

She Was The Last One

“You're going to break my heart, aren't you? And after you do, you'll meet the woman you'll marry. After me.” She would say that when we'd fight. I always thought it was just to rile me up, because she enjoyed riling me up, but somehow she knew. She was the last one.

“You're just saying that,” I'd say, then roll over to grab a cigarette from the nightstand. I smoked constantly when we'd fight.

“No, Mike, I'm the last one. I'm the last piece of the puzzle. Your relationship puzzle was missing just one piece, and now you have it. I'm always the last piece of the puzzle.” She'd get out of bed and go get a drink at this point- she drank constantly when we'd fight. I'd stare at her naked body as she stormed out of the room. If she was right about me breaking her heart, I'd miss that part of her. The nakedness, not the storming.

It wasn't like we were ever meant to be together. I needed a housemate, she needed a room. Sure, I needed my housemate because the girl I had been living with left me for her boss, but in my head it was simple economics. You want to pay rent? You can live in my house.

But it wasn't that simple. It's never that simple, is it? No, we weren't meant to be together, but our parents meant for us to be together. “Oh, Mike, meet Debbie, we've been telling you about each other for years. She just graduated from UCLA and needs a place to live.” Wink wink. Nudge nudge. She needs a place to live and you two should really be in love. That's what our parents were really thinking. Or, in my case, my mom was thinking, “Mike, she's SO much better than that piece of trailer trash you were living with.”

And how was I to know that after living with a woman for two years in a house we bought together and having her leave me for her 48 year old boss would leave me vulnerable to a sneak attack on my lust by a recent UCLA graduate who was semi-attractive? Seriously, if this was a puzzle, one of the instructions on the box should read, “WARNING: Broken hearted 26 year old men have seriously reduced standards and are vulnerable to just about anybody. Even you.”

“Are you judging me again?” She had returned with a bottle of vodka in one hand and a cigarette of her own in the other. She smoked like a chimney when she was doubting everything. Which was often. And, really, I didn't give her much reason not to doubt. At first, our arrangement was fun. We starting sleeping together a few days into our housemate situation and never looked back. And that was fun...for about 6 months. Companionship, on the surface, is worth something, a lot of something, particularly when you're vulnerable. But then she got serious. She said “I love you.” I said “what?” That started some serious analysis on my part. Love? You, my UCLA graduate semi-

attractive housemate, love me?

“I'm not judging you, Debbie. Stop it.”

“You have that look on your face.” Perhaps I did. I did start to judge her after she said she loved me. Could I love her? Was she the right piece of the puzzle? Lord knows I had been through enough crappy pieces of the puzzle; but I knew I didn't want to put together an overall crappy puzzle. That's when it hit me. That's when I agreed with her - she was the last one.

If a man is lucky, once in his life the light bulb over his head switches on and burns so bright that the man gets the message. For me, that was the moment I knew that Debbie wasn't what I wanted. At all. And I knew that Lori wasn't what I wanted. At all. And Lisa. And Megan. And June. None of the glorious list of the Ex-Girlfriend Mafia. They were all pieces of a very crappy puzzle. And if I continued to settle for the same piece of the puzzle time and time again, I'd end up with a completed puzzle that would not match the piece of art my life was supposed to be. And that was unacceptable.

She was right. She was the last one. I broke up with her a week later.

And three weeks later I met my wife.

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