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Reasonable Person and I*

Lydia J. Carlsgaard

RIGHTS OF A BATTERED WOMAN

Who are you Reasonable Person? I would very much like to meet you since we are so much alike — behaving the same and all, I wonder if you and I could be friends. Perhaps, Reasonable, you and I share similar backgrounds? A Korean mother and a Scandinavian father? My dad is basically easy going, but my mom pushes me to the limit! An A minus is not up to her standards and forget about wanting to be anything but a cardiovascular surgeon or a doctor's wife. However, at least my mom can understand, unlike my dad, why one day a month I'm in so much pain I can hardly get out of bed and I'm ever so cranky and forgetful.

Can you sympathize with me Reasonable? Maybe you also know how it feels to be told, "You'd be so pretty if you lost five pounds, gained ten pounds, cut your hair like Cindy's, wore more makeup, nice girls don't do that, you would if you loved me, we don't think women can lift the trays so we only hire male waiters, what's for dinner, why can't you control your kids, stupid Asian driver, you must be good in math, can you see out of your slanty eyes, ching-chong-Kung-Fu."

Let me confide in you Reasonable . . . I had a boyfriend once who only wanted me because I was Asian and because I made a nice decorative piece for his arm. I also had a boss who hired me because I looked exotic and my clothes fit well. It is a bit embarrassing to admit, but, although I knew about their intentions, I went along with what they wanted anyway. As a fifteen-year-old insecure girl, I really wanted a boyfriend and as a poor-one-meal-every-two-days student, I really needed a job that would pay well (and I couldn't get that awesome restaurant job even with all my experience in food service!). My boyfriend now loves me for all the right reasons, especially since he threatens to kill me if I ever leave him — I don't think I ever will. I hope you can understand why I do what I do, Reasonable. If you get to know me, I'm sure you'll think I'm as reasonable as your name. Perhaps you are indeed a person I can trust, who will understand me, my problems, my situations, my decisions, my life.

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