

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

WHATEVER KEEPS US WARM: A STORY COLLECTION

AMANDA STANGO
SPRING 2014

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in English
with honors in English

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, through works of fiction and creative nonfiction, examines issues of coming-of-age sexuality and identity. Though the speakers in each piece vary in age, background, location, and socioeconomic status, they share one commonality: each woman is trying to wade through her relationships with others and her relationships to both sexuality and identity. Each story in this collection attempts to capture a transformative process which ultimately results in self-discovery and an altered worldview.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Toni Jensen for wholeheartedly believing in me when I was a terrified senior entering the BA/MA program in creative writing. You agreed to be my thesis adviser after knowing me approximately three months. Your faith in me was an integral part of my assimilation into the program. Thank you for understanding my writing, even when no one else “got it,” and never losing patience with me throughout the creating and editing process. Thank you for being the first person to encourage me to send my work somewhere. Thank you for making me feel like I belonged in the BA/MA program. Your guidance has pushed me to become a much more conscious writer, thinker, and person.

Thank you to Charlotte Holmes and Bill Cobb, both of whom had a hand this year in shaping me into the writer I’ve become. Your different perspectives have given my work variance and depth. There’s a little bit of both of you in this thesis.

Thanks to Marcy North for helping me graduate on time and keeping me on track throughout the thesis process.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my peers, the fellow BA/MAs I’ve spent the past two years working with and getting to know. This thesis wouldn’t be half of what it is without your continued support and feedback. I’m lucky to know all of you.

Chapter 1

Amazon Woman

4 piece White Terry Bath Towel Set - 100% Genuine Turkish Grown Cotton

☆☆☆☆☆ First time towel buyer

By GD on June 14, 2012

It sounds unbelievable that I went through forty-five years of my life without buying a single towel. My mother bought me a nice set from JCPenney before college that somehow never shred in the wash. The day my ex-husband insisted I throw out my old towels, he told me, "You're not 21 anymore; you can't continue using butterfly print beach towels," even though they brought me a sort of comfort, knowing they got me through four years of college. We received a beautiful set for our wedding that we used for ten years. But it's been two weeks since the papers have been finalized and those wedding towels have been leering at me from the closet. My sister says it's not "emotionally sanitary" to keep towels and sheets from an old marriage. My therapist said the towels have become a manifestation of my unhappiness that I'm trying to stow away until I inevitably have to face it. So, long story short, I'm doing the overhaul.

This is a week of double firsts: first time purchasing towels, first time writing an Amazon product review. I didn't know whether to say, "Hello," or not, but after going to <http://www.wikihow.com/Leave-a-Review-on-Amazon>, I didn't see anything in the 16 step tutorial about a greeting. I don't know if I'm supposed to include links either, so I apologize and understand if that means you have to delete my review, Amazon.

These towels are probably the softest towels I've used in my entire life. They're made from Turkish Cotton, which I imagine is something like the Egyptian Cotton of the towel universe. I've never been anywhere exotic, not even for the honeymoon, so that might be part of the allure. It's also worth noting that the towels are super-absorbent but don't stay too damp if you hang them to dry properly afterwards.

I don't know what the average size of one of these reviews is, so I'll stop now.

Comment | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Jun 14, 2012 1:53:09 PM EST

_Sammy_B says:

LOL!!!..., My shrink says EVERYTHING is a “manifestation of unhappiness”...I think that’s code 4, “Stop cryin& get new stuff”.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

14 of 25 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jun 17, 2012 6:42:16 PM PDT

Martha J. Singer says:

GD, I too enjoy the softness of the towels. They’re very warm. My cats love to jump into the laundry basket with them after I take them out of the dryer.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

8 of 19 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

400-Thread-Count Egyptian Cotton Sateen Queen Set

☆☆☆☆ Turkey in the bathroom, Egypt in the bedroom

By GD on June 29, 2012

My last user review, about the four pack of Turkish Cotton towels, got me thinking, for uniformity’s sake, that I should probably get rid of the sheets too. My sister Donna told me that my bedsheets should have been the first thing to go, but I thought it would feel weird for none of my linens to smell like home anymore.

I realized, after reading my first review, that I probably needed to get to the point sooner. So here goes. These sheets are incredibly soft, yet firm enough that I’m not afraid they’ll rip if I pull on them too hard. Once, I stayed in a Holiday Inn in Bedford, OH, and you’d think, given the name of the city, that at least they’d have comfortable sleeping facilities. Those sheets were like sandpaper on my legs all night, and I ended up moving to the pull-out sofa at 3 a.m. My ex-husband bitched (can I curse on here?) about it for at least forty-five minutes over our “subpar continental breakfast” the next morning. He’s always been a bit of a food snob, and I think wanted to get that last dig in, since I was the one who booked the hotel reservation. Anyway, after that incident, I vowed I’d never have sheets like that in my bedroom. Granted, he’s the one who started sleeping on the couch after that night...but that’s irrelevant, I guess.

I feel a little fancier now that I have soft towels and soft sheets. I won’t give these sheets 5 stars, mainly because I think last time, I was influenced by everyone else’s 5-star ratings and felt compelled to write one too. I give these sheets 4 stars because they’re warm, yet lightweight, and

feel soothing against my dry skin. It's almost like being wrapped up in a fluffy pancake, to bring the breakfast thing full-circle. But for that extra star, they'd probably have to make me feel safe. I'm not quite there yet.

Comment | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Jul 1, 2012 11:12:39 AM PST

Janet_loves_dogs says:

Since when is the breakfast you get at the Holiday Inn a dealbreaker? D*ckhead.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
73 of 75 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 1, 2012 1:40:54 AM PST

Marjean says:

Janet.....I was thinking the same thing, it's the freakin Holiday Inn! I mean it's no Waldorf Astoria (not that I could ever afford that, but I've watched the Travel Channel) but it's not the Red Roof Inn either (had bedbugs there once, NEVER AGAIN!) GD, I'm gonna buy these sheets because your story pissed me off and I think I need new sheets.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
50 of 60 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 4, 2012 4:09:02 PM PST

George Waterman says:

No offense, but how is any of this really related to the sheets?

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
110 of 150 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

GE 13 W Energy Smart Lightbulbs

☆☆☆☆☆ **A bright spot**

By GD on July 7, 2012

UNRELATED

Thank you to the people on my last review for making me feel a little better about the sheets. I haven't figured out how to reply on the comments yet...could somebody help me?

OK ABOUT THE LIGHTBULBS

It hit 97 degrees in Franklin County, Ohio this week, and of course this would be the time where all my lightbulbs burn out. That might sound weird, but I don't have a pool, and so on days like

today I like to go down to my basement (the coolest part of the house) and read a book, or watch QVC. It's dark in the basement. And so I found these bulbs on here, because I'm really starting to get the hang of online shopping, I think.

He (my ex-husband, from here on out) never bought into the new energy trend, always said incandescent lightbulbs were cheaper. "I won't be taken in by that cost-benefit rhetoric the news stations run about fluorescent bulbs," he'd complain, when CNN showed segments on going green. I tried to tell him it would be more frugal in the long run; put the cash up-front, and the payout will last for years. He was always a quick fix man, which is why we had to change the lightbulbs every three months...which is why I'm writing this review. These are things I want the people of America to know about.

These bulbs are great for those days you accidentally streak your foundation and don't notice until you're beneath the office's overhead lights, or those nights you mismatch tights and shoes because you can't tell which color is which underneath the yellow light outside your bedroom closet. And if you're hesitant about the cost - \$10.29 for an 8 pack - well, come on, you probably spend \$7-9 for lunch at work every day and that only lasts a half hour or so.

I don't know if really anyone else is putting that much thought into a stupid pack of lightbulbs. But we throw away so much money on bullshit that we should at least invest in something worthwhile from time to time. The quick fix might be those \$2 incandescents, but at the end of the day, what would you rather? A fast, cheap way to light up your bedroom, or the long-term investment?

I'm speaking figuratively, of course. ;)

Comment | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Jul 7, 2012 12:13:40 PM PST

Jake_Jay_69 says:

All you have to do is hit "Reply to this Post." Pretty self explanatory if you can read...

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

20 of 54 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 7, 2012 12:20:30 PM PST

JennyK says:

No need to be a jerk about it Jake.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

40 of 47 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 7, 2012 4:09:02 PM PST

GD says:

Thank you, Jenny. Ex-husband's name is Jake, what a coincidence. Something about the name???
Ha-ha.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
75 of 95 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 13, 2012 3:25:03 PM EST

Mrs. HarryPotter says:

LUMOS!

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
300 of 320 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?
Initial post: Jul 4, 2012 4:09:02 PM PST

Alligator Onion and Vegetable Dicer

☆☆☆☆ No more onion tears. Actual tears still possible.

By GD on July 28, 2012

It's really funny how many things you realize you need after going through a divorce. And I don't mean, "Haha, this cracks me up," funny, I mean, "Oh God, how did I not pay attention to the fact that he was taking this?" Or, in this instance, "Having my mom and sister over for dinner...convinced myself I need a gimmicky onion cutter because everything needs to be perfect. See? I'm managing well for myself without him! Look at these beautifully sliced Vidalias!"

These experiences, they're humbling. Yesterday, I took a crack at making French Onion soup and ended up flinging my cutting board halfway across the kitchen. He is a chef, works at a steakhouse in Columbus, and always cut my green peppers and onions and root vegetables for me. I never quite got the cooking genes from my mother. Predictably, I ended up gashing my finger, and six stitches later (it's hard to type with three layers of gauze, FYI), I overnighed the Alligator to my home.

Good news: it's pretty much impossible to cut yourself on the Alligator. You apply force to the outside plastic and the sharp, dicing grid comes down on your onions to split them. Other reviewers complain about the amount of weight you have to put on the handles in order to cut something. And to be honest, with the finger injury, I didn't even try. Sitting on it works just as well, given that you don't weigh five hundred pounds or something like that. I think most prospective buyers will be just fine.

The best part of the Alligator, at the end of the day, is that you won't cry. According to TLC's cooking website, humans cry when we cut onions because the onions absorb sulfur in the Earth,

and our eyes are equipped to shed tears to shield our eyes from irritants. It's this sort of built-in protective mechanism. The Alligator won't release the sulfur the same way as traditional slicing.

Of course, the Alligator can't be held responsible for any crying that occurs, for example, when you realize that despite a \$25 slicer, you still can't cook that French Onion soup without the one you love. After burning the soup (that is possible, I've learned), I drove fifteen miles to Wegmans to pick up pre-packaged soup that I dropped in the parking lot. But at least I can cut my root vegetables. I might be the Most Valuable Person at Family Thanksgiving this year, if I make it that long.

Comment | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Jul 29, 2012 1:03:06 PM EST

hothothot_sauce says:

I think I had dinner at your ex-husband's restaurant yesterday AWKWARD

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

100 of 100 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 30, 2012 4:17:24 PM EST

my pussymyproblem says:

FEMINISM MEANS CUTTING YOUR OWN VEGETABLES.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

50 of 173 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 30, 2012 4:17:24 PM PST

Janet_loves_dogs says:

Empathy means, "Shut the f*ck up not everything is about your p*ssy."

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

160 of 185 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 30, 2012 5:43:29 PM PST

George Waterman says:

Once again, I think we're losing sight of the original point here.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

40 of 92 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 30, 2012 5:45:51 PM PST

Janet_loves_dogs says:

George why are you even following GD's reviews if you're so bothered by them?

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

60 of 84 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Jul 31, 2012 9:18:32 AM EST

GD says:

I did take a Women's Studies course in college many years ago...I'm not an anti-feminist, I'm just not capable in the kitchen...thank you Janet...hothothot_sauce...seriously?

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
90 of 99 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Fred and Friends Doomed Crystal Skull Shot Glass

☆ **Just...no.**

By GD on August 6, 2012

I decided to be a hard-ass and pair my brand new bottle of Jack Daniels from the local Wine & Spirits with this skull shot glass. Translation: I saw him at the grocery store for the first time since the divorce, and even though I was relatively put together and had showered that morning, I still wasn't prepared for the inevitable run-in. Bonus: I had a 3 pack of Monistat tucked under my right arm. I know after seven years of marriage, I should be desensitized to that sort of thing, but he lost the privilege to know about my vagina when he slept with someone else.

(I'm pretty sure that comment alone will get this review removed from Amazon.)

So there I am, about to draw blood in exchange for a Hershey bar and some Midol, and he comes waltzing around the corner in his perfect white Lacoste tennis shoes, with a cart full of ground beef, corn chips, salsa, sour cream, the whole shebang. When we were married, no matter what was happening in our respective workplaces, no matter if CNN announced our country was on the brink of nuclear war, he and I would have Taco Tequila Tuesday every week. I mixed the margaritas, he whipped up taco salads with roasted corn, homemade pico de gallo, toasted black bean chips. We'd eat to the point of exhaustion before flopping down on the couch together, under that blanket my grandmother knitted us for our wedding, and channel surf until one of us inevitably passed out. Those nights, even when things began to unravel...I lived for those nights.

I'm still standing there, at this point, in the grocery store, with my yeast cream, and the only thing I can manage to say is, "Oh, hi, um, well that looks good, I bought an Alligator chopper in March and it works great on tacos." And he said, "Oh," and I realized it was time to go, NOW, so I hurled myself toward the Express Lane, out through the sliding doors, and immediately into my car. I'll spare you the unnecessary details about how I almost took out a mailbox on the way home, ran a red light, and got pulled over by Township Police. I haven't cried in front of law enforcement since that citation in college. I think the officer took pity on me, or something like that, because he gave me his card and a pat on the shoulder before letting me drive home to collapse on my couch.

The shot glass arrived the next morning, thanks to my new Amazon Prime membership. Expectation: pounding shots like a champion to take away the pain. Reality: throwing the shot glass in the kitchen garbage because I am not nineteen or one of those kids who wears black lipstick. I kept the Jack Daniels though; I've now got Band-Aids in my medicine cabinet and hard alcohol in my liquor cabinet. You've gotta be prepared for anything.

Comment | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Aug 5, 2012 2:48:09 PM PDT

vodka_princess says:

But, like, does the shot glass work?

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
35 of 62 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 5, 2012 3:00:23 PM PDT

shotzonshotz says:

Dumb bitch shot glasses dont either work or not work.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
90 of 92 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 7, 2012 4:13:13 AM EST

Charana says:

JSUK, you can buy Monistat online if you want to avoid the embarrassment of stores. I've been buying mine on Ebay for three years now.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
6 of 134 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 7, 2012 4:19:31 AM EST

Grandpa_Ray says:

This comment has been removed due to explicit content.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
2 of 39 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 10, 2012 3:43:55 PM PST

SportsPhreak says:

GD I been reading ur reviews and not commentin til now, but I've decided either ure hot or ure crazy or both.

Reply to this post

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)
33 of 51 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

LED Color Changing Showerhead

☆☆☆☆☆ **Jerkoffs, come one, come all.**

By GD on August 14, 2012

After that grocery store incident, I spent a good week contemplating my life choices. I talked to my therapist. And unlike every movie cliché where the therapist tells the grieving woman, “Live your life for the first time!” or “You have to do little things that make YOU happy,” my therapist told me, “Stop impulse buying things on the internet.” And as I was sitting in her office, I nodded my head along to what she was saying...but I can't lie, I was kind of irritated she chalked all of this up to ‘impulse buying’ for no reason. Right now, I've got towels, sheets, lightbulbs, and some kitchenware. Doesn't really sound too crazy to me.

And so somewhere between the therapist's office and my house, I decided to buy the most useless thing I've ever wanted, in spite of both her AND my ex-husband. This led me, of course, to the LED Color Changing Showerhead. I've seen the thing advertised on TV at some point, and I remembered Jake turning to me and saying, “Can you imagine some jerkoff somewhere is actually going to spend 60 bucks on that?” right as I thought, “Oh, that's kind of pretty.” That was back before things were bad, before he started dating the hostess from work, before we stopped having meals together. But it still got under my skin to hear him say it, to know that I was a “jerkoff” for liking the rainbow bursts of water, for finding something something beautiful in something as seemingly mundane as taking a shower.

Those were his two biggest complaints about me, back when we were married. He always said I shopped too much, bought unnecessary stuff. And he said I got too excited over stupid things.

He hated consumerism, would rant to anyone willing to listen about how everyone who bought into consumerist culture was easily manipulated and weak-willed. Christmas was always the most depressing time in our house; it got to the point where I hated celebrating because I knew he'd have some snide comment to make about putting presents under the tree. And I tried to explain that no, I wasn't buying him that electronic planner because society says he needs one to remember everything, but because he had so much going on at work that he might need a place to store large catering orders besides his memory. But he never quite hid the disappointment in his eyes, the disappointment that stemmed from my supposed “pettiness.”

The pettiness, in his mind, led me to get excited over stupid things. He never quite understood, for example, why it was such a big deal to get a package in the mail, or when that movie I'd been

wanting to see was on TV and I'd only missed the first five minutes. He was more interested in the "big things," - births, deaths, promotions - to entertain conversation about that book I liked finally transitioning from hardcover to paperback, or the neighborhood kids' Halloween costumes when they came around trick-or-treating. So it was, but it really wasn't, a surprise that he started cheating.

I don't really care if buying this \$60 showerhead only justifies his reasons for divorcing me. I think it's pretty, and goddammit, I haven't felt pretty in a while, and my therapist can honestly go to hell. The showerhead has four different settings - blue, green, red, and rainbow, but there's no reason to ever change it from rainbow. You don't need batteries, because the colors change from the water pressure. And according to what other reviewers are saying, it fits most showers.

I endorse this product wholeheartedly because I really haven't been angry yet and it kind of feels good.

[Comment](#) | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Aug 14, 2012 2:11:11 PM EST

OHM says:

You've got to find your inner peace in order to restore balance to the rest of the world. Have you ever tried yoga?

[Reply to this post](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

52 of 83 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 14, 2012 7:44:38 PM PST

Therapissed says:

Three years of therapy and I've calculated that if I took all the \$\$ I spent letting someone else tell me what to do, at \$50 a session, twice a week, for three years, I could have bought 260 LED

showerheads. What am I doing with my life?

[Reply to this post](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

95 of 111 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 15, 2012 8:23:04 AM PST

Marjean says:

I decided to search you to see if you're doing any better and to tell you those sheets are FREAKIN AMAZING!!!! Looks like you're finally letting out some of that anger and let me tell you, it works wonders for everything - the stomach, the complexion, the sex life (not that you need to worry about that right now, but when you finally do, trust me, it's great to break loose in the bedroom, especially with Turkish Cotton sheets ;)). But you're gonna be happier in the long

run without him, he's the jerkoff really, and who needs people policing everything they buy and chalking it up to "consumerism poisoning you." Sometimes a girl just wants to get something she likes - if it's a manicure, it's a manicure, if it's a showerhead that turns your water rainbow colors, be my freakin guest, it's just about what makes you happy, OK??

Reply to this post

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130 of 132 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Northern Lights Yoga Mat

☆☆☆☆☆ Finding my center

By GD on August 22, 2012

So I ranted a week ago and it felt GREAT at the time, but later that night I felt terrible. It takes a lot - a hell of a lot - to work me up and I just don't want Jake to be able to do that to me anymore. He's not sitting at home cursing me out on the internet. He's probably enjoying a glass of Maker's Mark or Disaronno or something stereotypically classy that men in suits drink on their balconies, or whipping up some Gorgonzola, Arugula, & Raisin Bruschetta on a brand-new granite countertop he always wished we had in our home. Of course, I only assume his new bachelor pad in Columbus has a balcony and a granite countertop and fully stocked bar with expensive liquor, but I always assume the worst when it comes to these sorts of things.

Because I realize I've been harboring all of this negative energy, and partially because of OHM's comment on my last review, I signed up for yoga classes at the local fitness center. I did a decent amount of online research, and it didn't seem like anyone had anything bad to say about yoga, except for this one person who claimed, "Yoga made me cross-eyed," but that doesn't really make any sense and I decided to disregard that review. But hey, if I do end up cross-eyed, at least it will put my life in a whole new perspective. Ha. Ha.

I've only been to one yoga class, so it's too soon to tell if this is gonna be my thing or not. In any case, I've finally breached the walls of Fitness Palace and signed up for a trial membership without incident. I was never one of those women who ate everything and never gained a pound, like my sister Donna, but I was never one of those women who needed to go to the gym every day. My body's been pretty average, even through the first god-awful months of menopause, but yeah, I'm sure I could use some sort of cardio or something. It was weirdly refreshing to walk into Fitness Palace like I belonged there, with the meathead football players, the overweight thirty-year-olds on South Beach Diet, and the old men running on the treadmill like their legs still work great at 75. It's kind of a misfit gym, and if anyone's going to lead the misfit brigade, it could definitely be me.

The mat itself, it's pretty squishy, but not too squishy that I can't maintain a downward dog (is that right?) without my hands slipping. It's longer than I expected, probably to accommodate all types of bodies, and has a star design in the center of it. Lisa the yoga instructor says we all have to find our center. I'm not really sure what exactly that means, but I expect to find out in at least another week or two. All that working out sure made me hungry, though.

[Comment](#) | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Aug 22, 2012 10:28:16 AM PDT

Meathead_nation says:

You say 'meathead' like it's a bad thing.

[Reply to this post](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

20 of 333 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 22, 2012 1:45:00 PM EST

StingLikeABee says:

It IS a bad thing.

[Reply to this post](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

216 of 259 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 23, 2012 5:16:49 PM EST

Matty B. says:

Yoga does GREATNESS for u're u-kno-wat...my girl started doin' yoga last year&& dayum gurl that shiteee is titeeee

[Reply to this post](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

126 of 167 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Aug 24, 2012 11:09:33 AM PST

Janet_loves_dogs says:

How did Amazon not flag ^this post? F*cking idiots. Glad to see you're doing better, GD!

[Reply to this post](#)

[Permalink](#) | [Report Abuse](#) | [Ignore this Customer](#)

310 of 316 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

The Definitive Rod Stewart (2 CD Set)

☆☆☆ **Have I told you lately...that I'm crazy?**

By GD on September 13, 2012

It's been nearly three weeks since my last online purchase. And I'd love to be able to say it's because yoga has suddenly eliminated all of my problems, that I've somehow magically condensed the two-year emotional aftermath of a divorce into three months. That's what the Wall Street Journal Online says. Two years. God, two years is a long time. That's roughly how long things were bad between him and me. And that felt like forever.

But no. Things aren't fixed. Not yet. After I went on google and typed in, "how long does it take to heal from a divorce," out of curiosity I looked up, "5 stages of grief," because I always heard people talking about that. And it's strange. For those of you who don't know, the stages are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. I think I skipped bargaining, which probably makes me a psychological miracle or something. But I've just been yo-yo-ing between anger, depression, and pseudo-acceptance. Yoga has been helping with that last part; it calms me down. And I did kind of have a breakthrough after the Showerhead Incident. But most of the time, I just feel...very...sad.

I bought this CD to try and force the sadness out. I don't know if that's a thing people can really do, but I'm willing to try. See, Jake and I, we weren't big music fans. Our friends always made fun of us for that, back in college. It was the eighties, everyone was always dancing, everyone had hair that barely fit through the door. But my parents, they always loved Rod Stewart; he was big when I was in middle and high school, and my mom had that cassette tape she'd play over and over and over again in the house. His songs always reminded me of home. And when I went away to college, probably two or so weeks after settling in, I heard Rod Stewart coming from one of the rooms on the floor below me. I had been feeling a little homesick, I went down to see who was playing, "Maggie May," and I met Jake. "Swiped this tape from my folks, stuffed it in my suitcase before they realized it was gone," he said, the first thing he ever said to me.

"You look like a Madonna girl though."

He doesn't remember this conversation. Even though I've run through it with him a million times - *I was wearing overalls, you were sitting on your bed, flipping through some car magazine, your bangs were so long you actually had to brush them out of your face to look at me* - he would still swear to this day that he has no idea what I'm talking about, that he doesn't remember the day he met me, or Rod Stewart, or any of that. Now, he'd probably say he never even owned a Rod Stewart cassette, just to spite me. He always tried to rationalize, though. He'd say, "Hon, we were friends for so long before we got married, how would I know my future wife walked into my dorm room, at eighteen?" *I knew*, I'd want to scream, those nights he pulled into the driveway three hours after I knew his shift at the restaurant ended. *You made me feel like home, and then we made a home together, and now my home is not a home anymore.*

I put this CD on two nights ago and cried until I couldn't see straight. In the midst of it, I found my way to the yoga mat, in a last-ditch attempt to regulate my breathing, but then I felt like an idiot for sobbing alone in my living room on a hot pink yoga mat while, "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?" blared from my entertainment center. I called my sister some time afterward, asked her to please come over, which is something I never did before. (She's got a husband, a happy marriage, a real job, and I never wanted to disrupt her life with mine.) She blew through the door, poured me a glass of Riesling, turned up her nose, and asked me, "Wait, you actually spent MONEY on that wrinkly old f*ck's Greatest Hits CD?"

After an hour or so of alternately watching, "Say Yes to the Dress," and me blowing my nose on the floor, she left, but not before staring at my kitchen trash can. I could tell she wanted to say something, probably remind me the bag was full and should be taken out. In her world, a woman is only as good as her house is clean. I kind of wanted to tell her that, "Say Yes to the Dress," was probably the worst TV show she could have turned on while I cried about my divorce. But we both said nothing, maybe out of mutual understanding.

I haven't snapped the CD in half, in some great show of devil-may-care attitude or sudden femme empowerment. And I haven't resolved to never listen to it again after that night. I've actually had it on nonstop in the background of my life - in the kitchen while pouring a bowl of cereal, in the car on the way to Fitness Palace, in the tub - because I'm hoping that after another day or so I'm going to be so sick of it that it doesn't make me sad anymore.

Three stars for this one, because the Rod Stewart aficionados of the universe will love this set, and the seller shipped it pretty quickly, but it's personally caused me a lot of anguish.

Comment | Was this review helpful to you?

Initial post: Sep 13, 2012 7:21:14 PM PST

SportsPhreak says:

Both definitely both
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5 of 72 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Sep 13, 2012 9:30:09 PM EST

Llama_Lady says:

HONEY, I saw Rod Stewart in New York at the Madison Square Garden in 1980 and he was PHENOMENAL...I understand why he'd strike your heart like that. He wasn't always wrinkly though - I think you and I BOTH know this - and I actually knew a girl whose cousin's brother's

sister-in-law's friend knew this girl who spent a night with him in Boston...what a little playboy!
;)

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80 of 181 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Sep 13, 2012 8:42:27 PM PST

Vince Grant says:

Divorce...divorce is tough. And that's a HELL of an understatement. My wife of 23 years and I recently separated. We wanted and needed different things. And I miss her every day, don't get me wrong, but every day feels a little, I don't know, freer. I'm not doing nothing special with my life these days, retired and all that, but I've been trying to do things I really like that have nothing to do with my wife. I know she likes watching those soap operas on TV, last thing I'm gonna do is watch those bridal shows when I'm sitting on the couch with a beer. Not that I'm judging you or nothing, but maybe you shouldn't play that CD and you should do something you like better.

[Reply to this post](#)

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250 of 267 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Initial post: Sep 14, 2012 2:15:45 AM EST

Flo-Ridin says:

Rod Stewart blows.

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300 of 439 people think this post adds to the discussion. Do you?

Elegant Solid Color Viscose Fringe Scarf - Yellow

☆☆☆☆ **Sayonara, shoppers.**

By GD on October 24, 2012

Hey, Amazon. It's been awhile. Five weeks, to be exact! And over four months since I bought those new towels. In case anyone was wondering, they're still fluffy. The Alligator finally broke though; all the bad-reviewers were right.

This might be my last review for awhile. I love Amazon, I do. This website has just about everything. I did look up the Monistat, and it is possible for me to buy a lifetime supply from the comfort of my own home. I almost one-click-ordered them. I was close. But then I had one of those rare moments of clarity and realized I was lying in my bed, unshowered, still in pajamas, about to sign away my grocery store social interactions because I didn't want to accidentally see Jake again. Because I got too comfortable being a hermit, living online, emerging only to sign for my packages and occasionally haul my ass to Fitness Palace. He said that about me once, that I

was too comfortable, that I didn't try to change things and instead tried to see the good in situations even when there was nothing good to see. And I always thought that was an admirable quality, always gave myself a mental pat on the back when I got myself through whatever mini-crisis was unfolding around me by having strength. It's not, though. It's not admirable. It's cowardly. And I hate myself for it.

This isn't a sudden therapy breakthrough. I still think the therapist is kind of an asshole. My sister didn't run interference after Rod Stewart, nor did my mother launch an intervention. I haven't really seen my friends much since the divorce, because I've pushed most of them away, rejected their invitations to dinner or for cocktails. It's not anyone else's doing. Oddly enough, I pulled a balled-up pair of jeans that ended up under the bed and found that business card, the one from the policeman who pulled me over in August. I won't put his name here, because I don't think that's allowed. But God, I cried like a moron in front of him and he didn't give me a ticket because he felt bad for me! I called him last week to thank him. He remembered me, which surprised me, until he said, "Ma'am, I don't really pull over too many women who drive like Dale Earnhardt, Jr. but cry like Terrell Owens."

I talked to him for a while. It was incredibly refreshing. And no, this isn't going to be some love story between me and the township cop who swoops in and does every romantic thing my ex-husband never did. But it might be a story of how good things can come from even the most heart-wrenching situations. I made a friend. At fifty-two, you don't just make friends. But the cop talked to me. He listened to me. I told him about the sheets and the showerhead...and even the shot glass. He didn't tell me I was crazy.

I might never talk to him again. And that's okay.

I bought myself this yellow scarf because yellow is the color of the sunlight. It's autumn here in Ohio, and all the leaves are changing colors, and when I walk to my car, I almost feel right again. Like if someone took my picture, right as I put my key in the car door, I wouldn't look like a divorced woman whose husband cheated on her, or some insane woman barely holding it together in therapy, or some hermit freako woman holed up in her house buying feminine hygiene products on the internet. I would look like me, a woman who likes bright colors, a woman who's heading off to her job, or the mall, or maybe even to some far-off place with no Holiday Inns that have scratchy sheets.

And no, I'm not going anywhere exciting or doing anything noteworthy. But I'm hanging in there. I'm alive, and if Rod Stewart comes on the radio I can finish the drive without crashing my car.

Four stars, because the scarf looks great, but I'm not acting like a stupid scarf changed my life or anything. Get the scarf though, ladies. And stay away from skull shaped shot glasses.

Comments on this review have been disabled.

Chapter 2

The Sound of Bombs

Last weekend, we met up for the first time in months on Barracks Row in Washington, D.C. You live on the north end of Arlington and make the daily commute to your desk job near the Capitol Building. But that Saturday, you took the Metro into town for my visit to the city with college friends.

“There's the Marine barracks, the brick with the wrought iron gates,” you said, playing tour guide, pointing to a tall, brown building with flawless masonry and uniformly cut grass.. Two men with automatic rifles stood guarding the adjacent parking lot, tipped their hats as our group shuffled by.

"Good evening. Where you folks headed?" one asked.

His badge read *McLaughlin*, and I couldn't help thinking of the ASPCA commercials on prime time television, the shelter dogs whimpering and scratching at their cages. I wondered if this man, McLaughlin, owned a pet, or if animals were simply sport to him, brought down by any number of rifles and semi-automatics stored in a shiny, glass case in his family's mountain home.

A girl from our group, politically conservative with a military family, was unaffected. "We're going to dinner, sir," she responded, as another stared, wide-eyed and trembling at the loaded weapon.

“I've never seen one of those up so close,” she later confided, looking strangely like the dogs on those commercials. “It gives me the shakes.”

I cried for two hours the night you decided to join the military. It seemed ill-fitting at best, almost comical, your skinny arms and legs in fatigues, swapping soccer cleats for combat boots, shaving the sides of your head. My best friend smoothed my hair as I lay sprawled across her twin bed, wiping my eyes with napkins from her desk.

"It's my gateway into a government job," you said, tonelessly. "The recruiter said I could become a captain fairly early. I'll probably have to go abroad. I'd be good at it."

That night, I fell asleep to the sound of traffic and students shouting from the balconies of neighboring apartment complexes. In a few months, you would fall asleep to the sound of detonating bombs and children screaming from beneath shards of glass and bits of rubble. Even now, the image makes my throat run dry.

Trattoria Alberto is a hole in the wall on Barracks Row. The website boasts, "fine Italian dining in a friendly, neighborhood setting." It seemed ill-fitting at best, almost comical, in light of the Marines stationed every two blocks with M16s. We ascended the stairs to the restaurant, you and I lagging behind the group, making small talk about wine, texture issues with casseroles, and ethical issues with veal parmigiana. I shot questions almost rapid-fire, frantic, *How do you feel about killing baby cows?* After five months apart, I needed to hear you speak, an affirmation you were, in fact, sitting across the table from me, sipping drinks and sampling garlic toast.

"I like veal. It doesn't bother me. Better to take care of it early on, before it grows up and dies anyway. Some people think that about babies, too. Abortion."

I'm not an animal rights activist or a vegetarian. But in that moment, I wanted nothing more than for you to say, "Veal is disgusting." I wanted you to smile, to order a beer instead of

bland water with lemon, to verbalize “I miss you,” instead of just messaging those words, sometimes.

Since you moved into the city, I’d seen you twice: once on my turf, once on yours. You never did join the military, opted out for an office job at a large law firm, filing papers and picking up slack for the other paralegals.

Several times a week, you complain about your overtime hours and deadbeat roommates, as you sit alone at the local bar where the waiters know you by name and toss you free sandwiches, out of sympathy. You’re handsome. Female associates from the firm liken you to Prince William, an observation I’ve always kept to myself, but you remain inexplicably single.

I don’t know who or what you’re looking for.

One night in July, your last summer night in that old college apartment above the bike shop, we lay on our backs in your twin bed, sheets stripped down in response to the heat. I asked if you were scared to move to Washington, alone.

“Naw, not really,” you mumbled, staring at the ceiling. “I’m looking forward to it, to moving on, getting out. But when I’m gone, promise me something?”

“Yeah?”

“I hope when I’m not around, and you’re a senior, you don’t tell people you regret this.”

“Regret what?”

“Being here with me right now.”

What a strange thing to say, I thought, rolling over to face you. We've been friends for years. I could never, ever regret this.

I didn't say that, of course. You were never over-sentimental. Instead I just nodded, cracked a joke about how old you were, getting a real job, and turned back to face the ceiling.

The next morning, I woke up, ran home, and went to work. You left town around noon. I made it through a ten-hour shift before I finally broke down.

I always thought the military would pollute you, turn you into a shell of the person you once were. The orders, the uniformity, the homogeneity of everything, would alter your individuality, straighten your imperfect teeth, erase each birthmark on your shoulders and every fleck of grey in your pale blue eyes. I hated picturing you in some military base, eating cafeteria style food, talking politics with corn-fed Texas Republicans, playing darts against four guys with your same haircut. And the thought that you might go overseas, set foot in Afghanistan or Iraq, die in the desert, made me want to scream until my throat closed up and no sound came out.

But as we walked home from that restaurant, down Barracks Row, I realized that this place, Washington, had polluted you instead. Gone were the trademark T-shirts I always remembered, lost in favor of plain button-downs, muted cardigans, and dress shoes. When I brushed your arm on the sidewalk, I felt a tension I never noticed before. At the crosswalk near my hotel, a man jogged with his two dogs on leashes. I paused to pet the smaller one, let him jump and stamp his paws all over my new, yellow dress. You stood and watched, shaking your head, refusing to bend down and acknowledge the animals.

I said goodbye to you that night in the dim hallway of the Courtyard Marriott. Pressing my head into your firm chest, shirt laden with cologne, I felt a twinge of something I couldn't place. Sadness? Nostalgia? Disappointment? I do not know when I will see you again.

That night, I buried my head in the pillow and fell asleep to some television sitcom. I could have sworn it was the sound of bombs.

Chapter 3

Sexploration: A Scholarly Assessment of the College Sexual Experience

ABSTRACT

The emergence of college hookup culture within recent years has prompted magazine articles, television shows, and heated kitchen-table discussions about the pros and cons of sexual intercourse in the university setting. This paper outlines the major issues surrounding college hookup culture, including, but not limited to, birth control, sexting, one night stands, oral sex, and unwanted pregnancy, in no particular order. For this paper, I surveyed over one-hundred individuals about their college sexual experiences. As a graduate student who partook in a significant portion of undergraduate hookup culture, I hope to provide insight on two major questions:

1. What is the nature of college students' relationships to sex?
2. Is college hookup culture "bad?"

I will be relying on entries from UrbanDictionary.com, a popular information source for Millennials, throughout this paper.

INTRODUCTION

According to UrbanDictionary.com, Safecracker G. defines *sexploration* as:

1. The early dayz of any sexual relationship when you are findin' out about each others bodiez and desirez.

Example sentence: *me + my new girlfriend have been sexplorin' fo a week now, I think itz about time I asked her about anal.*

I wonder if, when Mr. G shared this insight with the World Wide Web on April 10, 2005, he considered whether or not his new girlfriend would be completely traumatized by his proposition. I imagine he sat in front of his computer, backwards baseball cap with some Philadelphia sports team splashed across the front, metallic sticker on the brim, Youjizz.com open in three different tabs in his internet browser, hand thrown down the front of his ratty grey sweatpants as he thought about it. I wonder, if when Mr. G approached the new girlfriend after that week long period, she faked her own period to avoid further sexploratory experiences. I wonder if Mr. G is even a Mr., or just some horny, pent-up, sexually suppressed female attending an all-girls' Catholic high school in central Pennsylvania, desperately trying to take care of her own orgasm.

LOSING YOUR VIRGINITY

I lost my virginity at nineteen to a stoner kid from Wisconsin who lived with a friend of mine in an off-campus apartment. I say *kid* because now, at twenty-four, he devotes half his day to drinking beer and the other half to getting high before his shifts at Red Lobster. He took a good five or so years to graduate college, majored in sociology because, “People are so weird, ya know?”

It was never that idealized moment we see in romantic comedies, not that passionate, rose petals and massage oils experience I envisioned after years of watching straight-to-DVD movies on the WE channel, and certainly not the spiritual awakening the director of religious education at St. Eulalia's Church in Elmhurst, Pennsylvania promised our Confirmation class it would be when our two (married) bodies fit together like “perfect puzzle pieces.” I was drunk, his mind was most

likely exploding from the substances coursing through his veins, and, well, I just wanted to Do It. Nothing rational comes as a byproduct of a fresh breakup, and I was still reeling from the loss of my first high school love. After all, what better way to get back at that person who fucked you over than to fuck someone else? Immaturity breeds immaturity.

Stoner kid never knew he was my first. I didn't tell him because I was embarrassed, being a late bloomer compared to the other girls who lived on my floor in the dorms, the girls who "lost it" at sixteen in the backseat of someone's car. He probably wouldn't have remembered anyway.

BIRTH CONTROL

Birth control, as per the Oxford English Dictionary, is, "The prevention of conception."

viva_la_gloria of UrbanDictionary offers her interpretation on birth control: "something that your mom forgot to use before you were born."

"My mother used to call us into the living room before we went out on the weekends," I overheard my father telling his friends over Yuenglings at a cookout one evening, "and she'd line us all up and say, 'Keep your pecker in your pants!' And she told EVERYONE; she'd tell me and my brother Dan and all our buddies. She also told my sister Cathy's dates. Which was uncomfortable."

Later that night, I asked my father what he would do if I ever got pregnant in college. My mother jumped in before I could even finish the question.

"I would shoot you. And then I would cry forever because I shot my daughter and then shoot myself."

When I asked my mother to put me on birth control during my freshman year, she cried incessantly for a week and a half. I started on a low dose of Ortho Tri-Cyclen by the end of the month. No one got pregnant. And no one got shot.

UNWANTED PREGNANCY

My best friend from high school had a pregnancy scare the summer after my freshman year of college. She called me from work, choking down sobs in the break room at Five Guys.

"I haven't gotten my period in two months. I haven't told anyone. I need you."

When her shift ended, she and I drove out to the CVS in Scranton and picked up a pregnancy test. I envisioned the conversation that would have occurred if we instead had swung by the Family Planning section in our town's Rite Aid where we used to work.

"Hi, manager Tom! It's great to see you again! Please ignore the twin pack of First Response I'm holding behind my back! Are there any female cashiers to ring me out? By the way, do you guys still sell condoms?"

I brought the small, thin box up to the front registers at CVS because my best friend was mortified to admit the possibility of pregnancy to some random stranger. The cashier swiped my ExtraCare card. I saved two dollars. That's gotta count for something.

Fortunately, her story doesn't end in unwanted pregnancy. Others aren't so lucky.

"Whoops," I remember a girl from high school posting as her Facebook status, "Turns out I'm that .1% who gets pregnant on the Pill. Baby name ideas?"

Another former classmate bombards the internet with pictures of her daughters in Hello Kitty dresses. At 23, I have a Hello Kitty shower curtain. Am I supposed to glean something from this?

SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS

"Fuck, Marry, Kill" is the quintessential game designed to humiliate anyone who's ever mind-fucked a classmate at the gym, during lecture hall, or while guzzling caffeine at the speed of sound in the library. Usually, this game occurs while trapped in the car on a four-hour trip or as part of some Friday night drinking ritual, crowded around a chipped, wooden coffee table. The premise is simple: given three people, you must choose one to sleep with, one to spend eternity with, and one to eliminate.

One evening, given the question, "Fuck, marry, kill three people in this room," I chose to hypothetically fuck the girl standing next to me. I avoided the real answer, my blonde, soccer-playing guy friend loitering in the hallway. But this girl had a nice dress, and I didn't really want to play this game anymore, so I picked her.

"Dayum girl, that's so hot," one guy slurred, reaching into the fridge for another Keystone Light.

I asked him why.

Response: "Girl-on-girl is just hot, I don't know, because like, if two girls let you watch them go at it, it means they secretly want you to join in."

I think it means they're into girls.

None of my lesbian friends has reported the involvement of a third party in their sexual exploits.

"We've been propositioned," a friend told me, "When my ex-girlfriend and I were together, numerous times by girls and guys. I've always been monogamous...and it would *never* have been

with a guy. But if I ever DID have sex with a man, he would be wildly feminine. Like Justin Bieber.”

Unfortunately, none of Mr. G's twenty contributions to UrbanDictionary.com offers any substantial insight into this situation.

ORAL SEX

"Soft," a friend replied, when I asked her what it felt like to go down on another girl. "It was very soft. I think there's something very satisfying about giving someone that sort of pleasure. It's pleasurable to make someone want you like that.”

Another friend, after a three-course seafood dinner, threw up on her boyfriend in the backseat of her Ford Taurus while engaging in a similar act. From what I gather, he was extremely understanding, and even helped her clean the vomit off her car's upholstery. She blamed the shrimp alfredo.

“I don't know,” my roommate mused one night after too many martinis. “I find blow jobs pretty...emotional. When I give my fiancé one, and he smooths my hair, it just makes me love him more.”

In my own personal experience, I've cried twice after giving a blow job. Once, because I'd finally slept with the guy I liked from high school, and after ten or so prior, meaningless sexual experiences, it hit me hard. The second time happened with a different guy. After the longest fellatio of my life, he stood up and said, “Dude, that was awesome. I'm taking this other girl out to dinner tonight...do you have any suggestions on where we should go?”

“YOUR NUMBER”

The subjective science of charting "your number" has three components:

1. Determine your definition of sex. If you're unsure, the OED calls it, "Physical contact between individuals involving sexual stimulation." If this still seems vague, TJ from UrbanDictionary.com is eager to clarify: "What kind of moron are you that you look up sex in the urban dictionary?"

Some people believe "any sex is sex," that if the penis or vagina comes in any sort of contact with your partner's body, you can add another notch to the proverbial belt. Personally, I find this problematic; more than once, whether during a pick up game of basketball, or while trying to squeeze on the bus, or while waiting in line at the bar, my fingers accidentally grazed the crotch region of an unsuspecting person. I've been elbowed in the boob. These awkward, accidental interactions are casualties of life.

My twenty-year old sister thinks sex, "Is just penetration. Everything else is foreplay. You can't get pregnant off a hand job or blow job. You can't ejaculate out your fingers either. Unless you're Spiderman."

2. Count how many sexual experiences in your lifetime fall under this pre-determined definition. Be honest.

"How many people have I had sex with?" my neighbor laughed, squinting his eyes when I pried him for his number. "Yikes. I'd have to say...more than 25, but less than 100. No. No, wait. Definitely more than 50. But still less than 100. I think."

3. Now eliminate the experiences that "half-count," happened while heavily intoxicated, or are too traumatic to acknowledge for various reasons.

For example, I half-count the boy who left my room, mid-hookup, to "use the bathroom." When he didn't return after ten minutes, I slipped on a shirt and wandered out into my living room to find myself alone. Imagining him slipping out the front entrance, wedging himself between the

door and the wall to avoid being heard, and sprinting back to his apartment was the only thing that saved my pride.

side note: It's tasteless to reveal your number in a first date scenario. I've done this twice. Unsurprisingly, I spent the majority of my college years without a boyfriend.

COLLEGE DATES

The gradual decline of college dating culture, heavily lamented by generation X (i.e., your parents), means that getting asked out in the university setting is, well, a Big Deal.

Many undergraduates agree with Urbandictionary's h_diddy, who calls dating, "A pointless waste of time... defined by massive usage of cologne and/or perfume, awkward sweaty hand-holding, and feelings of puppy love that usually dissolve in a few weeks (or less)."

Still others, like originalposer, have a bleaker outlook. "(Dating is) the act of entering into the domain of hell where the lost and the lonely go to get laid."

My worst college date involved miniature golf, deep-fried Mexican food, and the horrifying realization that *oh my god, I cannot stand to be within two hundred feet of this person*. He talked incessantly about his workout regiment, supported Sarah Palin as a political candidate, and tried to grope me multiple times in the first fifteen minutes. Over lunch, he presented me with a complete breakdown of his diagnosed psychological conditions and medication he was currently taking. There was not a second date.

Last November, a law student I worked with in a professional context asked me out. "We're nearing the end of our working relationship," he said, "and I was wondering if we could get coffee."

Before giving me a chance to respond, he amended his original statement.

“Actually, I’m gonna cut to the chase. You’re hot, and your Facebook profile picture makes me feel like you’re a little naughty.”

For reference, the photo featured me in an old woman costume, circa Halloween. I did not follow. He did not explain.

“So I think we could have a good thing. I’d like to have sex. Unless that’s too forward.”

His last-ditch effort when I ignored his proposition: “I mean, I could take you out to dinner first. If you want.”

My best college date, in contrast, is a story I’ll tell my hypothetical grandchildren. After meeting for lunch earlier in the day, I took him to a costume party at a friend’s apartment one Saturday. I dressed like a man. He wore my makeup. Considering we hooked up later that night, the gender-bending is an interesting touch. We dated for four months. Come to think of it, no. I will not share that story with my grandchildren.

PHONE SEX

On Cafepress.com, a website that sells custom made apparel, mugs, mouse pads, and other miscellaneous accessories, for \$3.99, one can buy a pre-made bumper sticker that says, “I Heart Phone Sex with David.” The tote bag’s only \$14.99. And if the world still doesn’t know how arousing “Phone Sex with David” is, a white t-shirt specially sized for small dogs is available. Of course, at this point, it becomes unclear who is hearting the phone sex, the person or the dog, and that gets kind of weird. I also have a cousin David, which makes things even weirder.

Phone Sex with Anyone, my old roommate insists, “is really awkward...especially if someone overheard only one end of the conversation.” Another friend considers it the saving grace of her long-distance relationship; her fiancé works in Ohio, and she’s finishing up school in

Pennsylvania. For me, it's a guilty pleasure, typically provoked by a moderate quantity of alcohol and pent-up sexual frustration.

Rissa230, of Urban Dictionary, shares her opinion: "When someone is horny and express their feelings for someone over texting cuz they are too fucking lazy to get up, go to their bf/gf's house and fuck them. its that simple."

What Rissa fails to mention, however, is a breakdown of that appalling moment the following morning when you pick up your phone and remember you exchanged a number of explicit text messages while obliterated with that cute friend of yours from the on-campus organization you're both in . At this point, you have three choices:

1. Be brave and acknowledge the situation for what it is. You can try to laugh it off, make some off-handed comment to diffuse the tension, and ultimately come out of the exchange looking semi-normal.

Example: "Yep, so that happened, haha. My bad. Still carpooling to the fundraiser on Friday? I heard there's going to be free pizza!"

2. Blame the alcohol.

Example: "Oh man, I drank too much last night, sorry about that."

Less tactful example: "So0o0o0o drunk last nite...totally didn't mean any of that and we should forget all of this ever happened because we're just friends and that's it, okay cya."

The latter of these statements, while making it abundantly clear to the cute friend that you want nothing to do with this sort of behavior, also eliminates your chances of ever getting with said friend. It's up to you.

3. Ignore the situation completely and start a totally unrelated conversation about the unsexiest thing you can think of, like what you're planning on making for dinner in your Crock Pot, or the new Pope, or infant mortality rates.

As a last resort, you can ignore these rules completely and go jump off a bridge. Because when you text Cute Friend, "I want to be your little slut," at 1:47 am, there's really no recovery from that.

ANAL SEX

Remember our friend, Safecracker G.? He was pretty interested in anal sex. Turns out, 56 UrbanDictionary.com users have weighed in on this weighty topic.

DonnieLee says anal sex occurs, "When the crack you attack is the track in the back."

Jenji74 finds back-door intercourse a little more emotional. "When you find someone you love and trust with all your heart," she writes, "You have to let them penetrate your arse."

Forays into the realm of anal intercourse are not for the faint of heart.

"You know how people say 'balls to the wall'?" a friend explained, "Well, when you're doin' it in the butt, it's balls to the wall or none at all. In this case...I guess the wall would be your buttocks. Ooh. I'm sorry. That's kind of gross."

Another friend was not so enthusiastic. "Your butt hole is a one way street. I drove up a one way street in the city by accident once, and I ran over a cat. I felt really bad about it. I cried, even. And I tried anal once and it hurt like a bitch so yeah, NO THANK YOU."

Further butt sex inquiries have been met with mixed results. Some people love it. An old coworker swears it's "a whole new world." Others shudder at the thought of a foreign object invading their intimate space. Many people can't get past the image of poop.

My current boyfriend is a football-playing undergraduate at another university. I won't weigh-in on my personal experiences in this arena, except to say you better like someone *a lot* before you attack the crack.

STRANGE PLACES TO HAVE SEX

My first sexual experience took place on a bridge in a public park. In the grand scheme of my sexual experiences to date, it was pretty tame, but the element of potentially getting caught heightened the adrenaline. Coincidentally, when my partner in crime hired a photographer for his high school senior pictures, she took him to the public park, positioned him on the same bridge, in the same spot, and unintentionally immortalized the essence of my sexual experience with high-resolution photography. This picture is currently displayed in his family's guest bedroom.

Upon surveying roughly 50 college students ages 18-22 about the strangest places they've had sex, I have received the following responses:

- "During my sophomore year, my boyfriend brewed hard apple cider and convinced me to have sex with him in an igloo on campus. But let's be honest, I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't secretly wanted to a little bit."
- "In a porto-potty at a church picnic. The porto-potty had also fallen into a ditch. And she was totally into it. Don't worry, it's not as gross as it sounds. And it wasn't my church so it's all good."
- "I had sex in my grandma's attic. I actually lost my virginity there. But it's no big deal. My grandma had moved out by that point."

- “It was on the hood of a yellow Mustang, center field of my little league field when I was sixteen. It was summer, it was extremely hot, it was nighttime. There’s a certain poetry in driving out in the middle of a field. It made more sense than, say, a porto-potty.”

ONE NIGHT STANDS

A one-night stand, according to the OED, is “a casual sexual liaison or encounter lasting only one night. ”

Hidollarho, on February 25, 2004, described it as, "Hooking up with someone for one night of sex with no strings attached and hoping to never see them again. It is important not to exchange any personal info with them so they can't track you down and stalk you later."

The one night stand can simultaneously function as a piece of social currency or a shameful discoloration on one's sexual history. For example, the friend of mine who grew up listening to Third Eye Blind and somehow, at 21, befriended and slept with the lead singer, automatically has the best one night stand story in any given circle of friendly discussion. But the guy who tried to hook up with a girl after a party at her apartment and mid-coitus, suffered an explosive nosebleed that dripped all over her face will bear the shame of that encounter for the next several decades.

During a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit a friend who recently graduated college, we took the metro to a sketchy bar she insisted would be a great time. She, of course, vanished with some random person about twenty minutes into the evening, leaving me alone, in a strange bar, in a strange city. I made the classic bad decision to follow a strange boy out of a strange bar in a strange city into a strange apartment on a strange campus. Whoever coined that public service announcement, "Do you know where your children are?" would have had a coronary.

Strange Boy was a baseball star from George Washington University, not an axe murderer or anyone ever featured on, “To Catch a Predator.” And the next morning, in the true spirit of

chivalry, he gave me a white, XL t-shirt with pale yellow pit stains and a pair of "George Washington University Lacrosse," athletic shorts to find my way home in.

Those shorts were my go-to, senior year, when I ran out of yoga pants. I haven't tried them on since I started graduate school.

CONCLUSION

In a perfect world, I could bring this full circle, back to Safecracker G., who suddenly logs on to UrbanDictionary.com, now eight years later, happily married, with insights on adult relationships, domesticity, and children.

"It wasn't like this when I was in college," is my mother's mantra when she hears her own students exchanging battle stories before her American History class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. "Is that what it's all about these days? Running around and...fucking each other?!"

After I posted photos online from my boyfriend's birthday weekend, my Facebook-illiterate grandmother sent me this message: "mandy is that your new beau.tell me about him.gram."

At least three people approached me with some variation of, "Oh my god, how cute is that? Your *beau*? I wish life was still like that, where people went on dates and had first kisses on the front steps and you weren't expected to have sex right away."

My tiny, god-fearing grandmother would have *died* if she knew the years I spent as an undergraduate drunkenly stumbling through parties and bars, letting guys buy me Long Islands to loosen my inhibitions, before taking me back to their apartments for sex on futons dusted with potato chip crumbs and bits of pizza crusts. More than once, I've taken emergency contraception and prayed to whatever higher power is out there to please, spare me, that I'm young, that I'm

going to have a real job someday, that having a baby in my early twenties would destroy me. And more than once, I've continued to buy into the college hookup culture.

I had sex with my current boyfriend for YEARS before we decided to settle down and seriously date each other. The space between our intermittent hookups was loaded with half-assed relationships, random sexual encounters, and experiences we collectively call, "shitshows." The sheer drama of being an undergraduate at a state school with thousands of people and thousands of parties is...exhausting.

"Why did we do this?" he mumbled, one night as we were falling asleep. "We shouldn't have been with all those other people. We blew it."

I can't condemn college hookup culture; that would make me a hypocrite. And I'd be lying if I told you all those sexual experiences were negative. Some of my funniest stories and life-changing moments were borne of a random hookup or crazy sexual escapade. But I'd be lying if I told you I felt fulfilled waking up next to someone I didn't care about, getting dressed, and trekking back to my apartment at 6 a.m. in a leopard print spandex dress.

This brings me back to my two questions from the beginning.

1. What is the nature of college students' relationships to sex?

High school students like sex. College students like sex. Grown men and women like sex. And, as much as we hate to think about it, the elderly like sex too. But for young people, specifically college-aged guys and girls, it's an exploration. When Christopher Columbus landed in America in lieu of India, he made the most of the situation. Yes, he called the native peoples, "Indians," and took several prisoners, but that's not the point. America was new territory, and he was going to hunt, and plant, and settle the hell out of that place.

In most cases, when kids go to college, they're embarking on a journey to a new town with new people. Coincidentally, their bodies begin producing unbelievable amounts of testosterone and estrogen. It's the perfect storm for sexploration. And when things are new, they're thrilling, and intriguing, and exciting. And we want more. But just like that Ke\$ha song popular radio killed on endless repeat, too much of a good thing is a very, very bad thing.

2. So is college hookup culture "bad?"

I've done the research. I've emptied my arsenal of personal anecdotes. I've teased out the greatest and most horrifying sexual stories of my peers. I've learned a lot.

That's what this is, more than anything. Sexploration is a learning experience. It's the way we determine what we like and what we don't, what we need in a partner and what we cannot tolerate. Sexploration taught me the difference between sleeping with that hot guy who lives across the hall and settling down next to your significant other and letting them slip off your clothes. It taught me what feels clean and what feels so dirty that I need a second shower. Most importantly, it taught me that even though we strive to define things, to make sense of things, to determine why it is we do the things we do and feel the way we feel, my college sexual experience does not define me.

Upon revisiting Urban Dictionary's definition of sex, DGlaze writes:

"The lone reason why the world exists, figuratively, and literally!!!"

He's probably right, you know.

ACADEMIC VITA

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Education

- M.A, English, May 2014, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania
 - Concentrations: Fiction and Creative Nonfiction
- B.A., English, May 2014, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania
 - Concentration: Creative Writing
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Honors and Awards

- Outstanding Mock Trial Witness Award at Cornell Invitational, January 2013
- Outstanding Mock Trial Witness Award at Elon Invitational, October 2012
- All-Region Witness award at Buffalo Regional, February 2012
- Outstanding Mock Trial Witness Award at Cornell Invitational, January 2012
- Outstanding Mock Trial Witness Award at Tufts Invitational, November 2011

Association Memberships/Activities

- Administrative Vice President, Penn State Mock Trial, 2013-2014
- Happy Valley Invitational Tournament Director, Penn State Mock Trial, 2013
- Camp Counselor for Penn State Mock Trial's High School Program, 2013
- Administrative Vice President, Penn State Mock Trial, 2012-2013
- Happy Valley Invitational Tournament Director, Penn State Mock Trial, 2012
- Judging Coordinator, Penn State Mock Trial, 2011-2012
- Fundraising Coordinator, Penn State Mock Trial, 2010-2011

Professional Experience

- **Graduate Social Media Intern for Creative Writing Department**
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 - Updated the Creative Writing Department's various social media accounts, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WordPress.
 - Interviewed, recorded, and photographed visiting authors, faculty and staff, and students.
 - Collaborated on various projects, textual and otherwise, in order to advertise the BAMA program and gather student interest, both current and prospective.
- **Undergraduate Intern for Communications, Arts, and Sciences Department**
The Pennsylvania State University, January 2013 - May 2013
 - Served as teaching assistant for CAS 321: Rhetoric and Law

Teaching Experience

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