



For our fellow Filipina,
regardless of relationship
and Facebook status.

Before I Do Anthology

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Katherine C. Eustaquio-Derla

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A collection of “real” stories *for* women *from* women.



Before I Do ANTHOLOGY

Introduction

Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla

Cheekie Albay

Ria Hazel Lumandog

Ada De Pedro

Jacquie Bamba Zamora

Paula Bianca Abiog

Krystle Marie Pingol

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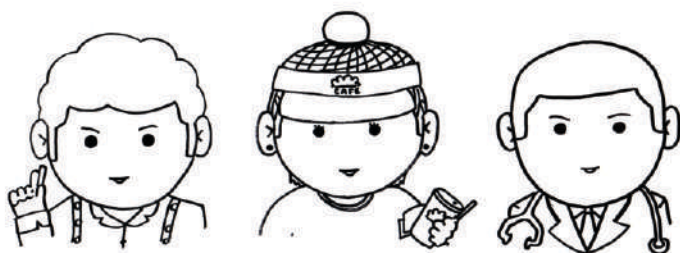
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By Kath C. Eustaquio-Derla

When I said that my first novel, *Before I Do* is a must-read for every Filipina, regardless of relationship and Facebook status, I meant it. Contrary to first impressions, it's not a book you buy when you're engaged or getting married soon. It's a book you read if, like many of us, you're unsure about how getting married could change you.

I've had my own doubts. I've had them for years that even I, one of the most romantic persons I know, thought that maybe I'm not fit for marriage. Why? Because I am selfish! Oh, god, not just selfish but also very, very spoiled. Or used to be. I don't know. I guess a part of me will always be selfish and spoiled but, as fate would have it, I've found myself a partner in crime.

I met my husband on Friendster. Yes, that ancient social networking site. The first time he met me in person, I was gearing up for a fight with some people from high school. When we started dating, I took him to back-to-back media events because I wanted to see if he can survive in my world. I've dated jerks, insecure sons-of-bitches and good-looking men who couldn't

understand what I do for a living. My husband passed the tests and became my constant plus one since. Fast forward some years and we finally tied the knot, twice. First in civil court in 2013 and in church in 2014.

The thing about getting married is that many of us think that love is enough. Perhaps it's a case-to-case thing but, at least for me, it's made up of the big three: love, respect and trust.

A few years ago, I made a decision to follow my husband abroad. That decision broke me. At that time, my career in corporate communications was just taking off. I was in a very good multinational company, a post that had so much potential. I was renting my own condo. I had a great social life. And I am blessed to have such a close-knit family.

But I dropped everything and followed my husband to Malaysia.

We both knew that the stint abroad would launch his career to greater heights. And we both knew that a long distance relationship would be the end of us. For someone who is career-

obsessed, egotistic and downright stubborn, it was one of the most difficult things I have ever done to date.

You see, I initially wanted to be a powerful and successful woman on my own. I thought that joining him abroad without a job offer of my own was a sign of weakness. But I realized that joining forces with him is what partnership is all about. I've gotten so used to doing things on my own—methods and timelines—that I didn't know how to tag team. Two years ago, he told me this:

“Don't worry about it babe, maybe your time to be successful is not now. Maybe in the future, when my success is waning and I am too lazy to work, you will be the successful one.”

It was one of the most amazing and honest truths he has ever told me. At that very moment, I realized that love (and marriage) really is about compromise and being each other's greatest supporter.

Our life abroad has led me away from the corporate arena by choice. It brought me to a new path, which is actually an old one that I shied away from because I thought I didn't have it in me: writing books. I've always wanted to make my mark and for me, nothing better does that than powerful stories. That's what my first novel and this anthology project is all about.

There are women who can't wait to get married. There are women who second-guess if marriage is for them. There are newly married women who can share a lot of stories and lessons they've learned from “the other side of the fence.” And there are older women, whose children are already married, who can help younger women determine if the fears are legit. I say tear down that fence and let's stop single-shaming or married-shaming people and get together, as women, so we can get a better grasp on this marriage thing.

What if these women could talk to each other? Better yet, what if these women could share their stories to a broader audience? If you're single, what are your fears about getting hitched? If you're in a relationship, why do you want to feel single again? If you're married, what would you tell our single sisters? If you've been there, done that, what would you tell younger women who just started their journey and are currently going bonkers?

Before I Do Anthology is a spin-off of my first novel. In fact, some of the writers involved in this writing project are characters in the book. I'll let you guess who they are.

This book is a collection of musings, funny anecdotes, crazy episodes and lessons learned from women for women—regardless of age and relationship or Facebook status.



HAIR/MAKEUP: RACHEL ABERASTURI CADIZ
PHOTO: MAD MINDS PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO BY GENZEL HASAB



We hope you find the inspiration that we all did. 🍩

About Kath

Kath is the author of the “Before I Do” trilogy. She is also the writer behind “Bedroom Blog by Veronica” published in *Cosmopolitan Philippines* from 2009 to 2013.





“Honestly

I don't have any problem with being a
Tinder-less single woman in her 30s,

BUT IT DOES STING A BIT

when other people do point out that I am a
Tinder-less single woman in her 30s.”

Paula

„A Love Addict: Learns Her Lesson

BY CHEEKIE ALBAY

I'm Cheekie, and I've been a love addict all my life. It's taken me over two decades to realize that it's not something I want to be anymore.

You might wave me off by saying, "Oh, we're all love addicts! We all want love in our lives!" But no, my love addiction is not just some cute, harmless quirk for which one can always find validation in Thought Catalog articles or Lang Leav poems.

For me, it's a real affliction, one that I have to heal myself from if I ever want to experience love in the truest sense of the word.

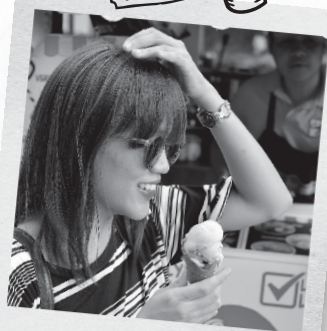
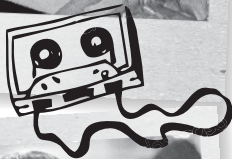
Ever since I was in grade school, my sisters would tease that I was a hopeless romantic, and I never took offense because I always thought that was something special about me. I was sniffing through romantic films and sobbing through romance pocketbooks when girls my age were still dressing up Barbie dolls and fiddling with Polly Pockets, and I thought that made me more sensitive, more mature and with a greater capacity for love—hardly bad things to be at 10 years old.

But now, with my two older sisters happily married and the younger one in a relationship with the same guy for five years now, I've begun to think that maybe I'm the one who has love all wrong.

This is what I'm like as a potential romantic partner: I'm super picky. A guy has to be my type or bust; the one time I dated outside of my type, I was bored out of my wits and never talked to the guy again. But once I do meet someone who ticks all the invisible boxes in my head, I'm ecstatic. I'm over the moon. I'm hearing Sebastian and a choir of lagoon animals warbling *Kiss The Girl* in my head.

And even before we start dating, in my daydreams, we're already a thing. We're meeting up after work and going on movie dates and charming each other's friends and families and marking each street corner with our shameless public display of affection (PDA)—all in my head.





"I've been a love addict all my life. It's taken me over two decades to realize that it's not something I want to be anymore."

And all signs that point to me and him being made for each other, I zero in on them to build my case that this one is The One. Born on the same day of the month? OMG, WE MUST BE SOULMATES! Obsessed with the same band growing up? WE'RE ABSOLUTELY MEANT TO BE! Have the same all-time favorite movie and can quote all the same lines? IF THAT ISN'T A SIGN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS!

Then let's say we actually become a couple. My romantic tendencies go into overdrive: I make mixtapes for him (no kidding, I still do that decades after mixtapes were a thing); I write the sweetest prose and most loved-up letters designed to make any man turn to mush; I tell him I love him whenever I have a second to spare to type on a messaging app.

I thought all along that I was doing these little things to keep my man happy, but maybe there was more to it than that. Maybe I was also doing them to feed my romance-obsessed self. Maybe I longed so much to feel in love, I willingly participated in these little routines to bolster my belief that my man and I were meant to be together. This in itself isn't a bad thing because I was able to keep the *kilig* going in my relationships, but when things got too real, my love addiction would reveal itself to be the unhealthy obsession it was all along.

When major challenges arose, I would question the entire relationship because I couldn't believe how it could betray the magic I had so naively assigned to it. I would turn passive-aggressive because I expected my guy to know how I felt—we were kindred spirits, weren't we?

Conversely, I would also put up with bad behavior from a boyfriend because I had convinced myself that true love could make everything all right. But when none of these things worked and I still felt let down by the man who was supposed to be my heart and soul, I would convince myself that the relationship was doomed instead of committing to work through the problems with my partner—eventually rendering the breakup inevitable in my eyes.

And I would cry, dear God, how I cried, as helpless boyfriend after helpless boyfriend watched. My last boyfriend accused me of being “all romance, but weak when things get tough.” It stung because the way he said it stung—we were in the middle of a heated argument and he was winning—but also because I realized that he was right.

I had always believed that I was the aggrieved party whenever my romantic illusions were shattered. But by choosing to clutch the pieces close to my chest long after they got broken, I failed to just get over them and cross over to true love, the kind that accepts faults and stays steadfast through hardships—the kind that I had always wanted to have in the first place.

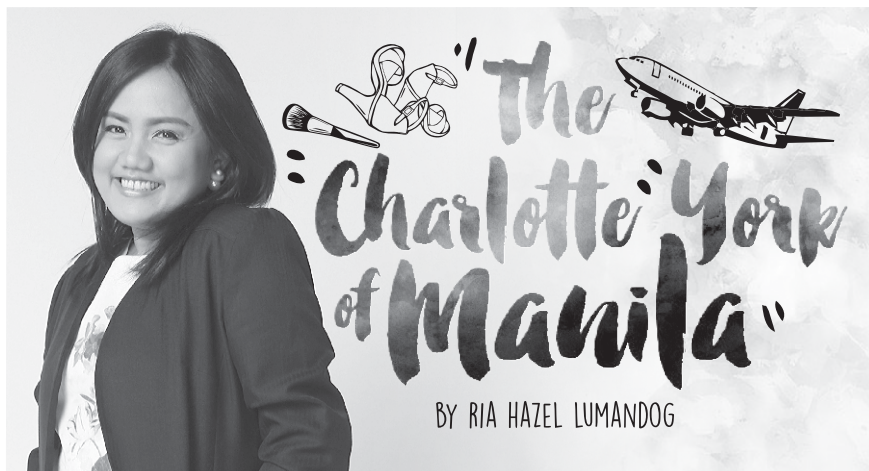
As I write this, I’m single, and I don’t want to jump into a relationship yet until I feel I’ve fixed the things about me that need fixing. I’m hesitant to commit to someone again, not just because I keep disappointing myself with my obsessive need to feel in love, but because in every relationship I get into, I end up disappointing someone else, too.

I know all relationships are complicated and no love is free from conflict. But now that I know that I, myself, have contributed to my own romantic unhappiness, I want to get out of my own way now.

I’m Cheekie, and I’m a recovering love addict. Next time I talk to you again, I hope I’ll have recovered—whether I’m still single, in a relationship, or hell, even married by then—and we can both laugh about how silly I used to be, letting love mean much more than it should. ♪

About Cheekie

- Cheekie Albay graduated from the University of the Philippines Diliman with a degree in Broadcast Communication, but went into publishing instead of broadcasting to fulfill her childhood dream of being a writer.
- She has served as staff writer, and later, acting managing editor of Cosmo.ph, the online counterpart of Cosmopolitan Philippines magazine. She now works as a freelance writer and PR consultant for various clients and publications and is currently based in Davao City with her son, Joaquin.
- She still hopes to meet The One someday. But in the meantime, there’s always music.



If I were a character in *Sex and the City*, I would be the Charlotte York of Manila.

When I was little, I loved attending weddings. I've always wanted to be the flower girl of an aunt or uncle who's getting married. If I wasn't part of the entourage, I'd collect the souvenirs or take the "wishes" hidden at the bottom of the wedding cake.

After college, I became a bridesmaid to one of my high school friends and caught the bouquet when I wasn't supposed to. At that time, I thought it might be fate. I was in love with my then boyfriend, who happened to be my childhood crush with whom I reunited after some years apart.

But a year after that, I found myself being cheated by fate. To be more specific, I was betrayed by the same guy I thought I would spend my life with, forever.

And to think, I had the wedding part all planned out. From the flowers, the possible venues for the reception, the music that's going to be played, even up to the audio-visual presentation featuring our childhood photos so our guests would say *ohh* and *aww* as our photos flash on the screen.

My plans and dreams were shattered. And for the first time in my life, I wasn't sure where I was going. Little Ms. Planner felt lost. At 25, I was hoping to find true love again. I went back to square one. For someone who had her first relationship easily, looking for someone to give my heart again to was difficult.

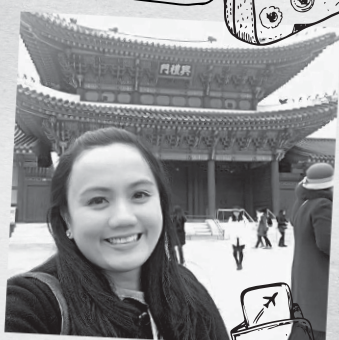
But as it turned out, fate wanted to play around with my heart some more. Fate wasn't done with the scheming. Just four months after the breakup, I met someone who was exactly the person the tarot card and palm readers described to be. And I'm a believer of such things. He and I had the same wavelength. He took care of me when I felt bad. We sang the same songs and enjoyed the same movies. And just like Lily and Marshall from *How I Met Your Mother*, we finished each other's sentences and sandwiches.

"*Rakista ka ba? Kasi* you rock my world." That was what he would always say and we would laugh about it over and over. But after some time, I discovered things about his past. I found out that the man from the tarot cards had an ex-wife and kids. Yes, kids. As the drama unfolded, I found out that the things he said about

“Only this time, I lessened my expectations. I managed to be the mediocre one. Some people told me I was settling, even if I knew that my heart only beats for him. And because I am such a romantic, I stayed even if it seemed impossible to get the wedding of my dreams. I always thought to myself, ‘At least I’m happy.’”



TRAVEL



came with it. I really thought he would be my Jack, still holding on amidst the waves ready to take us in, just like in the movie *Titanic*. At least even in the waters, we could be together.

Five years. It took us five years to hold on to our relationship. I promised my parents that when I accepted the situation, I would fight for us and that he would finally be the one who’s waiting at the end of the aisle for me. Only this time, I lessened my expectations. I managed to be the mediocre one. Some people told me I was settling, even if I knew that my heart only beats for him. And because I am such a romantic, I stayed even if it seemed impossible to get the wedding of my dreams. I always thought to myself, “At least I’m happy.”

himself were just lies. I was in a whirlwind of emotions. And I wasn’t sure if I could take everything in. Although I knew in my heart that he loved me, at that time, I wasn’t sure how much of that was even true.

This man got me—hook, line and sinker. When he professed how sorry he was that he lied, my heart still found a way to forgive him and took him back after much begging.

You know the line, “You jump, I jump”? I probably took it with my whole being. I thought that loving this person, beyond his imperfections, will make me stronger. Every single day, I made myself believe that we could make it until the end and move on, even with his past and everything that

I could say that I’ve given up everything for that relationship. I lived each day as though I would eventually lose him so that when the time comes that I have to give him up, he could say that I am unforgettable. I have always loved the classics. And I wanted to be the “classic” in his life so he would cherish me forever. May it be the city that we traveled together to, the people we impressed with our love story, or the life that we envisioned for our future.

Sadly, even with the strongest foundations, even if you know you love each other to the point where you would abandon everyone you know just to be with each other, your story together would come to an end.

A fight isn’t worth fighting for when

only one of you wants to battle the odds. You know that you want to prove all of them wrong—that you would fight with every inch of your soul just to have him back and to remain where you used to be; that you wish you could rewind all the memories when you used to be happy and you were partners who wouldn't let anyone tear apart what you have. It gets harder when you hear the song he used to sing for you, or be in a place you always used to go to, or talk to the family that he took away from you when he ended your relationship. And so you begin to look for ways to be happy again and to live for the people who love you.

As I have said, fate continues to play with me. I never thought in a million years that by the time I'd hit 30, I would be single and alone. I was a Charlotte from day one, but I manage to be a much conservative version of Samantha Jones today. I tried being the alpha female, holding everything together even when you feel like falling apart.

I went to new places so I could erase the fragments of this person with whom I've basically imagined my whole future with. Although sometimes, I wish I could turn back the time, I know that I have to experience all these because I know I am getting a little bit closer to my happy ending. ♡



About Ria

- Ria Hazel Casem Lumandog has always
- been a hopeless romantic. She works in a
- bank, but also blogs in her lifestyle web home,
- www.sugarsmile.info. She graduated from the
- University of Santo Tomas, majoring in AB-
- Journalism, where all her ideas about love,
- life and friendship blossomed. She loves
- traveling, coffee, Hello Kitty and music. If
- she can have a soul sister, it would probably
- be Elle Woods, because like her, she also
- "wears too much pink."



I have come to the earth-shattering conclusion that my true love, my prince charming, the love of my life may or may not exist, and that's okay. I am happily single and a recovering love addict. I am also a former professional relationship doormat, gladly sitting out the game to catch my breath and gain back my bearings.

Back story: I was ALWAYS in a relationship. I was ALWAYS the other half of someone. Somehow, the first time my ovaries shed, it sent a signal to my brain to consciously be in a relationship. It's like I was playing *Dumb Ways to Die* but with my heart. Twenty-nine years of existence, 15 years of active dating, 3 official exes (don't bother with the "unofficials"), a million dates and heartaches later, I look back at my life and wonder who I could have been had I not been someone's half. What Ada would have evolved had she not been either falling in or falling out of love.

I spent so much time playing second fiddle, playing supportive soccer

girlfriend / dramatic jealous girl / Portuguese guy's Filipina conquest #6 / exotic beach girl #2 etc., when I could have been playing the lead role in my own life story.

I could have been going on my own adventures, learning new hobbies, nurturing relationships with people who really, truly mattered, instead of spending time, money and efforts having futile romantic pursuits that only led to eventual heartache.

I mean, call me Debbie Downer, but after going through what seems like a 15-year epic of a drama hurricane, I feel like putting all your eggs on the love basket can be a losing investment.

Humans are complex beings. Human connections are fleeting. Intense, passionate attraction today could be tumbleweed and regrets tomorrow. How do you know that you won't regret the decision later on? How do you know you won't become two totally different people and won't evolve into each other's worst enemies?



"It's like I was playing *Dumb Ways to Die* but with my heart. Twenty-nine years of existence, 15 years of active dating, 3 official exes, a million dates and heartaches later, I look back at my life and wonder who I could have been had I not been someone's half. What Ada would have evolved had she not been either falling in or falling out of love."

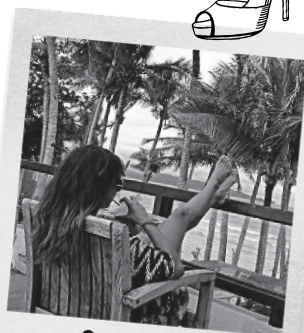


You shouldn't look to your partner to complete you and make yourself whole. That is a job you do for yourself. Unrealistic fantasies on relationships just build up equally unrealistic expectations. So love yourself and grow with your partner so you could bring something to the table.

The point here is that you could choose to liberate yourself from the societal pressure of marriage and see life and happiness outside of marriage. In a world of Maine Mendozas and Alden Richards, you could be a Miriam Defensor Santiago or a Leila de Lima (but with better styling). Marriage is not the end all and be all.

Once at a party, I was being hit on by some Danish guy and per usual small talk, I revealed that my age was 29. He said I had one more good year to go. To which I replied, "Not true. I will be partying until I'm 60. I will be a hot cougar. And with all the fucked-up, mother-deprived millennials running around these days, I have plenty of prey to live by." He grinned at my master plan and high-fived me.

Joking aside, think about it this way: love and romantic relationships are just a subset of your





“What I lack in my Facebook feed in photos of engagement rings, wedding and babies, I will fill with new adventures in Europe. Will I find myself a Turkish millionaire to paint the town red with, or my very own Prince William in my travels? Time will tell. But for now I am out to make the greatest love story with myself.”


full life. To define yourself as a wife and *only* a wife is like denying yourself of the essence of your being. There are several layers to your humanity that you could explore and nurture. To limit yourself to fit into the box of that one role would be robbing yourself of all the many potentials you could unearth within yourself.

So what now? I asked myself this question in Hong Kong, the morning after the boy I followed to the country decided to make a piñata out of my heart and lectured me about being needy, insecure and love addicted. Over wasabi dumplings, green tea Oreo McFlurries and spacing out at flamingoes in Tsim Sha Tsui Park, I found myself in the deepest depth of self-pity and made a decision to put my emotional investments into something less volatile.

I hatched my escape plan.

Cut to today, August 22, 2016, T minus 17 days before I leave for Turkey. I quit my corporate job, sold my cars, clothes etc., let go of my flat and said goodbye to friends to start fresh as an English teacher in the Turkish suburb of Cekmekoy.

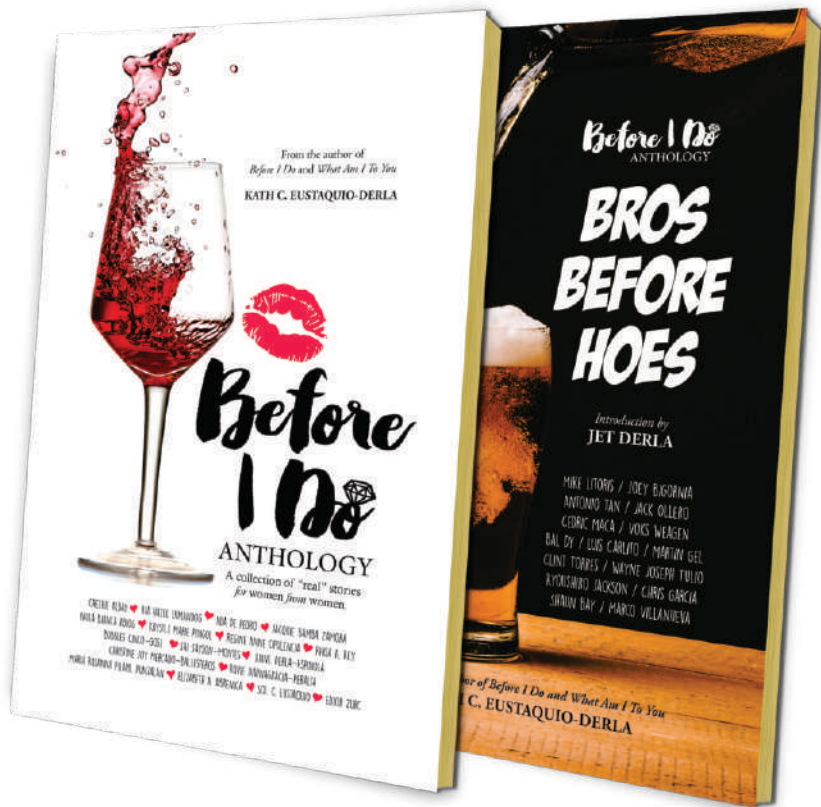
What I lack in my Facebook feed in photos of engagement rings, wedding and babies, I will fill with new adventures in Europe. Will I find myself a Turkish millionaire to paint the town red with, or my very own Prince William in my travels? Time will tell.

But for now I am out to write the greatest love story of all: a woman re-discovering her passions, exploring the world, seeing new sights and experiencing new things. 

About Ada

.....
Ada De Pedro is a PR and events executive at a multinational IT company. Outside corporate life, she is an avid traveler, fashion fan, longboard enthusiast and adventure-seeker. She lives for trips to the beach, meeting different cultures and having global conversations on philosophy, culture, politics and general what-the-fuckery, Malibu pineapples during sunset and motor biking coastal roads.





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