

I recently binge-watched “Bridgerton” on Netflix and its prequel “Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story.” Initially, I was intrigued with the chess game of early British society. But as the storylines progressed, it was obvious that the show centered around arranged marriages and the struggles of some to thwart marrying only for social standing but marry for love. Of course reaching that goal led to much more chess playing. But love was achievable.

The main reason marrying for love in this society was possible was because there were young couples and some elders who believed in love and did not give up on it. I am not too masculine to admit I teared up and even cried a bit on some of the scenes. I literally found myself cheering out loud, pleading really, for the characters to say those magic words we all want to hear... “I love you.”

And so, in many of the prominent storylines, love prevailed. Whether it was a immediate connection or one that had to nurture, it happened. I got so much satisfaction from seeing love succeed. I wanted it, I craved it and I felt it. Yes, it was a well-written show in my opinion.

One of the unexpected displays of true love was with the King and Queen. In the main show, this was not very evident but the prequel delved into their story in detail. I blew my freaking mind. Never have I witnessed or read a story that equaled the intensity of love and the distances one will go to stay with the one they love. I will explain.

The queen, Queen Charlotte played by Golda Rosheuvel and the young Queen Charlotte played by India Amarteifio, immediately falls in love with the king, young King George played by Corey Mylchreest and the older King George played by James Fleet, after he finds her trying to escape the palace walls. But as she learns over a time that King George has a “madness.” In other modern terminology, he was mentally ill.

King George is kept up by Parliament and his mother to hide the illness from his subjects and the world. He is subjected by his personal physician to the worst kinds of treatments of the time that were nothing less than pure torture. Burning and branding of his legs and arms, waterboarding in ice water, beatings and God only knows what else, all in the dungeon.

Slowly it becomes obvious to his staff what is going on and his own aid even fought in his defense to make it stop. Then Queen Charlotte learns of the treatments and intervenes. She is able to help the king through his episodes through sheer love and support. She uses her words of love and support to calm him. She uses touch by holding his shaking hand to steady and divert his thoughts of disarray. The queen keeps professing her love for him and promising to not leave his side despite his madness. She has him repeat that they are a team. It is all about him and her. Together.

Throughout this series, she doesn't waiver from her love and promises.

This love she has for him transcends the love type, Eros. It is an Agape love in my opinion. Unconditional and forever despite his mental illness obstacles. I found one of the gestures she makes in order to gain his attention and lure him away from his madness is to lie under the royal bed. Initially, she found him one day lying under the bed. It was shielding him from his obsession of the stars and heavens. Those were always watching him and he could not get away. So, under the bed he was, and his sanity was temporarily restored.

Charlotte, finding him underneath the bed crawled underneath to be with him and they were able to be themselves again. To talk, to be husband and wife. To profess their love for each other. And later, she wanted to bring him news of his heir to be born.

Entering the room, he was in his madness and scrawling on the wall. She could not even get a response from him. Charlotte crawled under the bed and coaxed George to follow, which he did. From that point, they were a couple again. His sanity returned and he was glad to hear of the upcoming child. They were a team. They held hands and professed their love.

Now that I have spoiled this series for you, I have some things to say about the love portrayed in this show that stands out. It is, at least for me, the first time I have seen such an expression of love and dedication to another person. It is special because it deals with mental illness.

My experience with being bipolar has seen the good and bad in people. My first wife did the best that she could. I put her through hell, but she hung on for decades. I could never blame her if she wanted to leave earlier, but I do believe it did eventually wear her out. I was and still not am easy.

I have lost loves, friends and jobs and more as a result of my disorder. It is just a fact of life. As stable as I am, I can never promise not to be. I have lucid times and times of sheer hell. No control.

I am George. I am not a king but I am a man who is in the same condition as George. I have never known, real or imagined a woman who would stand by a man like my self or George for a lifetime. Love unconditional, nurturing, protective, non-apologetic, romantic, affectionate, forgiving. I simply cannot fathom this person existing.

When Charlotte made her gestures, especially crawling under the bed to be with her ill husband, my heart exploded. I felt a wave of love I didn't know could exist. I cried at their bonding under such circumstances. In truth, I don't know if I have ever known any two people who are willing to go to such lengths to support each other. To love like that.

Mental illness is such a lonely disease to suffer from. Very lonely indeed. What if the answer to dealing with mental illness is not all medications and therapy and holistic treatments?

Without a cure, can simply love be the answer to living with it? Are there people out there who are willing to do that?

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