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### Love: Less a Dream, Than a War

Love is less a dream, than a war. It is not the idealistic, perfect dream that many make it out to be – rather, a war defined by the bloodied casualties of many, many conflicts, a war defined by woeful defeats before obtaining joyous victories. Society was, is, and always will be attracted to the quixotical aspect that love offers, yet disregard the inevitable misfortunes and tragedies that one must encounter to reach the end of the journey of love. Love can never prosper under this ignorant belief; in no other situation would a person weigh the benefits without also weighing the downfalls, and as such, love should be approached through cautionary lenses, and with a strong sense of will. Therefore, when one ascends towards their fated journey of love, it is wise to ignore the deafening voices of those who claim that love has no equal and overlook the blinding light of illusionary perfection that love offers. Only those who have realized the quixotical nature of love, only those who have cautiously prepared for the hardships that will arise during their journey of finding true love, could travail through the winding path of love and keep marching through the path riddled with defeats and sorrow to eventually experience the nature of the coveted true love.

My goal, however, is not to suggest that one should not undergo this journey. In fact, I believe in the opposite – love is a journey that should be conquered, as it not only biologically allows for the survival of the human species but is the “purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it” (Popova 2013). To love, and have that love reciprocated upon yourself is a wonderful feeling; it is a blip of bliss in our insignificant lives that provides the fulfillment of our psychological needs,

according to *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* ("Maslow" 2022). Intimate love, a feeling of "closeness and bonding in relationships... and the feeling of being at ease," provides pure happiness to the lives of those who have cultivated it ("Triangular" 2022). Love allows us to enjoy life at its fullest and "experience the micro-moments of positivity" that life has to offer (Smith 2013). It is only when individuals believe that intimate love can be found thoughtlessly is there uttermost fault. Like a peach tree, intimate love does not spring up suddenly to provide us with the sweet juices of the fruit – it must be cultivated through cautious and attentive care. The sweet juice of the fruit is not a product of the fruit tree, it is the product of your efforts. Thus, the intimate love that society is so fixated upon, yet almost always out of grasp, can only be gained through the careful advancement of love. Don't recklessly rush out to seek love!

The consequences of reckless love can be disastrous. Sometimes, it leads to what we know of as a "toxic" relationship. Other times, it leads to overwhelming heartbreak, leading some to take their own lives. Martin Luther King once said that "love has the ability to cut the chains of hate that entrail all of humanity" (Luther 2017). Yes, love is powerful. But have we ever considered that love is also powerful in promoting hatred and destruction? Over the course of history, love has made monsters of men. Men have killed in the name of love. Men fought wars in the name of love. As C.S. Lewis once said, "To love is to be vulnerable... is no safe investment... your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken" (Popova 2013). There is no worse feeling than knowing the one you love has betrayed you. To love, therefore, does not necessarily guarantee harmony in the world. In fact, I would go as far as to say that love is a harbinger of conflict, not peace. Every conflict, in essence, is the result of love's powerful influence, which we have established is not always pure. Is not the American Revolution fought because of the colonists' love of freedom? Is not the Trojan War due to the love for Helen of Troy? Love should be approached cautiously, or risk succumbing to the consequences of reckless love-making.

I have established that the journey to love would be riddled with obstacles, but how can you and I avoid the mistakes made by those who came before us? I believe love is a war, a war of attrition. It is about approaching love cautiously; whether you can withstand all the consequences of love and keep on marching through the path. Therefore, I believe that love is a journey meant to be taken slowly. Contrary to modern dating trends, “mass-sampling” of “matching” individuals through an app like Tinder is ineffective and a waste of time. It is better to get to know someone for a long time, in which you can put your full trust in them and theirs in you. Gradually, an intimate relationship would be reached, and eventually, sexual desires and attraction will arise. While this intimacy does not always endure the test of time; it is the love that society most focuses on, as I believe that it is stronger than any other type of love there is. To be intimate is to be vulnerable and true, to accept the other despite their differences. After all, “what is love, but the acceptance of the other, whatever they are?” (Povova 2013). To be intimate is to invest your trust in an unsafe position and hope for your trust to never be abandoned. Upon reaching this level of intimacy, you should also realize that in order to maintain this intimate love, a battle must be fought every day to maintain trust in each other. You will lose some battles along the way and there will be times where the war seems to be a lost cause, but if you fight continuously to maintain the relationship, it will provide far greater benefits than anything else could ever provide. Sadly, society today seems to be fixated on the idea that the war is not worth the effort. They praise those who give up upon a whim of effort and emphasize the misguided belief that one day, you will find intimate love by swiping right a couple dozen times on Tinder; but no great things come from those who put no effort.

Love can be a beautiful thing, but only if it is cultivated slowly over time. My advice? Do not get swept up seeking love – all that would lead to is heartbreak. Do not become irrationally infatuated with your partner in a relatively short period. Take your time and tread carefully; know

which battles are worth fighting for and which battles are better left alone. Love is a war, and to emerge victoriously is to stand up after each defeat and look onwards without fail.

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