

are fully in the moment, focused on each other, as opposed to pretending that a queen-size Tempur-Pedic with Ralph Lauren sheets is the floor of a sterile exam room. Still, however weird it may be, I treasure my fantasy because it's all mine. Maybe someday I'll decide that I've had my fill of being drilled. Until then I'll keep scheduling regular checkups.

—ANONYMOUS

THE DELIGHT OF DIFFERENCE



“Do not free a camel of the burden of his hump: you may be freeing him from being a camel.”

—G.K. CHESTERTON

I HAVE A BLANKIE. AND I'M ALMOST 40.

AT THE MOMENT, it's a blue microfiber dishcloth. For a while when I was little, it was a snippet of an old hand-knit blanket. Later, a fuzzy red sock. Then a pilled raw-silk scarf. I gave them all the same name: Scrap.

I like to think of myself as a grown-up. I have a job, two kids, a mortgage—even a 401(k) somewhere. And yet I also have a blankie. Over the course of my adult life, I've cuddled up to a long line of soft companions, each replaced when it went missing or became too grubby. I have no sentimental attachment to the cloths themselves; I just crave the tactile joy of rubbing something. I run my fingertips across it to a quick rhythm, like that of a baby's heartbeat. In the same way a glass or two of wine provides a feeling of mellow disengagement, my Scrap brings me a moment of serenity, of freedom from responsibility. Blankie time is my time.

Even when I was a kid, Scrap's presence elicited disdain. My mother would ask, "Are you going to bring that rag on your wedding night?" (She called Scrap, with no small measure of disgust, my "rubby.") At sleep-away camp, when I was 10, I'd slink under my blankets so the other girls wouldn't catch me cuddling my chosen cloth (this was the era of the red sock). In my junior year of college, my suitemates frequently kidnapped Scrap (by then another bit of old blanket); once I found it in the freezer.



I kept it a secret for about a year and a half after I met my now-husband, pulling it out only after he'd fallen asleep and then nestling it inside my pillowcase each morning. When it turned up in the sheets, I'd mumble something about static cling. But at some point during our first year of marriage, I decided to let my freak rag fly and told him the truth. ("You're a nut job" was his good-natured response.) My mother remains horrified. "Aren't you just *so* embarrassed?" she frequently asks. But who cares? I'm done hiding. And I have faith that my open, honest attitude about Scrap will eventually rub off.

—LIZ KRIEGER

THE DELIGHT OF DIFFERENCE



“Eccentricity is not, as dull people would have us believe, a form of madness.”

—DAME EDITH SITWELL

27% OF READERS FEEL COMPELLED TO PERFORM CERTAIN ACTIVITIES—LIKE CHEWING FOOD, KNOCKING ON A DOOR, REREADING AN E-MAIL—AN ODD OR EVEN NUMBER OF TIMES.