air in front of him. Inevitably he would shake his head. “You know what, hang on, I’m just going to go back to the beginning of the verse. Really pay attention this time.”

I’d sigh and settle back into the corner of my bed, listening to spurts of verse and watching him as he struggled to find exactly the spot he was looking for.

2. Andy and his friends were part of a drifting team. One night, after watching them as they very excitedly and expertly steered their cars (admittedly, I am still not totally clear on the nature or culture of “drifting”), I followed them to our neighborhood bar. Andy separated from the group and ran up to me as I waited for our drinks.

“Joe got a Taser from the back of a police car and we’re going to go tase each other in the parking lot,” he said. “Want to come?”

I did not.

About 10 minutes later, a friend walked into the bar and met me at my table. “Some assholes are tasing each other in the back parking lot,” she said.

“Oh yeah,” I said, drawing a sip from my gin and tonic. “That’s my boyfriend.”

3. Jake was charming but aloof — beautiful and smart, but self-described as “not ready to commit to anyone right now,” a fair warning that I learned to mean “not ready to commit to *you* right now.”

“Do you want to come over tonight?” I asked one evening.

He paused.

“Do you have any floss?” he asked.

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“Yeah, I think so?” I said. “I’m not entirely sure.”

“Oh,” he said, with another, longer hesitation. “I’m just really in the mood to floss. Maybe I’ll just go buy some.”

“I mean, I’m sure I have some somewhere,” I said. “No, I definitely do. Come over.”

I dug through bins in the shared bathroom of my dorm and finally found some. Jake requested it immediately upon his arrival, and fell into my bed while wrapping it around his fingers.

“Yeah, that’s the stuff,” he said, hands in his mouth.

I nuzzled my head into his the hollow of his chest and fell asleep smiling, jolted every few seconds by the violence of his flossing.

4. When I learned that Nate had been cheating on me, he was already on the other side of the globe — South Korea, to be exact — and we were trying to make it work through phone calls and Skype sessions. He was meant to be gone for a year, half the length of our relationship when he left, and the plan was to finally move in together when he returned.

“I’m having a hard time trusting you,” I whispered into my cell phone, huddled by the door to my Greek Mythology class.

“Well, I think you’re being selfish,” he said.

“Selfish how?” I asked.

“I just don’t think you’re taking into account how all of this is affecting *me*,” he said.

“How your cheating on me is affecting you?” I asked.

“Yeah. I just think you’re making this all about you.”

We made it work for another month and a half.

5. There is a woman in my aerobics class who is regularly accompanied by the men she dates. We know each other tangentially, and the only reason I know that her companions are boyfriends is because they have twice been men I have also dated. Their sudden appearance into what is supposed to be my sweaty and flush-faced safe space was initially jarring, but the lasting effect had to do with the woman, not the men, and it is one nearing reverence. I have perhaps irrationally placed her on a pedestal, an example of confidence and poise, the polar opposite of myself and the allowances I’ll make in the pursuit of romance.

What magic is this, I wonder, and how does it feel to possess it? To be the woman who moves men to don spandex and do scissor-kick crunches on reused yoga mats in a dance studio filled with ladies? To be, in general, the one who compels rather than the one compelled? It remains largely a mystery.

Recently, however, I received a brief Facebook message from a gentleman with whom I'd been on a couple of more-or-less good dates:

“Checked out Patty Griffin. You’re right — pretty good.”

It is a small victory, but a victory nonetheless.

Arianna Rebolini lives, writes, and serves people Thai food in Brooklyn.

Relationships

Arianna Rebolini

Confidence



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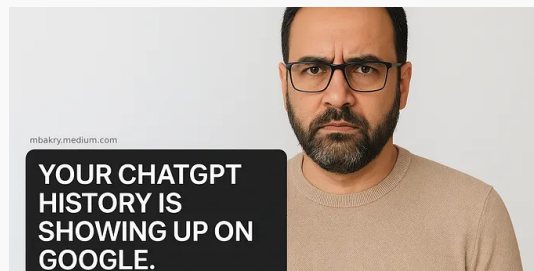
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