

The Invisible Weight of the Alone

If someone should invite me over for Sunday brunch, I would say yes in a heartbeat! Rather than doomscrolling in bed all weekend, feeling like a loser, I should definitely spend some time with friends or colleagues. But then, the rants about spouses, parenting duties, and other problems married people commonly have would definitely take up a good chunk of the conversation. Based on past experiences, it can be hard to chime in when I don't have the same problems and therefore don't have a good understanding of the issue at hand. Or, even if I do have something I think would be substantial enough to contribute to the conversation, I would eventually be brushed off with expressions like, "Oh, darling, I know this isn't something you typically worry over", or "At least you have your freedom".

So, yes, I dread the brunches and similar group gatherings. It's not always a good feeling to be perceived as someone without a worry in the world, because I surely have my own stuff to deal with. I have my burdens too, which, at times, look inconsequential next to married people's problems. It's no one's fault that things are seen this way, but I still feel like I'm being pushed outside the circle, isolated, amongst the group of people whom I chose to spend time with to feel like I belong somehow, if only for a little while.

Because I appear carefree and unburdened, I ultimately become unassisted as well. Why would anyone offer help to a person who doesn't seem to have a problem? This is why sometimes I feel like I'm becoming invisible, like my problems. I fade in the background, a name and a face, only to be recalled on a few rare occasions. Not only am I alone, but I'm also forgotten.

But the truth remains: My life isn't easier because I live alone. It's just quieter, more expensive, and entirely my responsibility. I take care of every single aspect of my daily life: the rent, utilities, internet, streaming services—no one to split the base costs. No second income to cover an out-of-the-blue expense like a car repair, medical bill, or pet emergency. The math is simple: one paycheck, all the risk.

Also, because I only have two hands, I often have to pay the silent "tax" of convenience. If I'm too tired to cook after a long day, ordering takeout for one is the only answer that makes sense, despite being shamefully expensive. Another thing: Buying in bulk is impossible, so food waste hits harder.

As much as I would love to be, I'm not carefree or worry-free at all! I have no other choice but to cry or laugh alone, because there's no one to witness my small victories or failures. I buy the tissues to wipe my tears, and retrieve them from the box myself. Likewise, if I get promoted, I

grab my phone and text a screenshot to my friends because no one's there to hug or to clap for me.

It also takes a lot to decide on every single thing, big or small. I decide when to change the smoke alarm battery, when to call the plumber, or whether to go to the ER for a bad cough. I own all the hats and wear them all, sometimes all at once. I am my own cheerleader, therapist, and crisis manager 24/7. Of course, I am exhausted.

Now comes the even trickier part: I get socially erased because I don't have family. To friends, I look like I'm always available to babysit or run errands. They cancel on me any time because I have a flexible schedule, or invite me at the last minute, since "I have nothing else to do, anyway". To others, I have infinite time and money. If only that were true.

Would I rather have it differently, then? Would it be better to come home to someone, regardless of the quality of the relationship, rather than have no one? Don't get me wrong, I would very much still choose to live my life solo rather than settle for a relationship I know for sure I won't be happy in anyway. But I also feel like I should be allowed to grieve the path of life I didn't choose and the beauty that it could have added to my existence. The thing is, there's no perfect choice. It's just A or B. And it's okay if I feel sad some days because I chose to be alone. I'm not happy all the time because I'm free, even though some assume that I am because I've gotten so good at being single.

At night, while I eat dinner in front of the TV or the computer, I'm reminded of another silent day I've spent with myself. Another day full of struggles that happen in the quiet, completely unseen, but definitely felt. Regardless, I am embracing this life with the good and the bad, looking easy on the outside but a lot more complex within.