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Zero Sum



Martin Connelly

My wife and I thank each other often. Thank you for doing the dishes, for going to the grocery store, for making tea. Thank you for the kisses, thanks for a nice weekend. I have never been as thankful, and I don't really know why. Perhaps this will fade—we are, after all, not quite a year married. But it could also be that there's something bigger at stake. I wonder if the near-constant thanks are way to keep the balance books close to zero—if we are always shoring up our thanks, always saying *you're welcome*, then neither of us will ever end up with liabilities skewed way beyond our assets. We'll be even, so we'll be happy.

There are days when I'm not as grateful, or attentive, as I should be. Days when I sit at my computer for "just five more minutes" for more than an hour running. Days when I sit and work instead of getting up to say a real goodbye as she heads out to work. But luckily, our debt ceiling sits right around 16 hours. Which is to say: it's hard to go to sleep without settling up accounts. I have yet to model the number of apologies that equal a thank you, but I'm sure it would be possible with the proper data.

So far, though, we've been good. Neither of us has gone into the red for more than a day or two, and, children of America, we both understand the value of good credit. I can pay back apologies over time, if it comes down to that. Emily knows I'm good for it. Just as long as these things don't get out of hand.

Because the goal is still where it was before, balancing those books in the name of marital bliss. Never mind that it's silly to thank your partner for kisses. It does the trick.

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