

But my roommate is a nerd

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I used to be able to pick up guys like nothing. Bars, parties, library, classrooms... they just flocked over to me. I hardly had to move my fingers. I let them do the talking, let them make the moves, let them pick the music, let them pick... oh, whatever. Not that I didn't have any self-esteem or anything. No. I knew what I wanted... I hardly ever got exactly what I wanted, but it came close once in a while. And, whatever I did get, I liked well enough. It is interesting how many different things people want... different ideas of the exact same thing. For instance, I bet those guys thought they were picking me up, which is kinda' true, but what's important here is what I wanted and what I thought and what I got.

I don't want you to think I was some poor slut victimized or socialized or conditioned to be objectified or something... I went through phases, too. I didn't always attract attention like a military chopper flying low over a dorm building. I didn't always want to attract attention. It's just that, for a couple of years or so, I just did, and I had fun.

On the other hand, I don't mean to imply I got anything out of it, either. To be frank, I got nothing out of those years except for a couple of troubles... I broke some guys' hearts, too. Not the best thing for your self-esteem. I was a nice person; I was not out to hunt down and hurt anyone... I just wanted to enjoy life any way Nature allowed me.

Well, that was then; this is now. I don't mind being home-bound very much. I've got things to do... like some of the work I bring home... talking to friends, writing to friends. I keep in touch with some of the guys I met. Is that weird? Well, most of them got married or committed or something I hear, and, as soon as I find out, they're out of my books. Those that didn't, let's just say I can usually see why. I don't "hang out" with any of them any more. Just keeping my ears open to see what happens to people after their karma brushes by mine. Mostly, I write to school friends and talk to more "recent" friends.

Friends... they don't mean very much to me. They keep me busy in the evening when I manage to see them at all. Something to do when I don't want to review the files or clean the kitchen. Now, there is someone who means a lot to me, but not in a good way: the woman who calls herself my roommate. Housemate, more precisely. I share an apartment with her. I make more than enough to move into something bigger all to myself, but I have so much memory here... and so much junk, that I don't really feel like moving. Well, more like I'm used to living here. I am also used to living with someone. Living alone just doesn't feel right. Now, this whatever I am living with, I hardly ever see her. Sometimes I run into her in the kitchen as she grabs some food before darting out the door. She works at some company, and it takes her about half an hour to get there. At night, she seems to have a life or something.

She is not really a friend. She is just in my life. Once in a while, I do get to talk to her about things, life, guys, politics, whatever, but, she means something to me only in so far as she leaves

dirty dishes in the sink and underwear on the couch. Lots of noise late at night. Dry-cleaned outfits, in plastic bags, sitting in the doorway. Things like that. I don't mind it very much, and, in any case, she is the source of just about all the excitement I can get these days.

Also, she keeps my non-life, non-work consciousness busy. Sometimes I wonder what she thinks of me. She's not that pretty. I don't see her as someone who would be popular or something... like I was... but she seems to enjoy life somehow. Different guy every time... well, almost every time. I think she goes through a cycle. Like, five or so guys in her book, and she goes through them like she would with, like, her hair style. I bet she has a hairdo for each one of them she knows. I never changed my hair. All the same wavey, long hair every day for all sorts of weirdos and good ones. Different outfits, of course, but the same hairdo and makeup. She doesn't seem to have as many outfits as I did; maybe that's why.

Sometimes I try to figure out what I think of her. I don't pay much attention to her at all, even at night when I wonder if she's home or the rats are holding an election. She's never that significant. Like a stray cat you see in the staircase, or a new neighbor you see moving in but never again. Despite all the markers of presence she leaves around the living room, and her perfume. It's not really her that I notice, but those artifacts that collectively become my image of her. So, whatever I think of her, it has nothing to do with her personality or essence or character or anything. I can imagine what she's like deep down, and I can tell you what I see when I do see her or talk to her, but it's like those people working at the bank. You talk to them, you see them, and you can know something about them, but you can never be sure how much more there is to know about them.

Well, maybe it doesn't matter. What you see is what you get, right? That's all that matters to me... that she leaves dishes in the sink and makes noise at night. Those are the things that she is to me, not what school she went to and what *Weltanschauung* she holds and what kinds of food she likes and, least of all, whether she is a good person or not. Who cares if one of those tellers is the wildest thing in the club scene? All that matters is that she's a cold, depressed person taking my rebate check and typing it into the computer. So, why bother to judge my roommate by her career if it never figures into my life? I would much rather define her by the kinds of clothing I see spilling out of her bedroom.

So, in my life, there is work, and then there is home... which consists of more work, old friends, and the clues to my housemate's existence. And food. I love good food. I eat well; I like to cook; and I have tons of time to cook. I even make myself a salad every day. I also go out to eat a lot. I snack. I don't diet; never did. I don't exercise, although I feel a little itch in my muscles sometimes and get it out by dancing. I studied dance a little when I was in high school. Nothing serious, although there was a time in college when I thought I was going to become a professional dancer.

I collect things, too. Mostly antique glass bottles and things that look good in or between my bottles. I don't really go out looking for them. I just run into them once in a while, and a bell goes off in my brain, "Oh, I collect those, don't I?" I also pick up twigs and leaves and stuff that, I

think, look fine with the bottles. Sometimes I see cute porcelain or crystal animals that I buy and put between the bottles...

I love to shop, but I am not always in the mood for it. I know I already picked up enough stuff to last me for the rest of my life. Jewelry, too. I probably have more chests and cute little boxes stuffed away in the basement than anyone else in the world. Stupid, exotic cookware still in their boxes. Clothes and little cute things and cheap jewelry and stuff. Things I imagine I will wear one of these days. I also have closets full of outfits for those "formal" occasions that my job requires. Some of them, I must say, I look really good in. (The clothes I used to wear to bars and parties are now stowed away in chests in the basement... don't like them any more.) I admit, sometimes I buy clothes that are more "private," and wear them while sleeping or lounging around the apartment. More often, I wear them under my work clothes. I get tired of them really fast, tho'... Besides, I am usually too busy with work to play with my clothes, and I don't get that depressed any more... it's been years since I bought—and ate—any chocolate larger than a Snickers bar. I don't know if I feel "good" about myself, really, but I don't need to perk myself up as much. Life is just life.

Last night, I heard my roommate coming back home. She was with someone, and they were thrashing about the living room... It sounded like he was trying to lead her into her bedroom, but she didn't care where they did it, or something like that. I thought the guy's voice sounded familiar, but it must've been because he had his face buried in her neck. Couldn't understand a thing he was saying. She was giggling furiously, and spoke softly, but in her typical clanky, high voice, between breaths.

I wasn't paying any attention, but I heard parts of what she was trying to mutter. It went something like this: "... oh, she always leaves her light on at night... (giggle, mumble, the guy says something)... don't worry, she's just an old nerd..."

Then I fell asleep.