



*sample* CHAPTER

The following is a sample chapter  
from the book  
'How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Lovers'  
by Jonar Nader

*If love conquers all,  
what conquers love?*

*About  
The author*

*A writer  
who can upset you  
is a writer  
who can command  
your attention*

**F**RIENDS ASK ME IF I LIKE TRAVELLING, AND I SAY, 'I LIKE BEING THERE, NOT GETTING THERE'. THE SAME IS TRUE ABOUT MY LIFE.

I like being here, not how I got here.

In hindsight, parts of my journey have been valuable, even though they were, at the time, regrettable. My claim to success has been my steep learning curve — a rickety roller-coaster ride, filled with exhausting ups and frightening downs. For my own sanity, many of my memories have been put to rest. A few still ring in my head, and some pound in my heart. The checkpoints that influenced and shaped me would be too numerous to mention. For this reason, I'll tell you about one crisp morning when I was seven years old. The air was present and sharp. My breath was a flurry of steam. I was in the mountains of Lebanon, whose ancient trees and snow-capped mountains painted a canvas of soft greens and whites. The mellow smoke from burning cedar-logs piped through distant chimneys.

Just after sunrise, my uncle and his older sons called me up to the large balcony of their country home that boasted a natural spring whose water passed through a decorative fountain wherein freshly-picked apples and pears (as well as bottles of beer) were placed to make them colder. If any of us fancied some fruit, we would have to roll-up a sleeve (and in my case, climb onto the mosaic edge of the fountain) to reach down, take a big breath, while thinking, ‘Oohhh this is freezing cold!’

‘Come up here,’ they gestured, distracting me from the fountain and guiding me onto a weather-beaten sandstone ledge overlooking a panoramic view as far as the eye could soar. ‘Rest this on your shoulder. It will kick, so stand firm,’ warned my cousin, handing me a double-barrelled rifle so large and so heavy, I needed help to hold it. I followed their calm instructions and eventually squeezed the trigger. An almighty bang vibrated through my body, and into my inner ear, via my teeth. The birds received their wake-up call.

Two rounds, and I was lifted down. ‘Let’s go,’ said another cousin. And on we walked along the cobblestoned lanes and picturesque paths. All the while, the mountains were there, appearing to pivot and shift as we turned and jumped over and under rocks and around trees, until I could see a house in the distance.

The doorway was arched, like that of a church. I did not ask where I was. I just went inside where the light struggled

to follow. Along the candle-lined wall, was a glass coffin. The dead man was someone whom the villagers worshipped — not religiously, but artistically. It was Gibran Kahlil Gibran. He grew-up around those magnificent mountains from whence he derived inspiration to paint and write rich volumes such as *The Prophet*. In the early days, Gibran infuriated the establishment.

For me, back then, it was just another pleasant outing to an interesting place. How could I have known that Gibran would so impact my life. By the time I turned thirteen, we became friends: he spoke to me through his books, and I kept imagining him, lying in state. When I turned sixteen, he became a mentor. I grew to admire the solemn author who, throughout his fascinating life, agitated the world. I walked where he played, and I devoured apples from the trees he surely climbed. His mother took him to the USA; mine took me to Australia.

I sought counsel from Gibran. His insights made sense to a depleted adolescent who earlier had tasted war and all its horrors; watching cities burn and homes bombed to rubble along streets on which stiff bodies were scattered and where murdered tortured men could be found stuffed in the boots of cars. Guns, bombs, tears, blood, and bucket-loads of spent cartridges underfoot. At the age of ten, while walking past a semi-decapitated man whose face was blue and black, I asked my father, ‘Why would they kill him? Didn’t he ask them to stop?’ I presumed that people listened to each other, or that

compassion and reason were easily exchanged. Not so. Evil is much stronger than good. That dead man was proof of it.

Gibran's guiding quill helped to soften me. I am calmer now. Quieter. Happier. Amidst turmoil and civil unrest and migration and pain and confusion, I came face-to-face with hate and death at every turn, including the death of ideas and the death of hope.

Mercifully, my yearning to understand the 'essence of love' sprouted from the 'seeds of life' that were planted in my heart while gazing at a resolute man in a coffin — wondering why everyone spoke so highly of him. As I matured, I wanted to learn about love and its mysteries, and why it eludes so many people, young and old.

I once sat next to a lady on a flight home from some exotic location where I was on business. She was returning with her girlfriends from a shopping spree. She enjoyed shopping so much that she became a part-time travel agent, merely to obtain a much-coveted membership that enabled her to receive industry privileges from airlines and hotels (just so that she could do heaps of shopping). And on she went, telling me about the bargains they had scored. A watch that normally retails at four thousand dollars was on sale for eighteen hundred, would you believe! This, and that, and three of these, and seven of those. Whatever for? How could anyone need to own so many ornaments? All that materialism screamed something at me. Just before touch-down, we had lift-off. The tears emerged. She was in

pain. Sorrowful and soulful, yet cluttered and searching — distracting herself with silverware and silk. She carried a type of pain I knew only too well. I've walked it. I've felt it. When I stopped focussing on my woes, I began to see that people around me were also hurting, including the man at the store, the lady on the bus, the student on the bike, the executive on stage, and the passenger on my flight. Thankfully, I can close my eyes and retreat to those snow-capped mountains and stroll along the narrow paths and chat with my old dead friend who continues to influence me. Gibran forces me to think hard, and harder still, about my plight and the burdens of others.

Readers like to learn more about the author. What can I tell you? I don't think my résumé matters so much. My journey thus far has shaped me. For a long time, I did not enjoy the ride, but thankfully, I now like being here, and I have no desire to go elsewhere. But it seems that I have no choice. I am always on the move. When will the world stop spinning?

# *Dedication*

We share this planet with one-way lovers who,  
in dark isolation, care deeply and intensely.  
Their struggle is fuelled by boundless affection  
that goes unrewarded.

Amidst humiliation and rejection,  
they confront the new dawn,  
yearning to hold the beautiful stranger  
whose crushing indifference threatens  
to extinguish the dimming flame of hope.

This book is dedicated to  
the lonely one-way lovers  
who cry in private.

They deserve better.

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# *Introduction*

*Relationships  
are the most distracting  
of all human endeavours*

**U**NDoubtedly, we can study love from many angles, including the psychological, theological, and philosophical. In addition, we can explore the various types of love, such as: the love that is shared between friends; the love that is freely given by parents towards their offspring; the love that is expressed by children towards one or both of their parents; the erotic love that is expressed affectionately towards random strangers with whom we crave to ignite a relationship; and the love of objects, pets, and external distractions from which some people derive solace or pleasure.

Obviously, love is broad and complex, let alone mysterious; especially when we add the self-sacrificing love that is given to fellow-humans in need of assistance.

This book will explore the core of the love that drives people in a positive, unselfish way towards engaging in life and its rewards. It will also address the hurdles and the traps.

These are inevitable when the tide washes us onto the shore of the love that elates erotically, emotionally, and romantically.

Authors are frequently questioned about their motive and inspiration. Readers would ask ‘why’ I wrote this book. They would want to know how I came to address the topics of love and relationships. How does someone like me, with a technical and management background, venture into the elusive and intangible?

After the polite questions subside, probing ones will emerge, such as, what gives me the right or the authority or the knowledge to write about such a subject. And then there are those who, disagreeing with the messages, seek to discredit me by saying that I have no formal qualifications in this subject. My response will be demure and calm. I will simply smile and say that I wrote what was in my heart, and I drew on years of experience; not all mine. When you enter the public arena, you’d be surprised by how many people will confide in you. With each year that passes, I meet more people who, uninvited, pour out their hopes, dreams, desires, and pains. I never ask. They just tell, and seek, and query, and cry. And from these, I hear the pleas. People are hurting, and they are yearning for direction. They are hungry for solutions. They are restless for solace. They are burning for love. You see, in all my corporate consulting and coaching and mentoring and advising, it seems that, after the nitty-gritty of business settles down, most of my projects have their roots in ‘human relations’. Whether it is marketing

or management or leadership or branding or terrorism or national security or sales or technology, it somehow stems from a desire to improve one’s lot. The root-cause for the agony seems to come from interpersonal relationships. At the core of all relationships is love. I did not set out to write about love. I was driven to it!

Life is indeed strange. Years ago, long before I decided to write *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate People*, conference delegates would flock to the stage to ask me for a copy of my book. Which book? ‘The one in which you cover the topics you touched on, in today’s presentation.’

I had no idea why they presumed that I had written a book. I was merely delivering a presentation. I made no reference to a publication. Truth be known, I still receive this type of enquiry. If I were to address an audience about, hypothetically speaking, the merits of eating carrots, someone is bound to ask where they can purchase the ‘carrot’ book. These days, this is especially problematic because most of my lectures are given a name within the ‘Lose Friends’ series, such as, *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Competitors*. Although this subject is not yet a book, I receive endless requests for ‘the book’ — not encouragement to write one, but requests about where a copy can be purchased. They demand it. They write to the webmaster and insist that the website has a problem because the book is not showing up as an option in the shopping list. At one time, a businessman wrote to me and he happened to mention that he recently received

a copy of *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Your Staff*. This is a title of a lecture, but not yet a book. This aspect of his e-mail disturbed me. I sent it off to my legal department, somehow presuming that some silly smart-alec was trying to muscle in on my series. When no trace of the book was found in the market, we contacted the businessman and asked him more about this publication. He grabbed the book from his shelf and had a look at it, still insisting that he had it in his hand. He later laughed and realised that his staff members had played a practical joke on him. They had purchased one of my books and cleverly replaced the cover with one that they had mocked up and laminated manually as a way to drive a message home to their boss.

It's funny what people presume. For example, it's not uncommon for an MC at a conference to introduce me as *Mister Nader*, and then conclude by thanking *Doctor Nader*. Hmm... it baffles me too!

I share this with you to give you part of the reason for this book. People have been asking for it. For example, after delivering an impassioned presentation to the directors, managers, and staff of an international bank, about brand-building and market-supremacy, a lady approached me at the end of the night and asked me if she could obtain some of my writings about love. Now I ask you: how did she get such a daft idea? The word 'love' never left my lips. I had not alluded to my interest in the subject, and I did not discuss this with the audience. You see, there is something spiritual

or even spooky about the way that the universe draws us into certain cyclones. Throughout my travels, people bestow upon me an uninvited guru-status. They want to hear my opinion about 'things' and 'stuff'. They share their stories about 'life and living' and about 'love and loving' and indeed about what torments them. Young people, especially, will ask me inscrutable questions that their parents would ask of them. They sound me out and put me under the spotlight to see how I would respond to a barrage of objections, which I know originated from their parents. The students want to see how someone should respond to their demanding or sometimes unreasonable parents. I get it all, especially via e-mail. These days, I receive mail from Azerbaijan and Zimbabwe, and from countries in between. Indeed, some of my books are now translated into Russian, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Serbian.

I am aware of many people around me who struggle with love. Their pain and mine spurs me to think about love and its challenges. For example, I know a young man who, at the age of eighteen, fell madly in love with a beautiful girl. As a friend of mine, I knew him to be level-headed and a thorough gentleman. Not many of them around at that age. He was calm, devoted, and one-hundred-percent committed to his girlfriend... until she began to date another guy during the fourth year of a relationship that hitherto was devoid of arguments or quarrels. This 'betrayal', as he would call it, affected him deeply. He went far away,

overseas, to work, to learn, to forget. We kept in touch, but I did not raise the matter until five years later. I felt that enough time had passed, and new pleasant memories would now be occupying his mind. In response, at the age of twenty-six, he wrote, *‘There is a saying that goes, “What doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger.” Physically, this might be true. Emotionally, I can’t agree with it. That experience tore me in two. It was, without question, the most difficult time in my life. I’m strong mentally. It takes a lot to sway me, but that incident sure did knock me about. Now, where has it left me? I’m more guarded, less emotionally-open, and, you could say, still very much emotionally scarred. I have met other girls, but none with whom I have shared the same type of connection as I had with [my previous girlfriend]. Nowhere close. So I keep on searching. She wasn’t right for me. That I know. And I don’t live with regrets, even though I could have won her back. It wouldn’t have been the right thing to do, and I still believe it. But certainly, when I stand in front of the mirror and shave every morning, there are few days when she doesn’t come into my head. The difference now is that years have passed and they have numbed the senses. Indeed she has tried to be a friend of mine on Facebook etc, but I have declined. I can never be her friend. To answer your question about whether or not the merry-go-round is still spinning... the answer is yes. I’ll never recover from that and be the same again, but I’m able to function, and I know that that ship has sailed. On a different note altogether...’*

And like a real trooper, he moved on and changed the subject. That’s a sign of maturity. He reminded me of a counselling session I had with a university counsellor whose approval I needed before I could be granted an extension for

an assignment. My lecturer could not allow me to submit a late paper without the permission of the college psychologist. I was going through a very rough patch, and almost everything was going wrong for me. I just did not have the time to attend to the many urgent catastrophes in my life. The counsellor said to me, ‘I see hundreds of students each year, and they all have a story, and most of them try to pull the wool over my eyes, yet I can see that your case is genuine. I’m sorry about your difficulties. By all means, take your time. How long do you need?’ On the way out, I turned to the counsellor and asked how she knew that I was not spinning a lie, and she replied, ‘Most people who come in here, try to influence me. So they tend to ham-up the sob-story. They cry, they blub, they look disheartened and despondent... yet you smiled, you quipped, you laughed, and I could tell that this was due to some embarrassment, and some protection mechanism that honest people tend to exhibit when they are in deep trouble.’

My jilted friend holds his head high. His heart is completely shattered, but he stands hopeful. He can talk about it with me, but he recently admitted that he does find it almost impossible to speak about this with most people. Now twenty-seven years of age, he says, *‘It’s interesting that other girls have asked about that relationship. As you can imagine, people tend to probe into each other’s past. But it’s something I can’t easily talk about. Ninety percent of the time, I refuse outright. On the odd occasion that I do open up, I share few details. That process of trying to protect my*

*emotions tends to make girls even more curious, and some might think I have something to hide, and so it creates more tension when girls latch on, trying to solve the mystery which is nothing more than a difficult and terrible journey. I had to ban my Mum from asking about her in any form, including mentioning bumping into [my previous girlfriend's] mother at the shopping centre, as would happen every four to five months. You see, it all hurts so much.'*

Indeed it hurts. For some of us, it hurts longer and the pain becomes stronger as we seek and search and look and delve and dream and fantasise and, with great intensity, wish for a happy ending. Love baffles. Love torments. Whether we are young or old, love takes up much of our attention. It's weird that we profit little by thinking about it so much. If we were to spend as much time thinking about our studies or our work, we would probably excel in our chosen field. Yet when it comes to love, no matter how much we think about it, there seems to be little reward. Perhaps it's due to the futility of the thinking processes. Often, our thoughts are reactive. They are not really thoughts at all. They are cerebral verbalisations of feelings. Ah, that must be it. When we think about love, we are merely reacting to the feelings about love, and in so doing, we are just responding to the pain. We do not really think. Instead, we discuss the matter in our lonely head, and we try to strategise, to plot, or to work out how we can overcome the challenges. Such discussions degrade into arguments. How can we win an argument with ourself? It's a never-ending tit-for-tat. Dare we ever

condemn ourself? Which part of my head shall have the last word? Which shall have the last laugh? Years ago I was thinking about the old adage that those who laugh last, laugh the best. It occurred to me that those who cry last, cry the most. For fear of admitting defeat, we keep the battle raging in our head, and we pretend to think about the solution. Recurring battles in our head rarely produce satisfactory results.

I know that people are hurting. Most are beautiful. Many are lost. Some have lost the plot. Others have lost something much more precious... hope. Almost all of them cry for affection and direction and acceptance and clarity and joy and simplicity and laughter. And they think that all this will come when they can snuggle in the arms of not only someone whom they love, but someone whom they love *and* who happens to love them back in equal measure, simultaneously. If only. Oh, if only those whom we loved, could love us in return. All the world's troubles would lift and drift. All of these things are compounded by the difficulties and challenges that stem from our career, our work, our finances, our fears, our pressures, our loneliness, our insecurities, our age, and the ticking clock. Worst of all, they are complicated by the loss of hope. Losing hope is the final death knell. If there's one thing that I want this book to do, it is to re-ignite hope. Without hope, nothing happens. Or should I say,

*If only those  
whom we loved,  
could love us in return.  
All the world's troubles  
would lift and drift.*

without hope, *everything* happens, but it happens without purpose, without guidance, without joy, without reward. Hope is the key. Love is the ignition.

I have been assured that love conquers all. Perhaps so. Meanwhile, I would like to know what conquers love. It is for these reasons that I felt that we needed some structure and analysis. And this is where this book comes in.

By all means, if you have had occasion to lose friends and infuriate lovers, I would welcome your e-mails to [Jonar@LoseFriends.com](mailto:Jonar@LoseFriends.com)

PS: In all my books, out of respect to readers, I avoid the use of 'he' and 'she' as descriptors, unless I am referring to a specific person. For this reason, I speak about people in neutral terms so that all readers can associate with the stories. ■

ONE

# *The Merry-go-round*

WHY IS IT SO HARD?

*The most  
beautiful thing  
is to find  
the perfect partner.  
The most  
horrid thing,  
is to actually  
need one.*

**T**HERE IS A PROBLEM IN WRITING ANY BOOK ABOUT LOVE. THE ALL-ENCOMPASSING AND ALL-CONSUMING TOPIC

is an emotive one that cannot be expressed with mere words. You see, words are serial, in that they must come one after the other. Words are slow and cumbersome. They cannot truly express thoughts, and they are poor tools for conveying feelings.

Character by character, word by word, sentence by sentence, a book is supposed to help us to learn. Alas, on the subject of love, this seems impossible, because complex heart-wrenching mind-twisting feelings come in lumps — in huge cold gooey blobs that splatter. Orderly words cannot keep up. How can you write a real-time descriptive running commentary about a three-dimensional explosion? How can you run every which way, chasing each wayward fragment?

Feelings barge through. Uninvited, they push and they shove, and they demand immediate attention. Painful or

joyous thoughts force themselves into our heart. No common courtesies. No ‘excuse-me’. No ‘would-you-mind?’ It’s just wallop! Take that. Listen up. Deal with this. Nag nag nag. It’s all three-dimensional, quadraphonic, heavy, confusing, and sticky. Incessant, never-ending agony. On the way in and on the way out of love, it’s agony.

When the loop slows down, guess what? It then accelerates all over again, automatically. Again and again. Then, just when you think that you have arrested the rhythm, it starts to fragment and surprise you randomly, differently, sneakily, in bits and pieces like a psychedelic tease show, set to music and a quickening beat that thumps and grinds, and all the while, you think, why me? How hard can it be? Why is it so difficult? It’s just love. All I wanted was to make someone happy. All I yearned for was for a wholesome relationship. That’s all. Nothing complex. To hug, to kiss, to cuddle, to love. To give. Not to take. So why is it so difficult?

Then, when it pleases the angels — those sneaky cheeky mischievous clowns — we find our true love. It’s all perfect, until it falls apart and then, wallop! Take that. Listen up. Deal with this. Nag nag nag. It’s all three-dimensional, holographic, painful, demanding, and prickly. Intense, ever-changing insults. Why oh why?

No book can keep pace with the action. Sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter... it’s all too slow. So why write about love and relationships? Because there is no other way. We mortals are not so good

at doing the very thing that we desire most — to communicate our feelings to each other. Of course we communicate with art. And we say it with flowers and gifts and stares and whispers and smiles and touches, and through the most ubiquitous cry of all — the love song: that three-minute ding-dong that mixes poetry and anger and quandary and mystery with questions and queries and pleading and begging.

Words cannot describe — they can only trigger. So perhaps, while reading this book, these dead words will ignite thoughts and ideas that you can translate into solutions and shields. And only after you have finished reading, can you stack each sentence and compress each word inside a slingshot. Then, in one swift motion, you shoot the nugget toward the barrage of tormenting ferrets — those enemies that pull at your heart-strings and slow you down. Here’s the funny thing: our heart races, yet our soul grinds to an indolent limp. Our mind thrashes, while our spirit cops a battering. It’s a fast-paced slow motion. Hideous.

We intellectual animals, who roam the jungle fully clothed, find ourselves naked. So we buy more apparel and hoard more worldly goods. Maybe when we have more, we can feather our nest and deck-out our pad. Luxuries ease the pain. Indeed they do, for three seconds at a time. But what do we do on the fourth beat? We cry and wonder why. Why me? How hard is it? Surely it’s not me? God knows I’ve tried. I’ve changed. I’ve compromised. I’ve given. I’ve listened.

What more can I do? It must be me. No damn it! Someone around here is a heartless snake, and I sure know it isn't me. Give me back my life!

So, we philosophise. We muse. We investigate. We delve. We take a different tack. We slow down. We regain

*Words are slow and cumbersome.* our composure. We smile more. We speak less. We ask, but we do not probe. We listen, but we do not judge. We mature.

*They cannot truly express thoughts, and they are poor tools for conveying feelings.*

We give it another go. But there's still something wrong. So we compartmentalise it into 'them and us'. Men and women.

Young and old. Rich and poor. Givers and takers. Experienced and green. We search for reasons. They must have lied. They

must have been distracted. The devil got in the way. They suffered some imbalance. It must have been hormones. Why else were they unfaithful?

Again we try. We change. We compromise. We give. We listen. What more can we do? Could it be me? Then again, it might be you. All I know is that someone around here is a heartless snake, and I sure know it ain't me. Give me back my life!

Like kids in a playground, we pack our toys and scatter. With each scuffle, the stakes grow higher. The pain is more intense, and the illusion of love becomes less realistic. Those of us who had ventured alone, turn to God; while those of us who had invited God on this journey, as a witness to our

fair play, complain and turn away. Either way, we revisit the teachings of the sages.

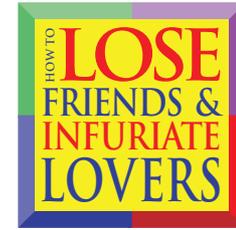
Once again, we philosophise. Having given up on trying to read people, we inquire into human nature. What are we? Why do we yearn so much for that illusive intangible feeling of love? Then there is the biggest question of all: *is it really better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all?* Are you kidding? I'm not so sure. If you have loved intensely, and have yearned most earnestly, and have surrendered completely, then how can it be anything more than a slap in the face? It's the biggest wallop of them all. Take that. Nag nag nag. It's all three-dimensional, quadraphonic, holographic, realistic, heavy, confounding, and debilitating. Incessant, never-ending torture.

I don't think that it's better to have loved, blah blah blah. No way. Ignorance is bliss. Who needs this humiliation? Then again, it is better to have loved and lost, but only if we plan on loving again. The experience could hold us in good stead. But hey, that's only wise if the other party is at our level. If we mature way above the average, we stand to fall from a greater height.

Oh it's useless... then we see someone who makes us enamoured by God's design. We are fixated on a face so perfect that we can but ask; how on earth can anyone be so unbelievably beautiful? And all logic goes out the window. Philosophy withers away. Wisdom is relegated to the shelves. Maturity is muzzled.

We put our best foot forward and approach the merry-go-round. One ticket please.

Watch out! Something is about to happen. **N**



## *final* CHAPTER

*The following is the last chapter  
from the book  
'How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Lovers'  
by Jonar Nader*

**R** **WARNING**  
CHAPTER 16 IS RESTRICTED TO  
COURAGEOUS READERS ONLY

SIXTEEN

*If  
A loves B,  
and B loves C,  
who loves me?*

OPTIMISING OPTIMISM

*I want it all.  
I want everything.  
But I am happy  
with nothing.*

**A** RESTRICTED SECTION IMPLIES CONTENT THAT IS TOO HOT TO HANDLE. INDEED, SPECIAL CARE IS REQUIRED when contemplating the messages within this chapter that not only infuriates lovers, but also the establishment, the religious, and those for whom tradition is binding.

Have you noticed the skewed ways in which some products are advertised? Take luxury cars. In advertisements, the superbly polished vehicles are often driven by cool cats who live with loving families in impressive homes, surrounded by trendy friends. This is called aspirational advertising.

The same goes for lotteries and casinos. They promote their wares by showing us the one winner; not the ten million losers. We are tantalised, teased, and told that next time, we could be that one winner. What are the chances of winning? I could bet a million dollars that if I were to go down to the store now and purchase a lottery ticket, I would

not win that illusive grand prize. All the odds are stacked against me, and against all the players. Only one in several million might win. Given that almost every experience ends badly, why do they still show us the fortunes of the minority? This seems like false advertising. They should not be allowed to sell a product by showing us what is least likely.

I think they should advertise what is most likely. Take gambling and the way its products are promoted.

*Deep inside  
their imagination,  
gamblers  
think that  
they might win,  
even though,  
deep inside  
their head,  
they know  
that they  
will not win*

Most gamblers will lose. Only one or two can win the grand prize. Yet, rather than showing us the most probable experience, we are shown what *could* happen if lady-luck were to smile upon us.

As a marketing professional, I am acutely aware of advertisements that are designed to lure the gullible and the credulous. I think of such examples because I know many gamblers whose lives are ruined. I find myself in awe of the ways in which casinos are designed and decorated. Many of the large casinos also boast conference facilities. For this reason, as a keynote speaker, I often find myself within the confines of these dangerous playgrounds. Walking through that type of artificial world, I watch, most intensely, the people, the promotions, and the promises. Win, Win, Win! Dollar signs flashing, luring, entrapping.

Observe for a moment, and you will see the hundreds of poor patrons who exit drearily, hauling their shattered

dreams with them, only to return another day for ‘one last shot’. The most bizarre thing is that people *do* win. Not many. Not even a few. Just enough to entice everyone else. By allowing one to win, we raise everyone else’s hopes.

Love is equally alluring. It torments the masses while befriending a handful of people, showing us what might be possible if we only knew the secret passage to its inner sanctum.

Incidentally, I often wonder why gambling dens don’t show us how many people have *lost* their money — and how *much* was lost. Instead, when one player wins, it becomes headline news, and the collective agony and shame is swept under the carpet. I happened to be at a casino for a conference when I noticed the television cameras outside, waiting to interview and congratulate the high-roller who had won a million dollars. What a fuss. I had the urge to grab the cameraman and swivel him 180 degrees to pan the faces of the dozens who stood behind, wondering how they were going to afford the bus-fare home after an all-night poker spree. The skint fortune-hunters might not have realised that *they* were the ones who funded the nouveau riche.

You must have been asked this question: what would you do if you were to win the lottery? Try this old ice-breaker at your next gathering and note what people will say. Then consider your own response. I was once asked what I would do if I were filthy rich. I said that I would cause havoc. First, I would hire a team of a hundred people who, like

surgeons, would always be on-call. They would be able to go anywhere and do anything, but whenever I called on them, they would have to drop everything and perform a small task for me, much like sleeper spies have to execute a duty when that coded message arrives. You see, I cannot stand it when service-providers excuse their insensitivity by

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*Rather, the rewards of love are power beyond our normal capacity.*

telling me that, 'No-one else has complained about that' or 'No-one else has asked for this'.

I once attended a hideously bad concert. The performer was brilliant, but the concert hall at the five-star hotel was abysmal. I called the hotel to let them know that their venue was shocking. The lady said, 'No-one else has complained'. Oh, how I wished that I could have released my team of complainers onto

her. One, every hour on the hour, until she could no longer utter those words. I dream about my team when a waiter tells me that no other patron has asked for mineral water. Apparently, most non-drinkers are happy with cola or tap-water. If I so much as hint at my amazement, I am told, 'No-one else has asked for mineral water. There's no call for it.' I would like to be rich enough to send my one hundred agents, who would each take a party of eight for dinner, every hour, on the hour, and upon being told that tap-water is the only option, they would stand up and leave the restaurant. At some point, the owner would have to think harder about the product mix. Amongst a

well-stocked cellar that boasts sixty different types of red wine, how hard would it be to carry six bottles of decent water whose profit margin these days is greater than the average bottle of Shiraz?

What would *you* do if you were to win the lottery? I know some people whose answer is not only prepared, it is well considered and perfectly rehearsed and, in all seriousness, is ready for execution. They know precisely what they would do with their new-found wealth, down to the colour and pattern of the curtains in their new home. They know what brand their new car would be, and they even have their personalised number-plates all worked out. Deep inside their imagination, gamblers think that they might win, even though, deep inside their head, they know that they will not win.

And so it is with love. There are those who know what they would name their first child, even though they are nowhere near starting a relationship, let alone a family. Deep down, they have rehearsed every caress and every kiss, and they have plotted every picnic and mapped out every sunset walk. All they need is a co-star.

Yes, indeed, there are people who do win the lottery. And yes, somewhere, somehow, ordinary people do find the lover of their dreams. And yes, for the lucky few, everything works. It can happen. It does happen. And my dear reader, it could happen to you. Don't raise your hopes, but if you are the gambling kind, then why not? This is one prize worth

winning. So, where can we buy a ticket? How can we be in it, to win it?

A book of this kind ought to have at least one chapter about the essence of love. And this is it. If we were to peel away the immaturity and human frailty, and look at love for

what it is, what would we find? Some scientists, *When preparation combines with love, we arrive at optimisation from which we see productivity* bless them, have tried to answer this question by suggesting that love is nothing more than a few sparks in the brain. Some say that love is a chemical reaction. Whether it is electrical or chemical, or even spiritual, love does exist, and if you can win it, find it, make it, unearth it, capture it, or be run-over by it, go for it. Although love might well be the third-most expensive thing in the world, it is worth dreaming about. It is worth thinking about. It is worth preparing for. Whatever the cost, it always delivers riches beyond its asking price — but only if you know how to welcome it, engage with it, and then surrender to it! (By the way, if love is the third-most expensive, what is dearer? The highest, is the price of hate. The second-highest, is the price of indifference. Hate consumes energy as fast as the floodgates will allow. There is no-one more generous and more careless with resources than a person who allows hate in the driver's seat. Indifference does not spill energy. Instead, it bypasses opportunities. While hate squanders resources, indifference squanders opportunities. Hate is expensive by wastage. Indifference is expensive by neglect.)

Is love something that we must wait for, or search for, or advertise for, or pay for? Alas, we are called to love by invitation only. However, we cannot sit back and wait for an invitation, because if it arrives, we might not know what to do. You see, here is the biggest secret of all. Love does nothing. Love is of no significance. Love cannot function on its own. Love-sick puppies dream of finding love, yet, when it comes knocking, it does nothing for them, simply because they neither know what love is, nor what it's supposed to do, let alone how it works. Soap, on its own, is nothing and does nothing. It needs to be applied. Petrol, on its own, goes nowhere. It needs a finely-tuned engine if it is to be put to extraordinary use.

You might have heard the expression, 'You have not lived until you have loved' or 'Love makes you alive'. What can these sentiments mean to people who do not understand them? Church leaders speak of sin, to people who indulge in activities that seem to be perfectly normal and enjoyable. You cannot tell unenlightened people that what they are doing is wrong. They hear you, but they do not understand you. As a result, they stop listening. This is why I feel that religious leaders rarely communicate well. They *tell*, yet rarely *explain*, beyond, 'God said so.'

For this reason, it would be useful for all concerned if we were to explain what love is, what it does, and why it is worth the effort — notwithstanding the inordinate pain that seems to stem from its misuse.

Despite the apparent evidence, love is not responsible for the pain. Love honours its promises. The agony comes from misinterpretation and weak implementation. Electricity can be a marvellous thing. Yet, poke around, and you will be zapped. A perfectly good technology is also a lethal force. So it is with love. Learn how it works, and you can light up your world. Fiddle in the wrong places, and you will get hurt.

To those who confuse it with lust and ecstasy, love appears to be one of those great mysteries. An intense desire or liking towards another person cannot be love, simply because love concerns itself with outcomes, not feelings.

If one were forced to use words, one would say that love is fuel, love is strength, love is speed, love is stamina, love is enthusiasm. But this poses a problem, because love is three-dimensional and cannot be described in words. Words pertain to one thing at a time. Language, by its design, is limited. Mathematics is a little better, in that we can say that ten plus ten equals twenty. We can merge two numbers and understand the result of the addition because we can now imagine the answer as a third entity. If only we could do this with words. How can we add fuel plus strength plus speed plus stamina plus enthusiasm? What is the end-result? Can you imagine that altogether-different element? Go on — picture it in your head. Can it be a single entity? What does it look like? How do you weigh it? Here's another example: I can say carrots plus car plus calculator plus window. What does that mean? Nothing. Notwithstanding

that each of those items is the result of a combination of complex elements, our mind has no way of adding physical objects, and no method of adding intangible forces. Love is made up of some special compounds that do possess pre-eminent properties that are synergistic and exponential. You might have seen those toys that first appear to be a motor vehicle, and then they transform into a robot that becomes a soldier whose hat turns into a weapon. This kind of power almost describes how love can take something, and inject new life and new force, transforming it into something that is not only completely different, but also supremely powerful and purposeful.

The rewards of love are not the heartfelt glow of attachment. Rather, the rewards of love are power beyond our normal capacity. This is what I meant when I said that love is in itself nothing. Power is in itself nothing. It must be applied to something. And this is what I meant about being ready to welcome love into your life. You need to have something to empower. If you have fuel, but no motor, you gain nothing. The word that strikes at the heart of this is 'optimisation'. When we are blessed by love, we can optimise our resources. Optimisation is the key to success. And for this reason, we must guard against the temptation to allow our heart, our head, our soul, to become dormant. We must remain poised for the moment when love seeps through us. Through optimisation, love takes what you have and what you do and what you are, and injects energy that transforms action into

momentum — people who are blessed by the gifts of love are like bullet trains — get out of their way. But how far can they go if they have not laid down the tracks? When preparation combines with love, we arrive at optimisation from which we see productivity. When enthusiastic people inject energy into their craft, and when they insist on excellence (even if they manage a one-percent improvement each day), they arrive at brilliance. Brilliance refers to both superbness and lustre. No doubt you know of such shimmering souls whose enthusiasm makes their friends wonder if they are high on drugs.

The greatest advocates of hard drugs are those who are new to the scene. To them, drugs offer new-found energy and hitherto unimagined intoxication. Drugs offer rapture and rhapsody, delight and delirium, fervour and frenzy, satisfaction and serenity, verve and vim. We all know that, in due course, the side-effects will outstrip the benefits, but until then, and during the early stages, a user experiences something new and powerful. At first glance, it would be difficult to distinguish between someone in love, and a drug user.

Love is not related to how someone makes us feel. Rather, it comes into our life, and it heightens our senses for (and our appreciation of) the world, our work, and other people. This is the monumental missing link. Love is not something that we feel towards other people. It is the *reason* that we feel that way towards them. If we do not recognise this subtle, yet stark difference, we would be shutting the

door too soon. If we narrow love to just one person, then we would have missed the point. Those who are shattered by dejection are distracting themselves to such a degree, that they would miss out on the far-reaching power of love, because love can do wonders beyond one relationship with one person. The same elation that we can feel towards another person, can be felt in terms of our engagement with our career, hobby, community, or family. Once more, I must stress that love, on its own, is useless. It can only boost what is already in existence. Therefore, we must develop relationships, build our career, invest in a hobby, support our community, and nurture our family, so that, should we be one of the lucky few to find love, we can infuse it into existing environments so as to turbo-boost our life. Conversely, if we wait to latch-on to another person in order to feel ready to advance, then we become dependent on someone else. If they choose to leave us, we lose our crutch. No wonder people fall in a heap when their relationship falters. Independent people make the best lovers. Their gifts demand no gratitude. Their support has no ulterior motives. Their generosity is not expectant. Their happiness is not conditional.

Discipline and love share similar, albeit mirrored, qualities. Both of them function in opposing ways. Erroneously, people presume that discipline is a form of power that one activates in order to resist temptation. They look upon

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discipline as a ‘controller’ that can be brought to bear when destructive pleasures are otherwise too difficult to shun. Contrary to popular teachings, discipline is not charged with the unpleasant duty to *deny*. It is not the role of discipline to give us the strength to repel temptation. Rather, discipline *removes* the temptation. When the temptation is removed, resistance is no longer required. When tension evaporates, one is at peace. Disciplined people do not engage in a tug-of-war. They simply do not feel the urge in the first place. So much so, that they do not even have to give the matter any thought whatsoever. A person who does not sniff glue, does not have to ward-off the temptation on a daily basis. It simply does not raise its ugly head. There is nothing to resist. There is nothing to deny. Discipline creates inner peace in situations that would otherwise have wreaked havoc.

While ‘discipline’ stops us from thinking, feeling, or doing what we know we ought *not* think, feel, or do, ‘love’ liberates us to think, feel, and do what we normally would have liked to do, but have been too lazy or too tired or too distracted to do. Instead of excuses, postponement, and procrastination, love cuts through the barriers and forces us to do what we have already decreed we must do.

When temptation lures us into its clutches, discipline (if we have it) eliminates temptation. Conversely, when lethargy hinders our progress, love (if it is within us) eliminates lethargy. Now, with vitality and vigour, we find ourselves engaged in all manner of projects that, to our

amazement, are executed productively and efficiently. Think of teenagers who hate school. Any excuse that can help them to skip class will be used. The slightest headache or stomach-upset will incapacitate students. Conversely, where there is a deep-seated desire in the heart of teenagers, nothing and no-one can stand in their way. I knew a boy who would take a day off school for the flimsiest of reasons. At first glance, one could accuse the boy of being lazy and lifeless. Yet, when it came to matters that were dear to his heart, like his driving lessons, camps, fishing trips, and outings with mates, there was no stopping him. He would do everything within his power to reach his destination, even if it required a sleepless night and other sacrifices. No-one could accuse the boy of lacking motivation. He sure did have a motive each time: a motive for devising reasons for his alleged infirmity, and a motive for his decidedly energetic embrace of life’s offerings.

Even the most lethargic of layabouts can be said to be motivated. It all depends on what drives them to the decisions they make. In highly energised people, ‘enthusiasm’ obliterates most obstacles and removes the plethora of feeble excuses. Love has its own life-force. It gives people a new sense of energy that helps them to overcome the difficulties that would otherwise have robbed them of their opportunity to succeed. (Trouble and disharmony emerge in a relationship when only one person is blessed by love, while the other is besotted by lust, gripped by jealousy, and

suffocated by selfishness. These insecure lost souls do not understand why their enlightened partner is darting about. They confuse vigour with disinterest, and, fearing that they might lose their status, they will set boundaries that become electric fences. Instead of celebrating their partner's newfound freedom, they plot to engage the heart, thereby smothering and suffocating.)

Let's summarise love and discipline, and compare them with addiction.

Discipline stops us from wanting. Its powers are invisible. Disciplined people do not have to battle with urges, because their desire to engage in destructive habits is pulverised.

Addiction stops us from reasoning. Its powers are overwhelming. Addicted people do not have to contemplate an urge, simply because their opinion and their permission are not sought. It neither matters what they think nor what they want. The addiction takes control. Dissention and resistance will soon be silenced. For example, an addicted smoker might curse the cigarette, and could well want to kick the habit. A few hours later, the body speaks a different language, and all sensibility vanishes.

Love stops us from procrastinating. Its powers are non-negotiable, simply because it takes decisions seriously and literally. Enlightened people are not distracted by excuses. They are mission-led. They know what needs to be done. They consult themselves and they honour their own

personal commitments. If they decide to do something, they go ahead and do it, unshackled by the typical burdens that are usually associated with lazy people who blame the world for their failures. Love keeps the priority in perspective. Road-blocks are no match when determination is supported by stamina. This is why I state that love is three-dimensional. It keeps on fighting. It keeps calling on different resources so as to combat negative forces. Like a clever kitchen appliance, love has a seemingly endless supply of attachments to handle any job.

Roaming within a kingdom of possibilities, love operates on the premise that nothing is ever final until it is proven to be final, and it insists that nothing is ever impossible until it is proven to be impossible. Love is focussed. It does not take kindly to distractions — notwithstanding that love, if it is undernourished, can be the greatest distraction of all.

*Like a clever kitchen appliance, love has a seemingly endless supply of attachments to handle any job*

Please do not quote me as saying that 'love is focussed'. I am not saying that love is focussed. We cannot go around advising people who desire love, to be focussed. No, being focussed does not give us love. When love visits us, we will *become* focussed — unintentionally, automatically, inevitably, uncontrollably. This is an important distinction. Often, people who hate their job are told that they need to immerse themselves in an industry about which they are passionate. This advice is misguided. It is

true that passionate people enjoy their work. From this, we cannot reverse-engineer the solution. We cannot suggest that people (if they wish to enjoy their work) need to be passionate. Aimlessly, the misguided stumble home, wondering what on earth they can be passionate about. It just does not work. Similarly, people might hear me say that love is focussed, so they presume that if they are to receive or honour love, they must be focussed. They set out to learn how to focus. This is wrong. I am not saying that to succeed at love, one must become focussed. I am saying that when love works its magic, it makes us focussed.

In the same vein, we hear wise counsel and we read from Scripture that love is patient and kind. We are told that love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. We are reminded that love does not delight in evil but it rejoices with the truth, and that love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.

I fear that people absorb such wisdom by way of instruction. They seek to become patient and kind. They struggle to shrug off any signs of envy, and they promise to be more modest, civil, calm, and forgiving. Admirable as it might be to polish our behaviour, love cannot be engineered in reverse. The observations about the anatomy of love are not some sort of dress-maker's scissors that we can use to trim our excesses. Rather, they are descriptions of what

love *does* — not what love must be. We cannot obtain the skeleton of love, and then seek to add the embellishments later. A description is not a recipe. Furthermore, love makes no demands, simply because it is non-negotiable. Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. These are the characteristics of love, not its building blocks. These are the results of love, not its roadmap.

If, and I mean a giant skyscraper-sized 'IF', we are blessed enough to be invited into love (and it might happen if we are poised and ready), and if, and I mean a colossal to-the-moon-and-back stretch of hope 'IF', we find a mature, sensible, lovable, adorable, sexy, beautiful soul who decides to entwine their spirit with ours, then my-oh-my, that's exultation. The dreamiest, the creamiest, the yummiest, the silkiest of all jubilation. Can it be true? Pinch me.

You will recognise the 24-carat version when, inexplicably, their eyebrows are the most erotic things you have ever seen. You will know that you have entered a new dimension when zapping sparks fly every time your darling comes within arm's reach. You will melt away when you hear your name pronounced like never before. You just want to hear it again and again through luscious lips that can make single words sound like a drum roll.

I would not mention it outside this Restricted Section, because it would not be fair to promote something so rare.

Whether it is electrical, chemical, spiritual, or mystical, love makes everything brighter and softer and faster and slower and bigger and smaller and lighter and heavier until you realise, for the first time, that a beating heart *can* stop, and you have to kick-start it with a deep breath — the kind you have to take with eyes as wide as they will open.

There are some people whom you might have liked and admired, but nothing compares with the person whom you love, and who loves you back. You will know it's real when your lover appears to be the personification of the perfect specimen. To you, their teeth are works of art. Any blemish becomes a cute beauty spot. The slightest of tilts and the subtlest of smirks is an invitation that pulls and tugs at you until the magnets in the lips clash as cymbals heralding another heart-stopping moment.

Those strange appendages, the ears, develop into erogenous sensors while hair becomes stimulating strands that awaken the millions of cells that cover your hands; and somehow, an embrace turns into an entwine that folds and curves and climbs and wraps and clasps and curls and links and hooks and locks and clicks! It all fits into place. Who would have thought that two odd-shaped humans could flex like rubber and meld like putty? Is there an instruction manual on how we can safely unlatch? Oops... just a minute... let me move my head first... no... why don't you... I've got it... How did we get into this position atop a hard cold wet rock? Despite the contortion, we are

sublimely comfortable. Amidst howling cold winds, we are snugly warm. The blissful escape amongst a vibrant crowd, yet we are obliviously bedazzled by a nose whose every dainty twitch whips us to attention and piques our anticipation. The peaceful hush surrounded by a lively city where the cacophony finds a rhythm. The pensive repose under a sparkling sky whose distant stars pivot to shine their beam on the face of the person whose eyes flicker in code, and you can decipher every word — until the thumps climb up your neck to remind you that you have stopped breathing.

In love, the office becomes a stadium. The shopping centre becomes a fairground. The street becomes a race-course. The garden becomes a park. The hallway becomes a landing strip. The kitchen becomes a playground. The lounge room becomes a theatre. The bathroom becomes a plaza. The bedroom becomes a jungle. The bed becomes a meadow. And wherever we look, we will see affirming messages, and they all promise bliss on two fronts: a bright future, and a fading past. Pain and humiliation that have squatted in our heart are being evicted. No more room for old oppressors. The scars begin to heal, and we are renewed. Love makes us new. And the word is... optimism. **M**