

number ten

*Æ*liens

The book is also available in hypertext format. It will not be put on the Web though.

Preface

Everytime I meet a new love, I have to tell my story. The count is incremented by one each time, and consequently the story grows. The story should maybe be told once and for all, so that I can continue with my life, and simply give a handout to each new love I meet in the future, if there is one.

One – The story of what?

I have always wanted to write a book. A real book, I mean. I have written two books already. These were scientific books. I didn't write a real book because I had nothing to say, I thought. Now, I don't care. I'll just write it. Nobody would believe me if I was going to tell this was the story of my life. Neither would I.

The women I loved Upto now I have loved seven woman. That is, there are seven women with whom I shared a part of my life in one way or another. This does not mean I did not have other women. I did, but they have left no more than a memory, not an impression.

I got married to the seventh. Seven is not my lucky number, that I can tell now. With her I had the feeling that all the women I knew converged. She subsumed all the others. That is why I feel at a loss. She disappeared. And with her she took the memory of all the six others.

Warning When she left me, I lost my identity, my personality. I write my story to recover my identity and to learn who I am. My story may be read as a warning. A warning for number eight, or nine. Perhaps I lost count by then.

Lonely I am a lonely person. I have always been that way. Every attempt to change that has failed thus far, one way or another. I may need therapy. But I decided to write down my story first. Or instead.

I am dutch Before I tell you my story, I have to explain something. I am Dutch. I can't help it. That's the way I was born. And raised. In other words, I am very Dutch. Even if I don't appear to be, at first sight. Why do I write my story in English then, you may ask. Well, simply because all these months I have lived in English. Besides, I can use the exercise. The girl I married to was French, with an English speaking mother. We got on well, in English. Her accent was perfect, better than mine. And since I read and wrote English already most of the time, English was fine with me. Nevertheless, English is not my mother's tongue. I found out the hard way. I may have been too eager, too naive, to think I could warp into a different language zone. Is that why my life is in such a mess now?

Life Women are an important part of my life. I have only a few friends. My best friends are women. But I am also at war with women, in particular the ones I

loved. I have no brothers. My father died when I was young. So I have been living among women, my mother, my sisters, my lovers, the women I slept with. My relations with men have been focussed on work. I have never slept with a man.

Statistics I am in my forties now. Forty-three to be precise. When I met my wife, the girl I married, I was the happiest man on earth, ready to settle down and lead a normal life. Moreover, she was beautiful and very sexy. What more could I wish for. When we broke up I did some statistics on my life.

Of the seven women I loved, two have been anorexic for a period in their lives, there were two abortions, two were very shy, two of them were French and two of them had ex-lovers that one way or another reappeared. There is no need to say that they were all very special, but to continue counting, two had big tits (very big, actually), two had a doctorate degree, and (only) two of them lived in the same house with me. They were all slim, like me. Significant is that none did not smoke and that none of them had money.

What I got from this all, apart from a love life, is one child and one marriage. The marriage will be ended soon. So I will only have a child left. Of course, I am very proud to have a son.

Intellectually I didn't do so bad. I have a regular job (with income) and I have written two books. I am a doctor in science and completed three doctorate studies: philosophy, psychology and computer science. Also I have completed an artschool, as a painter. I did these things because, once, I was very ambitious. The fields comprise the area of Artificial Intelligence and I hoped to be able to program a computer to make Art. My ambitions have been tempered in the course of time, though.

A classical story The story I am about to tell is in a way a very classical story. A love story. With a dramatic ending. We met on her birthday, the seventh of february. We lived together for about a hunderd days, three months, making love, enjoying life. We separated a month after we got married. The whole affair had taken less than six months. Seven, if the divorce is included.

It has been like a dream. Now, I must wake up, get on with my life. But it is difficult. I miss her. I can't forget, unless I understand. Why were we not able to build a normal life? What did I do wrong?

Writing the story is like an intellectual revenge. Emotionally, she has proven to be too strong for me, too lively, too unpredictable, too vulnerable. A poor revenge, indeed. But I can't do any better. She left me. What moved her was beyond me. Too complex and too dark.

The outline The outline of the story is simple. We met in Paris. I was there for a conference. She took part in the organization. I asked her out for dinner. She agreed, and we spent the night together. Back in Amsterdam, I called her. We both liked eachother and agreed to meet the next weekend in Paris. There I said "welcome into my life." Since she had already planned to go to the States for a few weeks, I proposed to meet in New York, to celebrate my birthday. We

had a party for two. She dressed up very chic, and we went out for dinner. She gave me a pen, as a present. Back in Amsterdam, I wrote her two letters. Love letters. I mentioned the thought of marriage, of living together. When she came back, I went to Paris to pick her up, to go to Amsterdam. We were all excited. I had already met her parents and her family, and they all liked me, her future husband. Things had taken a quick turn. Two weeks later, we went back to Paris to pick up her things with a rented van. I still have a picture of that. We look very happy. In the mean time, we started organizing our life. We improved the apartment, bought various cupboards, ordered a new bathroom, and did an incredible amount of paperwork to get her a residence permit. She also started learning Dutch. Never things were done so harmoniously and efficiently. Finally, we got our wedding papers ready. We invited the family, and the wedding took place. Immediately after the wedding, on our holidays, everything collapsed. It appeared to have been false pretense all along. She said we didn't have anything in common, we never had intelligent conversations, she didn't know anything about me ... I was shocked, in despair. I had told her everything about my life, more than I have ever told anyone before. In her all the women I had been in love with converged. Suddenly, it turned all against me. I am still on my feet, but I need to find my way back, my way back to life. I need to relive this episode and investigate my past, to find how the dream could turn into a nightmare, to understand why, blinded by my love for her, I went over the edge, to awake in utter despair and loneliness.

Two – The women I loved

Never have I used the word *love* so much as in the past half year. Before that, I hardly ever told the women I was involved with that I loved them. Sometimes, they thought I didn't. I did. I did love them all. In different ways. But I never told them. As far as I remember, I wasn't told I was loved either. It somehow seemed not important to say these things. Actually, I don't know whether I loved them, really loved them. This whole episode has made me doubt whether I can love at all. Counting the women I was involved with for some period of time, I come to seven. For convenience, and to avoid names, I give them a number. From #1 (number one) to #7 (number seven). This is not to be mean. However, it does create some distance and thus protects me also.

Number one It all started with #1. I was only 21. These were my formative years. She is important also because she gave me a son. The son seems to be all I have left. #1 liked #7. The feeling was mutual. #7 even confessed, at our last evening together, that she had felt an erotic desire for #1. I would not be surprised if that feeling was mutual as well. But I didn't pay attention to these things at that time. With #1 I lived for about four years. Then she decided to live on her own. I was furious and smashed everything in the house. I also threw away all the plants. Actually, I gave them away, to a girl I knew. From then on, I never had another plant in the place I lived, until recently. #7 bought me a plant. I am taking care of it now. After #1 moved out, our relation continued for another ten years. Her reasons for moving out were manifold. We were at the same artschool, and both needed space. Space to *work* and space to breathe. Also, she liked to be able to see her friends on her own. At the time we were quite modern, *living apart together*. We were never tired explaining how wonderful it was, to have a relation and a life of your own. No longer daily in eachother's presence, we started employing the agenda to fix the days to meet. We kept to a minimum of three days a week. Living apart, we wanted to have an open relation. These were the seventies, mind. In a week of seven days, there were usually four days left. That's when #2 came in the picture. #2 was #1's best friend. They had already developed an erotic attraction. As a favor, one night, I was allowed to join in. #2 fell in love with me, and we started a relation that would last for ten years. #1 nevertheless remained my first choice. We spent evenings discussing the situation, dealing with all the problems, talking about moods, tensions, frustrations, ambitions, films, books and culture. Actually, we

liked talking. After finishing school, we talked about taking a child. The need for a child occurred to us both and it seemed natural to have a child together. This did not imply that we would change the situation of living apart together in any way. We just planned to divide the burden of raising a child. It took us a month to make the child, and another nine months to wait for its birth. The pregnancy was not easy. We were both studying again and were often quite stressed. #1 often complained about my domestic aptitude. This became worse after the child was born. She even claimed, afterwards, that not meeting my domestic duties was the ultimate reason for our separation, four years after the child was born. I think she exaggerated. She fell in love with a woman, still her partner now. And also, although never mentioned explicitly, my relation with #2, once her best friend and female lover, must have been painful. I think she never forgave me for that. We still share the care for our son, but as far as I know our relation was for her nothing more than 'though'. At least, that's what she told #7 at the wedding. For years, anyway, she gave me the impression that I still owed her something. I never knew exactly what. I did my best to prove that I was a good father. She never trusted I would be. Perhaps, I overdid myself in this by not returning with #7 to Amsterdam. Instead I continued the holidays with my son. It seemed a natural thing to do, but a different choice might have saved my marriage.

Number two It was a turbulent time when #2 entered my life. An unexpected outcome of experimenting with sex. We were the three of us, she, #1 and me. I enjoyed the experience, but could not foresee the dramatic change in my life. Reading my diary from that time, it appears that #1 experienced our living together as a depressing form of intimacy and her decision to live on her own as "waking up". This struck me, because #7 may have experienced the same feeling of depression, despite the short time we actually lived together. I also read that, at the time, my life was the result of an absence of positive choices. To an extent this still holds, although marrying #7 seemed to be a positive choice. Anyway, #2 came into my life by chance. #1 had paved the way. Our relation was opportunistic. We took what was on our way. And we enjoyed it! #2 was French. This was a big thing for her. When we split for the first time, after three years, it had become an issue between us. She started hating everything that was Dutch, projecting it all on me. Actually, in a way I learned her to speak Dutch. Not the basics, she knew how to speak Dutch already, but the finesses, the subtleties of the language. All we did for three years, for at least two times a week, was talking and making love. We were passionate. Our relation was no secret. People knew about it. Friends criticized me, #1's friends. "How can you do such a thing?" Nevertheless, we took care to be discrete. We were discrete. Too discrete. We did never publicly recognize each other as lovers. Our relation was anonymous. It seemed illegal. I felt like a secret agent. An agent of love. This deepened our solitude. When we finally broke up, after ten years, our relation appeared to have taken place in the dark. An obscurity that didn't leave room for memories, or anchor points, as if it had never happened. The key to living with two women (apart together) is *organization*. Already living by the agenda, it took quite some planning to keep everybody satisfied. Fortunately, I had my

work (painting and philosophy) to keep me busy in the intervals. Emotional synchronization went surprisingly well, for almost three years. I loved them, and I was able to convince myself that what I did was right. Moreover, I managed to split my time and my emotions, without a shred of doubt. In retrospect, the whole thing might be considered as a dream, for which I applied all strategies available to keep it alive. After three years, it lost its splendor, and all I could do was trying to rescue what there was to rescue. So I talked, but I did no longer believe in what I said. Slowly, I began withdrawing myself. Incidentally, that is when I started my career as a scientist. Ending the dream, I stopped being an artist and philosopher and I transformed myself into a man of science, which I still am today. Ironically, our final separation immediately followed on our attempt at coming out in the daylight. #2 told her friend about us, in the hope that he would accept our relation. On the contrary, he made hell, #2 broke down and fell into a severe depression. I saw her just before I went to Paris to get #7. I had this wish to reconcile myself with my past before starting a new life. There was still a spark between us, but it was too sad and too dangerous to do anything with it. I didn't see her again after that.

Number three About a year before I definitely broke with #1 and #2, I started something with #3. I was feeling more and more lonely and things were going difficult, at work and with #1 and #2. #3 had a friend already, but they didn't make love. She was very shy and quiet. The evenings with her were calm. She didn't eat much, only some carrots and bread. Indeed, she had been anorexic. She was very thin, but experienced in making love. I listened to her stories. She used to say: "You are so human." I guess that meant about the same as when #7 called me "sweet". I am gentle-natured, I listen to people and I do not impose myself on them. Moreover, I tend to enjoy the intimate moments with a woman, talking, touching, making love leisurely. These evenings with her were peaceful, they gave me strength. But after a while, I grew more ambitious. I wanted to meet other people. In other words, I needed passion!

Number four #4 gave me the passion I waited for. Not so much erotic passion, but the mind-fucking passion, a craving for what simply was not there! She was a director, doing various kinds of theater. She had big tits, a big car and an adventurous life. In my work, I was at a dead end, completely fed up with the people and the subject of my research. I welcomed the change in my life, going to the beach, wild people, a lot of noise. Desperately willing to change my life I made plans with her, for going to Africa, having a baby, doing theater projects. I was not in love with her so much as with the idea of giving another turn to my life. Perhaps the most dramatic aspect of my relation with her is that, in that time, I definitely broke my relation with #1, which was even then still lingering on. I wanted to change my life, and commit myself. Soon, however, I found out that #4 was still fooling around with her ex-lover. One evening, we had been out, she suddenly announced to go home by herself, smiling vaguely. I got angry with her, and slapped her on the face. After a while, we got back together, but she kept teasing me, using phrases such as "we will see", "do what you like" and

”look at the way you are looking at me”. She found a weak spot alright, but it was all a game to her, and she was a mean player. I had learned a lesson the hard way, I thought. The episode had taken only a few months. It was a very hot summer, like this summer. I was disappointed and sad. I decided to concentrate on my work, finish my Ph.D. and not to fall in love again before that.

Number five #5 was probably the nicest girl of them all. She was very young. We differed fifteen years. She was friendly and had a radiant smile. Our love was tender, but she had great difficulty of giving herself to sex. To circumvent this problem, I learned the art of kissing. Having lots of work to do, we only saw each other occasionally. Together, we listened to music and talked about people. We never shared a real life together. She needed more attention than I could give her, especially when my son was there. After a while, I felt I needed someone closer to me in age. So when I met #6, almost half a year later, I broke of the relation abruptly. But she is still a friend, supporting me in this difficult time of my life.

Number six I met #6 at my sister’s birthday. I was enchanted by the way she smiled. We talked. Nothing happened, but we agreed to see each other, sometimes. The first time I visited her, she fell ill halfway during the evening. Walking home with her, I had a sense of belonging. Again, nothing happened. But I felt very close to her. The second time, almost three months after we first met, she came to visit me. We got along well. The next day we went to the sea. She became very emotional, but she didn’t want to talk about it. Later she told me that she had been waiting for a friend to come out of jail, but it had been too long. #6 lived in the place of my birth. In the beginning she came often to Amsterdam. We spent much time together. We even thought about living together, but she wanted me to buy or rent another place. The place I lived in was too small and too uncomfortable to her taste. Besides, she didn’t adapt well to Amsterdam. Our life together was very secluded. We both didn’t need many people around us. We had few friends. But we liked being together. We enjoyed our intimacy. Our relation was, most of the time, very tender. Our best friends, actually, were my sister and her friend. We had many conversations with them, about relations and personal problems, often half drunk, until deep in the night. Soon after we met, we started thinking about having a baby. Somewhat to our surprise, it didn’t happen rightaway. We tried everything. We took medical advice, did tests, disciplined our love life. Nothing worked, but we kept on hoping. We were both very disappointed. #6 had great difficulties with my past. She often said that I didn’t love her enough, that I had spent all my energy before I met her. That wasn’t true! Somehow, I couldn’t make clear that our relation meant very much to me. But, indeed, we were not passionate. Many times, when we had a fight, she got furious and ran out, slamming the door. I usually waited some time and then went after her. I hated her running away like that, but she always returned. In the beginning of our relation, she had warned me that she might hurt me, someday. I had kept that in mind. Towards the end things got more and more difficult. We quarrelled a lot, and there were many irritations. Living

in two different places became a burden. I felt more and more estranged from Amsterdam, spending all that time in the train, travelling back and forth. This had been going on for five years already. When we met, she had been working as a secretary, just as #7 by the way, but soon after that her contract ended. Only towards the end she found other work, volunteer work, unpaid. The work give her a sense of value, and some structure in her life as well. I expected that our relation would improve because of that, but it actually became more difficult. She was even less inclined to come to Amsterdam. Being with my son, the three of us together, was often difficult. She experienced it as a loss of time. She thought I was giving him too much attention, allowing her only to take in the second position. She gave in too easily, I think. I often encouraged her to be assertive and claim her place. The last four months we were together, we saw eachother irregularly, and usually I had to come to her place to see her at all. She was a bit vague about the status of our relation and kept me at a distance. To think about what she wanted to do with her life, she said. Nevertheless, we went to one of the Dutch islands with Christmas and we also planned to spend a weekend in Paris together.

Number seven In Paris I met #7. When I saw her at the conference desk, there was this spark. She later said that she was struck when she saw me. I asked her out, and she took me in her car to a restaurant. Paris by night, music in the car. I enjoyed the ride. We had a delicious meal. Seafood and wine. She came with me to the hotel. The hotel room was cold. We undressed quickly. She had a bandage around her right upper leg. From an operation to remove tissue, she explained. I touched her breast, lightly. She got excited and said: "You love women, don't you." "Yes", I said. I licked her briefly, and entered her. Later, she told me that never had anyone made love to her that way. In a classical way, so lovingly. At breakfast, my student (who was accompanying me) was surprised to see me with the girl from the conference desk. But we acted very natural, had breakfast and drove to the institute where the conference was held. Before leaving, to meet #6 at the station, I went to see her. She looked radiant, her lips curling in a smile. I knew something important had happened.

Three – Living together

Our encounter had a dramatic effect on our lives. Without consulting each other, we broke with our relations. We did not want to miss this opportunity!

Paris – New York We agreed to see each other another weekend in Paris. "To check it out." We spent the weekend in the hotel, making love and telling each other the story of our life. She told me about her anorexia, her attempt at suicide, her use of drugs, her sexual experiences and her dependencies on doctors. "Doesn't it scare you?", she asked me. "A little", I said. "But I am glad you told me." She also told me that she was a demanding woman. I told her about my relations with women, the confusion my multiple relations had brought me in, and the solitude of my current life. We had smoked some joints and were tuning in to each other rapidly, physically and mentally. When the weekend came to its end, we had to decide whether to continue with each other. It took us about three hours over coffee to say "YES", committing. I left with the train, excited, with pain in my heart. Back home, I called #6 and told her 'things are going fast.' After a month, I saw #6 again, to exchange the little stuff we had of each other. I had made her suffer a lot, but I didn't want to feel guilty about it. My life had to go on. Yet, I told her that I still cared for her very much. Which was true, I still do, and I miss the intimacy that we had.

I was excited. She had everything. She had the spirituality and wittiness of #1. She had the sensuality of #2. The sexual experience of #3. She was as adventurous as #4. She had the liveliness and radiance of #5, and the sensitivity and need for intimacy as #6. What more could I wish for? There was only one problem. She enjoyed to be touched, but she could not touch. She would learn, in time.

Back in Amsterdam, I couldn't stand the thought of not seeing her for almost a month. Walking to my work, I suddenly got the idea of flying to New York to celebrate my birthday with her. She was delighted, and impressed I think. We had a lovely time. We walked in Central Park and made a wish. We had to keep silent about the wish, but for the both of us it was obvious what we wanted. We also visited the MOMA, where we felt very close looking at the paintings. In the evening, she dressed up and took me out for dinner. My birthday dinner. As a present, she gave me a pen and a photo of herself. I was impressed, and when I saw her undressing later in the hotel, the thought of having her as my wife occurred to me. Man and wife, in a classical style. Back in Amsterdam I called

her a number of times and we wrote each other letters. We were desperate to see each other.

I wrote: Reality How sweet it was to hear your voice again, after so many days. Telling me it is not a dream, but that our love is reality, waiting to be fulfilled. Being without you is hard. Hearing your voice is a sweet consolation. There are so many things I want to talk about with you. I tried to call you again, longing to hear your voice. It is so miraculous what we have that I sometimes can't believe it's true,..., I simply need you, I want you. One more week, we can manage.

Never, waiting seemed so hard. Time goes slowly, day by day. There is nothing I can write, nothing I can do to speed that up. My body is aching to be with you. It is only one more week.

She wrote: Joyful ..., I can't wait to see you – it seems rather lovely, like a twinkle, being just with you, discover more from you. Your "being" is beautiful. We are shy and I like it, but I can't wait to see what we will be when living together. I promise, I do not want to shock you by saying this.

I am so joyful and impatient for "US"! How can I tell you, such new feelings growing in my heart?

I have just been kissed by a little angel and that was you, pulling me along to go through the blue door into a new light, that neither you, neither me knows, what kind of light it is!

Let's be patient. (It's so hard!) Let's not hurry things. (It's so hard!) Just "LET IT BE"! And the rhythm of the truth will start getting in place. I am going to try to be very precautious, because in any case I could not stand shocking you or deceiving you.

She wrote: Moved ..., I'm feeling lonely without you. You called me this morning, it was wonderful to hear you. I cannot believe the state I am in now. Truly, it never happened to me in my life, this way. I'm astounded, I'm deeply moved. You turned me upside down. I suddenly feel a new maturity ... one I've never felt before, the one you probably have when you are in love. My body is quiet, at rest. And my mind is so turned up. I've got the "stage fright". My life is switching for good. I waited that time for so long, it seems unimaginable. I've got butterflies in my whole body, shivering like the leaves blown by the wind. You are the sunshine of my heart, the gentleness of love, the wildness of love, the precious one that I want to cherish. I am very impatient to get to know you now. I can't wait to be all over and done with my "social business" I'll have to face those coming weeks. I'll probably need your help. I can't wait to be in our "love nest". I guess that in the first months I'll have to do a couple of returns to Paris as far as that "social business" is concerned. It really is a drag, but I have to do it to feel comfortable and this has to be done the most efficient way.

..., you're the first man for which I have such feelings: this strong feeling that makes you desire a sharing of life in love. Love is for us. I can't wait to be with you, at ease, calm and happy. I can't wait to be close to your body, to your mind.

She wrote: Love ..., I love you. I'm so happy when I think of you. I can't wait for that wonderful life waiting for us. Life is going to cherish us and we were both hoping for that for many years in the depth of our hearts.

I cannot wait to see you, to be with you. I hope that life is going to be smooth enough to let us be together, just simply as our love is. Help me to be not too complicated. Help me to sort out all the practical things I have to face to be with you, darling. Just think of us and what we have to do to live together. Our love. I can only think of our love, how wonderful love is and how wonderful it is to be in love with a wonderful being – like you! My love, let me kiss you a lot, let me kiss you a lot, let me love you. Take care, you're so special, so wonderful. I love you.

Things went fast Things went fast, indeed. But we did it 'grand style', at least in the beginning.

When she returned from the States, I went to Paris to meet her. I remember she was too late at the station. I felt lost. Was it all nothing but a dream? But she only had some trouble with the car. Later in the evening, in a 'brasserie', I suddenly felt sick and I fainted. Again, the feeling of loosing everything overwhelmed me. But she was so sweet, wiping my face with cold water.

The next day we visited her family. Everybody was very nice. I was received as a new member of the family. I was considered 'cool' and 'clean'. They obviously thought I was the solution for her problems. And theirs, because for the last two years she had been living with her parents. Her sister assured me that she needed a quiet and simple life. Only her mother asked her if I was using drugs, because I was so calm.

The day after that, before I left for the south of France, where I had another conference, we spoke again of marriage. We agreed to do it. We were both excited. When I came back a week later, she had packed everything. Ready to move to Amsterdam. Her father had accompanied her to the station. He shook my hand and said: "I trust you will take good care of her." Nothing more needed to be said.

She wrote: Wife ..., yes, you are my dearest loveliest and loveliest darling. I feel so fulfilled at your side, I can't wait to have your name, to be your wife. I want to be yours. You're mine ... just you I love and nobody else but you! I want to be with one and another, in one another. I want to be with you, body and soul. My heart is magnificently loving you. Never have I been so happy to be loved by someone and to love. I love your whole being ..., I love your body ..., I love you ... Don't let me down. Never will I let you down. I am your wife.

Living in Amsterdam Arriving in Amsterdam, I was anxious about how she would like my house. Actually, she was a bit disappointed, she later confessed, that it was only a two-room apartment, and not a real house. Nevertheless, she liked the place, although she found it a little bare, without things showing my personal history. Later when she left, she said that the place had looked sinister.

Rightaway, she demanded a new bathroom, with a sink and a new shower. I agreed.

The next week we visited my family. My sister was at first opposed to this, because she had spent lots of time with #6. A little to my surprise, my sisters started telling her what a difficult person I was and how awful I could behave. But she just replied by stating: "I love him very much."

The week after that we rented a van and drove to Paris to get her stuff. Back in Amsterdam, we bought a number of closets and within a week all her stuff had found its place in the house. Sorry, apartment. I had written her already that I was difficult in allowing changes to the house, but to my surprise our ideas were quite compatible. Each day the place became more lovely. She renewed lots of things, in the kitchen for example, cleaned the woodwork and the walls, and we also bought a plant. My first plant in more than fifteen years. In the evenings we went out for a glass of wine, or drank a sambuca and smoked a joint. We were very much in love.

When we had done most of the work to install ourselves in the house, we started organizing the marriage. We selected rings. We went to the townhall to register. However, before we could register, she had to get a residence permit and explicit permission to marry from the police. This was a little more difficult than we thought. We had to spend hours of waiting at the police station and the townhall to get the paperwork done. We did it. Just in time to fix the date of the wedding before the summer holidays. This would be the most convenient time to invite the family.

In the second month, she did a ten-day course in Dutch. Learning Dutch was necessary, to be able to find work and to communicate more easily with the people around us. We spoke English with each other, which was fine at the time, but for my son it was very tiring and sometimes just too difficult. For shopping she did alright, but she was a bit lax and difficult to motivate to learn the language properly.

A few weeks before the wedding, when she got her residence permit, we went to the employment agency, to see if there was any work for her. Again, this was not so easy as we thought. She had to be able to speak Dutch, and take a course before she would have any chance. We got her subscribed, and she would probably have entered a course in the fall. We were well on our way.

We did not see many people. During the day I went to work. When I came home from work, she was usually waiting for me, excited to see me, kissing me everywhere.

She loved the neighbourhood, with all the little shops, terraces and people on the street. "Everybody seems to have vacation", she often said. "Except me", I used to say. The weather was lovely that period, and many times we went out to have a drink. Saturdays we went to the market to do the shopping. After that we drank a coffee or a beer. I loved that. We enjoyed life and each other. During the week she did all the shopping and all the domestic chores as well. I had a luxury life. Living together was beautiful.

There was one incident, that proved to be important later on. It was Friday evening. We were out of money, so we went to the cash machine, together. When

I had to type my PIN code, she was looking over my shoulders. I was reluctant to type the code. She felt I didn't trust her. She was upset. I apologized for my behavior. I did not expect her to abuse my card, but I felt uncomfortable with giving my code away. I know I made an error. It is one of the things she could not forget, that she criticized me for later. She may have been right about my attitude, but I was willing to change that, gradually.

Having lived a life as a solitaire for so long, it was quite a thing to learn how to share. The incident is an example of where I had a problem of allowing someone on what I considered as 'private space'. More in general, money, and how to deal with money was a problem.

When I met her, I had quite some money on my savings account. Going to Paris and New York, buying tickets for our holidays, buying the furniture, things for the house, a new shower, the preparations for the wedding, and in general our way of living, made my reserves disappear quickly. Since also her allowance from Paris stopped when she applied for her residence permit, our financial situation became a bit tight. I am used to having little money. In such a case, I just start living more economical. My worries about money, however, gave her a feeling of guilt whenever she bought something or, for example, even when she finished the last piece of cheese. But to be honest, it showed on my face. It wasn't my intention to restrict her, but just to be careful.

She wrote: Budget I've been thinking. You are right. I have never been careful with money – I have always lived like a "free little bird". I have never lived with anyone in the way to manage money. So let's learn together. I am asking you to be a little patient with me. Give me a budget and I'll stick to it. I'm totally aware and conscious of the fact of money. Let's be simple – please – do a budget for me. I want to solve this because I don't want this to ruin our life, because we love each other. And as soon as I'll work, if it happens, it will help ... And don't forget, I love you, I want to be yours and nobody else's!

Becoming Dutch We agreed to have a budget for shopping and her personal expenses. We opened a shared account for that purpose, so that she wouldn't have to ask me for money. In the meantime, I put the money weekly in a teacup. This worked fine. In addition, she had still some money on her own account. It was the first time I took financial responsibility for someone. We were not rich, evidently, but we should be able to manage. We were both willing to learn.

She was a beautiful girl and very lively. Everybody around me liked her. I was considered fortunate to have her. And indeed, I was proud. I was proud to have her as my wife. I was proud to give her my name, and I was looking forward to start a family with her, to live with her and have a child together. "I am here to stay", she said on my son's birthday. "I will become a Dutch girl."

A few weeks before the wedding we had a little crisis. I had a strange feeling when sending the cards to my family and friends, formally announcing our wedding. It was not really my style. She was nervous and called people in Paris, her aunt, her analyst and her ex-lover. They reassured her, I believe, by saying that a little stage-fright is a normal thing before a wedding. For some days

she thought about going to Paris for the weekend. I was reluctant to let her go, a little paranoid, afraid that the wedding would be postponed or cancelled. For a while her aunt called her daily, telling her how happy everybody was with the marriage.

Actually, she was nervous quite often. She had been taking neuroleptics, anti-depressiva, for several years. She also had been seeing an analyst for years. She stopped seeing the analyst when she came to Amsterdam, and she stopped taking the neuroleptics after a few weeks living with me. Instead, she took ordinary calming pills, in a light dose. When she became nervous, I usually tried to calm her. Making love often helped. Sometimes, I got nervous myself.

She wrote: Sorry How can I say "sorry"? I deeply love you, darling. You must know that I am very grateful for all you have done for me, for all you are giving to me, for having me in your life, for sharing your life with me. I'm proud you have chosen me. I know, I'm difficult. I complain a lot, but I have met the most wonderful man of my life: you. You are wonderful, all over, all inside. Stay close to me – that's all I want. I'll stay close to you because you are the one I love and with love ... forever. Please, don't judge me now – I'm particularly nervous at this enormous turn of my life. I want us to be happy and enjoy life together, and I am sure that is what is waiting for us – we deserve it! You, as much as me. I don't want to loose you because I love you. I want to give you my respect and don't worry ... I can be a wonderful girl, a women you have not yet expected, and this is the present I would like to offer you for life, my love.

The wedding The day before the wedding, the French and English family arrived. The English family, two uncles and two aunts, all of about my age, came for tea at our apartment. We talked and played music. The French family arrived by train. They were all very emotional and friendly. Again it was a beautiful day. Everybody loved Amsterdam. "She has never looked so well", her mother said to me. "The Dutch life does her good." In the evening we had dinner together. After that we went to a bar for a drink. We went home early. Running, to become calm. "How do you feel?", we asked eachother. We didn't have an answer. We didn't sleep very well that night.

The day of our wedding was also a lovely day. At nine she went to the hairdresser. At ten, I went to the hotel to meet her family. With her father, her aunt and her uncle, I walked to the town hall. The sun was shining. My family, my mother and my sister and her daughter were already waiting. About ten minutes later, #1, her partner and my son arrived. "You two look very much alike", said her uncle to my sister and #1. "That is the reason he went with her in the first place", my sister said, jokingly. Everyone was in a good mood. A little later the rest of the family arrived. Her mother and sister and her two brothers with their girlfriends. She had instructed me to tell her mother and sister how lovely they looked. So I did. "I must take care not to marry the wrong one", I said, hugging her sister. Also my younger sister with her husband and children arrived. Finally she came. She looked like a Parisien model, in a very tight dress, looking very anxious and nervous.

The ceremony was mostly in Dutch. Typical Amsterdam style, lax. #1's partner made an attempt at translating it in English. The marriage vow was in French, however. We were standing on a platform, that started rotating when we were to make our pledge. I felt a slight vertigo. After saying the "yes" (she said "oui") to each other, we were both almost in tears. (Were we?) I felt dizzy, we were married. From now on, we were living in another world.

She told me afterwards that her brothers took her in their arms and asked her whether she was happy. She said, she didn't know, so she didn't say anything.

I had arranged a boat to take us to the restaurant where the lunch would take place. Everyone enjoyed the view of the canals. And the cool air. I was complimented for having organized it.

At the restaurant, we unpacked the presents. We kissed and thanked everybody. We got beautiful things. The next day, our house looked lovelier than ever.

The restaurant was near a church. The carillon was playing all the time. We took care that everybody was happy. We did not pay much attention to each other. Why should we? We had a lifetime waiting.

Towards the end of the afternoon, everybody went home. The French family left first, then my family. Only the English branch remained to help us with our presents. Everybody had liked everybody, as they said. We agreed to have a reunion the next year.

At home, we opened another bottle of wine, unwilling to end the day. Then we took the English family to their hotel. Walking to the hotel, some old guy sitting in front of a cafe shouted: "You will never make it". I was annoyed, but didn't say anything. "He was right, that guy", she remarked later. Waiting for the family to pack, we took another drink and smoked a joint. The joint killed her right away. Also her uncle passed out. They drove us home and I carried her upstairs. I put her on the bed. Her uncle took a long time to say goodbye to her, and an even longer time to go to the toilet. I was wondering what the two of them were doing, but I decided not to interfere. It was a family affair. God knows what happened in the past.

The next day, we woke up with a hangover. She had a nausea. "Not exactly the erotic route", she joked on the telephone. That afternoon we made love, but there wasn't much difference with how it was before the wedding. We were slightly disappointed. What did you expect? To live in a completely different reality? Since the nausea continued, she did a pregnancy test. To my surprise it was positive. She got very nervous, and I phoned a doctor to have the test confirmed. The next morning, Sunday, the test was confirmed. She was pregnant. It was a love baby. She complained about the Dutch doctors and the primitive way everything was done here. That evening we informed our families. "That's fast", they said. Indeed, that was fast. Were we happy with it? Yes, I think so. But I don't know. We were still exhausted.

Four – I told you I was sorry

Four days after the wedding we had planned a holiday. These holidays had actually been planned even before we had met. But I had invited her to join me and my son. At the time we liked the idea, but before our departure we regretted that we didn't have a regular honeymoon.

Our holidays Early in the morning, we went to the airport, the three of us. I was not happy with the way we were packed. It was too heavy and too bulky. Since we had plenty of time, we had a look in the bookstore. I couldn't find a book that pleased me. She accused me later of not permitting her to buy a magazine. In the airplane, she felt sick. I was worried and read some book on the philosophy of mathematics. Occasionally I glanced at the guide, but since our hotel was already booked, I left the guide for what it was. Later we would see what we would do. In the airplane, when she came from the toilet, she snapped: "Stop that worried look on your face". I was a bit anxious, indeed. Would she be sick? Would she be flirting around? We were just married. I felt the ring on my finger. I was worried. At the airport, we took a taxi to our hotel. The weather was hot and damp. It was around noon. We decided to have a look at the sea and ended up on a small beach, where a taxi took us. Not exactly what we expected. We went back to the hotel, by bus and taxi. I felt clumsy with the language. Nobody seemed to speak English. In front of the hotel, she felt sick and fainted. I was just in time to prevent her falling on the street. The staff in the hotel asked whether they should call a doctor. No, I said, no problem, we are just married and my wife is pregnant. I was worried. She wanted to sleep a little and I went out with my son. I took the guide with me. We had a sandwich and I tried to figure out what to do. I decided that we should go to a little island nearby. The next day we took a boat. On the boat we quarrelled about whether the hotel should have airconditioning. I hated the noise. "We have to get used to the climate", I said. "Without airconditioning, I'll die", she said. At the island we took two rooms in a simple hotel, with airconditioning. After taking a little rest, we went to the beach. She walked around and talked with the guys renting equipment, scooters and watersport gear. She was restless. At the end of the afternoon, she decided to go waterskiing. We went in the boat and after trying a few times, she skied along the harbor. I also tried to ski. I got up alright, but could not hold for more than a hundred meters. Returning to the beach, I noticed that I had lost the sunglasses she borrowed me. I went back to look for them. She was angry,

but said: "They were very expensive, but these things can happen." She started criticizing me. "You don't give me any challenge", she said. "The challenge I'm offering you is to travel and visit the ruins with me", I answered. On our way back to the hotel, she discovered that she was losing water from between her legs. It seemed to be plain seawater, but nevertheless she was worried. I tried to calm her, but I was a little worried too. She suggested to call her gynecologist in Paris the next day. I consented, although I knew the gynecologist would just say "calm down, take it easy, give yourself a rest". Since my son was still sleeping, we went into the town. She got excited about all the shops. I dragged along. She went into a jewelry shop and bought herself a necklace, proud at making a good bargain. "Isn't it nice?", she asked me. "Yes, it is beautiful", I shrugged. "They have the most wonderful silver here, and very cheap", she said. I kept silent. I am not here for the silver, I thought. We went to eat a pizza. "You're not much fun", she said. "I hate places like this", I said. I was worried. The next day we went out for a snorkeling trip. We had to wait a long time before we finally got going. In the boat there was another couple, Spanish, just married. The attractions – tropical fish, a tame shark, a meal – were rather shallow. A complete rip-off. Nevertheless, we stayed friendly, and I gave the boatmen a tip. Coming ashore, she saw a jewelry shop she wanted to visit. "I am going to the hotel", my son said. He was tired. I went with her to the shop and we looked at diamonds and other kinds of stones. All very expensive. "Look at the bracelets", she said. "Yes, they look nice", I said. She tried a few on. I was getting bored and annoyed. Is she going to buy something again, I thought. Suddenly she said: "Why don't you wait outside, and ... eh give me my creditcard." I went out, furious, and saw my son waiting. He had not been able to find the hotel. I gave him directions and went back inside. She was still busy. "Go to the hotel", she said. I did, but went back immediately. I found her in one of the streets, heated. "I couldn't find the hotel", she said. "Where were you?" Back in the hotel, we quarrelled. I went out. But since it started raining, I went back. Then she got dressed and went out. After an hour she came back. "I have been crying in the streets", she said. "And I called a friend, we must talk." "Calm down", I said. "This is not such a big thing, we are both exhausted." "No", she said. "What is happening is a real psychodrama." Something was wrong. "I am worried about the baby, I can't stand the heat, and you don't give me any strength", she said. "I am worried for you, and worried about the trip", I said. Then she told me she had been thinking about her ex-lover these last days and felt very distant from me. Afterwards she confessed that it had been her ex-lover that she called that day. It was only our second day on vacation. I was worried. The next day, we went to see an archeological site. It was a long trip by private car. She was complaining about the heat. On the way back, she told me that this could not go on. She wanted to go back. To Paris. To her doctors, to take care of the baby, and to speak to friends. "Oh no", I said. "Don't, let's try and find a solution here." The following days, we did all the usual things. We went to the beach, ate in restaurants. We talked and talked. But nothing seemed to help. She kept on criticizing me, that I had no humor and that I was a sad person. We could only speak with each other in English. It was difficult. Finally, I decided to help with arranging a flight to

Amsterdam for her. The seventh day, I took her to the airport. On the boat to the mainland I cried in her arms and apologized for my behavior. At the airport, I was in doubt whether I shouldn't have gone with her. I probably should have done so. Before leaving, I asked her to be strong. "Don't take any premature decisions", I said her. "We will work things out, when I get back." I told her that this was a normal thing in a relation and that we must take it as an opportunity to get to know each other better. She seemed to be happy to leave. I was worried.

Telegram I continued the trip with my son. We went to all the places of interest. I was restless. At one of the places, I thought of calling her. Instead, I sent her a telegram, saying:

I LOVE YOU

Apparently, it didn't have any effect on her. She didn't even mention it when I called her. She had become resistant. Or what? Being on my own with nobody to talk to except my son, I wrote her letters, desperately.

I wrote: The plea Now when you are safely in Amsterdam, we are walking to the ruins. It is bloody hot. Yesterday, in the bus, I thought of writing you a letter. The letter must win you back. However, with regard to my own feelings, I wish to be truthful, and hence I must take the risk not only to lose you, but even to decide for myself that we cannot go on. Your behavior has hurt me. I have been suppressing my anger. You said you wanted to be a young woman, I wanted you to be my wife, as a young woman. The last week you behaved like a child. Your mind went back to an ex-lover, who has been as a father to you. I want to be the father of our child. I do not want to be your father. The choice is yours. Do you want to be a young woman? And if so, do you (still) want to be my wife? (*Say simply YES!*) We made quite some noise when getting married. It was a great event, but when our marriage fails, I cannot consider it other than as a big circus. Moreover, I would feel terribly embarrassed in front of my family and friends. If we break up, I will have to apologize with a note like:

\ \ Passionate.
 \ \ The dream has become a nightmare.
 \ \ We are divorced.
 \ \ Sorry for all the noise we made.

Speaking honestly, my worst expectation is that it can not work. You have judged me, you have terrorized me with your criticisms. You want me to comply to all your wishes and you make not a single effort to see what my needs are. Nor do you wish to accept that my moods and feelings include sadness and depression. I have seen my father die, heavily depressed. Depression, one way or another, is part of me. If you cannot accept that, if you do not love me as I am, then our marriage can not work. That is obvious. Why did I trust you, when you said that you loved me? ..., it was so good to hear you on the telephone. Your voice sounded close. I was

happy to hear you say that you would not take a decision on your own. This is as it should be. Remember the times we called, Amsterdam-Paris and cross-atlantic. I now do have the feeling that some distance will do us good. To be apart in order to be together. My worst fear that our decision to marry was based on a fantasy might not come through! Hurray!! I realized, walking through the ruins, that our (little?) psychodrama centers around words: *spoilt, sad, humor, french, budget, money, style (?), happy, worried, responsibility, strength ...* and probably some more. Each of these words has a particular meaning, a meaning which is possibly (!) different for the both of us. One single word, not in the list, but maybe even more important is *language*. (Another, by the way, is *effort*.) Is it a language problem that we have, or is it simply difficult? Another difficult word, as heavily loaded with meaning as *marriage*, is *divorce*. Is making a non-fun joke a reason for divorce? Is making a long face when your wife buys a piece of jewelry a reason for divorce? Or do these things add up to something, such as *attitude*, which is a reason for divorce? After one week in a tropical climate ... Not many would think of these as valid reasons for divorce. The only valid reason is the marriage itself. If we consider our marriage to be foolish, then we must divorce. My mind is slowly calming down. Last night I had a horrible dream. We were at a place somewhere and suddenly you screamed. Your right hand had been squashed. You pushed at the deformed flesh. I said, stop it. I am sure you would have liked it here, except for the heat. I wonder whether I should have taken the decision to go to the mountains rightaway. But no decision seemed right that first night. Do I have to blame my indecisiveness or just the heat? We do have a problem. I can blame myself for my behavior with respect to the jewelry (the silver necklace and bracelet) you bought for yourself. So I did. I have to keep up better appearances than I did. Nevertheless, the incidents represent our difference in view with regard to our holidays. Buying things would be natural once we would be in the right spirit of being there ... Am I right, or am I simply defending myself? Anyway, I can see that such a small sum of money is not worth the problems we had. But, again, I think we have to find a way to organize our life money-wise. A way that suits us both! It is urgent! The jewelry looked lovely on you. Let me not forget to say that. I am glad that you had the courage, or insight, to wear them before you left. It gave me a chance to appreciate them in context. Why do you doubt that I find you beautiful? I do, and I did tell you. Actually, in our mind-game last week, you made me feel terrible. Don't live with me if you find me really disgusting. I was terrified, but I don't think I deserve that. (Putting it mildly!) But naturally, I want your love. I did not say *welcome in my life* to you to let you go so soon. I feel a bit out of place here. My (favorite) place is with you. I was angry before writing this. I thought about your father saying: *She is an expensive girl*. My reaction was one of distance. I can offer you what I have to give, no more and no less. I can swallow my pride. But not indefinitely. I want a relation based on mutuality and equality. Freedom is a doubly-edged (s)word. If you want more freedom, eventually I will want more. If one of us starts fucking around, the other will inevitably follow. If we have too much freedom, we will break up. If we have too little, we will be suffocated. We will have to find the right way to deal with our individual freedom. Within a couple, freedom works if it is based on

trust. But trust requires effort. Without trust, we will become solitary. We know that style. What does our marriage mean to me? It means, before anything else, commitment. Commitment based on love, naturally. I felt, this morning, that you should have been here with me. But I know, being here with my son would be impossible as well. Nevertheless, you should not have left me. I hope things will turn out right, so that I will be able to let this feeling of disappointment go. Our whole trip seemed wrong from the start. Is it the *mechanics* of a post-marital depression? If so, we should be able to repair everything. We are in the right to define our life together as we wish. Let's do it together and be open to the possible directions it may take. You have enriched my life. I want to enrich yours. What do I see as a solution to our problem? The marriage, all the excitement before, and finding that you were pregnant, has obviously meant a shock to the both of us. I do not think we dealt very well with that. But let's not overdramatize it. We must simply try. That means for the coming year, you must go to school and learn Dutch. I want us to be together during the pregnancy, and after that to raise our child. The budget problem can be solved. The *culture* problem, I am not so sure. But we should be able to find a solution for that. In due time, a Paris-Amsterdam solution may be the only option. But not before we have tried, for at least a year.

I wrote: Some background ..., the first letter can be read as a plea. I desperately want you to stay with me, in Amsterdam, to make our marriage and our life work, to grow old and mature together. If we decide that we must try, these bits and pieces might give you some background so that you will understand me better. Nevertheless, I think you should ask me more. In general, I tend to listen when anyone speaks, and I speak when the other one indicates that s/he wants to listen to what I have to say. Strangely enough, the things that happened between us remind me of my two-month affair with #4, the girl with the big car and the big tits. She had this ongoing thing with her ex-lover, and I could not trust her on her word. Words, as you know, are very important to me. The reason I promise little is that I find the words spoken often inappropriate, or even untruthful. Last night, I dreamt that two black guys came to pick you up to visit some fighting match. But before that they were going to beat me up. In the bus, I felt very unhappy, sad that you were not there with me. I was wondering what you were up to at that moment. I think you have treated me badly. I know, however, that I was not nice as well. I guess I was a bit at a loss, not knowing how to deal with the situation. These days, I keep wondering how I could have organized our trip in a way that you would have enjoyed it. But I guess that with the pregnancy and the nausea that comes with it, this would have been an almost impossible job. The indefiniteness of our situation worries me. The words *we will see* are familiar to me and evoke painful memories. In the end, if there is no decision, there will be nothing to be seen left. The two *we will see*'s I experienced before both involved the presence of another lover. With #1 it was her wish to have something with #2. Well, you know how that turned out. With #4 it had to do with her ex-lover. Knowing your story, I am not sure whether I can trust you, when you say that all is finished. But maybe I am paranoid, we will see. Money

has always been a problem, one way or another. The least so with #1. Although we had little money, we almost never quarrelled about it. Only sometimes we had a difference of opinion on how to spend it. Anyhow, most of the time we lived apart, with separate accounts. With #6, money was a problem. She complained a lot. She had only a small income, so usually I had to pay for her, which meant we could not do things as easily as with a double income. In the five years we were together, I gave #6 a lot of money. We could never come to some kind of agreement, though. The result was simply distance ... You are the first I share my money with. No small thing, indeed. Yet, again there are problems. I figured that we should be able to living together with my income. Practically, I think a budget of ... and ... for each of us might be feasible. There is not much room left then, however. Money has always meant *security* for me, and independence. Without money, I feel in some sense weak, without power, without *control*. I feel best when there is a little reserve. The last four months with you, I spent all my reserves. This was necessary, but I can't say I feel comfortable with it. Maybe you expected more money with me, seeing how I spent money the first months. Now there is simply less. I feel that the only solution is to share responsibility and discuss budgets. In september, we must be able to make a clean start after all the bills are paid. You may find my *attitude* towards money narrow-minded or even boring, but with my *profession* there is not much room for an *adventurous style*, which I detest anyway. But let's be clear about one thing, I have never been judgemental about how people spent their own money! Or have I? Marriage has never been on my list before I met you. Yet, living together with a woman has been a long standing desire. So, in a way, it was natural to ask you to marry me and live with me. If it doesn't work, we can consider our marriage as a *joke*, and probably laugh at it, sometimes. However, it would also be tragic, since with you I can realize my dream to live with a woman, to share emotions, feelings, and to be daily in eachother's bodily presence. I miss you, and I hope this is only a brief intermission in a long standing relation. Bodily and mentally we are *close*. I guess we have to learn to adapt to eachothers *style*. I keep wondering why we had such a clash of style, and what to do about it. Now and in the future. Both #1 and #6 have complained about me having no eye for the *small things of life*, the things that seem to make life worth living. Our clash seems, however, of a somewhat different nature. It may be better characterized as the difference between a *poor man's travelling* style and the expectations of one who is used to luxury, or at least that everything is organized. I keep wondering whether you would have liked the *trip* we are now having, sitting at the plaza, walking over the market, admiring the products of craft ... However, there are also long bus rides, and consequently, waiting at the busstation, sleeping in the bus. Is this something my precious wife would be willing to do? I keep looking at my *ring* and wonder whether it is still valid. It is hard to imagine, we have been just married for two weeks!! Occassionally I glance at a girl, but I just want you! Anyway, my son likes the trip very much, it has been planned for him. I was stupid to drag you along. Is is, after all, a *dilemma* between the interest of my son and the interests of the one I love? The dilemma of split attention. The afternoon you bought the bracelet, my son went to the hotel on his own, complaining. Will you excuse me

for my face? I just was not in the mood for buying jewelry! When we get over this (our psychodrama and the fact you left) we still need to think how to deal with such situations in the future. That is, quarrels and holidays. However, if it is all due to our fear and anxiety of being married, then there may be nothing to solve at all. Then we first need to rescue our marriage ... You accused me of lacking *strength*, of being a *sad* person. What can I say? Did I lose my 'cool' or was it just an impossible situation? I am only human. For this I need not defend myself. Tell me, how can I have fun in an impossible situation? It seems the trip was not going to work. Let's resume life! How can I laugh when our marriage is suddenly in a crisis. I'll probably not laugh for years when all this goes wrong. Feeling lonely is no fun. My god, this is a test! How can I make you stay with me, for the rest of our life. How I miss you! Looking at the couples around me, I feel the pain of not being with you, the solitude. My seriousness. My seriousness that you loved. What happened? Why did you suddenly detest it? How stressed we were, in the heat, the noise, the ugliness of the place, the commercial aggression. I felt you regressed. I know I did. What am I doing here, without you? There are about ten more days to go. No girl is as beautiful as you. I asked you to marry me because I wanted you to be my wife. Now that you've married me, I simply ask you to be my wife, and live with me!

I wrote: Despair I just had you on the *telephone*. I know there is only a small chance that we get our marriage back together. You sounded very distant. You speak about everything going fast, of being in the hands of doctors again. It is ironic, I haven't even seen the pictures of our marriage. In a way I knew what I was up to. I know that you have a very fragile constitution. I knew it could one day turn against me. But I didn't know it would happen so fast. I still find it impossible, unfair. Just think, it all happened in the first two or three days. An ordinary quarrel ... But no, a big drama. You were nauseated because of the pregnancy, nauseated with everything, ..., including me. Or you were just stupid, foolish enough to marry me! And the same for me! Actually, these days I wasn't even worried about my money, I was worried about our money. Why didn't you hug me when I was sad? Why were you so bloody self-centered? Why did you provoke this drama? Do you want to punish me because I love you? We have fallen in love. You moved in with me. We got your things. We started improving the house. We got married. The marriage was a lovely day. I said yes, you said yes. Everybody seemed happy. At the end of the day you fainted. The next day we discovered you were pregnant. We were married, but also tired, irritated, worried and anxious. After what should have been our wedding-night we did not wake up in paradise, but with a hangover instead. Mentally and physically. Everything that happened afterwards made it worse, for the both of us. Your self-centered behavior and my narrow-minded money worries. It made you angry when I said it, but you behaved like a spoilt, demanding child. Why do you think you are always in the right? Who do you think you are? Why do you think, anyway, that you can have it your way? Maybe, this is precisely what you mean by strength. The one that is best at taking *distance* wins. My sister played that game with me, when I was a kid. I was scared to death of being left alone. This

is still a weak spot. Don't touch it too often! It is sad, the only thing I can do is write you *letters*. I am sorry I can not be there with you, but I have my *responsabilities* towards my son. I thought you knew what you were doing when you married me. It is difficult to discover that you, apparently, did not. Anyway, we have to deal with the situation as it is. I still have to get used to the idea that you carry our *child*. I still have to get used to that ... The ultimate question is, do you want to do it together with me, in one way or another, or do you want to do it on your own. If you want to have the child with me and be my wife, we will find some solution.

Crossed out The following was crossed out:

If you don't want that
let's separate elegantly
and divorce.

This evoked a reaction, her only reaction to my letter: "Yes, let's do it elegantly." Well, I did. Didn't I? But I also wrote:

Actually, I don't want to speak of divorce.
Not after one week of marriage.

Please, let us try to live our dream!

Postscript: Fuck, fuck, fuck, what went wrong? Why did neither of us have the strength to stop the destruction of our relation? Is it too late? Fuck. Don't act like a child. Grow up. In retrospect, we cannot say we have not been warned. Check it out, they said. No need, you said. Aren't you going fast? Yes, I said, but we seem to be certain. Obviously, we were not. You were not. Were we totally naive to get married? I don't think I was, I wanted you to be part of my life. I thought marriage was a way to secure that. Looking back, the marriage seems to have done the opposite. It seems to have initiated the end of our relation. I just can not stop thinking of you. Optimistic one time, and then pessimistic again. I just hope your decision is not, without you admitting it, no. I think you are taking a great risk by reconsidering your love for your ex-lover. I cannot stand living in the fear of losing you. I closed my history, with no escape. You suddenly seem not to have done so. Our psychodrama seemed unavoidable. I felt your projections and could not move. It killed the light in my eyes. It is you who has to make the effort to regain my confidence. I miss you terribly, and my heart cramps when I think of the future, and the idea that the decision is yours. Marriage has never been a thing I wanted on my C.V. Your destructiveness has taken me by surprise. Am I struggling for a lost battle? Look into yourself and answer me!

I wrote: And more I have almost seen what I wanted to see. The stones, the piles, the shapes. But not in the way I wanted. Having seen them, I wanted to see them with you. Now you were only present in my mind, aching my heart. I

am clamping to a single straw, that you do actually love me. Yes, I cracked. I panicked. So what? If you are not able to live with that, fuck you! You crack all the time. I was sad. Yes, very sad. Don't tell me you're so happy, so full of life. Tell me, what did you see that scared you so? What is it that you feared, that made you humiliate me? If you feel disgust, fuck you! What do you think I feel?

- Why do I not trust you when you say that we must first speak, that you do not want to make a decision on your own?
- Why do I suspect you from fooling around with your ex-lover?
- Am I paranoid or just right? Are you playing a crazy game or am I having delusions?
- Either way, do you still love me?

Listen, you have played with my emotions, you have given me your word and broke it, you have projected your sadness on me and insulted me, you fool around with feelings for ex-lovers and betray me, you married me and now it all seems to become a cruel joke ... And yet, do I still love you? If you want to know the truth, I was quite disappointed with the way you were. Avoiding all responsibilities, flirting with the beachboys. You were friendly to everyone but me. And then, the buying of the necklace and the bracelet. Do you realize you turned your back on me? Is this all because of my long face? But I know my long face, and I know what it expressed. I was not in the mood. Maybe it is better that we finish the whole thing. Don't make me suffer too much. Maybe you are too difficult for me, too irrational. I will probably be very unhappy if I have to live up to an image that is not me. I must stop writing, this leads to nowhere. Perhaps, I must stop living, since that also seem to lead to nowhere. You even told my mother that you loved me. She indicated *don't tell me*, that she knew. Why did you use words without understanding them? Why did you have the need to play *young woman* with me? And why do you act again as a child? Do you still expect to be loved as before? It started in the plane. You told me not to look at you in that worried way. From then on you kept on killing the light in my eyes. Everything I did or said was wrong. Even the things I did not say or do. That was a very cruel game. I have not been happy since, and I dread the moment I will see you again, afraid that our love is dead and the game continues. I'd rather die. Sitting at the airport, a few more hours to go. Remembering how you left, only two weeks ago. Wondering, are we still in a state of marriage? What will become of us? Longing to be with you. Yet afraid. I am feeling very lonely. Excited, but also somewhat in despair. Hopeful, but in a tempered way. With no one, time has been such a torture as with you. It will be difficult, but we must forget this episode and continue with our lives. Together? Together!!

Flying back Finally my trip was over. What would be left of my life? It was inconceivable that in one week our marriage would be ended. Yet, I was afraid. I had lived all possible scenarios in my head. I was restless, prepared to fight, not

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willing to let go of my new life. But I was tired, tired of the heat and tired of living in uncertainty.

Five – Life?

When I arrived at the airport, #1 and her *partner* were waiting. "You will have to go to Paris", #1 said to me. So, after coffee, I went home as quickly as possible. It was hot. Summer in the city.

Envelope I opened my door. On the stairs, an envelope was waiting for me, with a note saying:

YES, I AM HERE

Please, can you read
this mail before
"any comment" –
Let's say "hello" anyhow

Thank you

The letter announced that our drama was final. Afterwards, I learned that #1 knew that #7 was waiting for me in the house.

She wrote: Drama I had to write to you before we speak with each other. I am profoundly affected, deeply sad and turned over because I see with a lot of sadness and sorrow that we are living a real drama: the drama of our failure. I have been thinking non-stop since I left you at the airport. I must be true, loyal, honest at last, by saying to you in a very blunt way, that I desire no longer to be your wife. I can not live with you. Something has broken for good in my heart. I am not in love with you anymore. I don't love you anymore – I know it hurts. You have an immense pain, me too. We fucked up! We were too much in a hurry. We were naive to believe in this fairytale that we had made up together. Let's be honest with ourselves, this wedding has been an enormous mistake. I have the feeling that I have lied to myself, to the ones that are close to me, and to you! We have been too foolish, too "con", too fucking immature! We put ourselves under the spell of an illusion, like young kids – not like adults. You and I lacked maturity. We thought we could get through, but the result is obvious, it is NO! Therefore, I can only see ONE solution to this terrible failure, the most intelligent solution (let's be intelligent – at least now): the *divorce*. Yes, a quick divorce,