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WOMAN SENSE

Can't stand
that heavy
settle musicALLISON
SILBERBERG

I had lunch with a former beau when I was in Chicago. He had good news: He was getting married. She sounded lovely, and I was happy that the love bug had finally bitten him again. As I listened to him talk about the wedding plans, I thought what a wonderful husband and father he'll be.

Funny thing, I seemed more excited about his upcoming nuptials than he was.

"This is great! Aren't you excited?" I asked.

"Sure."

"She sounds terrific!"

After a long pause, he added, "You know, Allison, nothing is perfect."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"She's terrific. Don't get me wrong. But..."

"Are you crazy? You're on the verge of getting married. Shouldn't you be ecstatic?"

"It's time to get married. I love her. She loves me. We're getting married."

I've known people to get more excited over a chocolate souffle. This didn't sound like wedding bells to me. He wasn't giddy. In fact, he was content, like someone married 20 years, not like someone on the verge of tying the knot. I suddenly felt out of sorts. Here was a guy I dated more than 10 years ago. He was giddy then, and I wondered what had happened to him in the intervening years. He said something about this being the real world.

I felt he had let me in on information I really didn't want to know. I felt invasive, that his fiancée should be here listening. Maybe he didn't have anyone else to confide in, an old friend who would understand.

'Sleepless' message

After our lunch, I remembered a conversation I had a few years ago with Jeff Arch, the screenwriter of *Sleepless in Seattle*. We were discussing what he thought of my romantic comedy script. Then he asked, "Do you know what *Sleepless in Seattle* was really about?"

"Finding Mr. Right?" I asked cautiously.

"Not settling," he countered.

"Well, no one's perfect."

"Right. No one's perfect. But don't settle just because he fits your basic requirements or because it's time to get married."

I wondered if my old beau was "settling." I hoped he was just full of pre-nuptial jitters. But, he was settling and he knew it. He was letting me know it, too.

I thought about all my married friends and wondered if they "settled" or married for the right reasons. I don't think any of them settled.

There are those who fall in love and it is right and works and lasts. And there are those who fall in love and it is right for a while, but then sputters and does not last. The ones who love and lose must dig deeply into their souls and allow themselves to love again and be loved again. Sometimes falling in love again can be as invigorating as the first go-round, but as my old friend in Chicago indicated, it isn't always the same. Yet, sometimes it can be better.

For some, life itself is about not settling. For others, life is all about settling. At times, it's about being able to say "good enough" and mean it. Wouldn't it be a shame to go through life in search of someone who does not exist?

Not a settler

I don't want to settle. This topic wasn't even a blip on my radar screen 10 years ago. Now, on the verge of my turning 35, it is an issue, and I know others grappling with these choices. In the olden days, there was an arranged marriage in the village. Folks of yesteryear would find my generation's angst laughable, but that's the double-edged sword of having choices. While my ancestors were concerned about Cossacks, my generation ponders the meaning of a book called *The Rules*.

In the end, I think it's a matter of luck and making the commitment, a matter of belief and conviction, a matter of opening oneself up to intimacy and all its wonder. People fall in love every day, and hopefully it will last. I know a lot of people who married their first loves and are happy. A few are divorced. And I know a lot of people who never got over their first loves. And I know people who loved, lost, suffered and then finally found a love that was heaven-sent.

How I hope we all find what we're looking for and know it when we see it.

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