

Life, As Dictated by a Romantic Comedy

RASHA JAMEEL

It's the beginning of a new day in Rom-Com Land, and a twenty-something-year-old woman has just woken up to a lovely morning, completely oblivious of how lucky she is to be waking up to such a view from her apartment window in an expensive city bustling with traffic.

She's absolutely miserable despite being exceptionally successful in her field of work, because she isn't in a romantic relationship. But despite her woes, Rom-Com Lady steps out every day in a very fashionable workday outfit and a pair of painful heels to conquer the world of fashion. Literally. It's either that or wedding planning. Or anything to do with writing really. God forbid if a Rom-Com Lady ever chooses to indulge in astrophysics.

Meanwhile, Rom-Com Guy wakes up to the unceremonious nagging of one of his regular houseguests, whom he proudly acknowledges as his "conquests", because nothing says "conventional" more than some casual sexism. Rom-Com Guy is regarded as an absolute player who wouldn't glance twice at "a girl like Rom-Com Lady" since he has a toxic reputation to protect. However, this is overlooked in favour of his "heart of gold" which is buried deep down in his soul. Suspend your disbelief, please.

Fun fact #1: Weekdays in Rom-Com Land always begin at 12 PM to provide people with ample time for a lengthy breakfast,



self-care session, a pep talk about how they're better off without romance, and a brief encounter with each other which ends in a fight featuring plastic coffee cups.

Here's where we forget what Netflix's Sima Aunty had told us about compatibility.

The men and women in Rom-Com Land never get along through sweet-talking. The romance is built on a foundation of constant bickering and endless tiffs. But

but also want to be together and now they're conflicted and spend most of their waking hours dwelling on the dilemma. It's the Carousel of Confusion, albeit an avoidable one.

Here's where we recall what Netflix's Sima Aunty had told us about her cuckoo theories of "stars being aligned".

The illogical concept seems to apply to the inhabitants of Rom-Com Land. Everything comes together at the end as the leads accept their feelings for each other (often at an airport, after abandoning their very important plans).

The end.
Fun fact #2: Romance in the real world hardly ever plays out like the ones in Rom-Com Land. It's important to not fret over that realization because conventional romantic comedies exist completely in fiction, unfolding in a ridiculously binary universe. When it comes to real love, it's important to not dive into a tumultuous romance where the mutual attraction is mostly physical and the relationship barely leaves room in your life for your work and passion. Take your time with finding "The One".
Okay? Okay.

The author has currently locked horns with her greatest foe: the microbial gut flora. Lend her a hand in battling the devious proteobacteria phyla at rasha.jameel@outlook.com

BEING TINY

BUSHRA ZAMAN

Are most of your friends taller than you? Have you ever been called tiny? If so, this article is for you. Here is how it feels to be small in a world full of tall people.

For starters, being tiny can be inconvenient. Wearing loose outfits may make you seem like a child trying on adult-sized clothing. Your pants have to be tailored to your size in order for you to not trip over the excess fabric that piles up around your shoes whenever you attempt to walk. In fact, the rare times you may find something in your size, you may notice a tag on the clothing item indicating that it is from the kids section. High heels may seem like a solution but only if they ever fit you; many shoes in the women's section will fall off as you try to walk.

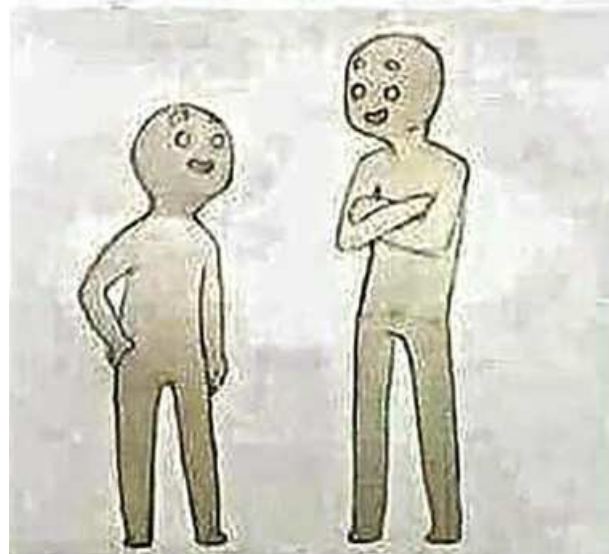
Items placed on high shelves have to be one of our biggest weaknesses. Anything placed atop a bookshelf or cupboard is as good as gone. Who has the time or patience to climb up a ladder? Another issue is your general demeanour as a small person. You could be screaming and jumping while throwing the biggest fit of your life, and they'll say you look like a child throwing a tantrum. Um, excuse me? What do I have to do to be intimidating or be taken seriously? Piranhas are small, but they're terrifying. You don't see anyone doubting their lethality. I could go around biting people like piranhas and I'd still be compared to a teething toddler.

Don't get me wrong, being tiny isn't all bad. People often mistake small people to be younger than they really are and you may relatively look more youthful than others your age. The only time it gets awkward is when people significantly younger than you are interested in you. I'm flattered at how young you think I am, but child, I am ancient compared to your age.

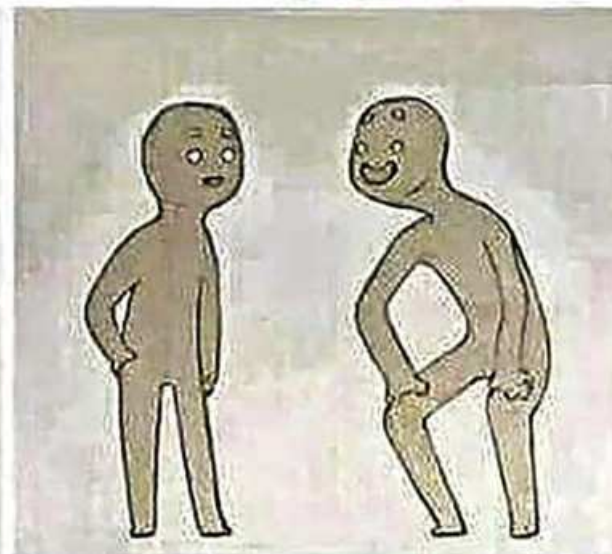
Your small size makes it easier for you to crawl into

How to talk with short people:

No



Yes



tiny spaces trying to fetch lost earphones or to find shelter behind a friend when the sun shines too bright. You can easily curl up in sofas and fit into most beds without having half your body awkwardly stick out. You may be better at hide-and-seek than most of your friends. With proper training, you could develop the stealth of a ninja, moving around without anyone noticing. Your

size may therefore be a gift.

If you are tiny, you are not alone. If you know someone who is tiny, never cross them. Piranhas aren't the only lethal tiny creatures on the planet.

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THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE SHOUT



IT'S OKAY TO FAIL

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

ADHORA AHMED

The idea of success is ingrained within us since birth. Why not? We like success stories, even if they incite envy within us. We like setting goals in order to be better than what we already are. Above all, we like how success makes us feel, especially the relief and the newfound confidence that makes all the hard work worthwhile.

However, let's not forget that failure is the pillar of success. You don't have to hear the stories of Oprah Winfrey or J. K. Rowling to know that behind every success, there are many failed attempts. Your life experiences are full of such stories. Perhaps your parents often share the anecdote of how many times you fell before you could take your first steps as a toddler, all by yourself. Maybe you remember the teacher who would always try to bring you down by asserting that you'd never pass their subject, only to prove them wrong by getting the highest marks. This very article will go through several rejected drafts before it sees the light of day in print.

The point is, there is no success without failure.

If you weigh your successes against your failures, the scales would tip heavily in terms of the latter. Thus, it is obvious that stories of failure are more common. Yet, how many stories do we hear about restarts, botched attempts, aborted missions or broken dreams? We do, but often in whispers when the afflicted person isn't around, accompanied by either pitiful sighs or smug

grins. The shame attached to these stories are somewhat shed if the failures are punctuated by successes. Would any of us care if J. K. Rowling had never reached the level of success she has now? Most probably not.

Living in a success-oriented world means that failure is relegated to a taboo topic, unless it can be justified with a form of success that outshines it. Our society expects us to be successful, to overcome often formidable hurdles. We are expected to be on good terms with everyone, get good grades, get a good job that pays well, get married and start a family – the list goes on. Our society also expects us to be proud of our successes, because we love hearing about them.

Just take a look at your social media feeds. You will see people announcing whatever good things happen in their lives, whether it's a new job, an engagement, or simply a nice painting. It gives the impression that everyone is living well and happily. Most importantly, our society wants us to work hard to taste that sweet fruit. There's nothing wrong with that; success without perseverance and hard work is like trying to turn back time.

However, there's another component that is crucial to success that we don't talk about enough: luck.

As we all know, the year 2020 has turned all our expectations and plans upside down and inside out, and the crisis does not seem to be resolved soon. The well-performing employee who was hoping to get promoted lost their job. The couple who

were planning to get married saw their relationship fall apart. The HSC candidate, who would've been busy with university admissions right now, waited for months to know if their exams would be cancelled. I myself was planning to go abroad for higher studies. All of these cases were struck by dumb luck.

Sometimes, even though you might put all your effort into achieving something, luck turns its favours away. Sometimes, the situation and the circumstances are out of your control. None of us imagined that a virus, invisible to the naked eye, would make us taste the bitterness of failure. But luck played a trick and that's what happened.

It sucks, but should you beat yourself up over your failures last year? No, because it's not your fault.

Does that mean all your hard work was for nothing? No, because what matters is that you tried your best.

Among the many things last year has taught us is the value of failure. Although we try to hide our sob stories without happy endings and avoid sharing them on our timelines, we often forget that failure teaches us way more than success does. After all, we learn the best from our mistakes, the botched attempts that urge us to restart and inch towards a successful one.

When luck runs out though, some failures can't be remedied easily. In most cases, failure teaches us how to improve ourselves. In the case of 2020, our myriad

failures taught us more by putting things into perspective, taking stock of how valuable the things we take for granted are. Maybe our failures against these unique circumstances redefined what success is. It need not always mean the desire for material things like wealth or status. It can also lie in the little things, like rediscovering a passion, spending more time with one's family, or anything that can offer some fulfilment, even if it's for a few moments. It may even mean the simple truth of being alive day after day, against all odds. These little things may not mean much compared to your grand schemes, but they do.

After experiencing failure, our instinct urges us to bounce back as soon as possible and march onward. It's what the world is desperately trying to do with the pandemic and the subsequent recession. Yet, 2020 has been a lot for all of us. The burden of all these failures is bound to make anyone emotionally fatigued, and bouncing back needs sufficient willpower. No matter what everyone tells you, it's okay to take your time to process all this. It's okay to take a break to learn all the lessons life has thrown at you last year.

When you're ready, perhaps you'll be kinder to your botched attempts for the knowledge they've given you, because failure is good.

Adhora Ahmed tries to make her two cats befriend each other, but in vain. Tell her to give up at adhora.ahmed@gmail.com