

If there really is a universal truth it isn't that rich, single guys are looking for wives (sorry Ms. Austin). No, it's that devices don't like working the way that they were intended to. Take for example the clock I'm staring at. About two minutes ago, it started to make this odd whirring sound and then the hands proceeded to turn very rapidly in the wrong direction. It currently says it's 4:37. Whether the clock thinks that it is AM or PM I don't really know. If AM, I should still be asleep, if PM, I should be driving to swim practice. But it cannot be ignored that I'm sitting in Spanish class, which according to my planner takes place between 8:35 and 9:30, every single Monday through Friday.

The clocks at my school have been doing this for a couple of weeks now and no one really knows why. A couple of my teachers have brought in their own clocks. I wish Señora Capes had done the same thing. I would sneak a peek on my phone, but Señora Capes is being unusually strict today and already has a collection of cellphones and iPods lined up in front of her like war trophies. Her ego seems to inflate with each new conquest.

I usually like Spanish but I already finished the worksheet and my friend, Jenny, isn't here either so I have no one to talk to. The clock is in warp speed mode again.

I'm no stranger to unusually working appliances. My family treats our dishwasher with a sort of mystical reverence. It only works occasionally and no one, not even a repairman, can figure out why. When there are three lights on the control panel it won't work. When there are no lights it won't work either. When one light appears, well that's when someone whispers, "the resurrection cycle has started."

Yes, we call it the resurrection cycle. After one light appears, a second will appear and we'll load it until it's practically exploding, and wash our dishes. And it will work for several weeks or days or sometimes only one load. We have ways to try and keep it alive; never closing it all the way, never opening it until it is *completely* finished, and my dad's new favorite, kicking it.

"Jake, you're going to break the thing," my mom always says, rolling her eyes.

"Hon, it's already broken," my dad will reply. And the amazing thing is that about 75% of the time, kicking it will actually wake it up.

And then there are times when it seems that the dishwasher is finally dead. That it will never again work, even in the most dysfunctional way. After about three weeks of

false hopes and washing dishes by hand, one of my parents will throw up their hands and say to the other, “That is it! We are getting a new dishwasher!”

And then, as if it can hear them, the dishwasher will come back to life, and the whole thing repeats itself.

Then there was the toaster incident of 2008. In the toaster’s defense this was actually more my and my sister’s fault. Have you ever had cinnamon bagels from Panera? Well they are one of the best things ever invented by humans. They are gooey, and sugary, and completely coated in cinnamon sugar. Sugar that apparently melts when you put it in a toaster. Sugar that melts in a toaster, drips down to the bottom, and eventually accumulates enough to light on fire. Luckily there isn’t much to fuel a fire inside of a metal toaster, and my mom quickly pulled the plug to avoid an all out electrical fire. Needless to say there were no cinnamon bagels in my house for quite some time.

On a side note, how many college students does it take to put out a fire? Four. How do I know this you might ask? I was visiting my sister’s apartment when one of my sister’s roommates was cooking something in a frying pan that was apparently very flammable.

“Get some water!” The chemistry major yelled at the top of her lungs, while standing as far away from the stove as possible. The communications major had enough brains to turn off the gas, and my sister, a tourism major, had started beating the flames with a washcloth that also promptly caught on fire. Luckily the graphic design major came out of her bedroom, put the lid on the frying pan and poured some juice on the burning washcloth on the floor. Go figure. My money had been on the chem major.

I told Kyle this story last year. He didn’t find it very funny. He just talked about how irresponsible America’s youth is today. It’s possible that’s why we broke up; if you can’t find humor in life you might as well shut yourself in your room and lock the door. He probably thinks the clocks are just annoying and doesn’t even think about time travel or warp speed or time turners or even back to the future when they start going crazy.

Maybe I just think about those things because I’m odd.

Anyone who can’t find comedy in dysfunctional appliances is doomed to end up as bitter and tragic as Willie Loman.

Take my across the street neighbors. Their washing machine broke, and for weeks, Mrs. Crawford brought a bundle of clothes over to our house to wash. It took that long for Mr. Crawford to convince her to buy a new washing machine. Finally, when the new washing machine came, everyone was slightly relieved. But then, two days later Mrs. Crawford sent it back because she couldn't reach the bottom of the top-loading machine. It took another week and a half for the new frontloading machine to arrive, and again, the entire neighborhood sighed a breath of relief.

Then the delivery guy dropped the stupid thing on his foot and an ambulance had to be called.

My point is that this gave the Crawfords ample time to become bitter. However, Mr. Crawford was able to laugh his way through and keep things light, even when Mrs. Crawford looked like she was about to explode. I think that Mr. Crawford has kept himself and Mrs. Crawford happy through fifty years of marriage by never losing his ability to laugh at difficult situations. This skill is irreplaceable for people of any age, even teenagers.

For example, shortly after I got my first cellphone, I also started to do my own laundry. Apparently, these two new responsibilities didn't work well together. I accidentally left my cellphone in my jeans pocket and ran it through the wash. It didn't have great results. And then, two months later, I washed my much cheaper, second cell phone. My parents weren't mad but they decided to wait before they bought me a new one. I sat through a very calm, but endless, speech about responsibility, and taking care of your possessions, and checking your pockets before you do your laundry, etc. But then, a week later, my mother washed her iPod, which she had left in her workout shorts. Two days after, my dad lost his wallet. I found it in a bag of parsley in the fridge four days later. Apparently the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree.

Now in my family, this all became a huge joke. But again, Kyle didn't understand this. He didn't think that irresponsibility was funny.

If Kyle were a color, he would be beige. He lives in one of those beige houses, in a beige neighborhood, with cream walls and carpets, and beige couches. Whenever something broke, it would be replaced with a newer, shinier version that would stare at you, oozing superiority.

Toward the very end of our relationship, I told Kyle that his fridge was a pretentious prig.

“Emily,” he sighed.

“What? Just look at it. Standing there, with its fancy smancy silver exterior, and its state of the art ice machine. It *so* thinks that it is better than the microwave. Though I guess microwaves and refrigerators are destined to hate each other anyways.”

“Emily,” he said again. As if I was a petulant child who would not stop asking, pointless, irrelevant questions, “Refrigerators do not have emotions. They cannot feel superior to a microwave anymore than a microwave can hold a grudge.”

He would tolerate the stories I made up about trees, or dogs, or people we passed on the street, but he would never join in with Jenny and my elaborate scenarios. However, when I would start giving personalities to inanimate objects he would get profoundly irritated. So of course, being the teenage girl that I am, I did it more to annoy him. Jenny immediately picked up on this.

“You guys have got to stop egging each other on, “ Jenny told me one day.

“What do you mean? I’m just doing what I’ve always done,” I said, even though I knew exactly what she meant.

“You get more and more spazzy everyday. And every time I see Kyle, he looks more like a plank of wood. Just put the poor guy out of his misery and break up with him!”

We had this conversation while scraping the frost off the inside of my windshield. Somehow, when it rains, water leaks into my car and settles in the floor of the passenger seat. On rainy days, as we drive to school, Jenny has to put her feet up on the dashboard to avoid having completely soaked through shoes. When it gets cold, this anomaly causes frost to settle on all of the surfaces on the interior of my car, which is annoying, but I don’t mind too much, because hey, it’s a car. As long as it can get me from point A to point B, it’s good. It also has no air conditioning, a bipolar radio, and only lets you put the heat on full blast.

I have this belief the first car you own should be a piece of crap. Chichi (my sister named it, not me) may have its own quirks but it is unique. No one has a car exactly like Chichi. Everything, from the ding on the bumper, to the lucky candy cane hanging off the

rearview mirror, has a story. I honestly don't think I would change anything, even if I could afford to.

Maybe it's another example of my oddity, but I really do believe that everything has a personality, even dishwashers and microwaves. I also think that they like to be acknowledged as part of our world. If we ignore them for too long, who knows, maybe they will rise up against us.

Anything could happen. After all, according to the school clock on the wall, and the watch of the boy sitting next to me, I am capable of existing in two times at once.