

#1-My friend Allison: An interesting specimen.

There's a word I didn't know existed until I met my friend Allison. It's the word "Misandric," which means, "Person who practices hatred or prejudice against the male gender." That's the opposite equivalent to the more common word "Misogynist" (a person who hates the female gender). Yes. My friend Allison is a *misandric*.

Allison is nationally infamous for her disdain for men. She wrote a bestseller on the topic of how to send them all to hell and become a self-fulfilled, something-something, yadda-yadda, independent woman. I love an independent woman as much as the next girl. But what concerns *me* is that Allison takes her feminism a little too far.

With her blond hair, big boobs and long legs, Allison gets tons of male attention when we go out together. But if any man ever dares to approach her, he gets a sour disappointment.

Without moving a facial muscle, Allison shoots him "the glacial glare." It's that icy stare where she slowly slides her eyes up and down the guy and sends him a telepathic message that says something like this (imagine me speaking in a low-pitched, calm, hypnotic voice).

"Your gender is responsible for millennia of oppression of women. You are a *worm*, and deserve nothing but for me to step on you, squashing you. But I won't, because I pity you. I can read every screwed-up trauma of your childhood, and see through your *façade* of bragging behavior to compensate for your small penis."

And then the poor guy shrinks, gets flashbacks of every childhood scolding he ever received from a severe, female authority figure, and walks away from the table slouching and dragging his feet. Actually, I suspect guys go straight home to cry under their blankets, sucking their thumbs.

I bet right now you're rolling your eyes and thinking that I'm exaggerating. But I swear I'm not.

I admit that when I met Allison, I didn't like her very much. The first time I met her, she had come to my friend Joy's house for an emergency therapy session in the middle of the night. She was pretty harsh, reprimanding Joy for a setback in her recovery after a heartbreak. For a while, I thought she was mean and cold. And even after I figured

out she really cared for Joy and was doing the best she could to help her, I was still a little scared of her. But lately, I've gotten to know her better and my opinion has changed.

People say I'm too optimistic and see saving graces where there are none. But I have the feeling Allison's a softy deep inside. Even when she keeps reprimanding me about my "over-the-top body language," (I have no idea what she's talking about), and rolling her eyes about Joy's tendency to hug everybody, and Hope's double-entendre jokes, I know she loves us.

And now I've started learning more about her history and seeing through her multiple layers. Take her obsession with Botox, for example. I've learned recently that Allison started using Botox like a decade ago, in her early 20's, *to make herself look older!* She was trying to gain a name as a counselor, and nobody took her seriously because of her youth. By using Botox she didn't need, and stretching some truths on her CV, she made people believe she was older, and only *appeared* young. And after that, hiding under the Botox to conceal her emotions from the world became an addiction to her.

I don't mean she *lied* on her CV. She claimed back then that she'd been "helping women for over ten years" and it was true. She has volunteered at various Women's shelters since her teen years—long before getting her degree in counseling and her PhD in psychology. She calls it her way to pay it forward for the help she, her mother and sister received after escaping her stepfather when Allison was little. By the way, Allison would kill me if she knew I was telling you this. She keeps her volunteer work hidden so it doesn't affect her reputation as a ball-busting, evil witch.

And yes, you read that right: since her teen years. That was Allison's main problem: she had to grow up too fast. Her mother had always been a big child who never learned to stand on her two feet. Escaping her abusive husband—Allison's stepfather—was the only burst of courage she ever showed. After him, there was a parade of good-for-nothing men and bad relationships putting her mother in a perennial emotional rollercoaster—unable to be there consistently for her girls. Allison learned to cook her own meals when she was still too short to reach the stove without a stool. She had to take over managing the household's money when she was barely old enough to know what money was. I once heard that when she was only eight, she had to start hiding the car

keys from her mother so she wouldn't drive drunk. Yup, Allison learned early in life she better take care of herself, so she never relied on anyone to help her.

Ever since I learned about her difficult childhood, I cut Allison slack. I no longer get annoyed for her refusal to let people hug her—though I still jokingly call her *the unhuggable porcupine*. No wonder she jumps at physical touch, when she had to constantly protect herself from an abusive stepfather. No wonder she mistrusts all men and refuses to depend on them. Allison is the only woman I know who never had a crush or boyfriend in her teenage years. She dated some in college, but her first official “boyfriend” was that gay colleague she agreed to fake-marry to provide him with a “beard” in exchange for him helping her in her career as a therapist.

Speaking of different types of beards. My mother used to say, “God gives the best beard to those who have a small jaw.” It's supposed to mean that if you're lacking some skills, God gives you a different set of gifts to compensate, and you end up better off than anyone else. Well, Allison is an example of that. The worse she treats men, the more they gravitate toward her—I suspect some men like to be treated *bad*. And the less pretty she tries to make herself, the more she shines.

Like the diva of fashion, hair and makeup I am, it kills me! Allison tries *very hard* to look plain and ugly—which is a lost cause, because she has one of the prettiest faces I've ever seen. I so envy her flawless, porcelain skin and delicate features. Her lustrous golden hair doesn't need all the keratin, hair dryers and hot ironing mine needs. (But, of course, nobody is happy with what we got and she keeps talking about how much she envies my curly hair.)

And with those unrealistic long legs and narrow hips, which are the obsession of designers everywhere, Allison could be the queen of fashion! But no. If you open Allison's closet all you will find is a collection of *business suits* (yuck!).

But I suspect she's putting on an act and she does care about how she looks. First, because she appreciates a designer stiletto—her feet are always stunning compared to her drab suits. And if you snoop in her closet (which she knows I have) well-hidden behind the neutral suits, you'll find a handful of light blue dress-suits, which bring out her eyes very nicely. Lately, as she has softened up a little and has started to take fashion advice

from me, I've learned the trick. If I want to get an inch away from her comfort zone and accept trying on, say, a sundress, I just have to make sure it is light blue.

Sorry, I get carried away talking about fashion and looks. My point is that in the same way she pretends not to care about looks but I know she does, I suspect that deep inside she also exaggerates her disdain for men. I think that after seeing how happy Hope, Joy and I are with our guys, her conviction about the hopelessness of men has weakened. Whenever I try to bring it up, she scoffs at us and rolls her eyes. She claims she's happy by herself and she doesn't need male company to have a great life. She says she sends flowers to herself regularly, goes out to fancy dinners on her own, and is always talking about taking beach-side hotel weekends or touring Europe alone—the trip plans are all a bluff; she works too hard and never takes time off.

I wish Allison could find a good guy to prove to her not all men are evil. One who could help her find the joys of childhood again—that childhood she had to give up too soon, to take care of herself. But it's going to take a very special man. One who doesn't take no for an answer. One self-confident enough—or crazy enough—to be immune to the effects of the “glacial glare.”

It sounds impossible, but hey! I'm the eternal optimist, right?

#2 Shawn tells the story of his friend Jay.

Did you know that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (the DSM-V), clearly states that for a behavior to be considered pathological, “it needs to interfere with the person's functioning or interactions?” Jay is one of the happiest, most successful men I know; so I'm holding onto that not to diagnose him with some psychiatric condition.

Jay is the crazy guy who shows up to your birthday party wearing little more than his birthday suit. And trust me, with all those ridiculous muscles he has, no straight man wants to look at *that*. Then, when you ask him what on earth was he thinking, he answers something crazy like, “Today is the national day to protest women's objectification. As the proud feminist I am, I'm wearing only my Speedo, to show my support for the cause—today I'm letting women objectify *me*.”

Jay is the man who'd show up to a doctor's appointment riding *a horse*. I know that because it took days to clean the mess his last ride left in front of my medical office building. And then when you ask him, "What the feck is this about?" he shoots you a suspiciously innocent look and answers, "My skateboard is broken."

The funniest part is that he acts as if whatever weird behavior he's showing was the most natural thing in the world and, before you know it, he's brainwashing you to believe that, maybe it's not that *he* is crazy—but the rest of the world is taking life too seriously.

But most of the time, his eccentricities are related to his work. Jay is a self-proclaimed entrepreneur and life-coach. I can't help from rolling my eyes at the title. I don't care how many gazillions of followers he has on YouTube and social media; when you show up at my house dressed like a Roman gladiator, you can't expect me to respect you.

He's in the fitness business, and the premise of his work is that people can only stick to exercise if the program engages their inner child—in other words, if it's *really fun*. So he has a bunch of custom-made programs where men get to dress up like their favorite characters from science fiction movies, history and legend. I sneered at the idea the first time I heard it, but I have to admit I've never had so much fun working out than that day he challenged me to a light-saber duel.

And that's Jay's biggest merit: He's found a way to make a living doing what he does best, which is *being a big kid*. Jay never grew up. I mean, he has grown up responsibilities; he owns properties, he pays taxes, he employs a bunch of people... Gee, some months he makes more money than *I* make as a doctor (as an entrepreneur, his income is unpredictable). But he somehow has managed to never lose his childlike enthusiasm about life.

Jay finds everything fascinating. He can entertain himself for hours studying bugs and snails in my backyard, or looking at the mineral layers in a rock. He's always happy to play catch with a stranger's dog, chase doves and seagulls, or climb a tree. His expensive collection of action figures is the envy of all his friends—including *me*.

In spite of his scary looks—he’s a six-foot-five giant made of solid muscle—he’s the most pacifist man in the world. He never messes with other people. So no, he does *not* fit the criteria for a psychiatric patient—that’s my theory, and I’m sticking to it.

Okay, he has done *some* things that could be questionable—like his obsession with his first girlfriend. But, hey, you have to cut the guy some slack. I think he was a teenager when they dated, and ever since they broke up he regresses from time to time into the delusion that she was the only woman who could’ve made him happy. Did I just say the word “delusion?” Maybe that’s too strong of a word. Let’s say “disproportionately strong conviction.”

Jay never has trouble finding short-term female company, but no woman seems to stick around for long. Women see this man with his ridiculously bulky arms and chest, and washboard abs, and they immediately assume he’s going to be a bad-boy romance novel hero. Good-hearted women take one glance at him and write him off as out of their league—or worse, assume he’s dumb and a playboy—and avoid him. Most women who approach him are the ones who are looking for a quick adventure—fulfilling a fantasy with the archetypal romance-novel cover model. They fall right at his feet and in his bed. And then when they find out he’s an incurable romantic and sweet guy, and when they get a taste of his childlike attitude, they feel disappointed and dump him. So his heart has been broken more than once.

But I don’t believe him when he says he’s devastated about that. I suspect that he uses his fixation with his first girlfriend as an excuse to never commit. From time to time he becomes obsessed with other women—usually tall blondes, who remind him of his tomboyish first girlfriend. But the truth is that if anyone gives any sign of wanting something durable, he quickly loses interest.

A long time ago, I gave up any hope that Jay is going to settle down and behave like a grown up. The only time he tried—in an effort to please his powerful businessman of a father—it almost killed him. But I do hope that he finds a good-hearted woman who’s finally willing to see through his muscles and glimpse his soul. I hope he finds a woman who realizes the catch he is, grabs him and doesn’t let him go.