

# ***For God's Sake, Don't Get Married!***

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**Freeditorial** 

Just as well I was alone in my living room, because at the end of the movie I couldn't help but shed a tear, brought on by the overwhelming emotion of the final scene.

The trouble is, a real man isn't supposed to cry when he watches a romantic film. He should smile with masculine superiority, shake his head knowingly and mutter something like "*ahh, women...*" Hence my relief that I was alone, because my reaction was not quite like that exactly.

After taking a few minutes to regain my composure, I began to analyze the plot of the film. The highly original storyline revolved around the doubts of the female protagonist over which of the two young men in her life she should give her love to. One of them was rich and wicked, and yet, as fun as such a character sounds, according to the story he was miserable. The other was poor and kindly, and yet, as boring as such a character sounds, according to the story he was happy.

The protagonist's friends split into two clearly defined groups when it came to offering advice. The first group warned her to tread carefully, because love flies out the window when the cupboard is bare, or words to that effect. And what would happen when kids came along? And didn't she deserve to live the good life? In other words, pick the rich guy.

Conversely, the other group told her that she should follow her heart. After all, wasn't the poor schmuck the love of her life? In particular, they kept repeating three words that apparently encapsulate a million years of human evolution and the most insightful conclusions of modern psychology: *Be*

*yourself*. And after this decisive argument had been put forth, we saw the film's protagonist running in slow motion along a deserted beach, into the arms of the poor schmuck, to the tune of a plaintive ballad, and this is the exact moment when the tears start to swell in the eyes of the viewers, mine included. It's understandable; you probably would have wept too if you'd borne witness to this touching scene.

At any rate, shortly after recovering from the emotion, my troubled mind became plagued with philosophical questions: What does it really mean to be yourself? Does anyone know how you're supposed to do this? Or more precisely, does anyone know how you could possibly *not* be yourself?

And furthermore, does anyone know why this advice leads the girl to choose the poor schmuck? And finally, does anyone know where I can find the solitary beach in that movie?

The human mind being what it is, speculations like these lead to others. Why do all movies end when the male and female lead decide to get married? Why don't any movies start right after the wedding? What is it that happens afterwards?

These questions led me into all manner of reflections, so to avoid boring you with the minute details of my mental wanderings, I'll skip them and get straight to the point.

The thing is, love is a process with four stages: the infatuation, the crisis, the betrayal and the breakup. It is when the first stage has us in its throes that we sign the marriage contract. And it is during the other three stages that we regret ever having done so.

The statistics on this are devastating: sixty percent of couples break up

within ten years of getting married. Why? Because—and this is a law of nature—the passion is dead.

With this in mind, I wondered: Has it always been this way?

Turning to the font of all wisdom -Zoilo, who is extremely clever because he reads books-, I found the answer: Romanticism, that bothersome, overvalued sentiment, is to blame.

It was romanticism that introduced the modern marriage tradition. "*So you say you're in love with me? Well, sign here.*" And thus it came to pass that once the "in love" phase was over, all that was left was the marriage contract and the mortgage on the house.

In a mental pirouette worthy of the best acrobat in Cirque de Soleil, I tried to imagine what it would be like to watch a movie that began at the end — i.e. with the wedding. Predictably, once the honeymoon was over and the sexual furor had abated, the first symptoms of future problems would begin to appear when hubby would become aware of attributes hitherto unnoticed in the girl next door, while wife would discover similar qualities in the gardener. And the next scene would be the predictable matrimonial turmoil.

But it is curious to note the different kinds of behavior exhibited by men and women in these breakdown situations. In the movie, two of the friends offering advice to the female lead were divorced, and while their ex-husbands reacted like guilty schoolboys who had been caught red-handed, the ladies seemed to have their own user's manual for what to do in case of separation. According to the manual, if it's the woman who leaves the man, everyone shall unanimously declare that he had it coming because he didn't pay her enough attention; if the breakup involves the girl running off with another guy, they

will explain, between wistful sighs pregnant with romanticism: "What could she do? Love conquers all! And he's the love of her life!"

Conversely, if it's the guy who takes the initiative, according to the strict terms of the user's manual, the mildest assessment he can expect is to be labeled a swine. And if he has run off with another woman, the latter will be described as a harlot, while the word used to describe him would not be repeatable in polite company.

At the top of the list of the most common accusations in these cases is generally that the guy is a pig because he took from her the best years of her youth. But of course, you'll never hear this theory of lost youth applied to the man. Don't we get older too?

In any case, this accusation, if you stop to think about it, completely contradicts the romantic reasoning of the movie, because underlying it is: *"if I'd known what was going to happen, not even violins and deserted beaches would have made me choose the poor schmuck. I would have accepted the rich guy's proposal and today I'd be living like a queen, which is what I deserve."*

All this raises a number of questions. If the dating period is so wonderful, why do we have to bring it to an end by getting married? When we fall in love with a girl (or vice versa), why do we have to make a contract out of our fleeting passion? Why do we keep committing the same mistake of mixing up romance, love or sex with contracts? If it weren't such an idiotically established tradition, and we could examine it with a little perspective, we would come to the conclusion that it is worse than absurd; it's simply ridiculous.

Let's analyze it together. We live in a society where any drug that has a one-

in-a-thousand chance of provoking negative side effects is banned immediately. If a machine has a defect that has the remotest possibility of causing an accident, we pull it off the market at once. And yet, marriage has a failure rate of more than 60%, and there it remains, undisturbed, like an unassailable institution.

But it wasn't always this way. The Romans (according to my friend Zolio, who is extremely clever because he reads books) had it all worked out perfectly. In those days, marriage was a contract between two people who agreed to combine their respective estates subject to certain conditions, thereby establishing a conjugal partnership that included their children. Questions of passion had nothing to do with this contractual relationship. It was what we would label pejoratively today a "marriage of convenience". However, if you'll forgive me, I would describe it as a marriage based on thinking with your head and not with other less noble parts of the human anatomy.

Basically, we copied the Roman system of conjugal partnership, but with one important difference: in those days, after getting married, both spouses remained free to fall in love and pursue their passions accordingly, as often as life offered them the opportunity, and this was not viewed negatively by society. For example, Zoilo tells me that Seneca deemed a man fortunate if his wife settled for only four or five extra-marital affairs, and there are even inscriptions on Roman gravestones that make the curious affirmation: "she remained faithful to her husband for thirty years, taking only three lovers."

In short, they were a lot smarter than we are and had the whole marriage thing much better worked out. They simply didn't confuse biochemical

reactions with contracts, and they understood that fidelity is not the same as faithfulness; it's just sex.

After this profound analysis, I finally came to understand why films never begin after the wedding: because people aren't going to pay to go to the movies just to watch the same problems they have at home. And film producers, who are a bright bunch of people, have worked this out.

After all these insightful reflections, all I am left with is the conviction that the best wedding present I could give a friend who announces to me his intention to enter into holy matrimony is to tell him: *For God's sake, don't get married!!!*

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