



# The Quirkyalone: Celebrating Single Life

*Loners are the last true romantics*

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*by Sasha Cagen, from To-Do List*

I am, perhaps, what you might call deeply single. Almost never ever in a relationship. Until recently, I wondered if there might be something weird about me. But then lonely romantics began to grace the covers of *TV Guide* and *Mademoiselle*. From *Ally McBeal* to *Sex in the City*, a spotlight came to shine on the forever single. If these shows had touched such a nerve in our culture, I began to think, perhaps I was not so alone after all. The morning after New Year's Eve (another kissless one, of course), a certain jumble of syllables came to me. When I told my friends about my idea, their faces lit up with instant recognition: the quirkyalone.

If Jung was right, that people are different in fundamental ways that drive them from within, then the quirkyalone is simply to be added to the pantheon of personality types collected over the 20th century. Only now, when the idea of marrying at age 20 has become thoroughly passé, are we quirkyalones emerging in greater numbers.

We are the puzzle pieces who seldom fit with other puzzle pieces. Romantics, idealists, eccentrics, we inhabit single-dom as our natural resting state. In a world where proms and marriage define the social order, we are, by force of our personalities and inner strength, rebels.

For the quirkyalone, there is no patience for dating just for the sake of not being alone. We want a miracle. Out of millions, we have to find the one who will understand.

Better to be untethered and open to possibility: living for the exhilaration of meeting someone new, of not knowing what the night will bring. We quirkyalones seek momentous meetings.

By the same token, being alone is understood as a wellspring of feeling and experience. There is a bittersweet fondness for silence. All those nights alone—they bring insight.

Sometimes, though, we wonder if we have painted ourselves into a corner. Standards that started out high only become higher once you realize the contours of this existence. When we do find a match, we verge on obsessive—or we resist.

And so, a community of like-minded souls is essential. Since fellow quirkyalones are not abundant (we are probably less than 5 percent of the population), I recommend reading the patron saint of solitude: German poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Even 100 years after its publication, *Letters to a Young Poet* still feels like it was written for us: "You should not let yourself be confused in your solitude by the fact that there

is something in you that wants to break out of it," Rilke writes. "People have (with the help of conventions) oriented all their solutions toward the easy and toward the easiest side of easy, but it is clear that we must hold to that which is difficult."

Rilke is right. Being quirkyalone can be difficult. Everyone else is part of a couple! Still, there are advantages. No one can take our lives away by breaking up with us. Instead of sacrificing our social constellation for the one all-consuming individual, we seek empathy from friends. We have significant others.

And so, when my friend asks me if being quirkyalone is a life sentence, I say, yes, at the core, one is always quirkyalone. But when one quirkyalone finds another, ooh la la. The earth quakes.

**The editors of *To-Do List's* definitive guide to who is and who's not quirkyalone.**

**Katharine Hepburn**

Yes. She was an independent spirit, ahead of her time.

**Jo March from *Little Women***

Yes. The intellectual type. Married late in life.

**James Baldwin**

Yes. Experimented with love, but always felt like an outsider. Cultivated a state of being alone.

**Laverne and Shirley**

Yes. Real and unafraid to show it. Plus friendship is very important for quirkyalones.

**Oprah Winfrey**

Yes. Steadman is just a sidekick. Her main allegiance is to herself.

**Joan of Arc**

Yes. Followed her inner voice in the face of scorn and ridicule.

**Morrissey**

Yes. For those who grew up in the '80s, the prototypical quirkyalone.

**Bridget Jones**

No. Too concerned about calories. Relationships should be fostered, not festered.

**Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks**

No! No! No! The enemies of quirkyalones everywhere.

**Emily Dickinson**

No. Quirky and alone, but not quirkyalone. We are sociable people.

**The Brontë sisters**

Yes. Interior lives, habits, and key relationships override all else.

**Margaret Cho**

Yes. She's the one that she wants.

**Sandra Bernhardt**

Yes. Quirkyalone *and* bisexual. Extra points.

**Ally McBeal**

Yes. Though controversial, Ally is the poster child for long walks alone at night.

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

A big yes. This turn-of-the-century poet is the patron saint of solitude with character.