

TELEVISION



SHRILL – In many pieces of media, a large person is ‘fat’ because they’re broken. If they just fixed what was wrong, they’d be able to lose the weight and stop being a point of ridicule in the world. Annie, the star of Hulu’s show *Shrill*, doesn’t see herself as broken, or a joke. Despite people in her life and even strangers stressing that losing weight would magically make her feel better, Annie doesn’t buy into this mindset. Annie doesn’t let these societal expectations of beauty and body shape get her down . . . at least, on the surface.

Shrill does not neglect to show how sometimes, societal expectations really do break you down. Annie, while outwardly saying she’s fine with who she is and the body she has, stills struggles with a lot of insecurities that stem from her weight.

Annie’s insecurities show through in her relationship with Ryan. Ryan is just not a great guy – he hides his sexual relationship with Annie from his housemates and his attempts to change for the better when Annie asks for more from him often fall flat. Yet Annie keeps clinging to this apparent man-child, to the frustration of her roommate Fran.

But that is also an extension of the weight of Annie’s insecurities. She becomes preg-

nant because Ryan likes to ‘raw-dog’ it, and Annie’s breakdown to her friend while deciding whether to keep the baby sums it up well:

“There are moments in my life where I like, didn’t think I’d get to [be a mom], you know? Because of how I looked like, or . . . because there’s a certain way your body is supposed to be, and I’m not that.”

All too often, society has told men and women alike that they need to look a certain way, and that if they don’t, they’ll find themselves alone. While Annie ultimately decides on an abortion, she still clings to making the shaky relationship with Ryan work because she feels like this is her one shot at love.

As depressing as that sounds, I’m happy that *Shrill* focuses on the insecurities of a larger person in a world that demands perfection. It’s not always as simple as saying to ignore the negativity and embrace your true self. By the end of the season, Annie learns to love her body and eventually break off her relationship with Ryan, but it takes a lot for her to find her self-confidence when so much of her life has been dictated by how she looks. *Shrill* is sometimes brutally realistic but it’s needed when so much of media write large people off as a joke.

– ELIZABETH HENGES