

THE END OF A RELATIONSHIP

A Performance by
Andreas Sell

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I. Setup for the performance

Inspiration

A friend of mine was unexpectedly left by her boyfriend ending the relationship, shortly afterwards I met her and she told me the story. Immediately after we met I wrote a summary of what she had told me.

I met Arnold for the first time in May. He is a friend of Matthias. Also a lawyer. At first he did not really interest me, besides, he already had a girlfriend. I was doing well at that time. I was happy being single. In summer I met Arnold now and again at parties. His relationship with his girlfriend ended around this time and we started meeting on and off. In November things began getting more serious between us. We talked about it. I said I didn't want a steady relationship, I wasn't in love with him. He answered saying we didn't have to be lonely singles, why not have a good time together without committing ourselves to a relationship. We began to meet regularly, and as things turned out I slowly fell in love with him. It was clear to me that we were a couple. We went out a lot and I got to know many of his friends. There was often champagne, in fact so much that I soon didn't like the taste of it anymore. I had a lot of problems at work, especially with my new supervisor, he was an idiot. We argued often, and it cost me a lot of my energy. He had no idea how our business worked, I had to explain everything to him, he hated me for that. He seemed like he had never met women before who knew what they wanted. Our boss once admonished him in front of me. That hurt his pride. She should have fired him two weeks after he had started. He had made a good impression at the interview. She was taken in by his good looks and dedicated nature. I didn't like him from the start. In April she (the boss) asked me to come to her office, where he was already sitting. She said: "Mr. Lemke will be leaving us". I was so happy when I heard this I could hardly control my facial expression. However things did not improve in our business. But in my private life things were going well with Arnold. Although I then had a better position and more responsibility, still I didn't feel comfortable in our department. Despite the fact that it really is the job for me. It is meaningful and has standards. My boss is a very strong woman and always on the go. But sometimes you notice she is also just human. Sandra, with whom I work is leaving us in one week. She applied for work with other firms because she wasn't happy with the climate

at our work. I should have done the same, although I would not have the strength to write applications. Last week-end I slept at Arnolds from Friday to Saturday, we had been out to dinner and I already noticed that Arnold was behaving unusually. When I asked him if something was worrying him he said no. There were so many signals that evening. He was very absent, and didn't really want to kiss or hug me, I thought "don't worry, he just had a hard day". Everything is fine between us. I stayed over night with him and we had breakfast the next day. As I wanted to leave he said: "There is something, I don't love you anymore and I can't imagine growing old with you". In addition he told me he was still in love with his previous girlfriend who had left him. I was speechless. I was so surprised. He then cried and I went home. I feel terrible. I feel like I'm in another world. The week after I felt I had to do something. I bought a ticket to Vienna. I'm going to meet an old love affair. In concern of my job, I talked to the boss of our Swiss branch, a few weeks ago. They haven't found anybody yet to cover my area of work there. I explained to the boss various ways in which it would be possible to shape this area of work in our Swiss branch. In the end he suggested I send him my curriculum vitae. He asked me if I would be interested in taking the position as leader of the department in his company. I said yes and he said he knew it. I feel motivated again at work. I'll show them what I'm made of next week when I'm at work. Good ideas and the ability to realize them.

Andreas Sell
12.11.2007

The end of a relationship

For an exhibition at the end of January 2008 I wrote brief stage directions for 2 actors to act out an argument during the exhibition.

Stage directions

A couple argue while viewing an exhibition together.

The whole scene lasts 5 to 10 minutes and will be improvised by the actors. The improvised scene is repeated for the whole duration of the exhibition.

Course of the scenery:

- A couple view an exhibition together, whereby, they go the same way through the exhibition every time the scene is repeated.
- The way is directed by the curator of the show.
- After about 5 minutes the argument begins. It should be short and very emotional.
- Me, the artist gives the signal to start the argument.
- At the end one of the actors leaves the room, the other follows and shortly afterwards the scene begins anew.

Re-enactment of the key moment which is to mark the end of the relationship

As follows, I asked Claudia to describe the situation, when Arnold ended the relationship, as precisely as she could. After that, I engaged two actors to re-enact the scene. The scene was recorded in audio.

II. Notes

Comparison of Claudia and Arnold's accounts of their relationship

I asked them both to describe their relationship in retrospect.

I met Claudia at a party. She is the friend of my friend Matthias' partner. The minute I saw her I wanted to have her. I found out her address and then began working on how we could meet. I was always the one who made contact between us. She was unsure of wanting to be with me and was passive. This went on for two months. I had to put quite some effort into this. But it was clear she did feel some attraction to me. I was in love with her, at least I thought I was. I wanted a more long term relationship with a woman. Things got quite intimate with Claudia. Soon, too intimate, as I do a lot alone. It is difficult to maintain a relationship, one's own interests and work all at the same time. I became doubtful of my work. She was having a bad time too in her work. We both took motivation away from each other. Sexually it wasn't working either. I made it clear to her that I needed more time for myself. She reacted angrily. We didn't meet for quite some time. After a few weeks I contacted her and we began to spend more time with each other again. However I realized that I couldn't change her and neither could she change me. You are what you are. Claudia was always there when I needed her. She never rejected me. I have a lot of respect for her. Despite this, I was always looking round for other women. No one was as good as she was. I thought, if I don't find a better woman I could imagine staying with her forever. I got to know Steffi while I was still together with Claudia. From the start she told me what she expected from a relationship. I tried to conform to this, but she soon realized that I am who I am. She is now wondering whether she wants to put any more energy into our relationship.

Arnold Steiger
Berlin, 03.01.2008

I got to know Arnold a year and a half ago at a party hosted by a former work colleague. I was already there when he came onto the terrace where we were all sitting. Immediately I found him far too arrogant and over the top and therefore not attractive. He was far too thin and had short hair which

made him look too tough. We all had a lot to drink and at some point Arnold was sat next to me and was very entertaining. I went home with him, we carried on drinking and then slept with each other. During the next four to five months we often spent our midday break together, we worked in the same area. I found him superficial and very middle class. Besides he had a girlfriend. But I was interested in him. We never talked about our one night together in that time, and had a friendly relationship without commitment. There was however, sometimes some tension between us. At some point he separated from his girlfriend, we then started to meet in the evenings, but my impression of him stayed the same. On one evening I went back to his place. Since then we have often slept together and been out together in the evening. After three months I wanted to end the relationship, he got on my nerves. I told him this and I was surprised that he seemed also to have put some thought into this subject. He said that he enjoyed the time he spent with me, he didn't know where our relationship was going but we didn't have to spoil things just because we hadn't found the love of our lives in each other. In the following weeks I fell in love with him and I felt that he also had similar feelings for me. The next half year was actually really nice, we saw a lot of each other. I really enjoyed the fact that Arnold was so uncomplicated and funny. I was attracted to him because he was on the one hand conservative in his life and thoughts and yet on the other excessive and easy going. We met frequently with his circle of friends, I was often also with him. The friends were often funny and interesting people, although without commitment and the conversations were often trivial. We went out a lot and drank a lot. Arnold and I never talked about our relationship and we never argued. We met one evening, it was strange, I asked him what was going on. He said it was nothing. I slept at his place and dreamt that he would leave me. In the morning we had breakfast as usual. As I was leaving it came out: he didn't really love me, couldn't be together with me any more. I couldn't believe it. He cried a lot, I already felt in that moment that he was crying for himself and not for me. A week later I found out from a friend that he had met another woman. That's over two months ago now, Arnold hasn't been in contact with me since then, the time we spent together now feels unreal.

Claudia Busse
Berlin, 28.12.2007

Interpretations of the accounts

I gave these texts to different people and asked them why they think the relationship did not work.

I think the relationship ended because Arnold didn't really love Claudia. Probably never did. At first he wanted "to have her" which sounded very much like a physical attraction. Furthermore he wanted to "have a more long term relationship with a woman", i.e. he didn't want to be single. And because Claudia didn't want this, he was left with his first desire, so to begin with he could fulfill this wish with Claudia, then when Claudia began to fall in love with him, his desire for a "more long term relationship" was also fulfilled. At least that's the way it seemed: they talked about their relationship, got to know (his) friends, and so on ...

So Arnold sees a woman he is attracted to. In addition to this, he doesn't want to be single. Through "quite some effort" he finally gets what he wants. She fulfills only half of what he wants. He gets used to this but over time it becomes uninteresting and is not enough. Sex gets worse and he needs more time for himself, separation over time. Arnold is caught between his wish for a stable relationship and constancy in his life on the one hand and his desire for other women and new excitement on the other. "If he doesn't find a better woman" he would stay with her forever, if he does then things can only get better.

Bruno Basili

Barcelona, 16.01.2008

I would say the relationship failed because:

1. The man doesn't know what he wants. On the one hand he says he wants a relationship and on the other that he wants to do everything alone. He also seems to see women as objects: "The minute I saw her and wanted to have her" or "despite this, I was always looking round for other women". He didn't fall in love with her, rather he fell in love with what he imagined her to be, which she was not.
2. She didn't describe how she really felt about him therefore it is hard to say why the relationship failed with regard to their feelings, e.g. she said nothing about how she felt after he said he wanted more time for himself

and that it had hurt her.

3. When one compares the texts, one sees that he over analyses everything and speaks quite openly while she does not talk about herself very much. Therefore it failed because they didn't communicate and didn't really want to communicate or couldn't.

Kathrin Scherer
Düsseldorf, 14.01.2008

Right from the beginning, there really wasn't any love there. Falling "in-love" is only desire and not real love. This relationship had a bad beginning because neither one of them had their hearts open enough from the start. The man was too much in a rush and she was too insecure. With that kind of a beginning it is easy to foresee an early end. She doesn't have a peaceful heart; not a "white" heart, which one needs for the long run. The heart is the most important. One must always be still enough and take the time to listen to one's heart. invisible

Zhenfang Cheung
Berlin, 17.01.2008

The relationship never had a chance.

Concerning Arnold:

He wanted to "have" Claudia. She was simply one more thing that he could possess. He wasn't really in love; as he even said himself that he had only talked himself into it. Relationships require time and attention, and couples need to be considerate with one another, etc. For Arnold, however, that meant that the relationship would have been too cramped for him. It was also strange that he didn't mention the fact that he already had a girlfriend at the time when he met Steffi. He was probably lonesome and just wanted to numb his loneliness with a new woman. That is a rather typical phenomenon. Claudia was his consolation and she stroked his broken-down male ego. But he was always looking around for something better; hunting instinct. When you have a toy to play with, it can get boring. So, there wasn't even any love involved and things didn't even really work in bed either.

Concerning Claudia:

In end effect, she didn't fall in love with him, but rather in love with his desiring her. Maybe she even just got "used to" him. She couldn't and

wouldn't function the way Arnold wanted her to function. In my opinion, it's also not a good sign if, at the beginning, one doesn't even feel attracted to the other person. The Female instinctively clicked quickly into the "relationship-marriage-children" program, however, and Arnold just wasn't into that one because he just wanted to play, even if he won't admit that himself. Claudia wasn't much better herself. She just wanted a caretaker for her offspring.

So, neither one of them was crazy with love; not even crazy with infatuation. This whole relationship is so superficial.

The whole thing is built upon them just wanting to have some fun; nothing deep. They didn't even really get to know each other very well. And then they didn't even really have very good sex either. My god, what should I say about two such emotionally poor and obviously lonely people. I feel sorry for them. I am thinking that people don't even know what it means to love and fall in love anymore.

Nadine Rempert
Hamburg, 16.01.2008

As far as I can tell, the reasons that the relationship failed can be attributed more to Arnold than to Claudia. What I take from what he has said is that he is more or less on a search and therefore is busy comparing and judging between different women. Claudia then turned out not to be the one that he was looking for; the one with which he could be close and grow old with. Sentences like, "Every person is just the way they are," or "...I am who I am," insinuate that Arnold's willingness to alter his behavior or change in any way for the sake of a relationship was quite low. To me, that doesn't seem like a very good basis for a relationship.

Peter Brücker
Berlin, 14.01. 2008

As I see it, there are two reasons why the relationship fell apart:

1. Insufficient communication between both of them – as far as the emotional life of the relationship is concerned or concerning agreements they may have made.

The results being: Lack of clarity and transparency, as well as loss of trust.

2. Instability in their personalities: Each one is simply too occupied with

themselves. Neither one of them are clear about what they want. Neither one of them has the stamina nor the spirit to fight for the survival of the relationship.

Anke Grüner

Munich, 18.01.2008

This relationship fell apart because both were too overambitious and neither one of them had enough time for each other. He was extremely focused on his career and was rather egoistic. She was very passive and probably never really voiced her needs. This description sound to me like an average everyday Berliner couple in their mid-thirties. Work is the central factor of their lives and they try to plan their leisure time collectively. They need each other once in a while, but could just as well do without.

Olaf Hofer

Berlin, 12.01.2008

I don't think that it was love. I would guess that at some point there was an approximation of love there, but I believe that the whole thing ended up failing because of the sad classic situation; the concept of THE relationship. Although, I must add that I find it to be much too inexact to write that the source of trouble lies solely on disappointed expectations. I want to try to explain. I think that he fell in love with her, invested his energy in her, and then, as he got to know her better, he discovers that she met the ideal that he had fallen in love with less and less. And that was disappointing and boring for him, which seems to have occurred increasingly. She enjoyed his attention and got accustomed to him. She also had this posture of expectation, the kind of expectation that is celebrated and peddled by our surroundings – when you are like this and this with someone for X amount of time, then you are a couple – bullshit. She let herself get carried away while leaning back on her haunches, which is just fine sometimes, isn't it. Well, as it turns out, I don't believe that there was any love between the two after all. Hope, idealizing, and then the horrible reality of disappointment.

Larissa Gradzik

Berlin, 15.01. 2008

The communication problems and the expectations were the reasons for Arnold and Claudia's splitting up.

Examples:

At the beginning-

Arnold: "I wanted a more long term relationship with a woman."

Claudia: "... I wanted to end the relationship, he got on my nerves."

Arnold: "I was in love with her, ... "

Claudia: "... the following weeks I fell in love with him."

Arnold wanted a relationship with a woman (expectation), whether it was with Claudia or another woman.

Claudia was doing well when she was single, but then she slowly fell in love with him.

In the middle-

Arnold: "Things got quite intimate with Claudia. Soon, too intimate, ... "

Claudia: "We met one evening, it was strange, I asked him what was going on. He said it was nothing."

Arnold: "Sexually it wasn't working either."

Very obvious communication problems. They didn't talk to each other about the problems, feelings, thoughts. To the contrary, in fact, as there were major contradictions between what they thought and what they did.

Towards the end-

Arnold: "She reacted angrily."

Claudia: "He cried a lot."

Arnold: "I am how I am."

Arnold: "I met Steffi ..."

Both of them sung songs about the weaknesses of the other one, rather than talk about their own. This is especially true of Arnold. Arnold, go to a therapist to work on your insecurities!!!

Maria Rodrigues

Mexico City, 17.01. 2008

I must follow my first impulse and say that: Men and women just don't fit together. I'll begin with the man, because his text comes first.

He wanted her! That's all. He invested a little bit; he courted her. He was motivated because he had a crush on her. He found her to be charming and desirable. He manages to win her affections and get her in bed, but he then neglects to honestly reflect his intentions. He talks himself into believing

that it would be a good thing to be involved in a long-term relationship, without really knowing what that means (presumably, he had never had a long-term relationship, which, according to me, means 2 years or more). He neglects to formulate his needs - to be by himself every now and then. Frustration begins to build up. The more she cares for him, and the more he is secure in this position, the more his feelings for her begin to ebb. Was it the thrill of the conquest, the acquisition of something that one cannot have? He cried because he was sorry for having communicated that in the way he did (I do think him capable of a bit of empathy), but also because he doesn't quite understand his own feelings and doesn't know how it came to what it did. In the beginning, the girl didn't seem that interested in him, but it is clear that his efforts were successful. His courting flattered her and made him more appealing to her. Time and sex together creates intimacy and trust and spawns intense feelings. She eventually did fall in love with him. And then when he suddenly needs some distance from her, she doesn't understand his change of heart. She neglects to tell him that her feelings had changed and in her eyes, what was once simply an affair had turned into a real relationship. There was not enough communication about the relationship (bad feelings begin to get backed up within him). On the last evening, she notices his dissatisfaction, but he doesn't manage to tell her what is bothering him and what he is feeling, or rather what he was not feeling. He becomes sullen and it increases immensely over the course of the night because he just isn't able to communicate about the problems in the relationship. In the morning, he just can't hold back any longer. He ends the relationship. Since they stopped talking about their feelings, they have grown apart.

Heike Just
Berlin, 17.01.2008

It seems to me that there was a communication problem in this relationship. It appears that neither one of them truly talked about themselves and their relationship. They remember the same events differently. Although, I do believe that they both wanted the same thing, freedom. But they just couldn't live it in their relationship. They were mostly busy with themselves, especially him, and didn't really get what was going on with each other. On the other hand, they were nonetheless together for a surprisingly long time. Maybe it was something else. I am amazed at his thoughts about this re-

lationship, about women and himself. In concern of women he speaks of work, obtaining, wanting to have them: "... if I don't find a better woman ... " or "You are what you are.". He readily offered her to have an affair, while he was still (fancifully) in love with her, or at least wanted to have a relationship with her. And when they did get together, he started to look around for a better catch. What one notices about her is that she didn't seem to notice or want to notice. She gives the impression that she most obviously constricted herself even though she was the one who didn't want to be with him, but who was then the one to suffocate him in the relationship. The two definitely don't sound very happy; the way she talks about their time together and the way it looks like each one keeps to themselves; strangely deadlocked.

Daniela Neuhöfer
Berlin, 14.01.2008

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