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LLOYD DOBLER, WHERE ARE YOU?

Courtney Brogno

When I was five years old, a neighborhood boy came over to play with my sister and me. Within five minutes, we had convinced this poor boy to play “wedding,” a typical game my sister and I often played. Subdued into submission by the presence of two youthful and dominant girls, he attempted to play the part of my fiancé, with my sister acting the dual roles of priest and wedding coordinator. The boy pouted throughout the rehearsal, seemingly uninterested as my sister rattled off directions and wedding protocol. Underneath his unaffected demeanor, I knew he was as excited as we were to get on with this wedding. After all, the real excitement lay in the wedding itself; the rehearsal was but a prelude to the more meaningful event.

As I departed the rehearsal and changed into my white robe disguised as a beautiful Vera Wang gown, my counterpart and soon-to-be husband tried to make an escape for the door. Fortunately, we caught him and physically forced him to take his place at the coffee table turned alter. With the budding excitement of a bride to be, I walked down the hallway/aisle as my Fisher Price record player played the only record we had that was not scratched—the evocative music of Disneyland’s “The Haunted House.” Unfazed by the less than perfect melody, I took my position at the aisle and turned, searching into my love’s eyes for that great depth of meaning only true love can bring. What happened next was the chilling reality I have been faced with ever since.

As soon as my sister began her well-scripted wedding preamble, the whole wedding procedure went awash. The young neighborhood boy did not know how to act or what to say! The poignant words I had heard so often during previous “weddings” when playing with girlfriends was replaced with maniacal laughter and inattentive mumblings about

how he would rather be taking a bath than pretending to get married. Alas, I have now come to realize that not much has changed since my carefree childhood days.

After the wedding debacle, I sat on the front porch with my sister trying to discern what went wrong, where the problem had occurred. It was obvious that this boy was unclear about the traditional wedding protocol. But, how could he not know? Every other girl who came over to play was ecstatic when a wedding scenario could be acted out, and the whole event always took place without a hitch, usually involving rice being thrown and wishes being made to a happy ever after life. It soon became evident, as I consoled myself by popping *Cinderella* into the vcr, that little boys just did not watch the same movies as little girls did.

As a young girl, my whole life revolved around Disney movies. My mom refused to purchase cable or let her children even watch tv at family and friend's houses. However, my mother felt it was completely safe to pile her children in front of the tv screen and watch as many Disney movies as possible. She strongly felt that Disney had been a main-stream of American culture and could only impart the best of morals and values into her precious children's minds.

In many ways, this makes perfect sense. *Cinderella* listens intently to her step mom, works diligently at her tasks, and is rewarded with a beautiful prince and fairy godmother. *Snow White* takes care of seven little men, cleans the house regularly, defeats an evil witch a couple of times but finally gets deceived by her lies and trickery, falls into a deep slumber, and even while asleep her prince finds her, kisses her, revives her, and off they go, married and "happily ever after." *Sleeping Beauty* struggles just like the other Disney princesses. She has the awful misfortune of not even knowing what her situation is because she has been silently sent away from her parents to live with three fairies. She finds herself singing in the forest one day where she meets a man (unbeknownst to her that this is the same man she has been promised to since birth.) Unfortunately she gets lured into a sleeping trance by the evil witch, yet, still, her prince manages to cut through to a tower entwined in rose bushes, fight the evil witch who turns magically into a dragon, kiss his sleeping princess, and once, again, the couple marries, and dances into their future—again, happily ever after. Even *Lady and the Tramp* find true love through massive obstacles, including class differences and an unknown and sinister neighborhood—and they were dogs!

Although all of these Disney movies did teach me the value of never straying into a forest alone with singing and dancing animals, and, of course, never trusting women who wear only the color black, usually in the form of a cape and who are so incredibly horribly disfigured to be naturally formed (they are witches in disguise after all), what these movies really taught me was about the true nature of love: it will come at an early age, come in the form of a prince who I don't really know, who always wears white and usually

rides a horse, and even in the face of grave danger, love will manage to succeed. Without any other examples from my Disney movie collection to counter these images, my whole reality of love, marriage, and knighthood formed according to these principles. My poor mother never realized that Disney portrayed an unrealistic image of love and marriage, an image that haunts and disillusioned many women for the rest of their lives.

So the poor neighborhood boy had not watched the same Disney movies as I did or at least not with the same dedication, repetition, and conviction as I. Rather, his mom probably let him watch cable tv, viewing mass murders on a daily basis, drug dealers on every corner, corrupt policemen in every precinct, and a million commercials that brainwashed him into constantly nagging his mother for that special toy that he *needed*. And yet, this boy is probably more well-adjusted than I am. Thanks Disney!

Of course, I can't only blame Disney. Every movie I have watched more than a couple of times perpetuates the same knight in shining armor and happily ever after myth. As a pre-teen I repeatedly watched *Pretty in Pink*, a movie a close girlfriend gave me for my tenth birthday. Fascinated by the story of a girl from the wrong side of the tracks, a geek who worships her, and the rich and handsome high school boy who secretly loves her, I knew that in the next couple of years, when I actually entered high school, this was sure to happen to me. I wasn't living on the wrong side of the tracks and I didn't have red hair like Molly Ringwald, but I was sure that true love was destined for my high school years. The end of the movie stood out as proof of love's existence: Blane wins Andie's heart, and Duckie, the best geek ever portrayed in movie history, is still friends with everyone. Best of all, class structures do not matter when two hearts connect. This had to be real.

The next year, as I eagerly awaited my eleventh birthday, my mom took me to see the movie *The Princess Bride*. Once again I was enraptured by the movie's view of love. This movie had heroes, giants, villains, wizards, a six-fingered man, and true love. Princess Buttercup, the heroine, finally falls in love with her Westley when she realizes that his only response ever to her, "As you wish," was really a way of saying "I love you." Now, I still don't understand why Westley just couldn't tell his darling that he loved her, but he did go through seemingly insurmountable obstacles in order to rescue and save his love from a loveless marriage and death plot formulated by Prince Humperdinck. While watching this love story unfold, I squeezed my hands together in anticipation of what this movie promised: a beautiful man who didn't really speak very often, never contradicted his woman of choice, answered almost every one of her wishes with "as you wish," climbed mountains and fought giants to save her—and all in the name of LOVE. This was really something to look forward to.

By the time I was ready to enter high school my mind was filled with what love was and how it was supposed to stumble upon me. I was prepared and I knew exactly what I was going to say to the boy who walked down my path of love. It was during this height-

ened state of awareness that the most romantic movie of my time came out and, a man came into my life, unlike any I'd ever seen before. His name was Lloyd Dobler, and the movie was *Say Anything*. Lloyd Dobler, played by John Cusack, was a recent high school graduate without any idea of what to do with his future. The only thing he knew for sure was that he wanted to go out with Diane Court, played by Ione Skye as the high school genius who was smarter, richer, and more ambitious than he.

Their love match begins almost instantly as Lloyd nabs a date with Diane and woos her with his easy going personality, vast array of friends, and chivalric intentions. Diane and Lloyd begin to see each other on a regular basis and their love begins to mature. Although Lloyd never has to slay dragons or fight giants, he does have to maneuver his way through different class structures, an overbearing and overly involved father, and melodramatic friends who constantly surround him. Diane doesn't have it so easy either.

In between falling in love with Lloyd, she has had to deal with scholarship applications, a mother who is never there for her, a father who has been embezzling money for years and is being investigated by the FBI, and a heavy decision of whether or not to leave for England to study abroad. Frustrated with the chaos of her life, Diane dumps Lloyd to sort through the mess. But, does that stop Lloyd? No, Lloyd perseveres through obstacles, much like Westley did for Princess Buttercup. Lloyd never says "as you wish" to Diane like Westley was so likely to say to his love, rather he doesn't let Diane go. In the face of adversity, he stands outside her bedroom window, holds up a boom box and lets the melody of Peter Gabriel's song "In Your Eyes" come blaring out of the speakers, for Diane and the whole world. Oh yes, the whole world knew that Lloyd Dobler loved Diane Court, and, in the end, just like his prince counterparts, he won the girl and they flew off to England, together, to live, we assume, "happily ever after." *Say Anything* captivated me, and I knew that I was destined to meet my Blane, my Westley, my Lloyd Dobler in high school, the next stage of my life.

In high school, I met many boys and went on several dates, but none of these boys or dates proved to be successful in my love-enchanted eyes. There was no magic, no boom boxes delivering sweet melodies to my ears, and there were certainly no dragons to be slayed. Instead, I was surrounded by boys who talked too much, drove their cars too fast, and chose having some beers with their buddies over any romantic movie I desperately tried to get them to watch in the hopes of showing them what true love entailed. I was five years old again, trying to physically force my neighbor to act the part of the loving husband the way it was supposed to be done. I was disappointed and disillusioned. And I knew I was not alone.

Now, with high school and a college degree behind me, I can't count the number of times my girlfriends and I have spent sitting on the couch watching these movies over and over again wondering how reality could be so different from what was portrayed on

film. Or, at least, the films we watched. We have summed it up to the plain fact that boys don't watch the same movies we do, and they aren't fascinated by the same love plots that we are fascinated by. But, there are some boys who I know have seen the same movies and don't understand where the love story begins and ends, and why it is so enchanting to women. They look at us strangely and often ask, "Don't you know that this is just a movie?"

Well, of course we know it's just a movie, but a movie has to be based on something, right? Somewhere in our vast history, there had to have been men like Lloyd Dobler, Westley, Blane, and even the nameless princes who gallop through Disney's movies. If this is not true, if men like this don't exist, then I blame Disney and every romantic movie that ever portrayed love as an exceptional state to be in, an epic adventure that can only end with "happily ever after." In fact, I blame my mom for not knowing better and letting me watch movies that perpetuate this myth into my adult years. I even blame my therapist for telling me to turn off the tv and appreciate the reality of life.

No, I will not succumb to the notion that this has all been a big charade! And, until my true love comes to my door—seeks me out—riding on a white horse, dressed gallantly in armor, ready to fight any dragon or obstacle in his way, and carrying a boom box playing Peter Gabriel, then I will settle for nothing less than a night on my couch with one of my favorite men, from one of my favorite movies. 