

5 Women Wearing the Same Dress

No. He won't do any of that. He'll just get better looking as he gets older, he'll never gain any weight, he'll wear a t-shirt and blue jeans and have grey hair and he will be so gorgeous that it hurts just to look at him. I, on the other hand, will be as big as a house, I'll wear too much makeup, I won't have any hair left from a lifetime of bad perms, and I'll get skin cancer from going to the lake too much when I was in high school and I'll just wake up one morning and I'll be dead. And Tommy Valentine will read my obituary in the paper and it won't even occur to him that he ever even knew me.

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I was walking down the aisle; first thing I saw was the back of his head. It jumped right out at me. I recognized that little hair patten on the back of his neck, where his hair starts. You know where it comes to those two little points, and it's darker than the rest? I always thought that was so sexy. Then I looked at him during the ceremony, and something about the way the light hit his face ... I swear, it just broke my heart. And then outside, I saw him talking to this awful woman in a navy blue linen dress with absolutely no back, I mean you could almost see her butt. And he was smiling at her with that smile, that same smile that used to make me feel like I really meant something to him. And then it all came back, just bang, all those times I sat waiting for his phone call, me going out of my way to make things convenient for him. You know, I started smoking cigarettes because of him. And if I ever die of cancer, I swear it's going to be Tommy Valentine's fault.

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Y'all, am I bleeding? ... Well, I will be. I am having one of those days where I just can't stop running into things? Do you ever have those? I am usually a very graceful woman, but something about this dress, it makes me feel like Bigfoot. I just ran smack dab into a cabinet in the kitchen, just walked right straight into it. Like there was a big magnet in that cabinet and I had a steel plate in my head. Ka-BOOM. I will probably need stitches by the time this reception is over. I am terrified. Terrified I am going to do something to ruin this wedding, and Scott will never forgive me. Just like that time I ralphed right in the middle of his Eagle Scout induction ceremony. My therapist thinks I was jealous that I couldn't be an eagle scout, but I don't think that was it. I mean, I was nineteen, I think I had just had a bad tuna salad sandwich. Oh, this is a bad time, isn't it? I'm so sorry. I'll leave. *(She exits, knocking something over in the process.)* See what I mean?

And Turning. Stay

Don't you dare walk away from me! And don't tell me you're sorry! And don't you dare tell me to "let it go." God knows, I'd like to. I wish I could, but I can't! I can't forget that we had something, and you're running away. Don't you see? You're running from what I've searched for all my life! Why, because you're scared? Well, I'm scared too, but you and I - we have something worth fighting for. We could make it work, I'm not saying it would be easy, but I care about you. And I know deep down, under this bravado, you care about me. And that's what it's all about. Can you honestly stand there and tell me that I mean nothing to you? That everything that happened was a lie? That you feel nothing. I feel sorry for you. I'll move on. I'll find someone else. I'll be all right, because I will know that I tried. That I did everything I could. But someday you will look back, and you will realize what you threw away. And you will regret it always.

Bargaining

Ryan, there's something I have to tell you. I was born in 1931. I never lied to you, I am 23. But I've been 23 since the year 1954. I know, I know. It's impossible, right? No one lives forever? But, sometimes they do. In 1953, I got married. A few weeks after the wedding, I suddenly fell ill. My husband took me to a hospital. I was there for almost a week, and no one could say for sure what was wrong. One night, in the hospital, a stranger came to see me. He told me, "Janie, you're going to die tomorrow." That was my name then, the name I was born with. He said, "You can die tomorrow, or you can live forever. Stay young forever." My point is, this man offered me a chance to live. And I took it. I will live forever. I will never age. When my husband was 45, he died in a car accident. At his funeral, the stranger came to see me again. He asked me if I wanted to... give up my gift, and... die. I thought about it. But I said, no. I wasn't ready. I have centuries and centuries ahead of me. I'm looking for someone to love forever. Most people, when they say forever, they mean... well, they don't really mean forever. But I do. I'm in love with you, Ryan. And I'm asking you to share forever with me.

Because I Said So

I'll tell you one thing. You did not have me the moment that we met because I'm not even sure I like the fact that your staff talked about you behind your back at the dessert table. And excuse me but truth be told I didn't like anything that you ordered for me on our first date except the calamari. And okay fine, yes, it was nice to not have to think for a change. But who wants someone that doesn't think? Look! And sometimes you laugh when I cry, and you say "huh" when I make perfect sense. And never ever in my life have I burnt a chocolate soufflé until now, and that in and of itself... oh my god. Should have told me I don't feel like myself around you.

Center Stage

Wait. For ten years, all I've wanted was to be one of American Ballet Company's perfect ballerinas. I've wanted to be you Juliette. But I'm not you, and I'm not perfect, I'm just me, bad feet and all. And, I'm starting to think I like that even better. – No. Please don't. Because if you're not going to offer me a place in the company, then I don't want to hear it...and if you are...I might not have the strength to say no – and then I'd be spending my best dancing years in the back of a corps waving a rose back and forth and I'm better than that. So...thank you, Jonathan for making me the best dancer I could be. I appreciate it more than I can say, really. Because the best dancer I can be is a principal in Cooper Nielson's new company.

Collaboration

I wanted those moments - few and far between as they were. I wanted whatever time and affection you could give me. I felt like you found comfort in me. And maybe I wasn't your first choice, you know? But I was glad that I was somewhere on the list. You leaned on me. I cared about you so much. I can't explain it, but, I've seen the best and the worst of you... and I love you. I love the way you can tell me what I'm thinking. I love the way you tell a story, drawing me in. I love you for all the times you convinced me, with a stupid joke, or even just a look... to stop taking myself so seriously and just enjoy my life. Nothing could ever make me regret the way I feel about you. What I feel for you isn't a negative thing. It makes me better, it makes my life better. That's what I've been trying to say: That love is never wrong, even when it grows in the worst conditions, with no encouragement...

Crimes of the Heart

After I shot Zackery, I put the gun down on the piano bench, and then I went out into the kitchen and made up a pitcher of lemonade. I was dying of thirst. My mouth was just as dry as a bone. I made it just the way I like it, with lots of sugar and lots of lemon- about ten lemons in all. Then I added two trays of ice and stirred it up with my wooded stirring spoon. Then I drank three glasses, one right after the other. They were large glasses-about this tall. Then suddenly my stomach kind of swole all up. I guess what caused it was all that sour lemon. Then what I did was, I wiped my mouth off with the back of my hand, like this. I did it to clear off all those little beads of water that had settled there. Then I called out to Zackery. I said, "Zackery, I've made some lemonade. Can you use a glass?" But he didn't answer. So I poured him a glass anyway and I took it out to him. And there he was, lying on the rug. And he was looking up at me trying to speak words. I said "what? Lemonade? You don't want it? Would you like a Coke instead?"

Fat Pig

I'm not anything. Except confused. By a guy who tells me that he's interested in me. "Very," in fact was the word he used. "I am very interested in you." And we date, and then we stop, and then he sends me stuff, like flowers and letters, and keeps calling and wants to try one more time, he tells me... but then we do not go out. We see each other at work, but he keeps putting off the date because of ... Gosh, I couldn't begin to list all the excuses because it's Monday afternoon and I would probably be here, like, through the weekend. But now I hear he's met someone, a someone who he has managed – even with his many obligations and boys' nights out and all his other related juvenile activities – he has somehow squeezed yet another person onto his social calendar.

The Foreginer

Mind if I sit down here? I am not going up to that yellow room again. Shoot. 'Scuse me. I don't ever do this. I just get sorta – uh – sick and tired of things, from time to time. Sometimes I just – I don't know. I don't know. Or what I'm sittin' here jabberin' away at you for, either. You really, you don't understand me at all, do you? That's why, I guess. Talkin' to Betty, or Ellard, you know, there's always that slim chance you might be understood. Cain't have that. And David, of course, he's off someplace – instead of stickin' around here getting' to know me. I just keep thinkin' if he – if he knew me a little better, he wouldn't – Oh boy. You ever know anybody that was just so good, that you just feel *vile* most of the time? I don't think I was cut out to be a decent person. You know? Some people are just meant to be a waste of food, and I think I'm one of 'em. I'm good at it.

Hopscotch

You've got no right to be sorry. Sixteen years old and pregnant and terrified and you just leave me here to... to what? To die? To what? What did you figure I was gonna' do? Run the bank? Drink the lake? I'm really curious, Wilbur. I really am. How about when you were nineteen? How about when you were twenty-five? How about when you were twenty-seven? I'll tell you what's really on my mind right now, Wilbur ... what's really on the tip of my tongue as I stand here lookin' at you face-to-face... I wasted so much of my time worrying about you, and you're nothing. I gave yours away. I was pregnant, remember? Did you forget? I gave it away. You're really unbelievable Will. You were an unbelievable kid and you ran away and saw the world and grew up and now you're back here and I can see you've become just an unbelievable adult. I am really happy to see the way you've turned out... I can see exactly what you are. I am so lucky.

Laughing Wild

I tried to buy a can of tuna fish in the supermarket, and there was this *person* standing right in front of where I wanted to reach out to get the tuna fish, and I waited a while, to see if they'd move, and they didn't—they were looking at tuna fish too, but they were taking a real long time on it, reading the ingredients on each can like they were a book; so I waited a long time, and they didn't move, and I couldn't get to the tuna fish cans; and I thought about asking them to move, but then they seemed so stupid not to have *sensed* that I needed to get by them. And so then I started to cry out of frustration, quietly, so as not to disturb anyone, and still, even though I was softly sobbing, this stupid person didn't *grasp* that I needed to get by them to reach the tuna fish, and so I reached over with my fist, and I brought it down real hard on his head and I screamed: "Would you kindly move, jerk!!!"

Springtime for Henry

I don't happen to have a husband. I ceased to have one over a year ago. I shot him. He was a Frenchman, and I was really very fond of him. I found out after a year that he had a mistress. That I could have put up with, for after all you must expect Frenchmen to be a little bit French. But he began bringing her home to tea. I used to say, "Please, dear, don't bring that woman home to tea. Send her some tea, if you like, but it's not right to bring her here for it." He was very sweet to me in his own way and promised he would try not to. But he was rather weak, and this was one of the temptations he really couldn't resist. A few months later I found out he had another mistress also, and, after fighting against it for some time, he surrendered to an impulse, and invited them both to tea. I argued with him very nicely, and pointed out that it would be so bad for little Pierre to grow up thinking that mistresses for tea was in the natural course of things. So I bought a second-hand revolver and said that I was terribly sorry but, if he did it again, I really would have to take the law into my own hands. Well, poor darling, he did it again.

Stop Kiss

You know, when I was little, my parents made me take tennis lessons – I'm not an athlete – neither are my parents, I don't know why – because the lessons were free! And it was summer and my parents didn't want me sitting around the house doing nothing which is what they thought I was doing – which was true. So they made me take these lessons, and I tried – but I was a natural klutz. Still, at the end of the summer we all had to play in the tournaments. So for the first round, I got pitted against this kid who obviously took tennis lessons because she wanted to be a really good tennis player. The match takes like 10 minutes. Afterwards, my parents can barely speak, they feel so bad. They take me to Dairy Queen, tell me to order whatever I want – I get the triple banana split, and for the rest of the summer they let me sit around and watch *Love Boat* reruns, which is all I wanted to do anyway.

Red, Hot, and Tuna

This is Didi Snavelly reminding you on this national holiday that fireworks make a pop, but a good firearm makes a point. Now, when our nation's founders won their independence from the ugly English, they didn't win it by inviting them over for tea and crumpets. They won it because they shot 'em. And the English were obviously slow learners because they came back over here in 1812 and they shot 'em again. And they shot the Spanish at the turn of the century, too. I don't remember why, but you know they had it coming. This country's freedom wasn't purchased with peace marches, protests, and EST seminars. We bought it wit bullets, bombs, and bayonets. So come down to the store, demonstrate your commitment to the Second Amendment, and never forget that if our Texas forefathers had had bigger and better weaponry, it would be Mexico that remembers the Alamo.

Roses are Red

You understand? You understand? No, you *don't* understand. You think just because you have a Ph.D. and a framed certificate on the wall, that you magically know what I'm feeling? What a load of crap. You're just doing your job -- making your money. You probably never cared about anyone in your life. Well I do. I care too much. That's why I'm going crazy. I feel like I'm losing my mind. Every time I see a woman who even slightly resembles my mom, I swear she's gonna turn around and it will be her. Alive, here, now, smiling at me. But it never is. I keep waking up in the middle of the night, screaming, all drenched in sweat. Yesterday, I put my fist through the window and shattered it into pieces. My mom is dead. She's dead, and I can't even cry. Cause if I do, it'll mean I accept, really accept, that she's gone forever. I don't want to do that. I *can't* do it. Can you understand that? I can't let my mom be gone.

100 Girls

Without you, I'm as lonely as an abandoned dog on the side of a highway. I have gift anxiety, even though I don't know when your birthday is. If you consent to be with me, I'll clean the toilet every week. I'll love you. Even if your name is Mimi and you want me to pronounce it "May May". And I won't buy one of those red sports cars when I hit my mid-life crisis. Your parents can come visit us every week, even if your mom is a witch with a capital B. If you're a cat person, I'll never point out the fact that a dog can save your life from drowning, but a cat can't. I will happily go see chick flicks with you, like "Pride and Prejudice." I'll make a point to try new food like okra gumbo. I'll be thoughtful enough to read your horoscope every day. I'm gonna save every birthday card you send me! And I'll actually write you real letters when we're apart. I'm never gonna expect you to know where I left my car keys, and I'll never leave my socks on the floor. I declare now, I will give my life for you.

The American Plan

After my mother died, my father more-or-less lost control of things. It had something to do with a partner, I think, or the board – something shifty – I’m not suppressing the details here, I just never quite learned them. Anyway, just like that, it seemed, we were out of business. I was working in New York then, I’d visit on weekends. Every time I did he’d have sold off another room of furniture and he’d be sitting in it... singing, “I’m a ramblin’ wreck from Georgia Tech/And a heck of an engineer...” and he wasn’t even drinking—that was the funny part, he was stone-cold sober. I’d say, “Dad... are you sure you’re all right? Can I get you anything?” He’d say, “Oh, no, I’m fine, pal, I’m fine, sport – all I need is a shave and a haircut – that’s all I need, sport – a shave and a haircut – just a shave and a haircut – then I’ll be ready.”

Beyond Therapy

I want to marry you because all my life I keep fluctuating between being traditional and being insane. For instance, marrying Sally was my trying to be traditional; while that time I took my clothes off in the dentist’s office was my going to the opposite extreme. But I’m not *happy* at either extreme. And that’s where you, Prudence, fit in. I feel you are very traditional, like Sally, but Sally has no imagination, she’s too stable. And I think that even though you are very traditional, you’re very *unstable*, and because of that I think we could be very happy together. Do you understand what I’m saying?

Blow

Hello, Dad. Y’know, I remember a lifetime ago I was about three and a half feet tall, weighing only sixty pounds, but every inch your son. Those Saturday mornings, going to work with my dad and we’d pile into that big, green truck. I thought that truck was the... was the biggest truck in the universe, Pop. I remember how important the job we did was. How, if it weren’t for us, people would freeze to death. I thought you were the strongest man in the world. And that time you told me that money wasn’t real? Well, old man, I’ve finally realized what you were trying to tell me too many years ago. I finally understand. You’re the best, Dad. I just wish I could’ve done more for you. Wish we had more time. Anyway, may the wind always be at your back, and the sun always upon your face, and the winds of destiny to carry you aloft, to dance with the stars. I love you, Dad.

Driving Lesson

When I got my learner's permit, my mom decided she would teach me how to drive. I didn't see the problem with that at first. I mean, I'd have to spend time with her, and that's never good, but I'd be able to drive the car by myself when it was all over. So she started to teach me how to drive. But it wasn't like "Step on the gas when you want to go and the brake when you want to stop." No, she said stuff like, "There's a stop sign at the corner. Put your brake on now." Or "Children are playing on the sidewalk. You'd better slow down." And she said it in her "Mom" voice, which was like a drill digging into my skull. And my goodness, if I made one little mistake, she'd yell at me like I'd sold government secrets to Chinese spies. Her voice would get higher and louder. "You have to pay attention at all times! You can't wave to friends when you're going around sharp curves!" Like our lives were at stake or something. The yelling was bad, but at least it was a break from the "Mom" voice. Opera singing is better than the "Mom" voice.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses

I had no idea you were staying here! Not that it would have disturbed me in the slightest if I had known. You see, until I met you, I had only ever experienced desire. Love, never. You made an accusation and you must allow me the opportunity to defend myself! Now, I'm not going to deny that I was aware of your beauty. But the point is this has nothing to do with your beauty. As I got to know you, I began to realize that beauty was the least of your qualities. I became fascinated by your goodness. I was drawn in by it. I didn't know what was happening to me. And it was only when I began to feel actual, physical pain every time you left the room that it dawned on me: I was in love, for the first time in my life. I knew it was hopeless, but that didn't matter to me. And it's not that I want to have you. All I want is to deserve you. Tell me what to do. Show me how to behave. I'll do anything you say.

Fame and Features

Three weeks ago I had auditions for some agents. All on the same day. I go to the first agent, read my copy -- she loves it. But she wants me to get my hair cut and dyed. She gives me this salon card and says, "Come back once Pierre fixes you up and then we'll talk." I thought, that's kinda shallow, but hey, I'm willing to change for my craft. I got to the second agent who tells me, "You're very talented, but we've got to do something about your teeth -- that space." Look how small this space is! You can barely see it! At this point I'm somewhat disgruntled, but I go to the third agent. He wants to get a nose job. A nose job! There is nothing wrong with my nose! So today, just for kicks, I ask my friend Gary to go back to those agents with my resume and pretend he's the "new" me. And guess what? He got signed by all three! In my name! They didn't even realize it wasn't me! I'm sickened. As of today, I'm becoming a plumber.

Finding Forrester

My brother and I, we were here for every game. 'Til he left for the war. I thought it'd be the same when he came back, but, uh, he talked a little less...and drank a little more. I promised my mother I would help him get through it all. So I caught up with him this one night and I was already half a dozen drinks behind. So we had a few more. And after a while, he tells me he wants to drive me back to the apartment. Heh, I said, "No, thanks." We were all still living there then. I just stood there and watched him drive off. Makes it through the whole war and I let him drive. Later that night, the nurse was typing whatever it is they type and you know what she tells me? She tells me how much my book meant to her. My brother's getting cold in the next room and all she can talk about is a book. Well...everything changed from then on. Within five months, I buried him, my ma, my father.

Death of a Salesman

When I was a boy – eighteen, nineteen – I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker house. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was forty-eight years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. 'Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people?

Fences

I live here too! I ain't scared of you. I was walking by you to go into the house cause you sitting on the steps drunk, singing to yourself. I ain't got to say excuse me to you. You don't count around here any more. Now why don't you just get out my way? You talking about what you did for me... what'd you ever give me? All you ever did was try and make me scared of you. I used to tremble every time you called my name. Every time I heard your footsteps in the house. Wondering all the time... what's Papa gonna say if I do this? What's he gonna say if I do that? What's he gonna say if I turn on the radio? And Mama, too... she tries... but she's scared of you. I don't know how she stand you... after what you did to her. What you gonna do... give me a whupping? You can't whup me no more. You're too old. You're just an old man. You crazy. You know that? You just a crazy old man... talking about I got the devil in me. Come on... put me out. I ain't scared of you.

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

My name is Matthew. I was a Jewish tax collector for the Empire. My job was to take the food out of your mouth and see it shipped off to Rome. Roman tax was exorbitant and non-negotiable. If you had six geese, I took three. If you had a flock of sheep, I took fifty percent. If you had only one sheep, I cut that sheep in half. If you had no sheep, I took a child – your child – and had him or her sold into slavery to settle your debt to the Emperor. This is not a made-up story. This is history. This is fact. We were a conquered nation and I was a traitor to my people. I was a Jew stealing from Jews. According to our laws, I was a sinner and a traitor; I was unclean – unfit to be gazed upon. That's who I was. I was a scumbag, and it was against the law to look me in the eye. Jesus, he looked me in my eye. That's all he did. He looked me in my eye and he said, "Follow me." And before I knew it, I had. And before we broke bread that night, I was clean again... I was clean.

Laughing Wild

The other night I dreamt my father was inside a baked potato. Isn't that strange? I was very startled to see him there, and I started to be afraid other people would see where my father was, and how small he was, so I kept trying to close the baked potato, but I guess the potato was hot, cause he'd start to cry when I'd shut the baked potato, so then I didn't know what to do. I thought of sending the whole plate back to the kitchen – tell the cook there's a person in my baked potato – but then I felt such guilt at deserting my father that I just sat there at the table and cried. Then the waiter brought dessert, which was devil's food cake with mocha icing, and I ate that. Then I woke up, very hungry. I told my therapist about the dream, and he said my father cried because he was unhappy, and that I dreamt about the cake because I was hungry. I think my therapist is an idiot. Maybe I should just have gurus. Or find a nutritionist. But what I'm doing now isn't working.

Proof

This is the time of year when you don't want to be tied down to anything. You want to be outside. Perfect skies. Sailboats on the water. Warm, the sun still hot... with the occasional blast of arctic wind to keep you on your toes, remind you of winter. Students coming back, bookstores full, everybody busy. I was in a bookstore yesterday. Completely full, students buying books... browsing. Students do a lot of browsing, don't they? Just browsing. You'd call it loitering, except every once in a while they pick up a book and flip the pages, "browsing." I admire it. It's an honest way to kill an afternoon.

The Underpants

There are so many women, Louise. Pale blondes with subtle streaks of blue along their wrists. Dark-haired, with elegantly cut figures, tall, short, some wearing jangling beads. Some are so fragile that you touch them like a leaf, some are strong and you draw them to you forcefully. But you, Louise, are beyond category, and when I am with you, I will be in unknown territory, taking in my hands something unfamiliar and new, unlike anyone ever. I am on fire, Louise, and there is no doubt I am finally and forever in love.
