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Romantic Love

The word *romance* will conjure different visions for each person asked to describe it, as will the question, "What is love?", but ask, "What is romantic love?" and one is likely to meet befuddled blank stares before one actually concludes an answer. Merely looking up the textual definition of *romance* implies unclear thinking; adjective: 2) expressive of or exciting sexual love or romance, 3) not sensible about practical matters; unrealistic. Love, a strong positive emotion of regard and affection and one of the basic needs of our emotional selves, can expose the most vulnerable depths of any person. Infatuation, comparable to that first time one tried a drug or drank alcohol or some other vice, we experience a high that leave us wanting more. *The state of infatuation thrives on distance and frustration. It is the spark and the emotional kindling, not a steady, warming fire. It is an appetizer that makes you anticipate the full banquet. But it will not keep you warm and it will not fill you up.* (Peach) In our technologically enhanced world mass media holds the reigns to one draft horse and wears the spurs as well. Marketing is a business. Businesses have a common goal of making money. Marketing reaches us via the subways of mass media. Like infatuation, mass media gives us a taste of the possible and starts the addiction.

Inexpert in approaching topics unbiased, I must first confess a jaded view of *romantic love*. What has made me more aware of this than ever before is the constant, relentless pelting from mass media of some expectation that love **must** be in my path; the one in front of me or the one behind me. On the radio, on television, and everywhere you look. The music on the radio is the product being marketed by the artists performing it. News paper ads advertising a product, the marketing being the ads sold to support the news paper. The pressure staring at you from every angle while you are trying to check out at the grocery store on the covers of magazines, advertising that each one will succeed better than the next at making you a better person. Not by helping you get to know

yourself better, or teaching you how to love yourself; but how to turn yourself into the ideal mate or make you a better lover. Men seeking beautiful women and women seeking the love of their lives.

From the earliest ages we are told and, if lucky, shown by the examples of our parents, what our goal is. Get smart, grow up beautiful, meet a mate, and have a family. It hasn't been very many years that the prospect of being an independent person first and possibly getting an education first and / or having a career first was an acceptable goal. No matter how hard we try to shake it though, the expectation is still there that we eventually want a family which of course starts with a mate.

"The male of the species was literally the provider/protector and the female was the child bearer. Men had to protect their offspring from the everyday lion encounter. A sissy boy would run away from the lion but a protector would risk his life to protect his family.

"Women evolved to instinctually seek this protector quality in a man, because she knew if she didn't find that quality her offspring would most likely die. Some guys think they can win a woman over by smothering her with gifts and romance. Well that just doesn't cut it. Gifts and romance won't stop a lion from eating her offspring.

"Remember, you can't change 5 million years of instinct just because in the last 200 years there hasn't been a need to stop a lion from eating your offspring."

Albion

To attract that mate we must be attractive. The definition of attractive defined by, of course, the mass media we drown in. Thus this vicious cycle of love and romance that apparently cannot exist without the attraction and sex appeal. Although on a logical level we may be able to argue the point, there is a seed that is planted in each of us to grow some preconceived 'perfect plant' that will be our life garden. Unlike a whirlpool or quicksand of which you can break free from temporarily and stand nearby without being sucked in, giving one time to negotiate an alternative route, mass media innumerable levels deep and wide and out of ones control. The only chance of sanity and individuality is to try to ignore it. Unfortunately only the bad magazines come in brown wrappers covering their despicable covers, which nowadays aren't much worse than the ones on the news stand right next to The Family Circle. So we are forced to look at their ads and photos constantly remind us of our faults, flaws, shortcomings, and the fact that our mate or potential mate will always want something more than what we already have and that even achieving that bar may be

just inches from our grasp; but buying that particular magazine or paper will reveal the ultimate secret.

Becky Freeman, author of Marriage 911 states *a woman thinks of romance in terms of an environment, whereas a man thinks of it more in terms of an act*. Men desire the visually beautiful women and sexual encounters as their reward. Sex is love and sex is romance. Women desire a different kind of beautiful; harmony, security, sensuality, sincere beauty and a different kind of physical reward; touch, caress, affectionate closeness. Not to say that both men and women don't, at times, meet in the middle and agree for a while that they're both fulfilled. The media however, cannot be forgotten. As a business its goal is to make money to support its clients; its clients being anyone with a product to sell. The sexual appeals to the man, and drives the woman to produce what is desirable. Like the mating rituals of animals, we do certain things to attract the desired target or win them over; unlike the animal however we aim to keep the target with us for life and expect this ritual to continue and grow and repeat itself without the ultimate goal of breeding merely to produce our spawn. From this one may determine that the romantic part of romantic love is for the woman.

Largely men have won their battle once the woman has fallen in love. Although men have accomplished leaps and bounds of improvement over decades toward realizing the value and security in a monogamous, lifetime relationship, the primal instinct is still to hunt, gather, breed, and propagate. There is no consideration for the reality side of love and relationships. The extended families aren't even an issue. The potential of children before the couple is ready is often overlooked. The idea of entering into a relationship slowly is taboo, even though that might reduce the number of lightning marriages and tornado divorces. The prospect of crushed esteems and broken hearts is surely not of interest; only making that *sale*. Mass media dangles the meat in front of men to get the sales, simultaneously dangling the family and the romantic prince in front of the woman to get her sales. *Customers don't buy products—they buy solutions to problems. And that's the whole secret behind marketing. Marketing is nothing more than understanding what a customer really, really wants—and then showing them how you'll provide it.* (D'Alto) There may be sprinkles

of family or hints of family, but the focus is on the attraction of the possible mate for life. Pulling on heart strings and playing on emotions. *Great marketing is about discovering your customers' problems and then solving them.* (Khera) Our lives and relationships are no different to the mass media. They'll slam the population with so much marketing that even those without problem will think they have problems just because the solutions sound so great they want a reason to buy into it. *"Psychographic experts" are people who get inside customers' heads to discover why they buy. Their take? Every purchase is really about filling basic human needs.* (D'Alto)

Focusing on the sexy angle is a way of spotlighting the exciting or feel-good side of any product. Make people feel good and feel good about themselves, and you have their attention. *Every product has a sexy side—from that dental floss bikini that says "Look at me!" to the baby-sitting service that lets mom and dad finally spend some time together. Find the sexy side of your product, because sex always sells.* (Bonner) In that mindset it's crystal clear to see how easy it is to find the *sexy side* of romantic love.