

50 Shades of Grey Area: The Perpetual Friends-with-Benefits

The upside of my life revolving around my mental illness is the gift of a unique, almost detached, perspective on those issues that vex the every day individual: parents, sibling rivalry, friendships, regular stress, what to wear, what to do on the weekend, where to travel, and especially, romantic entanglement. I never spend much time worrying about these due to the large debilitating concerns I face on a daily basis, so I tend to view every day life in a way comparable to watching shows on television; the time I spend thinking on it feels like a vacation, one I will take now.

Romantic/sexual relationships have always been a side thought in my 22 years so I tend to put my faith in stereotypes; isn't it just a race to encounter at least one vagina for guys from 13-35? Don't girls determine their romantic choices on how it appears to others, driven by their implicit need for self-validation? Isn't it true that women get more out of posting "couple" photos to the social void as proof of their relevance and less out of the actual experience?¹ There seemed to be so much superficial behavior required of dating that I couldn't bring myself to explore for quite some time. Combine that apathy with the other lovely red flags I harbor: sexual repression (thanks to my Catholic education, yes the cliché endures), general distrust of others' motives, a deep hatred of sexual tension, a blunt attitude that ruins flirting, and a deep fear that the relationship I enter will fall apart when I have an episode where I sleep for a week...and you are left with someone who is completely ill equipped for the romantic landscape (me).²

Before we delve into my failed experiments, it is extremely important to remember, start to finish, that I love being single and I love being alone. I am a natural introvert, and the only I

¹ This one is still a yes. I pray for the day when they realize no one cares about you and your bf going to crate and barrel. And no, the filter doesn't change anything.

² I am choosing not to explore my deep insecurity that no one will ever love me if they knew how many pills I take and what I go through every day.

time I enjoy going to bars is when it's a dark empty place with a crusty 70-year-old-alcoholic-ex-veteran angrily drinking in the corner. Can you really blame me? Being single means no need for painful waxing, no tedious concerns about text etiquette (apparently 9 in a row is too many), and having the freedom to listen to my audiobooks without headphones before bed- not to mention, the joy of smoking as many cigarettes as I want without worrying what my mouth tastes like. Furthermore, I have no desire to get married or to breed (Don't bother with the "you're 23, you'll change your mind!" speech. I love infants. After 12 months, I run). I have amazing friends and a great family. Point is: there is absolutely no emptiness in my life that I seek to fill.

That being said, I gave dating a try due to pure curiosity about how I would fare; this endeavor quickly evolved into a rude awakening at the hands of the "almost relationship." To understand my dating revelations, a background on my preexisting beliefs about love, sex, and relationships and initial mindset merits a discussion. To help reader comprehension, I chose to explain by answering two questions.

1. Is life-consuming love necessary for a successful romantic relationship?

My first exposure to "true love" was my parent's marriage.³ Cara and Paul Martin are dedicated Irish Catholic lawyers, both hailing from large families.⁴ After raising four children, they opened a law practice together and now spend 24 hours together, every day. Even more surprising, is how enamored with one another they continue to be over thirty years of marriage. They still "active" in their late 60's (No visual proof, but I used to steal dad's Viagra when I was mad at him), and together, they are the poster couple for the classic marriage image of "two souls becoming one." Isn't this the life long partnership that every woman would kill for?

³ I realize there are probably many other types of loving marriages, I just work with what I know

⁴ The Irish don't seem to have caught on that half of one's children don't die by 10 from polio anymore. Or maybe they're too drunk to remember condoms. Both?

Probably, but I saw something different. I saw the extreme co-dependency. I couldn't ignore the fact that my fiery brilliant mother adopts a delicate, feeble, submissive persona whenever she and my father are in each other's presence. Now I want to clarify that my Dad is wonderful to her; he is her best friend, her lover, her therapist, her life. She welcomes the indistinguishable entity they become, and is content with assuming all of his opinions without question. When I would fight with her, Dad would scream at me⁵, assuming his role as her protector; when I would fight with him- the horrible unforgivable sort of fight- she would stand by, silently crying.⁶

Was their mutual endeavor for this type of relationship the work of religion, of their own parent's influence, of the societal expectations of the 1950s-80s? Or am I just witnessing the sole evolutionary definition of true love, achieved by two people?

I hope not.

While I am truly happy that my parents have a solid, loving marriage in a world where divorce is becoming the norm, my idea of love was forever linked with ideas of obsession, dependency, and loss.⁷ I never want to lose myself to someone else, and frankly, I doubt my disorders would let me, as I have been the same person since I was young enough to write (no growth or development yet, but I'm still young). Today, I am still afraid that if I eventually get serious with someone, I won't be able to forge a different kind of romantic love; that sacrificing my mental stability by giving all my thoughts over to someone else is the only way I can ever be able to have a real relationship.

2. With life-altering love is off the table, what sort of relationship did I want?

⁵ Yes, Yes I have Daddy issues. Surprised? Me neither.

⁶ Strange enough, these fights have ceased since he started taking Xanax.

⁷ Now, I realize there is so many wonderful other characteristics that give so much joy to so many people in love. And I realize that I sound like I am afraid of change, and that the right man would never change me. However, my Dad never sought control over my mother; she chose to give him her individuality, to become his pet, because she is in love.

Six years ago, I would have answered that labels are overrated and the need to justify a relationship to the world (excluding those involving legal documents or children) was an illusion instilled in us to satisfy societal ideologies. I have never been a jealous person and monogamy never seemed like a necessary construct. Personally, I can only be involved with one person at a time because I don't have the mental energy to balance simultaneous liaisons (so much texting). As for my potential partners, they could sleep with anyone they want...as long as I didn't have to hear about it and was receiving what I deemed the necessary amount of attention. In my mind, the ideal scenario was based in a friendship and the physical side of things could be added or subtracted when the situation called for it. I saw myself as an enlightened player in the romantic game; above the need to demand a definition.

The first major time I used my theories in practice was the first time I had sex. I looked up the average age for a girl in America to lose their virginity (17.3) and decided to get it over with. Despite my Catholic upbringing, I did not fear for my immortal soul, nor did I fear the possibility of life long attachment to the man I gave it up to. My only hesitation came from the testaments of overwhelming number of sources; all stating that women can only enjoy sex if they are in love. I used the fact that I had medicinally confined my menstrual cycle to one week per year (completely irrational, but sufficient) as proof that I would also be able to transcend the evolution phenomena tying hormonal patterns to female sexual satisfaction.⁸

Jake was a typical future fraternity douche, a year older, made me laugh, and was my favorite hook-up partner at the time. I asked him if he was up to the task, and he agreed after I promised not to get attached. The actual affair was cliché in every sense of the word: a car, by a lake, an unfortunate amount of blood, and all done to the cringe worthy song "Fireflies" by Owl city. While I was satisfied in terms of goal-completion, I felt a bit let down about the actual act.

⁸ Outlandish assumptions as justification for behaviors=the bane of being a woman/human.

Physically, it felt mechanical, messy and uncomfortable. I told myself I was young and that it would get better. Not wishing to start over with someone else, I slept with Jake as often as I could in the next year. To keep him involved, I would pay for everything and befriended his friends and family, all to use him as a sexual learning kit in the hopes I would figure out how to enjoy myself. The side effect of this venture was that we became real friends; I started to care about him as a person. This development drips with irony for so many reasons: for one, my sexual enjoyment, which hadn't been improved by my efforts, diminished to the point that the act became a miserable experience. He had morphed from an object to a friend and I could no longer partake in this empty activity with him. Secondly, our mutual efforts to prevent attachment failed. When I attempted to break contact and him off as a failed experiment, John found ways to stay in my life. Though not in the way I expected, the myth of an enduring attachment to a girl's "first" became a reality: in the form of a life-long friendship, which persists to this day.

At that point (age 19), I believed my mistake was getting physically involved without a previously established foundation of friendship; I remained resolute in my theory that good sexual experiences came from concrete friendships. This ideology led to several interactions that I define as "friends with benefits." I would make a male friend and for 2-8 months, we would be both mentally and physically involved. The failure of the system lay in the benefits. Originally meant to just be physical, the benefits would inevitably expand to include those that exist within an actual romantic relationship; in me they enjoyed a friend, a lover, and an ever-available source of comfort and support. There would be dinner dates, friend integration, sleepovers, and cuddling, but all were done with the understanding that "it didn't count." Meanwhile, sex continued to be an empty experience that I felt forced to pretend was otherwise. I always gave

the men the responsibility to “end it” (which never involved more than a text or had any warning before a fly away statement), when they decided the benefits portion had run its course. I accepted the change without issue, because I felt I had no right to care. I told myself this was ok; it was what I had wanted. I didn’t require a boyfriend and I did not want to risk losing a friendship over “benefits.” I suppose I might have felt different if I were actually enjoying the carnal side of things, and it’s even possible that the pseudo relationship qualities manifested due to my lack of satisfaction-necessitating the subconscious choice subsequent exploration of other realms of connection.

Whatever the case, in five years of relationships that were either the “fuck buddy” or “friends with too many benefits”, I had gained nothing, not even an orgasm.⁹ I wanted to be normal, to be able enjoy the joys of a good sexual experience, to at least find the one source of pleasure in life that was meant to be innate; I knew it was time to re-evaluate, and try something new.

January 2014, I made my first attempt to let myself naturally meet someone, allowing them ask me on “official” dates without protesting its mediocrity, and waiting before we meant something to one another before we slept together (unoriginal, I know). If a defined relationship was the key to enjoying physical interactions, than I was willing to give it a shot.

Will was a 24-year-old, alternative musician and a departure from both my usual type and my own age group. He took me on eight dates, agreed with the sexual hold, and said he was content with building to a defined relationship. When I felt comfortable, I slept with him. It was the first time I got a taste of real intimacy and the first solid evidence that sex could be better than what I had known. The very next day, he said he couldn’t see our relationship going anywhere

⁹ I’ve got to be the only 22-year-old atheist chick that doesn’t masturbate; can’t get the hang of it. Could be the 10 medications I’m on but I really just don’t have a sexy thought process.

and didn't want to continue, "Or someone would get hurt." I was shaken, broke off contact, and was disappointed in him and myself for thinking things would be different. To this day Will remains the only "one night stand" I have ever had and is the first person I've slept with who I intentionally stopped knowing afterwards.¹⁰ Even though this was yet another "almost relationship" it forced me to entertain the idea that I was, in fact, not above the need for a real emotion connection to enjoy sex. However, my faith in the possibility that not every guy I got involved with would only participate if it meant no-strings-attached, was diminished. I considered my own sexual enjoyment as a lost cause, and tried to accept my perpetual role as the girl who doesn't count.

Until the fall semester of 2014, I had taken a break from dating research. I had given up on the possibility of a real relationship and had again convinced myself that I was content with the type of interactions I had forged in the past. It takes two people to create relationships where one receives everything and the other, nothing. I was resigned.

This set the stage for an interaction that changed everything...and nothing. Logan was in my politics course and was the most gorgeous guy I had laid eyes upon- think Clark Kent, but tan. To be blunt, I had never really felt true lust until that point and had never sought an interaction just to see someone naked. Fuck everything that I had learned, fuck any sexual issues I had, I wanted to sleep with him. Even if he never spoke to me again. Though he was 27, completely out of league, brilliant, ex-military, and was a loner, I rose to the difficult challenge and made a seduction plan. After two months of laying the groundwork (asking him class questions, giving him reviews, etc.), I decided to make a move at the mandatory class mixer held in Barley House Bar. I thought I was out of luck when I learned he had been sober for a while,

¹⁰ For the sake of this paper I'm not the 1-2 times I popped Xanax and drank wine and banged someone. If I don't remember, it doesn't count.

but because I am an awful human being, I threw caution to the winds and bought him a drink. Two hours and too many cocktails later we went back to my place and I thought I had it in the bag. Much to my shock, he stopped after first base, looked me in the face and said, “I’m celibate.”¹¹

Even though I had plenty of experience with emotional rejection, this was the first time I was ever sexually rebuffed. He explained that he used to be a “sex-addict” but now maintained celibacy through his total immersion as a “dominant” in the world of BDSM and the rest, supplemented by daily yank sessions.¹² I told him not to lie; that it was ok if he was gay/not into me/had some junk problems/...or was gay. He shook his head, laughed, and proceeded to pass out drunk. I was adamant that if he, a man, were once a slut, he would cave again. It wasn’t about the actual sex, I assumed that would feel just the same as always; it was a campaign to prove that at the end of the day, all guys, no matter how honorable, are slaves to their baser nature. I did some research, learned that S&M was apparently good for sexual repression and figured that I’ll try (most) things once, so I moved forward. After promising the usual “I don’t want a boyfriend”, “I just want to learn about S&M from a experienced mentor”, “I won’t fall in love with you”, he finally agreed to enter into a Dominant/Submissive relationship, as long as I knew it was an open, temporary arrangement.

The self-realizations, emotional roller coasters, and life changing discoveries I had through exploring BDSM, is another essay for another time. The agreed upon S&M partnership timeline was meant to be two months...but lasted months. In the beginning, I was frustrated because the sexual progression through my predetermined bases was so slow; after all, my goal

¹¹ For the sake of this paper, “celibate” means abstaining from the act of actual biblical-baby-producing-sexual intercourse. It does not mean he abstains from any other sexual activity (i.e. hand stuff, mouth stuff, anything else besides the act was still on the menu).

¹² I know how to pick em’.

was just to get him to sleep with me.¹³ Neither of us trusted each other, both of us were skilled liars, and despite the agreement I made to be the submissive, my naturally dominant personality made our interactions a constant battle for control.¹⁴ Six months into it, he said we had learned everything we needed to from each other and (appeared) to end it. With Will, I was caught off guard; with Logan, the termination was expected- I was ready for it. Like every other grey area relationship I had been in, this one had also begun to change around month three. Intimacy, comfortability, and support, had slowly entered the equation. To this point, I had never let myself sleep over, I had never let my guard down around him, and I had always been in control of my own emotions. I knew Logan would try to pull back since he was planned to move in May, and I agreed to be friends.

It's important to note the effects that the termination of our S&M relationship had on the both of us. He didn't have a pre-determined plan for women who fight for a friendship after a breakup; and with no outline to navigate the situation, he began to let me in.¹⁵ For me, the break was the end of my obsession of getting him to sleep with me; and like Logan, it was the end of the interaction that I felt I had full knowledge and control over. Vulnerable in our mutual uncertainty, we entered a grey area that neither of us was ready for.

And so began (really) the most informative "almost relationship"; the last I will ever be in. The agreement to be platonic friends failed within the week. We talked every day, took trips together, would wake up with one another, and the void left by the distant S&M, was replaced with, for lack of a better word, love. There were so many firsts for me; it was the first time I had

¹³ The Dom/sub relationship is a sexual one, but with a focus on control and pushing mental limits-pleasure was a side product not the goal. When I say slow sexual progression I mean it took awhile for him to let me do anything at all to him (first four months, his pants staid on). His enjoyment came from breaking through my repression through, for lack of a better word, consensual torture.

¹⁴ Refer to appendix for bases and control examples

¹⁵ I subject everyone to a psychological onslaught (can be subtle or obvious), because S&M is control based, he would fight me when I tried to get in his head; No one can do that forever though.

ever been truly comfortable with someone; first time I was willing to give up everything I needed from someone for them to be happy. Though we never slept together, I learned what true physical connection was, and finally “finished” for the first time (hand stuff).

I had everything I wanted and I should have been happy, but the lack of label began to mean more than just refusal to publically announce involvement; it proved a serious hindrance for building trust. On both sides, the fear of “going to far” influenced every word and behavior; after a year, it wears you down.

I know that Logan didn’t want to feel anchored/accountable for me and was convinced that if nothing were defined, if we never slept together, it wouldn’t have tangible emotional implications. In the past, he had gone from city to city, making temporary friends and girlfriends his whole life, always cutting losses by simply disappearing. By keeping the threat of his departure on the table, he was permitted to treat me openly as a way to kill time before his move and nothing more. He could have pulled this off if he could keep himself emotionally separate; but he couldn’t. In an effort to masque his increasing vulnerability, he would often start petty arguments, that were really thinly veiled accusations. (While he appreciated the open relationship from his vantage point, he would be visibly upset when a guy friend would show up at the apartment, or if he saw a text notification from a boy’s name.)¹⁶

I could handle the outbursts, the putting me down to make him feel more secure, and the constant oscillation of his psyche depending on how emotionally exposed he felt at the time; that’s fine, I empathize with personality flaws. What concerned me were was a plethora of unspoken thoughts and unacknowledged feelings that were constantly being forced underground by continuing overall commitment to the delusion that neither of us cared, (which was becoming

¹⁶ I was truly ok with him hooking up with other people...but I told him: if he slept with them, he would have to sleep with me. I have an inkling neither of us fooled around with other people, simply because there wouldn’t be the opportunity when every night is spent in bed watching Frasier.

less believable by the day- ex. He would get agitated when I wouldn't answer his messages, we held each other almost every evening, and the off-hand hurtful comments we made- that used to bounce off as nothing- began to hurt both of us). Any real attempt discussion would end in "I am leaving so it doesn't matter" so I was forced to keep any issues or misgivings to myself. Imagine being in a relationship with only the good parts: no fights, no rules, and no collateral damage- having the joy of real intimacy with no discussion. You can't...it doesn't exist. I made this bed, knowing I had to lie in it; I chose time with him over risking everything falling apart, which I knew would happen if I demanded answers. That being said, I had spent ten months feeling like a muted TV, and couldn't ignore the resentment I harbored for what this had become.

Did I love him? Whether if it's just that I didn't allow myself to go there because of the inevitability of his move, or if I am just not mentally capable of dedicating my mind and heart to someone else, the answer is no. I didn't fall "In love" with Logan; But barring the risk of a broken heart, I knew I did love him in my way.¹⁷ I knew he loved me too, even if we didn't understand what type it was. We never admitted it, we never had one conversation about what we were to each other and we refused to accept that we both had become really involved. I gave him a test: Every day at five a.m. he goes for a run, I am usually half asleep but will roll over when he kisses my cheek goodbye, mumble "have a good run", and go back to bed. This time, I said, "have fun, I love you." He turned and said it back, believing I wouldn't remember. I tried this three more times and had the same result.

I should have been happy; but I realized that the fear of committing ran so deep that the phrase "I love you" meant handcuffs, a contract, and ownership. This isn't case specific; TV and Movies about dating have turned the "I love you" into the capstone of every break up¹⁸, the

¹⁷ See cover letter below, for response to the difference of love and in love.

¹⁸ For example when they get dumped and yell "YOU SAID YOU LOVED ME, RABBLE RABBLE RABBLE"

pinnacle of every declaration leading to marriage/life-partner. Furthermore, it made me realize that while I was content with stating it, he was the one that needed the label to say it to my (conscious) face. He was in love with me but he didn't want to owe me anything, and I knew that I didn't want him to feel that way anymore. I now know that this was not about me, that he was lost, lonely, and needed the experience of unconditional love without pressure.

This all made my head hurt. I did the only thing I knew was the best, I accepted the sadness and confusion and focused on being there with him and for him in any capacity he allowed. This sounds pathetic, but by this point, all I want to do is make him feel loved, whatever the cost to me. He moved in November (13 months later), but we have visited each other already. I know he will push away, that our relationship will change to platonic, but I will stay in his life as a friend who loves him.

I don't see it as a disappointing ending; rather, I am content, because I have a start on figuring out my own definition of "Love": Love is giving someone the last piece of pizza because you feel happy when they smile. Love is watching their favorite awful TV show because the joy you feel when they laugh is better than the satisfaction of watching what you want. Love isn't committing your life, soul, and future to someone; it's committing to care for, support, and accept a person no matter what bullshit they throw at you. When I discussed this with my guy friends, they said this pure sort of unencumbered adoration is a utopian dream. They believe that it is inevitable that at some point, all women use their love as a weapon, as a debt to be paid.¹⁹ They might be right. Maybe that's the real plague of the "almost relationship"- the feeling of investing everything you are with no hope for a return. Nonetheless, for John and Logan the

¹⁹ I believe emotional manipulation is simpler for men. Logan, John, and my other former FWB-turned-best friend, Larson, all have taken advantage of my loyalty and dedication by knowing they could do and say any range of horrible things to me and know that I will still love them, and therefore be forced to forgive them (See Appendix for more comments on this). However, they never gave me anything that they demanded an emotional return on. I believe this form of warfare is more common for women.

damage is done; they got in, and like my three other close friends, I will be there for them for the rest of my life, with my heart intact.

My experience has led me to form a theory about all of this: while guys don't want the label, they need it to allow them to give in to the other person, to trust the love that they are receiving. I have no regrets in my experience as "the almost girlfriend"; through the unique perspective of a 1.5 yearlong celibate relationship, I learned the importance of trust and comfort for a good sexual experience. I learned that that fear of vulnerability could poison every facet of a relationship by all the things unsaid; and that honest connection is what matters to me most, whether in friendship or a romantic contact.

I will never be in a "friends with benefits" relationship again. For one, I just don't have the emotional room for yet another shithhead that gets all the good parts of me, for life.²⁰ I also don't want to be in control anymore in the sense of burying issues, following "rules" as not to set off the "what does she/he want from me alarm", leaving everything unsaid from fear that they won't be able to be my friend. I want to say "I love you" the way I mean it, and love someone who is going to let me without question, which requires emotional growth and work from both sides...I just really wish that didn't require a label or rules.

In summary, I was wrong about mostly everything. I am grateful for the experiences I have had, the knowledge I have gained. Right now, I am burnt out to the point of considering a nunnery but I realize that I am only 22. When I am ready, I'll start my research again.

²⁰ I hate 98% of people. So if I make a real friend, it's for life. And seven is too many already.

Post Script- Aug 2016: This essay was written last year and proved to be extremely helpful. Reading a biography of our interactions, I figured out that Logan exhibited traits of Asperger's (Autism Spectrum). He finally agreed to get diagnosed, and I was right. It explained everything from not being able to read facial cues, to his obsessive focus, and why I could never truly understand what was happening. Woops.

Guidelines for The Cover Letter:

- What you were trying to accomplish in the essay and how closely, or not, the revised version has reached those goals, in your view

Prologue: Cover Letter, To my Professor

The original assignment was straightforward: write about an event or problem in your life. I happily took the essay prompt as a rare opportunity to put my mental efforts towards analyzing what I deemed a side issue: my views on dating and relationships. Obviously, I knew my mental conditions were an influence; without them, I wouldn't have had the detachment that so many of my friends lack when facing issues of the heart. I was ready to dive into my history, and even treated it as a test of how good of a psychologist I can really be.

It was a rough but important therapy for me; as I was both the one asking the questions and the one having to answer them; I couldn't lie or allocate blame because I knew I was the one who made the choices fully knowing the consequences each time. I sent my doctors and my friends this paper, and I was overwhelmed with the feedback. My doctor has known me for thirteen years, and never knew about any of my relationships (I had deemed it an irrelevant topic) but now I see how important it is for him to have all the data; he cried. Even more touching were that my friends used the essay as a template, and they were able to delve into their own experiences and articulate them with clarity for the first time.

In reference to one of the comments you made about what the difference between "love", and being "in love", I didn't have an answer (and I still don't). I knew when I began the essay that my way of loving is the same- it is a life long, inherent, loyalty and dedication to my few

friends and two out of six of my immediate family.²¹ Having finished, I feel the same way about Logan that I always did, but now I realize that the fear of losing him was the fear of losing the friendship connection I forged, rather than the boyfriend.

Again, as I write this cover letter, I am at a loss for what to say about my goals, and if I accomplish them- the truth is, I had no goals for writing this paper aside from a fun and brutally honest piece for my classmates to read.

As you can see the above letter is messy, lacking a thesis, and is all over the place...but that, in itself encompasses my approach to the topic. It caught me off guard with how much it meant to me, considering the events within it never registered on an emotional plane until now. I plan to write again, I want to write again, and honestly the fact I have a desire to do anything, having lacked passion for as long as I can remember, is the most important take-away of all.

²¹ When Electro consultant therapy erased my memories, I retained the emotions I felt for them without having the data. I think that's kind of beautiful- it shows that love is in a different location than memory...in a cheesy sense- I think it means that evidence isn't required to love.

Appendix

Footnote 7-8, Bases:

- 1st: Kissing, touching above the waist topless
- 2nd: Hand stuff. (To me, not to him. He didn't let me do hand stuff to him until after the first break up)
- 3rd: oral. (To me. He didn't let me do that to him until February)
- Home run: Sexual Intercourse.

Footnote 8, Control issue:

- The reason I wanted to explain this down here is that it relates to the bases. Before Logan, I had an unconventional view on the level of intensity for base progression- likely due to my intense repression. For example, I was never totally naked with anyone. I used a slip, or a pencil skirt, and thigh high socks to hide the body while still being able to do anything sexual. For another, I felt that doing hand stuff and blowjobs to them was way less personal than if they kissed me or did stuff to me. Before Logan, I would consistently force guys to skip doing anything to me by quickly making them forget about it by blowing them. I realize now that this was connected to why intercourse felt so awful; I wasn't physically or mentally ready for that personal interaction because I never wanted them to "get me ready"- I probably never wanted to be more emotionally vulnerable than I already was. I made it all about them, and they were happy. Of course, eventual resentment came from my like of sexual AND emotional dissatisfaction: the hole I created for myself.
- In terms of oral, I never let anyone go down on me before. For one, I was disgusted with female genitalia. I thought it was gross and just felt too guilty to have them down "there" where I couldn't be in control of the situation (ex-catholic, my junk is normal I am just psycho). Further more, I believe it is a hallmark of my mental disorder to be completely disconnected with my body (I never felt like I had needs and had never experienced lust before Logan). My mental stuff tended to take me out of my body, and when too overwhelming, I would use self-harm to, for lack of a better phrase, "come back down."²²
- When Logan and I agreed to enter into the S&M relationship, he was aware of this. He knew that my mind got in the way of my body, and through the very painful S&M behaviors (belts, hangers, wax, towels, knives) I was unable to mentally detach myself from the situation. It was difficult for me to understand, but I kept journals after every session. I had never felt more alive and connected to my body after they were over. That being said, the battle for control I refer to was I fought him and the process every step of the way; and if we didn't see each other for a week, I would revert into the locked up, resistant, pain tolerant, brat that I always was. I would try to pull my usual tactics of

²² My long time doctor and parents and friends all know about this and though they don't like it, they understand it wasn't with suicidal intention. A cut with a knife is quicker than popping a sedative, which takes 45 min-an hour to kick in. I don't love it, but it worked.

“focusing” on him as a means for control, but he always resisted. I also made a horrible submissive; I have never once followed rules completely and this was a source of constant issue (I lied about following the workout schedule he set, and the diet, and never could make myself call him “sir”-because it just sounded so silly). S&M was a good way to keep me present. Unfortunately, I am bipolar and fluctuate back and forth between phases of extreme anxiety/adrenaline (1-2 months long) and extreme depression (1.5 months long). While he remained consistent, I was unable to; the only times where S&M was effective were when I was in the anxiety phase. When I would try to participate when I was in the latter phase, the results were always disastrous, and likely confusing to him (I would cry, not respond, be catatonic, and just want to sleep rather than being up for the challenge of pain control -like usual). This was not what he wanted, and no pleasure was taken for either of us. I would always have to convince him to reassume the S&M stuff when I came out of the phase...and the longer the relationship lasted, the more warring this cycle would be, for both of us.

Footnote 13:

- I have a policy though, every friend gets 3 major screw ups before I let them go- I haven't had to let anyone go yet.