

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Love is a many splendoured thing.  
It's the ten kinds of books  
That you can read in this early spring.  
Love is nature's way of making  
You a fool for believing.  
A reason for living  
For flying and being.  
Love is why we fall  
Then get up and keep trying.

MUNIZ MANZUR

**T**HE New York Public Library shared their top ten picks for the greatest love stories of all time. They can melt your heart, make you laugh and leave you longing for a tissue. Whether you are looking for that special someone or blissfully in love, these ageless classics know just how to pull on those heartstrings. So, jump under the covers, turn down the lights and tuck into the most sought-after romantic novels of all time.

1. *Wuthering Heights*: A total eclipse of the heart.

In one of the oldest heart-wrenching classics in the "lost love can turn a good man evil" scenario, Emily Brontë's novel takes us back to 1802 at the Wuthering Heights estate. In this timeless love story, our leading man Heathcliff grows to become best friends with his adopted sister, Catherine, his life-long crush. But an offhand comment, overheard at the Heights, changes the course of both of their lives.

*"He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same."*

2. *Anna Karenina*: Love can be a train wreck. Frequently a top author's choice, this Tolstoy novel is a literary soap opera. Set in the highest circles of Russian society, Anna Karenina visits her brother Stiva in Moscow to help him save his marriage. While there, she falls in love with Count Vronsky. A married woman, Karenina fights off her desires until they overwhelm her and she leaves her husband, Alexei. Denied a divorce, Anna spends her life looking for acceptance in her relationship. When the strain of their love life becomes too much, Anna leaves Vronsky in a rage and well, if you haven't read it, do! We won't give away a heart-wrenching ending.

*"I've always loved you, and when you love someone, you love the whole person, just as he or she is, and not as you would like them to be."*

3. *Romeo and Juliet*: Wherefore art thou, Romeo?

In one of William Shakespeare's most celebrated works, this tale of "star-crossed loves" has been told and interpreted time and time again (from film classic *West Side Story* to teen flick *Romeo + Juliet*). A story all lovers can relate to,



*Romeo and Juliet* focuses on the tragedies that accompany the loss of true love. Lovers Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet, two of the most famed clans in literature, come from opposite sides of the Verona tracks and their family's disapproval of their love eventually leads to their demise.

*"Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;*

*Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;*

*Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears.*

*What is it else? A madness most discreet,  
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet."*

4. *Casablanca*: Play it again, Sam.

Made famous by Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, this love story was originally a play by Murray Burnett. The play was turned into a script

by writers (and brothers) Julius and Philip Epstein and their friend Howard Koch. In the story, American Rick Blaine is the owner of a gambling club "Rick's Cafe Americain" in the Moroccan city of Casablanca. Set during World War II, Rick is a bitter man having been scorned by ex-lover Ilsa Lund. When she walks back into his life suddenly, now married, with her husband in tow, Rick is forced to come face-to-face with well-aged heartache.

*"Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the world, she walks into mine."*

5. *Midsummer Night's Dream*: Dream a little dream.

A romantic comedy by William Shakespeare, this play takes place in Athens as Duke Theseus plans a large festival around his marriage. During this time, Theseus' daughter, Hermia, is refusing to marry her fiancé. Due to a true-love-in-the-wings named Lysander. Against her father's wishes, she flees the nuptials for the woods. And guess who? While there, they befriend fairies who cause a bit of mischief. Cue a new love triangle and surprise ending!

*"The course of true love never did run smooth."*

6. *Doctor Zhivago*: Boy meets girl meets girl.

This Noble Prize-winning Russian novel by Boris Pasternak is the ageless classic of one man torn between two women. Yuri Zhivago is a medical doctor and poet during the 1917 Russian Revolution. While married to aristocratic Tonya, he falls in love with nurse Lara. Set during a war time, Zhivago's love triangle falls prey to a twist of fate, and becomes a tale of protagonist versus an achy, breaking heart.

*"Oh, what a love it was, utterly free,  
unique, like nothing else on earth! Their thoughts were like other people's songs."*

7. *Sense and Sensibility*: Sisters and soul mates. Another Jane Austen classic from 1811, this love story focuses around the Dashwood sisters – Elinor and Marianne. When their father dies, they lose their family estate and are reduced to a life of poverty. The story follows the sisters as they move in with a distant relative, leading them to equal parts heartache and romance.

*"I wish as well as everybody else to be*

*perfectly happy, but like everybody else it must be in my own way."*

8. *Dangerous Liaisons*: A novel composed of letters.

The classic eighteenth-century novel by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos is the ultimate dark tale of lust, greed, deception and romance, featuring the Marquise de Merteuil, who requests that her partner, the Vicomte de Valmont, seduce the young daughter of her cousin. Meanwhile, young Cecile has the hots for her teacher, Chevalier Danceny. Love affairs, deception and lies aplenty unfold.

*"How characteristic of your perverse heart that longs only for what happens to be out of reach."*

9. *Pride and Prejudice*: A literary game of cat and mouse.

Charles Bingley is new to town and has leased an estate with his sisters and close friend Fitzwilliam Darcy. Named a "catch" by all the single ladies in town, Darcy is also known as snob. Neighbor Elizabeth Bennet finds herself repulsed by Darcy's ego. The resulting pas de deux between the feisty twosome makes for a quite a page-turner.

*"We are all fools in love."*

10. *Hugo's Hunchback of Notre Dame*: Oh Quasimodo!

Victor Hugo's story, set in Paris in 1482, centers around Notre Dame cathedral. In this "true love comes from within" story, Gypsy dancer Esmeralda is longed for by Quasimodo, Notre Dame's kind-hearted but deformed bellringer. Upon order of Archdeacon Frollo, Quasimodo attempts to kidnap Esmeralda, but is caught. Standing trial, Quasimodo is humiliated by the public and his victim Esmeralda has pity on him. Soon after Esmeralda is blackmailed and sentenced to death for the murder of her crush Phoebus. On her sentencing day, Esmeralda is saved from death by her dear Quasimodo. But can true love overcome her distaste for his looks?

*"Love is like a tree: it grows by itself, roots itself deeply in our being and continues to flourish over a heart in ruin."*

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## You Can Be Whatever You Want With Me



PHILIP JOHN

In the garden of transformations, a man and a woman meet.

They are misfits in the world but when together, they remember who they are deep inside, and feel free to say and do things they haven't done in years.

They cherish the freedom so much they promise they will let their relationship be a monument to freedom, a place where there are no rules and where each of them can be whatever they want to be.

The man turns into a unicorn and the woman rides him.

The woman turns into a tree and the man climbs her.

They both turn into water and waltz at the bottom of a river.

Then one day, the man comes to the garden after a long day's work and finds that his lover is missing.

He calls her name – the name he has given her and which must not be used here – but she doesn't answer his call.

Then he sees a bird on a branch and

recognizes his lover's edgy grace from the bird's movements. Something is up, he thinks.

"There you are," he says.  
"Yes, I've always wanted to fly. This feels wonderful," his lover says.

"Do you want to fly away?" the man asks, correctly gauging her wish.

The bird looks away. After a pause, she says, "I just want to see how it feels."

"Then you should go," the man says.

"Really? You won't miss me?" the bird asks.

"I will, but you can be whatever you want with me," the man says.

So the bird takes to the sky, promising to return at a later date.

As she flies away, the man looks at the bird's arc of flight in the sky with regret and happiness.

But he finds that his happiness is greater than his regret, and this is how he knows his soul has expanded in the garden of transformations, that beautiful, strange place where the only love you get to keep is the love you give away.

## Call It

MUNIZ MANZUR

I am laying all my cards down at the table. I'm laying them down and letting you know how this game is going to play out. We won't play poker, won't bluff. We won't Beggar My Neighbour or each other. No need for Blind Dons because my cards will be face up, for you to see clearly. We'll do no Crazy Eights, desperately trying to get rid of what we have at hand by throwing it into a discard pile. We've been discarded once. We know what it feels like. Let's pick ourselves up from there, shall we?

You've become used to playing Solitaire. I can guess it in the way it takes you all day to reply to my inbox message. The double ticks denote that the message is in. But it hasn't gone in. Because there's a whole lot of tick-tock-tick-tock before you compose the reply, probably a pause and finally, hit send. So I wait. Till you are ready to ping or beep or whatever me back. I know you will ping or beep or whatever me back.

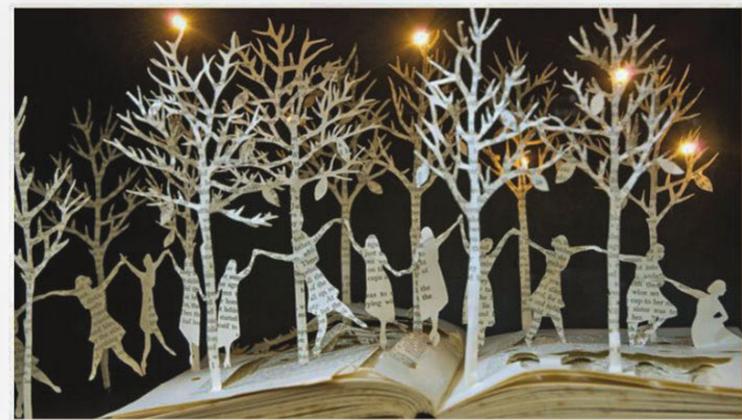
There's a sweetness in that.

Like the sweetness in the way you love to eat biryani. Your unashamed gusto for potatoes, rice and mutton cooked in its own juices, cholesterol be damned! Or that you think meeting for coffee denotes a date but sharing a plate of French fries at midnight does not. I like the way you wear your tweed jacket, complete with leather patches on the elbow, while other men fidget in their Boss jackets and Burberry scarves. They preen by the bar while you patrol the barbecue buffet. I like that.

After dinner, when everyone is drunkenly singing by the bonfire, I like the way I can almost lean against you, the mulled wine swirling inside my head and you stand straight, waiting to be leaned on, not a single muscle twitching. Separated by a hair's breadth. I like the latent heat that emanates between us, bouncing off each other's voids, waiting on the possibility of convection. No detectable change in temperature. Just a flurry of invisible molecules emotion-charged. Most of all, I like the way our eyes meet across the table, unhurried, curious, interested.

So I'm laying my cards down at the table. Here's the Two of Hearts. No. Not for the two of us. To assure you that I won't be like your ex. Because, I've been alone for that many years, reforming myself in music, in dance, in words. I won't cling to you like she did. I can manage on my own as needed. You can be the King of Diamonds and I'll be the Queen of Spades. A soft element forced to become tough after undue pressure; I'll dig away till you are ready to yield. We'll make sense, you and I. Perhaps not a straight hand. But we can take turns to be the Ace or Joker. We're both intelligent adults, ready to love again, to laugh a little.

There. All laid out. Go ahead. Call me on it.



## Perfect Adjustment

MEHRIN CHOWDHURY

Sanjana was more than happy today; she was ecstatic and hopelessly in love. Abir had taken her on a river cruise. She couldn't believe her luck. She pinched herself to check whether she was dreaming.

She had been skeptical about love since her parents' divorce; being a professional psychiatrist didn't make her life any easier. Every day she had to hear patients complain: mostly about unfaithful husbands, abusive spouses, failed relationships, tension in sexual intimacy, etc. Abir seemed different, very different from the type of men her female patients talked about.

A gust of wind ruffled Sanjana's hair and the boat swayed slightly. Sanjana felt thankful for having experienced such a flawless evening.

Abir interrupted her thoughts. "You look beautiful tonight, dear. I am so lucky to have met the girl of my dreams. Not everyone is lucky as I am, you know! Many spend a lifetime unable to find the right person."

Smiling, Sanjana remarked, "The right person doesn't exist, you need to adjust!"  
"But with you I am not adjusting. You are simply perfect. Beautiful, intelligent, assertive, independent, everything I like. So what's the catch?"

Sanjana blushed. Abir was giving her too many compliments. It was becoming very embarrassing for her. Sanjana tried to change the topic by pointing to the

sparkling carpet of stars above. He didn't notice; instead he grabbed her close and kissed her neck. The entire moment was so enticing that she felt dizzy with happiness.

An hour later, they both embarked on land and strolled towards Abir's car, hand in hand.

When Sanjana noticed Abir wasn't offering her to go back to his apartment, she took the initiative to invite him to hers.

The next day, Sanjana woke up to see Abir lying on the bed beside her, serene and comfortable. Feeling content she got up to make breakfast. She wanted Abir to taste her fabulous homemade croissants. On the kitchen countertop she noticed Abir's mobile phone. He had probably left it there in a hurry last night. She was just about to pick up the phone when it rang. A lady on the other end asked her who she was.

She promptly replied "I am Sanjana, Abir's friend. Who are you?"

"I am Abir's wife. I just called to check on him. You must be his colleague! He said he would be out of town for an important meeting. What time is the meeting?"

Sanjana felt lightheaded. She hung up without replying. The voice on the other side had sounded very familiar... in fact, it sounded like her most recent patient Mishra who was having problems in her marriage because of her cheating husband. Sanjana looked back at Abir through the open doors; still sleeping quite comfortably.