

## Facts of Love



By Anna Von Reitz

A few months ago a friend announced he was engaged. He was so happy! He smiled with every cell. I was happy for him.

Yesterday, I had cause to talk to him again and found him in despair.

He had had some fairly serious (but far from "despair" meriting) financial set-backs and vexations related to housing issues for himself and his fiancée. As a result, she decided that he wasn't a good enough provider for her and she went looking for another mate, all without telling him.

She was, apparently, keeping him on a string in case her new business deal fell through. And in the meantime she gave him Hell for not being rich enough, young enough, strong enough, blah, blah, blah.

I just shook my head.

Most of what passes for "love" in this world is merely a commercial deal, a quid pro quo of you do this for me, and I do that for you.

No wonder so many people are hurt and confused, and why families are in tatters, and the divorce courts are filled.

We've mistaken service contracts for love.

You wash my socks and clean my toilet bowl, and I'll mow your grass and haul out the garbage.

In such a relationship if something a little bit stressful or difficult comes up and you are not able to perform up to expectation, you get booted. If you are an honest and feeling man or woman, you are naturally confused when you get sued, hounded, accused, betrayed, and left as roadkill in the middle of life's highway by the woman (or man) who said they "loved" you.

Instead of helping and supporting you through the hard places of life, their only thought is their own disappointment and how best to profit and cover their own losses. They think of you as a bad investment, because to them, that's all you ever were.

Maybe you should read the fine print and ask what prospective mates mean by that word --- "love" ----?

If it's going to be a contract you might as well be practical about it and nail down the terms and know exactly what is expected and what you have to be or do to hold up your end. Also spend some time on the "escape clause" with a pre-nuptial agreement signed, sealed, and delivered.

If you are going to sell yourself this way, you might as well be clear-headed.

Ideally, everyone should know better than to treat love and its commitments as a business deal, but a majority of people in the modern world think of it as such, and if this is the way you are content to live your life, then go all the way and admit that its just a business deal--- a single party contract for sex and other services.

People shudder and look at you with incredulity and pity when you insist on this kind of put-it-in-writing mentality and well they should. It is horrifying to contemplate whole lifetimes spent alone and supposedly "married" at the same time. It is sad to know that people are slogging along in business partnerships and calling them love relationships. Sometimes they even convince themselves that what they have is "love".

Yet, the truth is.... I know literally hundreds, if not thousands, of good men and women who have been snookered into "business deal marriages" without admitting or knowing what they were getting into, and they have all suffered the results: nasty, vindictive divorces, huge losses of income and property, broken families, chaos, messed up careers, and often deeply scarring emotional wounds for them and their children.

It's a blessing in disguise that my friend escaped before the wedding instead of after. It's a small disaster compared to what happens when one of these marriages-that-aren't-marriages fail----often with a couple little kids hurt forever.

People who operate like my friend's fiancee figure they can exit anytime they like with no big consequences. If they see a better deal on the market, they have no qualms about going after the other options. They just merge with the larger more profitable corporation with or without full disclosure to Joe Back Home.

After all, their emotions aren't involved. Sex is just business, too. Nothing personal.

These love-as-service-contract providers also figure that they are owed whatever they can get of their former partner's assets, because obviously, they didn't get whatever unspoken and usually dimly defined desires they had in mind when they signed the paperwork.

He didn't become a billionaire.

She gained fifty pounds.

They lost the house, because he lost his job.

She was lonely because he worked too many hours, and Jimmy "just happened".

99% of these marriages were never marriages and relatively few ---maybe 15%---- grow into anything like a marriage over time.

So---- if you are going into a business deal in a market where over 40% of all ventures fail and of the remaining 60% only about 15% actually succeed to a reasonable degree----- why aren't you facing the facts and the odds and signing those pre-nuptial agreements? Figure out how you are going to come out before you go in.

Actual love is a different matter entirely.

The Apostle Paul did a yeoman's job of defining actual love in I Corinthians 13. Every young adult should memorize his definition of love by heart so that they have at least some conscious idea of what love is---and, by implication, is not.

True love often requires us to suffer and always requires us to be vulnerable to suffering. Ruth following Naomi into a foreign and unknown land with no guarantees of any kind. Joseph forgiving his brothers. Jesus on His cross.

Love exposes us to the most outrageous kinds of betrayal and suffering and shame, opens the door to endless sacrifices and self-denial and losses.

Oh, and don't forget, most of us also suffer all the slings and arrows of raising a family on top of all of love's other challenges.

That's a lot to accept on an empty stomach in a society that judges success according to things you possess instead of what's in your heart.

No wonder that so many people have simply given up and settled for a services contract.

No wonder, either, that few people ever experience actual love, and when they do, it is likely to come to them in the most completely unexpected ways and places.

I've known people to find it from rescuing stray animals, or as in my own case, as the result of rescuing stray people. Quite a few soldiers experience it in combat, when their souls reach out to their suffering and dying brothers in arms. Some people experience it as the result of near-death encounters.

One moment, you are standing there, an ordinary man or woman, bound up in your own petty little thoughts and feelings, your constant wants and needs, your endless self-concern and self-critique----- and the next, you are at peace. All your needs and fears are gone. Inexplicably, you are lifted up in the image of the living God, and in that moment, you experience and know what actual love is.

You can and will bear anything, just as surely as you know that you need nothing back at all. No return necessary.

You know that it is love, and that it will be love, because of and in spite of everyone and everything else that exists. It simply is.

I remember thinking--- "So this is the way God loves us." And the waiting silence echoed, "Yes."

Of all the things that love isn't and can never be, love is not a contract for services. It is not a quid pro quo. It isn't a list of fulfilled and unfulfilled expectations. It is not a lie or a misunderstanding or something that "just happens". True love is a willful and profound decision, one that you make in your soul, and it is a decision that requires you to risk it all. Forever.

All the things that happen, all the ups and downs, the successes and failures and dramas and betrayals and miseries of life cannot change it or stop it or reduce it to down to a contract. Even death cannot and does not stop love.

So when someone gives you a flimsy excuse for why they lied to you and betrayed your trust or tells you that you aren't worthy of their love because of this or that failure, fault, or adverse circumstance, be sure that you are highly favored and protected by God, and that all things work together for good for you. He has His hand over you---- despite the pain and disappointment you may feel, your time, your life, and your love will not be wasted as a slave to a service contract.

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