

# Five Toxic Relationship Tropes, We Need to Get Rid Of

Relationship tropes in movies are very toxic, indeed



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This topic has been in my head for some time. I already wanted to address it a year ago. When my last relationship crashed and burned. I have recovered from that, thank you. That experience, along with plenty of time for reflection means it is time to do something about it. I will start right off the bat. I am sick and tired of watching toxic relationship tropes in movies and tv shows.

Now, some of you might object. "It's fiction", is what I hear you say. And you would be right. Then again, it isn't that simple. Because the truth is that we are influenced by culture, whether we choose to or not. The things we see on the screen do shape our perception of the world. This is especially true for younger generations. It takes sufficient life experience to shift perspective. Some of these perceptions seem to manifest well into adulthood. Judging by what I experienced roaming around on various dating apps.

In my own case, I had to undergo some heavy perspective shifting of what makes up a healthy relationship. That took lots of therapy and hard work.

The problem with most relationship tropes is, that they often pass off toxic behavior as love. And often, this doesn't even stop at obsessing over the object of your desire. No, sometimes even abuse and rape are framed as romantic behavior.

So, here are 5 relationship tropes, that I no longer want to see on a screen.

## #1 – Love at First Sight

You know what I am talking about. That classic scene, where a guy sees a girl for the first time. Then there is the slow-motion effect, as we see a close-up of the girl's face. Her hair is waving around and we viewers revel in all the attractive features her face has to offer. And the script makes it clear, that from that moment on, the guy is in love. The entire rest of the movie is about how he chases the girl down, and how they end up together.

Just writing this makes me feel icky, to be honest. Here is the deal. Love, at first sight, does not exist. What does exist, is the sexual attraction at first sight, followed by infatuation. But those two are not the same.

There are plenty of girls I have fantasized about during my life. That does not mean, they would have made great partners. Or that I would have been a good partner to them at that point in my life. In most cases, we wouldn't even have been compatible.

This trope represents infatuation, branded as love. In the love at first sight trope, there is nothing to build a relationship on. Other than looks. Which is a pretty thin base. A solid relationship, that should stand the test of time needs to go way deeper than that. You need to have shared values. And the only way to figure out if you share values with a potential partner is to at least take a second look. Possibly even a third. Coupled with actual conversations and shared activities in between.

A notable example of this trope is 'Ten things I hate about you'.

## #2 – If You Chase Long Enough, Your Crush Will Fall For You

Ah yes, everybody loves a good chase. In movies, we see it play out like this. The protagonist falls in love. The chosen one does not reciprocate. The protagonist starts chasing, buying gifts, and singing serenades. Also, he will make sure that he randomly keeps appearing in the life of his chosen one. Usually in places where the person they desire also happens to be at any given time. Do you know what we call this in real life? Stalking. Let's be

honest here. There is nothing romantic about being stalked. It's creepy AF.

Plus, if your crush does not reciprocate your efforts, that is a clear sign. He/she is not into you. So it's best to read the room and leave it be. In the movies, it always seems to end with both of them ending up together. Which is weird. I would never consider starting a relationship with a girl who stalks me. You can guess how healthy that relationship will be.

A notable example here is 'All about Steve'.

### #3 Love Is All About Grand Gestures

This one seems harmless but sends a very destructive message. You know what I am talking about. It is that grand gesture trope, where our protagonist goes out of his way to declare his love. Or apologize after a fight. Like hiring an airship to display his message in the sky during a major sports event. Or covering the entire apartment with flowers. Of course, grand gestures are nice. But a healthy relationship really thrives on the little things. Like giving compliments to your partner now and then. Doing random acts of kindness without expecting something in return.

The trope is toxic because it often sends 2 messages. One is that you can win love by making grand gestures. No need for nitty-gritty getting to know each other and building a relationship.

The other is that you patch over an argument with another grand gesture. Like giving a huge gift. In reality, it does not work like that. What works is to have healthy communication. You know, talking through your issues and finding solutions together. A gift can play a role in opening up a line of communication. But it can't replace the work you have to put into the relationship. As for declaring love, my experience is that my partners knew what I felt for them. Even without the airship.

You can see a whole bunch of examples in 'Love Actually'

### #4 The Makeover

This one grosses me out. It is the one about that not-so-attractive protagonist who gets a makeover. Now everyone desires the character and wants to go out with him/her. This means that the secret crush of the protagonist now starts to show interest.

There are several reasons why this trope in particular is troublesome. For

one, it sends the message that protagonists worth only comes from looks. He/she is only dateable if they look completely different. I am all for doing something to make yourself look presentable. But this is not what this trope represents.

Instead, it shows us, that we are valuable only if we give up every bit of our unique personality. The makeovers featured in the movies are about changing the person. The nice girl has to become a punk-rock icon. The geeky guy has to become a sports fanatic. You get the drift.

Another issue is, that we get the message that it is romantic when somebody does not like us for ourselves. The secret crush doesn't love the protagonist. He loves a specific idea in his head about the protagonist.

We got enough of that judgemental shit going on on Instagram and dating apps. It is time to say goodbye to this one.

If you do want to see what I mean, just watch 'She's all that'.

## #5 Love Redeems

The last one on this list is one of the most unhinged relationship tropes out there. It is one about how love fixes everything and can redeem even the vilest character. That is a problematic message to send. Because toxic behavior is still toxic.

The trope tells us that we just need to let a person violate our boundaries long enough. They, will come around and change. In other words, you should stay in an abusive relationship in the hopes, that it changes for the better.

That is not what will happen in real life.

Some behavioral patterns are the result of trauma. Believe me, I know. But according to the trope, you don't have to do anything to heal or grow. You don't have to take responsibility for your actions. You have to wait around for that person, who will love you and you will be a better person.

So it is a problematic message for both parties of a relationship.

Love is not what will redeem you. Owning your faults and putting in the work will.

One of the most representative examples of this trope is 'The Phantom the Opera'

## Relationship Tropes Are Not Harmless

So, these were five relationship tropes that I would like to not see on the screen anymore. The movies and TV shows we watch do influence us, so it is important to talk openly about what messages it is that we send. Granted, many of those relationship tropes have been with us since time immemorial. You can find most of these in fairytales as well. That does not make them any better, though.

I think we could avoid a lot of heartbreak and toxic relationships.

If we start to see better models of healthy relationships on the screen.

If you have more tropes that you want to not see in movies anymore, let me know in the comments.