

KNIGHTS ARE ALWAYS BETTER

By Elizabeth C. Myers

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CAST: one female

I'm an incurable romantic...always have been, I suppose. My belief in fairy tales, handsome princes and true love started the first time that my mother read Cinderella to me...and it hasn't gone away since. I fancied myself to be that beautiful maiden in the stunning gown at the gala parties, and I waited for my handsome prince...and continued to beg my mother to read me that book over and over again.

(pause) I look back now and still hear that silky, motherly voice, coaxing me, nodding her head up and down in the "yes" motion, saying, "Honey, wouldn't The Cat in the Hat be a great bedtime story for tonight instead?" I'm sure she had the text memorized and was utterly sick of my pleas to hear the tale again and again, but she always relented and read me Cinderella instead.

Sure, after many years of failed attempts at great romances, there had been doubt...moments of sheer, unbridled cynicism that managed to put a damper on those clear definitions I had for myself of what the perfect man would bring into my life.

I still remember sitting in my bedroom with my two closest friends from high school, playing Duran Duran on rainy nights, imitating Simon Le Bon singing in that deep sexy English way he had. **(sing it!)** "You know you can feel my love...my heart...my..." ACK!! It even sounds horrible now, I can't imagine what it sounded like when three adolescent girls were howling it in unison!

Three best friends, sitting in our bathrobes, hanging out the window smoking cigarettes, and talking about our future husbands.

Now, we all had very particular definitions of the men that we were looking for...what they looked like, how they acted, how they would treat us. I still hear Patti and Cathy's lilting giggles as I relayed my description to them. They always waited until I finished mooning before they would do a mental one-two-three shoot to figure out who would be the one to break it to me.

To this day, I can hear Patti, and what remained of her Virginia drawl, calmly and tactfully informing me, "Darlin', knights in shining armor don't exist no more and you probably won't ever get the chance to be the princess at the ball, because...well, balls just don't happen that much in the New Jersey suburbs."

I never took offense to their disbelief. I think that, somewhere in my gut, I doubted as much as they did that I would ever find my gallant man on his white horse, riding through that flower-filled meadow to scoop me onto his steed, promising me the world and riding off with me into a perfect pink and gold sunset...

I was never offended by the doubt...didn't change the fact, however, that THAT was what I wanted. **(pause and laugh)** Both of my high school buddies went on to marry the men that they had dreamed of on those nights up in my room... and I smile every time I visit either of them, because I know how special it is that they found them. I was in both of their weddings, which were both years ago, and at each event my friends assured me that "mine" was on the horizon. Sometime in the near future I would find a man that I could build a life with and grow old with. Even through my smiles and agreements, I couldn't quell the voice at the back of my head that still demanded nothing less than my very own gallant, handsome, mythical knight in shining armor.

There were many years and many relationships during which I felt badly for my friends because they were so supportive and so hopeful that I would, indeed, find that man... Well, actually, after I had passed my twenty-eighth birthday, as far as they were concerned...any man. They would tell me in their kindest voices how

much they loved me and how they believed that I deserved what I was looking for, but wasn't I setting my sights just a little too high?

So...I spent years dating men whom I thought would work out nicely...whom I cared for very much...but they just weren't...well, I just could never walk far enough away from that Prince Charming in my head to let a real man in. So they never worked out, and nine times out of ten, it didn't work out because I had, as many, many people have put it, (*sarcastic lecturing tone*) "Set my standards too high for any man who lived in reality to actually be able to meet them"...and I hit a point where I just decided that I was done. I had agonized through disappointment after disappointment...and I closed myself off from the entire dating scene. It wasn't even really a conscious decision on my part...the guy I was dating at the time was nice enough, but I was so utterly sick of something being "not quite right" that I just broke up with him one day and started focusing totally on turning my life into the life that I had been dreaming about. A little selfishness is good every once in a while, right?! So, at thirty-something years old...I finally got selfish and stopped looking for Mr. Goodbar.

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