

# Is This

How to tell if what  
you're feeling is the  
real deal or a counterfeit

By Jule Kucera

Love?

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Is this love  
is this love  
is this love  
is this love  
that I'm feeling?  
- Bob Marley

Is  
This  
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Dedicated to all brave souls who seek true love  
and who won't settle for less.

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## Introduction

When I first started dating Trent Price, I told him I didn't know what love was. He said simply, "I do."

What is written on the following pages is completely, amazingly, joyfully true. The large, gray comments in script are things Trent really has said or written. And as Trent says...

True stories are the best kind.

This is love....

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## He thinks you are beautiful

You may not think so, but he does. When I look in the mirror I see curly hair, freckles, and lines that don't go away when I stop smiling or frowning. When I wake up in the morning the curls have flattened all around my head except for on top where they tend to stick straight up. I wake up and look over and see Trent. If his eyes are open he will smile at me and say, "Baby, you are so beautiful."

You only have to look beautiful to one person.

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## He is happy to see you

For a while Trent and I would both delay coming home, because neither of us liked to come home to an empty house. We both wanted to come home to the other. When I lived upstairs in my Chicago two-flat, from the kitchen I could see Trent's white Econoline van pull into the back parking space. I'd hear his steps coming up the three flights of stairs, heavy from hard work. He'd open the back door and seeing me, his face would break into a broad smile, his eyes bright. Before we did anything else, we would hold each other. If it had been a hard day he would ask, "Baby, can we lie down and hold each other?" and we would go the bedroom and lie down in each other's arms. Dinner would wait.

My heart is so happy  
we could both dance around inside it.

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## He watches out for you

I am writing this at Trent's dining room table, in his house that has just been sold. He's out at the barn, loading up pieces of scrap metal that need to be gotten rid of before the new owners take possession. When his nephew Matt calls, I walk the phone out to Trent. It is a chilly, blustery day and the wind cuts through my (his) sweatshirt. As Trent talks to Matt he has his eye on me, and he moves to place himself as a windbreak to protect me. It is a small gesture. It is huge.

I feel like I could pick you up  
and carry you anywhere.

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## He tells you the truth

At the first significant conversation I had with Trent, he pulled out his keys and thumbed through them until he came to the picture of his daughter, "This is my daughter," he said. "Her name is Jenna. Jenna Jo Price." He did not hide her or wait until we had had three dates. He wanted me to know the truth from the start. He tells me the truth even when he knows it is something I might not want to hear.

As long as we keep loving each other  
and telling each other the truth,  
were going to be all right.

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*He is what matters.*

Before Trent, before my marriage, I had a list of qualities that I was looking for in a man. I don't remember them all, but a few were:

- X Charming
- X Intelligent
- X Funny
- X Handsome
- X Athletic

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And if I am being honest, there were some unwritten requirements related to position and income. Let's just say that list didn't serve me so well.

The second time around, before Trent, when I was dating dating-service men, I wanted to be clear about exactly what I was looking for from and with a man. This is my list and I know it by heart:

- ✗ Kindness
- ✗ Integrity
- ✗ Laughter
- ✗ Passion
- ✗ Tenderness

When I shared this second list with Jenna she said, "Strange list." Strange maybe, different certainly, but it is a list that has brought me a man that has made me happier than I ever thought possible.

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## Kindness

My grandmother's china has had a wild ride. She enjoyed hosting large dinner parties and one of my favorite memories is being able to sit at the big people table and eat from her china. When she died her china was split between her two sons, separated for about thirty years between New Jersey and Nebraska. When my uncle in Nebraska died, I rescued his half from the trash and reunited it with the other half at my mother's condo in New Jersey. Last summer my mother decided to pass the china along, and she sent it off in the car with Trent and me. When we got to Chicago it went into the basement because I had no place to put it.

When I came home from work one day, there was a beautiful antique china cabinet sitting in my home. The cabinet was over five feet tall and just as wide, with glass doors and mirrored backing. The dark mahogany glistened as it waited for my grandmother's china. Trent was not there.

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The china cabinet got to Chicago on the back of Trent's truck, in a special crate he had built to fit the cabinet to the truck and hold it carefully on the ride from Battle Creek to Chicago. Trent got his friend Bob to help him load the cabinet into the truck, drive to Chicago, carry the cabinet up the back stairs, and then drive back to Battle Creek in exchange for Trent bailing five wagonloads of hay for Bob. Bailing is hot, sticky, exhausting work and Trent doesn't like it at all.

*Love is stronger than anything, even titanium.*

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## Integrity

He tells the truth. He does what he says he is going to do. He keeps his word. He sticks to his values even when it is difficult. He doesn't take the easy way out. He faces up to his own responsibility and accountability.

Jenna has had her father to herself for most of her life. Her parents split up when she was four. When her mother went back to school, her father was her full-time caregiver. He fed her when she was hungry and he was not. He built her a maze for a school project even though the project was primarily an excuse to get a pet mouse. He built her a fort. He taught her to drive an ATV. He took her on a driving trip through Michigan with Hermione, her pet turtle, and once backtracked several miles to a stop where they had inadvertently left Hermione behind. Trent has belonged entirely and completely to Jenna. And then I showed up.

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Naturally, Jenna wished I would go away, and let her father know that. She liked me but she didn't like the changes I was causing. Her father sold his truck and got a van, because it is illegal to park a truck on the streets of Chicago over night. He put the house that Jenna was born in on the market. He kissed me in front of her. He told us that he loved us both, and that he wouldn't stop loving either one of us.

I wouldnt even let my daughter change my mind.  
Theres nobody else left.

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## Laughter

This is not the laughter of being entertained by someone who is good at telling jokes or stories. This is the laughter that comes from being in a situation and seeing the humor of it, from finding joy in each other and in your life together. Sometimes it's the "if we don't laugh we'll cry" laughter. Sometimes it's "I can't believe they did that/said that." Sometimes it's laughter from not taking sex too seriously—some of our biggest belly laughs have been in bed. This laughter makes your stomach muscles hurt and makes you both feel good. (It's no good if only one of you is laughing.)

Our lives are going to be a fantastic ride.

And were car poolin'!

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## Passion

You enjoy sex with him. You feel safe in his arms and safe being naked before him. In that safety and heat you let down your defenses and explore and enjoy each other, in all your grasping and release. You touch and let yourself be touched; you know and let yourself be known. This is intimacy not just of two bodies, but of two souls.

Behind Trent's barn is a lot of land. One day he asked me to hop on the back of his three-wheeler because he wanted to show me something. When I saw what he had done, I was amazed. There was a place where some trees had grown sideways and then become overgrown with vines... it looked like a tree cave. He had raked and swept the floor and made it ready for blankets. Outside the tree cave a huge limb had fallen from a giant walnut tree, and he had taken his chain saw and carved a table and two seats from the massive branch. The back of his seat was a rectangle; the back of mine was a heart. He called it "The Love Shack."

There isnt an inch of you that I wouldnt

Kiss, lick, hug or love.

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## Tenderness

Trent is a big guy and his hands are rough from years of work with lumber and concrete. But those callused hands hold me so gently... when he plays with a curl at my forehead or pulls a coverlet up over my shoulders. Sometimes I feel like a teacup or a kitten. I know I am safe in his hands.

Early in our relationship Trent and I were talking about love. We were standing in the Chicago kitchen, holding each other. I asked him, "How can you tell if someone loves you?" I wasn't being coy—I was completely serious. He took a few moments to think about it and then he said, "I think you can tell by the way they hold you."

I wish I could wrap you up like a cocoon  
so I could hold you from all around and be loving you.  
Then you could be a butterfly every morning.

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## It is easy to be with him

Two summers ago Trent and I were planning a driving trip from Chicago to the east coast and back so that he could meet my parents and brother. I was nervous, not about him meeting my family, but about being together in the car for all that time. We hadn't yet fought and I was sure it would happen at some point during the trip. But it didn't happen. We got lost but we didn't fight. We got in a lengthy road construction traffic jam but we didn't fight. We talked and listened to music and made plans. We stopped when either of us needed to. We enjoyed our time together. It was easy. Doing laundry together is easy, grocery shopping is easy, paddling a tandem kayak is easy, it's all easy. Being apart is hard. Being together is easy.

I enjoy you when you're here  
and I miss you when you're gone.

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## *You are better together than apart*

Trent and I are together now. His place in Michigan is sold. My place in Chicago is sold. We moved our things to a new place where neither of us had ever lived that we both liked a lot. He's not on 80 acres anymore, he's on 20. I'm no longer getting my mail at the front door, it's a quarter-mile walk down a dirt road. We have both chosen to leave the lives we were familiar with and the places we loved for a new place and a new life together. We are a little bit scared and a lot in love.

When I lie in his arms I know we are going to be fine. We believe the best about each other and bring out the best in each other. We are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that fit together lots of different ways. I stretch his mind. He stretches my heart.

In the days when we were traveling back and forth to each other's homes, any day we weren't together we would talk on the phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night. One morning when I was in Chicago and he was in Michigan and we had already had our morning talk, I got into work to this message on my voicemail:

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Sweet baby, I just talked to you

I love you so much.

Baby, the love I have for you is so huge  
you cant see it in one day.

So Im going to show you a little piece of it

every day for the rest of my life  
and theres going to be so much left

that youll see it for eternity. I love you.

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## Epilogue

Our first date was on Sunday, October 5th, 2003. We moved to Newaygo, MI in March, 2006. Trent's body died on Wednesday, September 17th, 2008, at a little after 7:00 p.m. He was outside, and the last thing he saw was the sky and the trees.

He had a thin spot in his heart, and it tore. The medical examiner called it a 'dissection in his aorta.' He explained to me that the thin spot broke apart, and the blood filled the sack that surrounds the heart, so the chambers of the heart could not beat. He said that even if it had happened in an ER, there is nothing anyone could have done. His heart broke open and he bled into his own heart.

I miss being able to see him, to touch him, to laugh with him, to love him, to be with him. And I know he still loves me, and I him.

Our bones and our flesh will be gone  
and we'll still be loving each other.

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