

## Lonesome I Could Cry

by Ulrik Remy

“It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18).

It's actually pretty bad. In virtually every aspect of life, there is tremendous pressure to team up as a couple. Taxes, insurance, dinner invitations, vacation trips you could win in a sweepstakes – well, you don't win them anyway, nobody ever does, but you can feel the pressure. The trip is always for two, and you can't bring your dog.

Well-meaning friends contribute their share, also. “You're alone? Oh, I have the right one for you!” And they set you up for a blind date, and if it doesn't work out, you've not only lost an evening but also a friend.

It's not that I haven't tried. Every so often, I decided to trade the pressure for the burden. Bad idea. But at least I tried.

She's a really nice lady, at first. She thinks, I am the sexiest man around, she loves my music, admires my work ethics, and she'll lay no claim to my kitchen. She agrees that mutual respect and independence are essential to a lasting and loving relationship. I finally found the one.

The changes come only gradually, but they come. After a short period of limitless happiness and mutual enjoyment, the first stumbling block appears: dinner. I love to cook, but I also love to cater to the taste of the person I cook for.

“What would you like for dinner tonight, dear?” – “I like what you like, honey. You're such a great cook.” That means: why should I make the effort of thinking? Get me a cheeseburger, chicken tenders, a cracker with butter spread, or prepare something fancy – doesn't make a dime's worth a difference to me.

Next: my work ethics. “Why do you work so hard? Come on, you need a break once in a while.” That means: sit next to me on the sofa, hold my hand and watch a 4-hour movie – you can work all you want, while I'm not there.

I admit that my work ethics are extreme. Fourteen, sixteen hours per day, and while I am working, I am totally immersed in what I'm doing. Each loving “would you like a cup of coffee, honey?”, each motherly stroke over my steaming hair, each caring “did you take your medicine yet?” causes an explosive discharge of the tension I am under. And a tentative “I don't mean to interrupt, but – ” inevitably leads to “you just did!”

At least, she enjoys my music. And every other kind of music, because her taste is so broad – she enjoys every kind of music. She couldn't even tell the difference between Bruce Springsteen and a flute concerto. It's all music, right? And it needs to be played so loud that even the headphones I bought don't protect me from it.

Conversation is difficult, too. I follow the golden rule “Before operating lips, please engage brain”, but mutual respect commands that this rule does not apply to everybody. And, as I intend to be a polite listener, my thoughts get washed away by a continuous stream of words that don't really mean too much but fill the time nicely.

Thus, there is ample opportunity for conflict. And while I am trying to accept criticism as an opportunity for improvement, she does not accept criticism, period. And very quickly, the “sexiest man around” turns into “a sexist, there's no way around it”, as if that would resolve anything.

I went through the entire procedure several times, always with the same result. So odds are good that the blame is on me. That's perfectly fine, as long as we can spend our lives in mutual respect and independence. And stay away from sharing a life that's not ours.

Sometimes, I feel so lonesome I could cry. But most the time, I so wish I was alone, I could scream.