

THE DOCTOR

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Titel: THE DOCTOR
Auteur: Tirusha Camodeca
ISBN: 9789403775395
NUR: 402
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PART 1

CARL

Isn't it fascinating to see how people love to explore life, how they want to liberate themselves of social pressures to reach higher levels of emotional freedom, but when the flower of their hearts starts to open up, when they are about to reach a higher level, they suddenly pull back, afraid to offend the Almighty and disrespect the unwritten rules of love; isn't love precious and so rare in this world that there is nothing and could never possibly be anything wrong with love? Even when this love hurts others; even then it is inherently right; even if you lose everything you have for the sake of that love you act righteously. I am disillusioned though, that I cannot find anybody else who agrees with this view on life; I had hoped that Ruby was also on my length of thought, but even she could not cross the river of guilt, that nasty river that humans seem unable to cross. Am I cruel, heartless and selfish to cross it anyhow? This river makes everyone doubt about his or her actions. Right and wrong seem to be the eternal divider which humans seem unable to break. I crossed the river, but ended up alone on the other side; I feel lonely since nobody understands what I perceive to be everyone's duty: to free oneself of everything that is superfluous, even if by doing so you might end up losing everything you have, because it will allow you to keep the only thing that truly matters: ultimate freedom. My problem, if you can call it a problem, is that I believe freedom should also rule in matters of love. This office might not look like a battlefield to you, but it is one to me. I come here to fight for my freedom and some understanding, whether you can help me or not. What the hell is free love? I don't know anymore, doctor. Should every form of love not be free of basically everything? If you fight for love you don't mind paying for it with your happiness, because love prevails over everything else. Are humans too weak to fight for love? Why do they always end up opting for happiness? Was Ruby afraid; was her happiness at stake? Is that the limit of human strength? I believe in life, doctor, I believe in freedom, and am terribly disappointed in the human race.

DOCTOR

There is nothing wrong with your concept of free love, as it is a divine, wholesome feeling that very few people are fortunate enough to experience, but the flip side of this love is the impact it has on the pair's families. You have a haven of love at home. May I suppose that this lady you know has an equally loving haven, maybe even with children? As you know the latter come with responsibilities, that are inherently borne by their parents. They look up to them to fix things, make it right and always

want both parents to be together. You could argue that nobody is asking this lady to abandon her family? Well, I guess that, like most people, she can only commit to one person at a time. To her it seems that if she falls in love, it is totally: she gives her body, heart, mind and soul to the relationship. Having a part-time affair is against her nature. You might see her backing away as being spineless and afraid of society, when in actual fact she is afraid of the impact on her haven of love and children in particular. This lady you are talking about could be more on your wavelength than you give her credit for. Which river have you crossed that you have found yourself alone on the other end? Many a time we have discussions in our minds with someone we love. We agree about issues, answer for or plan with them, but being so busy with this conversation, we neglect telling them our plans, and when this doesn't turn out as envisaged, we become disillusioned, get cynical about the person we profess this free love for and lose faith. I am not necessarily saying that this is the case with you, but more open, face to face communication will clear out many a doubt. Will you arrange to meet her alone or at a neutral venue? Do you feel this compulsion so strongly that you will forsake your safe haven for it? Her ideas about life and love could be paralleled to yours in many ways. Are you possibly too disappointed and hurt to see it right now? My advice would be to reflect on conversations you two had and apply your mind to what she said. You might have missed vital clues.

CARL

She has, indeed, children, and maybe I have to accept that this justifies her behavior, but to me kids are part of life and they should be taught about freedom, or do you think that I expect too much from them? Shall I only understand this once I shall have children of my own? In certain cultures, children don't seem to mind though, that their mother has kids with several men. They perceive themselves as brothers, even if they are in fact half-brothers. That is what I call nature in its naked purity. Kids who cannot accept that their parents love other adults think that way because of the freedom-stricken values they were taught by their parents, and obviously nobody can blame the latter because they grew up the same way. Do we live in a time frame where rationality does not leave enough space for emotions? Make me see the light, doctor, because I feel like Oedipus who needed to puncture his eyes to be able to see. You said that having a part-time affair is against her nature, but against which nature? If it is, indeed, against her nature, it should be against human nature, but that is precisely my point. Is the limitation of love not against human nature? Should humans not be allowed to love freely? Would we not live in a better world if we could love without restraint? How can you say that having a part-time affair is against her nature and still claim that she sounds

unconventional to you? Maybe this lady is trying to be avant-garde, maybe she is, inasmuch as our society allows it; maybe she is as unconventional as she can be, but not enough to be truly unusual. Don't get me wrong, I don't perceive Ruby to be spineless; I understand that she is afraid of the impact on her haven of love and her children in particular, but fear is fear, whether it is of society or of the impact it could have on one's family. The question remains though, whether there should be fear at all when it is love we are talking about. You asked me where the line lies between right and wrong. I never pretended to know that and don't intend finding an answer to this question, because it seems of no importance to me. Isn't love always good? Allow me to rephrase your question: 'How do you know that what you feel is love?' I also don't claim to know that. All I can say is that what I feel is a strong emotion which I cannot live without anymore, a sensation I am willing to risk my safe haven for. Should the strongest feeling not take over when two feelings of the heart clash; should my wife not step aside if she cannot accept other lovers? I believe that several forms of love can peacefully cohabit, though, and would be thrilled to meet Ruby at a neutral venue. If I have missed vital clues, help me to see which ones.

DOCTOR

Nature at its fullest, as described by you, is having kids from different partners whom we love at any given time. How different then would we be from animals? Not that I look down on them, but just how primitive are your needs? Parenthood doesn't come in flavors: you make and raise that baby. That is nature at its most responsible. What you speak of was fine in the era of the cavemen, where exclusivity and monogamy were unknown concepts. Time has moved on and attitudes have evolved. Perhaps, as I said before, you would understand this concept if you too would be blessed with children. I believe that responsibility curbs one's emotions, and not rationality. To make you see this point I shall use an example. You are seven years old, in the latency stage of your cognitive development. Your realm has expanded to people and places outside your family. You see kids from broken homes, look at their hurts and joys, and compare and internalize these to what you have at home. Bearing in mind that your ego is being shaped at this stage of your development, you feel lucky to have loving parents, great siblings and a family that is together. You say and think: this is what I want when I grow up, a happy home. Now picture this while still being seven: your parents perhaps still love each other, but have found free love with someone else. They lose that emotional connection or, worse still, move apart and divorce. You are battling with your emotions, the upheaval in your family, your love and hate feeling towards your parents who were up until now the only concrete figures in your life. How does this shape your ego and the rest of your personality? I firmly

believe that to be a parent you don't have to forsake what you feel, but there are some sacrifices you have to make for your children. Perhaps you need to explain your understanding of an extra-marital affair. Is it emotional or physical infidelity? To me, it would entail both. While I don't deny the possibility to fall out of love, I think it is impossible to love two people at the same time with the same intensity. What I find hard to understand is that you expect your partner to accept these bouts of free love that consume you now and then. How many free loves do you need to experience before you find the ultimate one? Do you know what and which the ultimate one is? Will you be able to recognize it, if you see it? You remind me of a radical who, just for the sake of being different, will say things to the contrary, which is a trait that could lead you to be misunderstood. What is right and wrong? Of course, love is right. It is a beautiful, pure emotion that manifests itself in many forms. Is this free love you feel for Ruby truly it? You can't live without and are willing to die for her, but you might have this exact same feeling for other people, since free love has no boundaries. I am intrigued and must admit that it is a little confusing to me. I do not believe that several forms of love can live side by side. Love that involves even the slightest hint of physical intimacy cannot do so. You will be well guarded to believe that. I am the doctor here and truly hope that I shall be able to successfully treat you.

CARL

What do you mean, doctor, with 'I am the doctor here'? Did anybody in this room express any doubt about that? I want professional advice from you, based on your practical know-how. Am I your first patient with such ideas? If so, you are not the doctor I thought you were. Should I go find myself a more experienced one? Hey, I am just pulling your leg, doctor. Tell me more about the dark sides of my personality. Why do I think the way I do; why is it that I feel mostly misunderstood in the field of free love? I did not refer to the era of the cavemen, but to modern day life. During my world travels I had the opportunity to visit Africa, where I came into contact with tribal customs. My inspiration came from the black continent, where people seem to be free of Western thinking patterns. I don't know though, whether you are familiar with it. You put a link between free love and the animal world. Should you not apologize to the Animal Kingdom for perceiving the human race to be more advanced? It seems to me that animals, unlike humans, live in peace. If it weren't for the purpose of survival, they wouldn't kill each other. I might be slightly off track here, but I have a valid excuse: I am on therapy, so now and then you must forgive me for whatever I might blurt out. Responsibility and sacrifices, those are heavy words doctor, but what for? Is there no parental responsibility to give a freedom-based education to their offspring, instead

of a guilt-ridden one? If it is true, like you say, that responsibility and not rationality curbs the emotions, I want to know from you what kind of responsibility has the right to do so. Should feelings not always have the upper hand? I am not talking about sexual instincts, but emotions of the heart. Let me give you an example: a responsible person, who is aware of the existence of Aids, should take his precautions when he intends to make love with a person of whom he doesn't know the full sexual history. Responsibility should in other words curb the male animal instinct to avoid depositing his sperm in every hole without necessary precaution for possibly fatal consequences, or for females to allow any drift apple to fill their tank with warm passion juice. Instincts should be curbed by responsibility, but love never should. On the contrary, each and every human has the responsibility to allow his feelings to survive social and other pressures. The same person, who should be careful to avoid Aids, should be alert not to close his heart to love. No one should reduce his heart to a stone. This is disrespectful towards nature itself. It is logic ruled by fear of life and love. I like your story about the seven-year-old kid that grows up in a happy family. It reminds me my own youth. I would also not have appreciated any of my parents having a love affair with an outsider, because we were brought up that way. Our perception is that people who make this choice, like you rightly pointed out, lose the emotional connection, move apart and divorce, but should this necessarily be the case? You say that you firmly believe that being a parent doesn't compel you to forsake what you feel, but that some sacrifices have to be made. One has to make the right ones, though. To accept that love is complex and not always black or white makes part of their education. You ask me to explain my understanding of an extra-marital affair, whether it is emotional and/or physical infidelity. First of all, I disagree with the qualification of infidelity that you give to an extra-marital affair. Every human who doesn't allow himself to be free at heart is untrue to himself, and therefore necessarily to the essence of life. Let me therefore rephrase your question: Do I perceive an extra-marital affair to be a purely emotional or also a physical undertaking? A purely emotional one can, indeed, be an extra-marital affair. Since I never shared Ruby's bed, I could say that I am involved in a purely emotional extra-marital affair, but a full-fledged affair would obviously entail both, emotional and physical elements. What do you do with the rational element, doctor? In my eyes, commitment, which is rational in nature, is one of the most important aspects of any relationship, but let us leave that one for later. To answer your question, I would say that a matured extra-marital relationship should be one that is emotional, physical and rational at the same time. One loves a person from the bottom of one's heart, shares one's body with him or her, yet also needs to know what one engages in. This leads us to your

following statements: first of all, you say not to deny that it is possible to fall out of love. I personally prefer the perception that love can change but never dies. Your next statement is more intriguing: you think that it is not possible to love two people at the same time with the same intensity. Of course, no two forms of love are equal. The emotional connection that grows between two people is unique and therefore different from any other. Would you agree that it is possible to love more than one person at the same time with a different intensity? You find it hard to accept that one expects a partner to understand these bouts of consuming free love. Are you talking about me here, doctor? I cannot recall having said that during my sessions in this office or are you confusing me with another patient? Anyhow, it is interesting you mention this, because Ruby made a similar observation. In my last mail to her I namely mentioned, purposefully, that I had been jerking off while mentioning her name, in front of my wife. This might seem cruel, but doesn't cruelty kill hypocrisy? When a partner is not in the mood for sex, whereas the other one is, I don't see why anyone should compel his other half to do something he or she doesn't feel like doing. I don't rape her. She doesn't have to fake joy, meanwhile I can simply explode, admitting that I am thinking of someone else. If I would not be in the mood for sex, I would accept her doing the same while thinking of someone she happened to love. Unfortunately, she does not love anyone sexually but me, at least not that I know of. Social pressure might stop her from saying so though, but that strain would not come from me. You also ask me how many free loves I need to experience before finding the ultimate one? I don't believe there is an ultimate one, since each love is different in its greatness. So, let me rephrase this question as follows: How many free loves do I need to experience before being satisfied? At least three, because I believe that human beings are made of emotional, physical and rational energies. Do I remind you of a radical who, just for the sake of being different, says things to the contrary? I don't care whether you perceive me as a radical, but whether I am one, based on objective criteria. Help me to understand my own perception of life. You tell me that forms of love which involve even the slightest hint of physical intimacy cannot live side by side. How would you qualify living side by side? Different forms of love necessarily have to respect each other's strength, otherwise they will end up killing one another. I can imagine that Ruby's husband would want to murder me, if I were to break the peace in their safe haven, which is why I never even intended to do so, but if Ruby would dare to express her feelings for me, he would be well advised not to interfere with our stormy affair in the wide-open sea.

DOCTOR

My need to qualify that I am the doctor is to remind you that you are the one here for treatment and not me. We need to analyze your issues to try fitting it in with your perception of reality. As per initial contract, neither you nor I are bound to this process. If at any point you doubt my expertise you are free to pull out. I don't see the need to justify my credentials to you. My patients usually have done their homework before contacting me. I must tell you about the dark side of your personality? What is your definition of dark side? Would you describe it as inherently good or bad? Give me an example of a dark side. It is interesting that you acknowledge the multifaceted aspects to your personality. Even more intriguing how some aspects flare up, need immediate attention and then lay dormant to reappear later. This could be the beginning of multiple personalities, a tentative emerging of personality X. Your philosophy about who is more advanced, the animal kingdom or the human race, is a contentious issue which for the immediate now has no direct bearing on my preliminary profiling of you, but rest assured it is an important shaping factor of your personality in general and your concept of free love in particular. Are you deliberately regressing to the evolution of man or is there something genuine in this, a link to a possible diagnosis? We shall revisit this. Your definition of emotions – we all know it comes from the Latin word *movere*, to move or that feeling that guides us into action. What moves you in the context of free love; what constitutes your emotional make-up? Which emotions drive you to feel what you feel? What is so different about what you feel emotionally, psychologically and sexually for your wife and Ruby? Are you fixated at the anal stage; are you battling with gross immature development or are you a clever conman hell-bent on shocking his therapist? Right sacrifices: imagine that you are the parent of the seven-year-old in the happy haven and have to tell him that, besides loving his mother, you also love another lady. Remember, he is seven and cannot conceptualize the free love notion. I know that you have raised him to know about free love, but he just cannot grasp it. Do you shatter his definition of a nuclear family or celebrate your love within the privacy of yourself; do you feel the need to exhibit this free love and shout it aloud from the terrace of your office building and in the process destroy the world of that seven-year-old child, or would it be less traumatic to toast this love via the telephone from that very office building terrace? Hypocrisy at its height, you may say – no. It is not saying the whole truth simply to avoid pain and confusion. It will be interesting to see whether you feel like reacting or ignoring what I told you? Will the latent anger manifest itself? Intensity of love – my take on this is of no consequence to you, hence I won't comment, but let us coin what you are saying by asking this: if you had met your wife and Ruby around the same time and got to

know both of them as you currently do, with whom would your emotional, physical and rational love lie and in what order and why? Who would you have married? Don't forget that for me to tell you things you don't know about your personality, I have to comprehend those you do know, and to do that I have to paraphrase what you tell me as accurately and succinctly as possible. I understand your impatience. Is violence or death an alternate form of settling a dispute or the only way of doing so? I present to you this scenario: while talking to Ruby on the terrace of your office building, you reiterate this undying love you feel for her and she reciprocates a little later, say via email, that she too loves you – perhaps even that it just dawned upon her that she has feelings of love for you that she didn't mean to have and doesn't want to feel. How would you react? Remember also that her safe haven of love at home is the essence of her existence. Is she confused, cornered, overwhelmed or is she trying to get you off her back sensing instinctively that you lose interest when the prey surrenders? Has she called your bluff? Are you still willing to die for her and brave the open seas or did you suddenly reach a stalemate with Ruby?

CARL

I would like to have your opinion on a matter I have been considering for some time; I even discussed it with Ruby and she doesn't seem opposed to the idea. Would you accept her to be a patient of yours? I would like you to help her as well, because it seems to me that she might need your assistance more than I do. Think about it, will you? Let us get back to our topics for now. Does nature bother about the manmade distinction between good and bad? When a tornado hits, it does not apologize for the harm done. Is the tornado bad? No. Does a crocodile express regret when it kills an antelope who happens to cross a river at the wrong place and time? Men are so full of themselves that they think obliged to say sorry for things they consider to be bad. They should not, because predestination dictates their actions. The distinction between good and bad is inherently a misperception of nature. I can live though, with the more subtle distinction between dark and light sides of life, because it can be made without moral judgment. A light side in my personality is that I enjoy life when I can live it naturally, without being burdened by people who do not understand my hunger for freedom. My dark side is that deep inside me I seem to leave some place for self-destruction. I am sure you will find sharper questions to get me to talk more about that part of me. I cannot give it to you on a golden plate. You will have to dig for it. This is precisely the definition of dark: difficult to get at, hidden away, not open for everyone to see. It is not bad, though. Even the dark side of a contract killer, or a serial killer for that matter, should not be qualified as bad. True personal judgment should be left to God alone. I am not talking about social justice, which belongs to

Caesar and isn't my cup of tea. What moves me in the context of free love; what constitutes my emotional make-up? A strong belief that this world in all its complexity can be reduced to three main energies which could be given colors to facilitate comprehension: a blue color representing rational energy, a green color standing for natural energy and a red color symbolizing emotional energy. This is a concept which is obviously open for debate, but my free love concept is rooted in this three-color theory. It is my personal constitution, without which life wouldn't make sense to me. I developed it when I was eighteen which is nearly as many years ago. Maybe I suffer from a slight form of autism. That is obviously a medical opinion, which I leave you to be the judge of. Autism cannot be cured, though. Even if you would confirm this diagnosis, there would be nothing one could do about it, at least so say the medical books, but one never knows how you could break new medical barriers in this office. You ask me which emotions drive me to feel what I do for Ruby. I want to stress first of all that mostly emotions move me into her arms; I could qualify them as romantic love, that is passionate in its intensity. Intellectual confrontation and physical attraction play an important role too without being the major motivation in my quest. What is so different from what I feel emotionally, psychologically and sexually for my wife and for Ruby? I start enjoying your questions, doctor. You are getting closer to the heart of the matter. Emotionally my feelings are much stronger for Ruby than they are for my wife. I love the latter but when love is confronted with passion, it has to surrender; I also enjoy getting into an argument with Ruby, which I rarely do with my wife. As far as sex is concerned my answer is very similar. If both my wife and Ruby would stand naked in front of me and I had to point out which one of the two I would want to nail right here on your desk, I would go for Ruby. This does not mean that I do not enjoy sex with my wife but the passion I feel for Ruby heats up my balls. Make up the sum yourself, doctor. Don't forget though, that peace at heart is something that does not score well on the measurement of passion. Whatever they say about the strength of love, passion is even stronger in its intensity. What is this theory about fixation at the anal stage, gross immature development or a clever conman hell bent on shocking his therapist? Biased and subjective questions will obviously not motivate me to talk about it. Are you aware that you just closed an important door to the mystery? You might be competent but you have your limits. Could it be that your life experience isn't rich enough to comprehend certain human behaviors? That would be a pity. You ask me to imagine being the parent of a seven-year-old. Children of that age, doctor, cannot grasp abstract notions. This is why I would never explain a concept like free love to them. Partners, however, can understand it. One should therefore be able to tell them that one also loves someone else, specifying that this love

is different in nature. I know it is hard to get across; I have problems getting my own wife to accept it. She tried but never managed to get it. A pessimist would have given up long time ago, but I don't. Let me answer you with a question. If Ruby, who firmly believes that love is only possible for one person, now realizes that she loves me, what does that tell you? That she never loved her husband and is shocked at the thought that she has been fooling herself all these years, or simply that her concept of love was not developed enough to understand the deeper meaning of free love? Do I feel the need to exhibit this free love? Yes and no. I can enjoy love in silence, yet it seems to me that love which stays too long inside suffers from a lack of oxygen. What if I had met my wife and Ruby around the same time and got to know them both as I currently do, with whom would my emotional, physical and rational love lie, and in what order and why? Under the same conditions as today, Ruby would score on all three accounts, for the reasons I explained above, but whether happiness would merge as well with passion, as it would with love, is a whole different question. If I had explained my vision on life to Ruby, she might just have gotten the fright of her life and run away. Who would I have married? Ruby, if she had been able to survive the test of my three-color-system, which I sincerely doubt. It is not a question of intelligence. She just seems too rooted in traditions, just like my wife who also doesn't comprehend my love-matrix. The latter doesn't understand it, even if she tries. I learned to live with it, but fact is that I am still looking for my true soul mate. The scenario you described about me talking to Ruby on the terrace of my office building is very romantic. You refer to the love Ruby would feel for me; love she didn't mean to have and doesn't want to feel. Should people who ride the waves of passion not be able to live with the consequences thereof? If Ruby did not mean to have those feelings and does not want to feel them, she is a naïve little coward. I know that it takes guts to look life straight in the eyes and accept whatever comes; I still have to learn a lot myself in this regard: I told my wife that I loved her friend, but was unable as yet to tell her that Ruby also knows it. When I think about that, I feel like a coward even though I abhor cowardice. Do I first have to test this newly found love? Is it love that will become truly reciprocal or is Ruby going to pull back? She told me she loved me once before, but then she got afraid. It is always difficult to regain trust after such an act of expressed fear. Maybe you were right by stating that it is better at times to hide the truth. I understand that Ruby has a family. She might tell you more about it herself. I hope to introduce her to you soon. Anyway, I don't know whether she loves me or not, but she loves me to challenge and torment her, even if right now the price she pays for it is total confusion.

DOCTOR

True love is neither physical nor romantic. It is an acceptance of all that is, has been, will and will not be. Making a slight change to your value system could alter your view on the situation. It seems to me that freedom is your highest value, am I right? If I were able to define freedom, I would be a genius, but I am not. I can only try: Freedom is a value that defines a liberty of life to explore oneself and discover the limits of one's nature; complete freedom does not exist because every human exploration is limited by its own borders; freedom is always limited. Since we do not live alone on earth, our freedom is partly defined by others. In your case your freedom to love Ruby is limited by many people, such as your wife, Ruby's family members and last but not least Ruby herself. The acceptance of the limits of one's freedom is another value which you seem to be blind for. The downfall of many heroes has been the inability to accept their own limits. Did you ever hear of the Greek word 'hubris', meaning excessive pride? You might counteract with the idea that your highest value is not freedom, but the truth, and that one is allowed to fight for it. My response to this would be that happiness is a value that can overpower the truth. Would you tell your beloved wife that she is terminally ill, if her doctor would inform you about this tragic news? This might depend from many factors, right? Will the truth always prevail or will you settle for happiness instead? Doesn't the latter tower above freedom and the truth?

CARL

Would it be heartless to tell someone he is terminally ill, if the truth is the highest value which sets us free? Should the limits of our freedom ever be set by lies; should reality always prevail? I prefer to tell my wife that I would like to go to bed with Ruby than to hide my feelings; I don't perceive it as selfishness since I would rather be treated in a similar way. To be able to reach that level of freedom though, it is necessary that the whole truth can come out. If I tell my wife that I would like to sleep with Ruby and even have kids with her, this can only lead to freedom if Ruby dares to face the truth and acts upon her feelings as well. Many things happened since our last session: Ruby and my wife had a fall-out on the phone which led to the break-up of their friendship. At first it seemed as if the bond between Ruby and me was broken, but the period of silence lasted fortunately only two months. A storm of passion can wipe out everything on its way. Total freedom destroys mediocrity and erases all lies. I think it is time to accept Ruby as a patient. You could ask her about her feelings for me. It would help us both to understand each other better.

RUBY

Thank you for having me, doctor. My name is Ruby. I am the third of four siblings, and for as long as I can remember I have always been the responsible, sensible one; I helped my parents out with their differences, my sisters with their problems, my primary, secondary and tertiary friends with their issues and now my staff with theirs. What I am saying is that I am so used to not talking about my problems or delaying that process, that I don't know how to open up. Allow me to elaborate: my friend Carl, whom I know is also a patient of yours, is married to a friend of mine. This friendship dates back to when we were in preschool. I befriended her back then and ever since I have had this protective feeling for her. She is just one of many people I have adopted and made to feel well. That is not to say that I wasn't hurting during all those years, but I had no one to talk to. I envied those friends and family members for having me, I still do. Then Carl comes along who literally tortures me to open up. It is not easy, especially as I don't know how to. I have barely learnt how to crawl and he wants me to run; I am also very much into talking face to face, as I like to read the person I am talking to. Carl wants me to pour my heart out on email, which is just not me. Will you tell him that, please? I am grateful though, to have him identify that I too have a need to talk. My memories of my childhood and school days are very pleasant. I loved my dad who is late with all my heart. My mom is still a super friend and my sisters are also sweet. I had great friends at school and still keep in touch with them. At university I had even more friends, also really nice people and again, we are still in touch despite the fact that a lot of them have left South Africa. I then met and fell hopelessly in love with my husband, whom I am still married to. We have known each other for twenty-one years and are married for fourteen. We share three beautiful children in a cozy home. I love my family and guess you can call that my safe haven. Then comes along Carl who just shatters that haven, throws me into a dilemma and accuses me of being a hypocrite and not standing up to what I feel. When I first met him, I got the distinct impression that he was flirtatious at initial eye contact in the presence of his wife. True to form and to who I am, I hit the ball right back. Thereafter ensued a long break in our contact, although he used to write a short line when his wife wrote to me, but we never met for some reason. Then we just made contact again. I am not sure if you have seen that side of him as yet. He is dangerously charming, devilishly funny, at times outrageously vulgar, and always so witty. Our email-ship and obvious delight in each other's company ended up leading to deep, profound love. Then Carl told his wife and she verbally accused me over the phone about our relationship and of course threw me the 'how could you of all people do this to me' line. All along I told my husband that Carl and I have this really special relationship and often I would recite excerpts

from his mail. There were no fears, no lies and no threats, but after the call from his wife I spoke to my mother who cautioned me to stop the relationship, as nobody would understand it. I told my husband who more or less said the same thing; I love Carl in a way that is inexplicable, unique and unusual; I have never denied that, but what he wants is something I am unable to give; I just can't turn my back on my children and wonderful husband; I acknowledge what I feel, ravel in it, and am grateful for it, but shall not legitimize it. There is just too much at stake: innocent children are involved. Carl can't get this, because he is childless. Please explain this to him. It hurts to see him eat away at himself, but what he wants is impossible. We kept away for about two months, but then started talking again. Why can't we just go on like this; why must homes be uprooted; why is love so complicated and why in the name of hell did I meet Carl?

DOCTOR

Let me try to explain this to you. Carl doesn't purposefully try to uproot your life. He is passionate about you, and would do anything in his power to stay in contact with you. Even silence is a measured tool to keep contact. If I warn you today, it is not against him, but against his feelings for you. It is an emotion one can only survive by ignoring it, because once bitten by passion it will never leave you. You might think it is gone after a long period of silence, and then suddenly it reappears. I guess it bit you too. Maybe the best thing for you would be to quit the relationship right now and never write to him again, not tomorrow, not next month, not next year, and not even in ten years. Never. You won't forget him, but by doing so you might avoid a storm which could erase anything in your life which seemed so important to you thus far. It is my duty as a doctor to warn you, but in case you don't think this situation will ever affect you that dramatically, you are free to ignore my advice. After all, I could be wrong. I have to admit that I don't fully understand his view on life. He is a mystery to me too. I nearly refused to see him again, afraid that he would tear apart all my principles, but accepted to see you precisely because I could not resist the challenge to figure out what he is up to, and your opinion helps me to understand his real nature. I would feel truly bad if I spoiled your delight in each other's company by giving you bad advice, but it seems to me as if you would destroy yourself trying to master him, for he cannot be beaten in the chess game of love. He is dangerous although he would never admit to it, and his threat lies in his concept of love, believing that the truth is the highest value worth dying for. Not everyone is able to cope with that, certainly not kids as you rightly pointed out. It could be true for example that you feel some special emotions for someone who is not your husband. That would be the plain truth, but for kids, mom loves only dad. They cannot think on an abstract level. For them, these

ideas are destructive. Carl seems to forget that freedom includes freedom of choice. People must have the right to choose not to be free, which would ensure diversity. Everyone must decide whether and when he is ready for the next level of freedom. Carl enjoys reasoning himself free, well aware though, that he cannot argue against passion, which isn't rational. To conquer passion became his only mission in life. He perceives all the rest to be of little importance, and looks everywhere for this unique source of energy, without which life seems dull and worthless to him. Could he be using you to explore its power? The day you quit he will perceive you as a weakling, and if you don't quit, he will admire you until you quit, because one day you will. He cannot be beaten in this game, because he makes the rules. You ought to be careful, since you are so beautiful, having a lovely husband and three beautiful kids to whom you are a wonderful mother. Make sure not to lose it all, because after you lose them, you will lose yourself, and finally you will lose him too. Everybody that has been bitten by passion becomes a mermaid, which is a creature that lives in essence alone. Carl will never acknowledge being one. Loving his victim to bits, he won't leave you as long as you are game, but once you quit, he will kill you mercilessly, and one of the best ways to kill is by disappearing in the minefield of utter silence. Passion is his magic tool which necessarily ends up destroying those who don't subdue to his will. Don't blame him for being what he is. It is not his fault. He has been bitten before, many years ago, and since then he is a different man; he feels lonely although he makes friends easily. His loneliness doesn't lie in the absence of family or friends, but likeminded people driven by passion. He loves his wife, but love isn't passion. Once bitten, one needs it, and love is no substitute for passion which is a unique feeling. Only mermaids can combine both love and passion, being a danger for those who cannot accept to become mermaids themselves. If you are unable to live two lives at the same time, quit before it is too late, because he will destroy your rather traditional way of life. Could it be though, that you are a mermaid yourself? Although you had many friends throughout your life, you tell me you had no one to talk to. Weren't you grateful to have him identify that you have desires, and need to talk. What exactly are you not telling me? Carl never asked you to turn your back on your loved ones. He wants you to develop a double personality, for mermaids are schizophrenic, living two lives at the same time. If you can do that, I don't think he wants something you cannot give. You say you acknowledge what you feel, but do you? Is your inability to legitimize your love not the proof that you never did? You wonder why you can't just go on talking; you can, but the words will lead you someday to the bedroom, because this will be the only place where you will be able to fully talk it out. You ask why love is so damn complicated. It isn't, only passion is. You ask why you met Carl. Do

you even realize that the first time he met you, he didn't fall in love with you? It hit him only much later. Today he wants you to become his lover, by crossing the bridge of no return; he needs you in his bed. Don't overestimate yourself, for humans cannot handle passion. Mark my words.

RUBY

Dear doctor, I am afraid of Carl, not for my physical safety as I know he would not use violence on anyone, let alone on a lady, but for my psychological well-being and eventual sanity. I am also in awe of you for having shown me what I guess I subconsciously knew, but didn't want to accept. He is, indeed, a mermaid that wants to conquer a prey and then move on. I recall once eluding to this trait; I should listen to my instincts more often; I now see that he likes the challenge to remove the element of mystery and conquer it. He lives for the chase, and all of this masked as passion. When he gets his way, demystifies the situation and appeases his lust, he just merrily moves onto the next prey, and I am now more than ever convinced that he will move on and on. How can I say this with such certainty and conviction, you may ask? Well, doctor, it is because I am very similar, deliberately and purposefully choosing a guy whom I must make a victim of my love, this is to fall in love with me. I usually choose those guys who are egotistical, self-opinionated and often attached to really obnoxious females. Don't get me wrong, I never get physically involved, but flirt, humor and tease them, and all of them fall hook, line and sinker. I guess you think: how arrogant of her, but I merely do this as some guys trigger off something in me that proves this calculated move on my part, and I have not yet failed. As we speak, there are five guys whom I am currently working on and all are almost there. Once the guy whines about his love for me, I just switch off completely. Often, I miss the guy in question, because I genuinely liked him and enjoyed talking to him, but he was emotionally too weak and that turns me off. That is where the similarity between Carl and me ends, though. He will take things further, by edging, goading, stalking and manipulating his prey as to take life changing actions, knowing that he never had the slightest intention of disturbing his safe haven. True to himself, he is brutally ruthless and disgustingly selfish. He may well set his own rules, yet the unwritten rules of love stipulate clearly that in matters of love no rule rules. This is for Carl: any mind game you concoct or play, remember that there is always someone who will call your bluff, see through the facade and outwit you. I would appreciate it, doctor, if you would convey this to him, and hope he has an ounce of decency and humanity left in him to let this deliberately orchestrated relationship go, as I see no truth and genuineness in anything he does or says anymore. Carl kept asking me to enter into therapy with you. Now I see that in some perverse way he was asking me to see you in

order for him to keep contact with me. I clearly see through him now and that is thanks to you. I am appreciative and grateful. Rest assured, I shall not make a similar mistake again, as my guiding principle in life is never to give a person an opportunity to hurt you twice. I am not about to revisit that policy anytime soon; I know Carl will find every possible way in the book to destroy me: I knew you were weak, but not that weak; you are being so traditional and conventional, yet everything he says slides like water off a duck's back. In every therapy session it is the prerogative of either party to terminate the contract and I am exercising it right now.

DOCTOR

Eight years passed by during which Carl got divorced, remarried and had children. In the meantime, Ruby became a young widow. The wheel had turned, but did their perceptions on life and love change? Happy to see you again, Carl. It has been quite a while. Your new marital situation confirms my belief in the cycle of life. What goes around comes around is a cliché which rings teasingly true here. With your new life, yet another woman, two beautiful kids, and a happy home, can you put in jeopardy your safe haven to pursue Ruby? She is single now and has more freedom, although the love she still shares with her late husband will always abound. Did you know that she lost her beloved son as well? What is your take on free love in the context of your current life circumstances? Years ago, I created the scenario of the seven-year-old. Now put your kids in his place and think really hard about your concept of free love. Let me quote Ruby's words from eight years ago: 'Doctor, one day when Carl has kids, I would want to challenge him to redefine his concept of free love.' To answer her questions will liberate your thinking. I take it your present wife is unaware of what is developing between Ruby and you? Have you taken to lying? Interesting to see how you justify this to be. How truthful is that?

CARL

The wheel has turned, but strangely enough my guardian angel keeps telling me that Ruby, who endured my first wedding, will also survive my second one. How, is a mystery to me, since I cannot imagine getting divorced for a second time. My present wife, whom I met five years ago during a work conference in Germany, has been the one for me until this very day. Will life compel me to experience mourning a beloved person, just like Ruby had to do when her husband passed on? Maybe this would be the only way for both of us to reconnect and fuse, because if this would happen, and if after a period of mourning Ruby and I would end up together – many ifs, I know – not only her love for her husband but also my love for my wife would be around all the time. Two people who never met would influence both our lives. Years ago, you helped me to define

the basic concept of free love. Today you might assist me to crystallize it. I can see though, that you do not possess the answers to my questions. For that – forgive me my arrogance – you are not wise enough as yet, but you might make me understand more clearly what I am going through, since wisdom is the fruit of discussions between searching minds. I am happy that you quote Ruby. I leave it up to you to decide whether you get Ruby involved in this process of healing. If she was, indeed, genuine in what she said back then, she might just want to join our debate again. I am curious to know whether and how she has changed her concepts of love. Did I challenge and revisit mine? Yes and no. I remain convinced that if one meets a person one loves, even if one is already involved in a love relationship, one should not deny this love a chance to exist. Normally when the love one shares with one's partner is intact it would be hard, if not impossible, for other forms of love to intrude, but human love is never intact. There is always place for more love. You are wrong in mentioning that in my new life I love yet another woman. She is not just another woman. You might wonder why Ruby and I didn't get a chance to get closer after my divorce and her husband's passing. Well, precisely because my second wife is the one that made me realize – something Ruby couldn't back then – that I had to move on in the field of love. My second wife was the trigger to brave the waves, leave my safe haven and find another one. I know now that it is possible to find a new world, which is superior to the one left behind. To my knowledge Ruby did not experience this, which is why she does not believe in the essence of free love. It isn't about just loving another person. Accepting free love is trusting that humans do not rule in the field of love. It has not been easy to leave my first wife for my second one, even if I believed that there was a better future waiting for me. At the time that one leaves a safe haven, one's faith in the Almighty must be intact to put the step. One's belief that Life knows better what is good for us is the essence of free love. It is about trust that if we are given the chance to fall in love – even if already in a love relationship – this feeling is a present we should not ignore. I wonder whether Ruby was able to change at least that much to accept that the love I feel for her is not just the love I feel for yet another woman. It is a present from the gods, which they gave me to cherish every day of my life. And yes, I knew that her little boy passed on. It must be truly hard for a mother to see her kid leave this earth before she does, but if the gods let this happen, it is because they knew that she had the strength to carry this burden. Humans are free to accept life or reject it. She could have refused to acknowledge what happened to her and lose the opportunity to be eye in eye with the Almighty, but she didn't behave like a coward, accepting life as it was without turning her heart into a stone. True, my wife is unaware of what is developing between Ruby and me, at least in a way: about two

years ago she saw a flirtatious mail I sent to Ruby and wanted to know what was going on. I promised her that if she would not mention her name again, I wouldn't either, and since that day we never spoke about Ruby again. In that regard I did change, but the one who made me do so was my wife herself. I remember a discussion I had with her many years ago. I asked her what she would do if she fell in love again. Her answer struck me like a thunder: 'I wouldn't tell you.' In my eyes such behavior equaled hypocrisy, but she made me understand that, instead, it was an act of love: 'I don't want this to happen, but if it does, I would not want to hurt you.' I don't tell my wife that my feelings for Ruby are real and strong, because I adore her and know that my newly developing love might kill her, yet I can't help trusting that my passion for Ruby is a gift from above.

DOCTOR

I understand you, Carl, even though you might have the impression that I don't, yet if you would be right in your perception that it is possible to love more than one person, I think that it is important to know a person before one fall in love. It is kind of obvious to me that you fell in love with Ruby a long time ago, but isn't it time for you to realize that she might not love you? It hurts me to see that you still hope for her love in return. You aren't the mermaid like she claims, but she is, and she is not the only one in her family. Her sister had an affair with a married man once too. Ruby grew up in a world where it is more important to look, rather than to be good. She doesn't care whether you are hurting when you miss her; she didn't miss you at all; she just likes the thought of you missing her, but it would be in your advantage to let her go. Let her look good as much as she wants to, it won't ever make her good. This is at least my subjective impression after a long conversation with her. She even tried to make me believe she loved you, but I have my doubts. I agree that I could be wrong though; I also had a long discussion with your first wife who has her weaknesses, but is a good person. She explained why both of you split up after ten years of marriage while remaining best friends; she will never harm or hurt you. Her mother, whom I was told is late, loved you and from what I gathered you perceive her to be one of your guardian angels. I am sure she will agree with me that Ruby is just a fake. It must be hard to go through a process of cleansing when you have cherished a person for so long, but was it love? Weren't you attracted, instead, by the image you created of her? Is she possibly not the person she would like other people to believe she is? For a long time, I have been convinced that you were a devil and Ruby your victim, but after a period of silence and a lengthy discussion with both of you, I know better. It seems to me as if she isn't the cool girl you take her for. Is she not rather old-fashioned, selfish and very traditional, caring only about her little circle: her academic and

professional advancement, her appearance and her daughters; is it not all about her and her family? She keeps on portraying herself to be this talented woman with a bright future, yet she is old and has no future. Isn't she dead already? Her appearance might have a future, but a worthless one. It is nothing but a narcissistic show. If she loves you the way you love her, she will accept that you pull back for as long as you need to, to see her as she is, yet if she doesn't love you, she will forget about you soon after you stop contacting her. It will hurt, but you will get over it and move on.

CARL

With all due respect, I disagree, doctor. Ruby has proven to be a charming woman and here you go breaking her down. Didn't she make sure I wouldn't lose what I had; didn't she accept that my situation is difficult? Do you purposefully turn all her qualities into defaults? I guess you have a reason for doing so. Are you possibly trying to help me, to avoid me drowning in my love for her? Did you say those nasty things in an attempt to spare me unnecessary pain? My intuition tells me that one day I shall end up with Ruby, but I cannot grasp how and when. So many scenarios are possible. I have that deeper feeling that our paths will cross again someday. Do you want to prevent me from crashing down to earth while attempting to reach the sun, like Icarus fell to his death after ignoring the instructions of his father Daedalus? Shall I fall, if I ignore your counsel?

DOCTOR

I admire your willingness to defend her no matter what I say, but remain convinced though, that she is not the right one for you. The closer you get to her, the more she moves back, unable to bind herself, because her allegiance is with her late husband. She wouldn't know how to cope with new love in her life, perceiving this to be a betrayal to the man she cannot let go. This is my opinion, but I could be wrong and, in a way, I hope I am since I can see that you are desperately in love with her. Have you reached a point of no return? Can you still pull back? You seem convinced that it is worth fighting for her, but think twice before you take radical decisions.

CARL

I value your advice and thank you for the time you have invested in me; I wonder though, whether the issue of free love will ever be clarified. My heart is divided: I love two women at the same time, but why this is the case remains unanswered. Ruby made me discover the eagle in me who loves to fly above the Mountain top. I keep your advice in mind though, to avoid rushing into anything and burning my wings in the process.

RUBY

Do you want my opinion? Carl remains fixated at the self-gratification phase in life. He tries to flower it with wit and words, but the reality is that he is at the identification stage where the 'me, myself and I' are taking center stage; he wants his second wife combined with me as a girlfriend, but I shall stay outside his reach as long as he cannot put his money where his freaking mouth is. Can love end without an apparent beginning?

CARL

Why should we stay together if Ruby is unable to enjoy my company anymore? I still love her, but since my love isn't appreciated, I should let her go, but can I? I am sure that is not her concern. She can cut me out, if that is her call. There will definitely be other women who will make me rediscover the eagle in me. Over the years she became like a duck, getting angry when one ventures too close to her ducklings, or a mother hen who lost contact with her sexual desires. Is she even too dry for the slaughterhouse? How sad, really. Recently she asked me not to contact her anymore, and since I knew I wouldn't be able to cope with it alone, I asked my maternal grandmother who is late, to help me survive this depression. She showed understanding for my decision to seek help, without making any judgment, and warned me that it wouldn't be easy, promising to stay on my side until I would reach the end of the tunnel. Was she my angel guiding me to the light? I couldn't grasp the idea of a life without Ruby, but my grandmother advised me to take it one step at a time, keeping the hope alive that I would see Ruby again someday, even if for now I should focus on other things. Three days after the breakup I got a mail from Ruby: 'I want you to know that each time we chat, you hurt me a little more, and someday it will hurt so much that I sincerely won't respond.' It made me realize that Ruby loved me too. Could it be the situation I am in that puts everything on hold? Am I the captain of my soul, and the master of my fate? 'This whole situation is crazy for us both and I guess what upsets me a lot is your innuendos that I am feeling less. Just thank your lucky stars that I don't act on my emotions. I try to act nasty and hurt you so that you can be put off me and not tempt fate.' An earthquake was in the make and when kids are at stake things are different, her point eight years ago. Are we standing in front of an unbreakable wall? Did we reach a full circle?

DOCTOR

Ruby decided to let it rest for a while and focused instead on her research proposal to obtain her degree in doctor of philosophy. It seemed easier to obtain a doctoral degree than to solve the questions she was confronted with in her secret relationship. Carl's latest vision involved a snake who warned him for possible consequences in case he would trespass the

invisible line. It reminded him of the serpent in the bible, be it with a different twist: not the devil, but the angels themselves were warning him. This vision confirmed his view that the devil is a man-made construction, based on the human dichotomy between good and bad, but that in reality he isn't an entity which can be detached from God. The snake is God and devil at the same time, in as much as it encourages you to follow a certain path while showing you the potential injuries if you don't. The human mind must live with the consequences of the decisions taken by life itself. The choices that are given to humans are predestined ones. Life can suddenly push you in another direction, and a flexible mind will cope more easily with the radically imposed changes. The vision of the snake isn't one of choice, but one of preparation for what will come. Should humans always try to be ready for the unknown? Carl enjoyed the quietness, aware that a storm could follow at any given time. Would it pass by and leave his life intact? How could humans believe that they have any impact on the course of their lives? Outrageous arrogance. Even if Ruby would end up with Carl, her late husband would always be at her side, watching her, making sure that she would be happy. Carl knew and accepted that. After all, he too had a past that Ruby would have to live with. Once married, always married. Ruby waited patiently for Carl to do something about his eternal undying love. Somehow, she didn't believe it to be genuine. It seemed at times to be just a creation in his brain. When would he act upon it? What exactly did she expect and how would she react, if he would tell her he was honest about his plan to get divorced? Would there be place in her life for him? The present situation seemed detached from reality, but was it? She hated him to doubt her feelings, but didn't she often doubt his? It would be so nice if one day both of them could get rid of their emotional and physical shackles to love each other without boundaries, and allow their feelings to blossom like wine red roses, but would this day ever see the light? At times they feared the day that their lives would be turned upside down by love. Their hearts were at peace now, but for how long? They seemed to be nothing more than dice in the hands of fate. Ruby was quite a turn-on. Many men fell for her charms, not only Carl, but she contained her feelings well, being a master in matters of love, until that day in April when the tsunami started to roll. She came to see me in my office and admitted that she desperately wanted to make love to Carl. There was a chance that he would come to South Africa, and she couldn't wait for him to visit. He would be the gardener of the wild bushes between her legs, planting a cherry tree in the midst of it, which would blossom every year on the anniversary of their first sexual encounter. That was the dream she carried inside her. The passion they shared had to stay contained a little longer, but would it stop them from making virtual love?

RUBY

I fell in love with Carl even though I didn't think this would ever happen to me again, but now that I want him deep inside me, I wonder whether this is not a betrayal towards my late husband. How could I cross the symbolic river of guilt? Please help me to do so. I want it so badly.

DOCTOR

I don't know how you will end up crossing the river, but it is humanely possible since Carl seems to cheat without apparent feeling of guilt. Is he pretending not to feel guilty or is there no reason for him to feel responsible for his predestined acts? He claims to follow his heart and what is wrong with that? Will he feel accountable all his life for having broken his marital vows, or doesn't he perceive his actions as such? If life allows him to love freely, he is not cheating on anyone, but merely exploring the depth of his heart, while acting upon his feelings. Is that unfair behavior? If he is honest about it, who could blame him? He is unwilling to give up what he has – a happy family – to be with you. Does this make him a coward? Could he even live with the idea of being one?

CARL

I love Ruby and she loves me; I am married and she is single, yet still loves her late husband. We do play open cards, but do not share this information with other people, because they are no part of this relationship. Our bond is secret, although I would love to scream it out loud, but this might never happen, because I won't give up my marriage for it, as I said before. I also did not expect Ruby to break up her marriage to be with me many moons ago, yet I do believe that life has a surprise for us. Although we seem to share nothing more than a platonic relationship, I definitely trust we are meant to fuse in the flesh someday, somewhere.

DOCTOR

Soon after Ruby's visit to my office a first tsunami started rolling without hitting the coast though. There was no collateral damage, yet if Carl had also been single, he would be on a plane to South Africa already. He knew that he was no chicken; he had seen it all before during his divorce, but this time around it was something else that stopped him. Not the unknown of which he wasn't scared, but the fear to be foolish in a moment of total bliss. Did he suddenly realize he could control his own life? He was crazily in love with Ruby, but wouldn't allow his feelings to floor him. Why was he so protective suddenly? Was the tsunami a moment of madness which could end with disappointment for both of them? Ruby fell back in her role of eternal complainer: 'You expect from others what you are incapable of giving, ruthlessly criticized me for not acting on my

emotions, for being committed to my marriage, for not embracing true love, but look now on which hand the glove fits oh so perfectly. I know now that I have become a fill in the blank in your life. Don't worry, the tsunami won't ever hit the shore. I do have the power to stop it. Rest assured, your beautiful glass palace on the white beach will be saved. I just regret exposing myself to you; I shall try to occupy myself so that the need to feel for you doesn't arise.' Carl's guardian angel whispered a few wise words in his ears: 'It would be better not to contact her for a while. She exposed her heart to you, but has difficulties coping with it. If you write to her now, she will reject you, because she doesn't know how to handle this situation. She blames you for expecting more than you can give; she is wrong in that regard. Meanwhile there is no way you can prove it at this point in time.' Carl followed this advice, because Ruby had disappointed him by trying to keep control instead of letting her energies flow. After the first tsunami, a period of silence followed, which they both needed to digest their disappointment, find peace in their hearts, and refill their batteries. Ruby regretted exposing herself, whereas Carl felt misunderstood and was disappointed that she couldn't expose herself more in the heat of the moment. Years ago, he never expected her to leave her haven of peace. He just wanted her to face the wide-open sea to love and admit she did, without being negative or sarcastic about it. Now that both of them could naturally express their mutual love, she blamed him for safeguarding his haven of peace. Not only did she do exactly the same many years ago, he also never expected her to act otherwise. Was she unable to love freely without engagement? He couldn't understand why she was upset exposing herself. If they would end up together, they would form a New Haven of peace, but this would be a new and different relationship. Why was she negative about this love that wouldn't settle down as yet? Was it the ultimate proof that Ruby had never accepted the idea of free love? After his proposal to stop the relationship, if she so wished, she was short: 'Bugger off and allow yourself to continue living a double life in which your epic concepts of color coded and free love, safe haven and the like, remain fluid concepts, ready to metamorphose to suit your life situation at the time. You would get your way yet again.' She abruptly ended the relationship, but would she be able to kill her love? Carl was relieved to take his kids to Paris that day, joining Megan who was there on a seminar. Was it the start of a mourning period? Had he been floored by the compelling reality that humans must choose between lovers? Was he being punished for loving two women? To understand the reason of his depression, I had to dig deeper into his emotional past. What was the real cause of his divorce? Was he truly happier today?

CARL

I got divorced because my first wife and I felt sibling love for one another, reading each other like open books. During our ten years together it all seemed perfect, but it ended when I found out that my wife had cheated on me for six months. The guy she had an affair with started going out with another common friend of ours. The girls got jealous of one another and became sworn enemies, and since this other girl was a dangerous potential leak of crucial information, my wife admitted everything to me, under social pressure so to speak. Anyway, let me be clear on a few things. I do not blame my former wife for what happened. She tried to understand my free love theory by putting it into practice. I guess that I pushed her in that direction. It is definitely not because she cheated on me that we got divorced. I cheated on her, be it in spirit, too many times. She even allowed me to imagine other women while penetrating her. Was it because she felt guilty herself? All I know is that I enjoyed it. Call me selfish if you like. I didn't perceive it as such. It was just the consequence of my acceptance of free love. She wrote a wonderful story about it, called *The Stone*, and it is only when I read it that I started to realize how much I hurt her unwillingly, but she nevertheless never stopped loving me. She wasn't a sucker, rather a strong woman who loved me no matter what, but after her affair I started to question our relationship and came to the painful and sad conclusion that the love we shared was friendship-based-love, which is not as strong as lover-love. When both come face to face, the former has to step aside, which is exactly what happened. This brings me to your second question. Do I love my second wife? I do. She is the best thing that ever happened to me thus far, but faithful to my free love mantra I shall always try to reach higher, even if this seems almost impossible in my situation. When I met my second wife, I just knew my time with my first wife was over. The kiss we shared during a professional seminar in Trier, Germany, erased all previous kisses. I waited two weeks to be sure of my feelings, after which I told my wife about it and our world fell apart. We realized that same night that we would never kiss again. It was hard, but time helped to heal the wounds, even though scars will remain forever. It is definitely not because I asked for the divorce that I did not suffer from it. It was a decision I had to, but most certainly didn't like to take. Today both women are on speaking terms. They let bygones be bygones, even if they are too different to ever become friends. My first wife also remarried. We remained close, but I never told her about my secret relationship with Ruby, because she hated the latter, although she wasn't in any way the cause of our divorce. My feelings for her helped to speed up the process though. This brings me to your third question. Ruby means the world to me, because she is an intelligent woman with a great sense of humor and a very attractive smile, who personifies the ideal of free love to me. She

might be the woman whom I always wanted to have, but who never seemed to cross my path. I could imagine being with her without needing anyone else. Even though I love my second wife to bits, I keep on dreaming about achieving the ultimate goal by marrying my third wife. Each color corresponds with a form of love. Once a woman captures the color, she seizes the corresponding part in my heart. My first wife was blue, my second one is green and my third wife will be red. The last color symbolizes the highest possible form of human love. The problem with Ruby though, is that she does not trust my color-coded-love philosophy, believing that I shall keep on searching further, and that after the red color comes a yet undiscovered one. I can't prove her wrong, even if I trust that there is nothing after red except an empty space. Red is my ultimate goal, but to reach it, I won't step over corpses. I prefer a happy life, knowing that I might not have reached the ultimate love, rather than a life where I reach it, at the cost of creating clouds of sadness around me which would never dissipate. My second wife could accept one day, like my first wife did, that I found someone who allowed me to reach the last step up to ideal love, but the scar I shall leave in the soul of my kids might remain forever. That is my fear and I would never forgive myself, for I love them too much to harm them, even if it is to reach an ultimate goal. Another thing stops me: sometimes I get the feeling that the love I share with Ruby could be nothing but a fantasy. I guess I just need time after this tsunami to find my bearings back; I believe that someday we shall talk and get clarity on what we mean to each other and our seemingly different concepts of love.

DOCTOR

For me to understand you, Carl, you need to disclose the deepest, even hidden secrets of your heart. How do you experience the relationship you share with Ruby? Do you enjoy keeping your wife in the dark?

CARL

I am preparing myself emotionally for what might come: a second divorce and a third marriage. How would my wife and I explain this to our kids? Where would I live? Would I get married for a second time in the Indian temple – my first wife was also a Hindu – or would Ruby prefer not to, since she also married before Ganesh, Krishna and Vishnu. Somehow it doesn't feel right to marry twice before the same gods. If one would qualify my feelings for Ruby as cheating, I enjoy doing so, but – as I said before – I don't look at it that way. I love my wife, enjoy making love to her and don't want to think of my extra-marital feelings as mere cheating. Will the truth ever set me free? Is it just a matter of time or will action be required to realize change? I don't know as yet. It remains a mystery.

DOCTOR

I shall invite Ruby to find out whether she considers sharing her life with you. Does she think of it at all or was she serious when she broke off with you? If not, would she move to Europe or would she prefer you to move to South Africa? Does she accept or refuse any responsibility in your second divorce? Serious questions need serious answers. Let us see if she is up to the task. It seems to me as if the first tsunami might soon be followed by a second one, but didn't Ruby say that she has the power to stop it? Let us hear her out. When will you start your mourning period though, if Ruby confirms her break up? Is it time to start taking serious measures in that case? Silence alone won't help. You could try looking at your relationship with Ruby from a different perspective, not as a third marriage, but as a romantic relationship which might even be celebrated in the flesh, yet nothing more. You say about your present wife that she is the best thing that happened to you thus far. Meanwhile you also claim that Ruby is your ultimate love and that she means the world to you. Can you clear the clutter in your mind about whom you love and who you want to be with? Her challenge with you is that you don't know what you want in love, so when you do get a person, how will you recognize her as the one? And what is stopping you from moving from one color to the next? The rainbow is made up of many colors and countless shades. Does your appetite for love extent to those insatiable levels as well? What sexually have you done with your ex-wife that you haven't done with your present one and vice versa and why? Did you reserve anything exclusively for Ruby? Enact a lovemaking scene with her; it will help you in defining your aha moment. It is crunch time, so to speak.

RUBY

A friend of mine was in a love crisis and made an appointment to go for a tarot reading. As I went along for moral support, I was offered a reading. The lady was accurate on many levels. She picked up that there is this man who is attracted to me, but I am too closed. I guess having lost my husband has also made me lose my faith in the staying power of relationships. She does pick up that he loves me, but doesn't have staying power. If I decide to enter into a relationship with him, he will keep looking for more. I don't hold too much of faith in a pack of cards though, trusting that people define their destiny. Carl on the other hand believes in predestination. We clearly believe in different things yet love one another.

CARL

Ruby blames me for not knowing what I want in love, whereas I do. I never regretted my divorce, however a nice person my first wife has been. When I move on, I never turn back. It is not because Ruby only made love

to one man that she must assume that I am unstable just because I remarried. I never failed to recognize the love I feel for a certain person, and how I do this is something I do not expect others to understand. It is also not something one can easily rationalize since it is a matter of confidence. My present wife trusted me to love her more than I loved my first wife. Ruby wonders what is stopping me from moving from one color to the next. My whole adult life has been determined by three colors, which also symbolize my limits. I do not care about the other colors of the rainbow. They might be useful for other people, but not for me. What have I done sexually with my ex-wife that I haven't done with my present wife? Nothing, since my present wife beats my ex-wife in all fields. What have I reserved exclusively for Ruby? If she is the one I think she is, everything I shall do with her will overclass what I do with my present wife, from a simple kiss to lovemaking. Before I enact a lovemaking scene with Ruby, let me fire right back with the following question: What does Ruby reserve for me? Because if certain things might hold her back, other things refrain me from moving on. I don't expect her to say anything bad about her late husband, but I wonder whether she is able to rationalize her relationship with him. Everything is always described in absolute terms. It sounds unreal that a relationship is hundred percent perfect, and if she can only confirm that, it means that she cannot let go her past, unable to describe it as an objective event. Does she think that he would mind that she experiences even better lovemaking with someone else; does she feel guilty about finding something new that ends up being better? Is she convinced that he might deny her new joys? I guess you get my drift? I shall describe the lovemaking scene after Ruby opens up a little more. You cannot expect me to blow open totally if there is not a similar move from her side. I guess we shall have to open up together or not at all. It would turn you into a voyeur and me into an exhibitionist. This being said, I would like to hold Ruby in my arms, look her in the eyes, kiss her softly while squeezing her butt and fingering her softly. Until her breathing would tell me that she wants more, and the rest I shall tell you in due time. I went recently to my favorite graveyard where I enjoy standing on top of a little hill, where I would like to take Ruby one day, to show her how she makes me feel. There are stairs leading up to the hill, split up in three parts. When I climb up the first one, I can see the graveyard from above, and feel the presence of Shana, who helped me to discover a new world. On the second level I sense the presence of Megan who is more of a high flyer, and finally when I climb up the stairs to the top, I know there is no place closer to God. I am happy at my second level yet something difficult to describe pulls me up higher. Why do I know that Ruby is there? Because everything confirms it. Is it a matter of trust? Please ask her to discuss her past and what she sees when she dreams of a future with me.

RUBY

Doctor, for me sex is not the be-all-and-end-all of a relationship. Indeed, it is a very integral part, but the ability to laugh, the comfortableness of teasing each other, and emotional compatibility are infinitely more of a turn on than the act itself. My husband and I often slept in separate rooms. It all depended upon my son and in which room he fell asleep. One of us had to almost always be on night guard. I vividly recall having family and friends raise eyebrows at that, whisper at how unnatural the sleeping arrangements were. For us it was perfectly normal. How many couples sleep in the same bed and don't even touch each other? We always went to bed as a couple with my son to the side, but to allow the other a good night's sleep, one of us slipped out to the other room. My husband was my first and only lover. Old fashioned, strange, weird? Perhaps, but this is the truth. He had many lovers before me and just as I know that tomorrow will arrive no matter what happens, I knew that after we married, I remained his only love. I say this not with arrogance or pride, but with a simple: I just know. That is why I don't understand how Carl can be so shortsighted and think that his wife doesn't sense his infidelity, but I don't want to speculate on this as I am not familiar with his home situation. How is this for a romantic setting or venue for declaring, in person, one's undying love: a graveyard? He makes a very important statement here: 'I am happy at my second level, yet something difficult to describe pulls me up higher.' Please make a note to get Carl unpack this further if he cares to. Eight years ago, I became very good friends with a guy from Austria. We shared an amazing relationship based on academic attraction, pure love and something undefined. This camaraderie and closeness co-existed throughout these years, and then in early 2009 it developed into this yet still undefined something. He visited as he always did twice a year and this was the first time my girls and I visited him. This something just grew and for the most part it went unchecked by me. When we returned to South Africa we had to speak about this that had developed and, in a way, I fell in love again and he completely and hopelessly as well. When he came to South Africa my girls and I joined him for a weekend away and it was here that we kissed for the first time. It shook me to the core. A part of me wanted to and the other part felt as if I betrayed my husband. Carl is right when he speaks of the guilt, I seem to have shrouded over me. To say I didn't like it would be lying, but I did not allow it to go more than kisses and petting. Of course I was overcome with guilt, even disgust at myself, and it took me a long time to work through this feeling, to understand that this was a natural stage of grieving for someone having gone down the road I had just walked with my losses, but I ended the relationship and turned my back to a beautiful friend. We are still in contact and he has

moved on, but we both know that while that something remains undefined, it also binds us forever. I share this with you, doctor, because I am now not overcome with guilt and neither do I feel as if my husband would be upset or begrudge me another shot at happiness. I am not so naïve to think that lovemaking with different partners can be the same. What do I see happen between us? Whatever Carl wants. Is it ever about anyone else but him?

CARL

I wonder whether I could ever reach the symbolic top of the graveyard with Ruby, because in life there are many lost opportunities, as she just described; I hope she will take her chances next time a lover crosses her path, now that she finally made peace with her past. Maybe we are both ready to move on now. Will it be in the same direction? If so, I shall disclose my love life and dreams to her in person, not before that.

DOCTOR

This is not the response I expected, but since you will be going away with your family for a week, a break up might be better for the conscience than wondering during your holidays what is happening with Ruby. Shall we again be led by you? Feel free to break the silence whenever you want. I shall be here to reschedule, but remember that she does not guarantee a continuation after a break. You move in your direction as Ruby hers. Do you ever consult with her late husband? If so, what do you talk about? As a doctor it is neither good nor wise to express a personal opinion, but I shall take the liberty to express my thoughts here: I feel that you have acted quite typically. You ask Ruby to open up and when she does, you clamp down, but as I say, it is just my thought based on your past behavior, which isn't necessarily good or bad. Do you want to retreat? My policy remains: I shall help you to the best of my abilities, if you want me to, wishing you and your family in the meantime a Happy Easter.

CARL

What is this for nonsense, doctor? I don't want to break up with Ruby. I love to tune in to feel what is happening down south, but since she isn't able to guarantee anything, I don't put my hopes too high. Sure, she is ready for a new relationship now that she could free herself already partly from the shackles of her past, but I don't feel the passion. She is just happy to be free again, but doesn't care too much about who she will be sharing her life with: nobody, me or anyone else for that matter. Could this explain why I cannot open up as yet? Do I need her help, like she needed mine? This might require a lot of patience. Why do you want to know what I speak about with Ruby's late husband? Could you explain to me in which way this could be important for my treatment? I don't pay for curiosity and

don't care about your personal opinions. Where do you get the idea that I clamp down? I am eager to find out in which direction this will evolve.

DOCTOR

Welcome back. Has Easter been fruitful to your emotional well-being?

CARL

Let me read you the letter I just got from Ruby. I don't understand it. I guess she wants nothing to do with me anymore. My heart is broken, since I did not see this coming. Honestly, there is nothing I have done that could have caused such a reaction from her side, if she was in a normal state of mind. Is she depressed or am I, like she insinuates, so insensitive that I don't feel her heartbeat? Here goes her letter: 'Why do you always goad me to open up, bare my heart and then chip away at it? I am so hurt that I actually feel like running far away. You are a cruel person. Whether you meant to or not, you have now two times coaxed me into opening up, and then you return with your mind games and rub salt on my vulnerabilities. I give up and say this as a humble, even broken person: please reach whichever peak you want, but just leave me alone. Even with my gut-wrenching losses, my boys, my greatest regret is having met you. Please go back and stay back. Life and people are pawns to you and you enjoy games, but for some of us life is serious. I hope you will grow up one day to understand what I mean. Every success in whatever you do, but please don't hurt any more people.' What do you make of it? Could you please tell her that I am not playing games? Let me start by opening up about my past love life or would that be too little too late? It won't hurt anyway. I truly fell in love for the first time in my life at the age of twenty-two. Her name was Leona. We met in law school. She was the perfect girl, my Monica Bellucci. I wrote hundreds of poems to express my love for her; I even remember writing some, as I was participating in my written exams, even though we had a limited amount of time. When the urge to write came up I had to do so no matter what. Crazy, I know. The idea of suicide crossed my mind in those days, but I made a pledge with myself: I could do anything I wanted except that. It is then that I turned my rational three-color philosophy into an emotional split-up, to avoid ever being hurt like that again. Every person I would love in future would get a part of, but never my whole heart. I was often lost while being in that relationship: too crazy about her to leave and terrified at the thought of losing her, while knowing that she did not truly love me. It is only my departure to South Africa after my university studies that allowed me to leave her behind, yet my mourning still lasted more than two years. Thereafter I met my first wife who opened up a whole new world of love without pain. I tremendously enjoyed being with her. We were happy for many years,

even if I was not always faithful as a boyfriend. While dating her I slept with Maya, a girl I met in Johannesburg in 1997, and in that same year I slept with Jewel, a nurse from the Cape Province. Especially the latter left a stamp on my heart that I have never been able to erase up until today. Don't get me wrong, I didn't hide these escapades for very long. She got to hear the whole story, but by doing so I made things worse. It is only now that I realize that it is better to keep quiet sometimes. Certain events better remain unspoken. Thereafter I had a few crushes, but never slept with anyone but my wife, until I met my second wife. Yet by then the whole situation had changed, as I described above. I have always been faithful to my second wife; I love her very much, but Ruby has special powers over me and could get me to cheat; I truly look forward to sharing her bed even if it might remain a dream forever. It is strange how certain people cross your path in life and influence your being to the core without ever getting close enough to fuse. What do I speak to Ruby's late husband about in my prayers? I often remember his wise words: 'When you have a child with Down syndrome, you learn to look at life from a different perspective. You don't complain anymore about small things.' He made me realize the importance of social relativity. I thank him for the wisdom he shared with me. He loved Ruby with all his heart and so did she love him back, but now that she had time to mourn her losses, he would love her to move on and open her heart again; he asked me to help her in this process, even if he knew and warned me that she would not necessarily thank me for my efforts on the short run. I love Ruby and can only hope that one day we shall meet in the flesh so that she can see for herself that I have never intended nor wanted to hurt her, on the contrary. My heart is connected to hers and if I hurt her, I hurt myself. Why would I do this? Please tell her that I love her very much. I have never lied about the fact that I am happily married and would never leave my safe haven to be with her; I cannot do that, but truly love her and never intended any harm. My love for her is genuine. She is not a pawn in my life, but an angel, a divine being, a mystery. I admire her more than words can say; I love her advanced reasoning process, her passion, her strengths as well as her weaknesses; I shall try not to contact her again, if that is what she wishes.

DOCTOR

Did you reach a point of no return, helping you to realize where you stand?

CARL

I reached what I always dreamed of: a situation where I can say with certainty that I love her and that she loves me. Easter passed by in silence and I hope every day that she will contact me again, but I cannot make the first move. She disappeared from the earth, but remains deeply in my

heart. The hope in me is so strong that I can wait with a smile, for I know that one day we shall get married. Maybe I am a dreamer, but I trust that this reverie will materialize in whichever way. Last night I dreamed about Jewel, the nurse from the Cape, whom I met in 1997. Many years passed by since our encounter. It felt good to see her. I walked down the street and heard someone mention her name. I stopped, turned around and saw her, more beautiful than ever. Without ado we kissed each other into the stars, and when I woke up, I thought about Ruby's words: 'He will keep on hunting.' I must say that the idea to visit Jewel someday crossed my mind; I would nail her like I did in the military accommodation as well as on the backseat of my old VW Passat, back then in the old days. We were steaming up so much that her glasses were fogged. I won't ever forget her. She is in me forever. Am I a lover boy, with free love as only religion?

DOCTOR

Your defense mechanism helps you to overcome your pain: by meeting Jewel in your dreams, your heart takes a break from Ruby. Do you think that you would still long for the former, if you ever end up with the latter?

CARL

My hunger for Jewel will never die, but she became a lesbian, so that the danger of us making out again is reduced to almost zero. The fact that I have a permanent place for her in my heart is a given, which Ruby would have to accept, like she would have to deal with the risk that I could meet her again, which wouldn't alter in any way the ultimate love I feel for her. That is the whole point of free love. There is no cheating, only freedom. Is Jewel a flame that did not burn out as yet? Right now, I treasure her in my heart and she might burn forever, but maybe I shall realize someday that she was great back then, but lost her magic on the road of life.

DOCTOR

Do you miss Ruby?

CARL

I wish I could tell you that I did not, since she asked me to leave her alone, and that I could forget about her, but I cannot. Since her sudden departure I have noticed some positive changes in my life, though. I fell in love all over again with my wife, whom I have always been attracted to, but I sense a new wave of passion arousing me when I look at her. During the act it excites me to watch her masturbate while I lick her nipples. Just before she explodes, she begs me to fuck her, but I resist with a rebellious smile and tell her to cum first. After her first orgasm I fuck her to a second one: sexual excitement at its best, yet I am unable to erase Ruby and

wonder whether our first tsunami will be followed by others. Passion is stronger than love, which is why I am happy that my relationship with my wife encompasses both; to counter the immense passion I feel for Ruby. What kind of freedom will be waiting for me at the end of the tunnel?

DOCTOR

Give me an update of what happened since I last saw you weeks ago.

CARL

I am happy I kept my relationship secret which saved my marriage; I miss Ruby, but was able to find peace. Whether my heart will accept a truce is a question I cannot answer, since a volcano can erupt after years of silence. While making love Megan asked me recently to describe my fantasies. I was taken aback, but also happy that I could open up. I honestly told her that I would like to make love to her gorgeous friend Anushka, and while saying so my soldier swelled up inside her. When she wanted me to describe more of my sexual desires, I let loose my wildest imagination, pointing out, though, that my sweetest illusions were to drink the warm urine she would piss in my mouth or to watch another man screw her. Are fantasies merely fantasies or are they realities waiting to be born? Ruby crossed my mind, but I did not mention her name. Partly because she is more than just a fantasy, but mostly because I didn't want her memories to have any influence on my marital love life. Is she being erased out of my life as time goes by? Am I mourning? Does it feel good to leave her behind for now? Did I learn to ignore people who ignore me? Is life too short to waste time? I have a double feeling: I love Ruby, yet if she has a problem being merely my lover on the side, there is nothing I can do about it right now.

DOCTOR

Are you truly leaving the past behind? Let us hope you will keep up the good spirits. Don't ever take anything for granted in the field of passion. Before you know it, you make contact again and get floored, even if at this point in time you seem to have dominated passion. Don't let your desires for other women get the better of you: a few drops of fantasy cannot hurt anyone, as long as the weed doesn't destroy the green grass.

CARL

Two months passed by since Ruby and I turned a page in our lives. I keep hoping though, that it wasn't the last one of the books we opened years ago; I still dream of her as my lover. The flowers in the Garden of Eden are growing and I believe, more than ever before, that love should be free of all pressures. I trust that one day free love will reign supreme, proving

to be stronger than one-partner-love, which is unjustly proclaimed to be the only form of true love. Does exclusivity kill the essence of love's magic?

DOCTOR

Choosing for Megan implies letting go of Ruby, except in a world of free love where different passions can grow simultaneously. Will humanity ever be ready for it; will humans ever free themselves of their shackles?

CARL

Three months passed by and at times I am craving for her so much. It is very physical. I want to touch her and realize my feelings are very sex-driven. Did I use her to get rid of possible sexual frustrations? Fact is that I cannot make love to my wife as often as I would like to. She isn't as horny for sex as I am. When we make out, we both have a great time, but she cannot keep up with my wish to make love at least once a day. Am I a sex maniac? The saying goes that 'everyone who looks on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart'. If this is true, I committed this type of perceived infidelity many times over. I love my wife too much to leave her, but why couldn't I meet Ruby in the wide-open sea without harming my safe haven? Why did she pull back so suddenly? Was an affair not enough anymore? Did she feel bad about it, did she want more? How could she blame me? I never expected more from her, when she was protecting her safe haven back then. All I wanted was to meet her in a secret room to spend some very special time together.

DOCTOR

Did you try drinking cold water when your wife wasn't in the mood? Not everyone has the energy to make out every night, and since a man has to do what he has to do – nobody likes to go to bed with a rock between his legs – I am sure you enjoy the occasional masturbation. The reason why Ruby pulled back is also a mystery to me. I guess she couldn't cope with the feelings of guilt. She is a good woman who ended up playing the role of a bad one trying to snitch a man away from his safe haven. Was she unable to live with that? Should you forget about her; should you freeze her in the fridge compartment of your heart? She might show up again, but in the meantime, you shouldn't allow her too much of a grip on your heart.

CARL

I had a dream last night in which a crocodile and a gazelle fell in love. The gazelle liked to come to the river to flirt with the crocodile who enjoyed looking at her cute little ass. One day they decided to move forward in their relationship. They kissed and the crocodile took the gazelle with him

under the water to make love, and that is when they realized that they couldn't form a couple, because the gazelle couldn't breathe under the water. Both were devastated, but could do nothing about it. The crocodile helped the gazelle out of the water and let her go. I don't know whether the gazelle ever came back to the river. Was Ruby the striking gazelle and I the hungry crocodile; was my marital situation the river that made it impossible for the crocodile and the gazelle to live together? Will there ever be a solution for our problem? What seems impossible today might not be so tomorrow. In the meantime, I shall let my heart rest and recover.

DOCTOR

I am sure you know the saying: 'Let the bird go. If it doesn't come back to you, it was never yours, and if it does, it will be yours forever.' It might give you hope and keep you strong in these times of draught and pain.

RUBY

It has been a while doctor. Carl always remained in my heart and was never far from my thoughts. I know that he is giddy with happiness as his wedding anniversary approaches. They probably have another baby in the making. I hope so, as kids are so incredibly precious and rewarding. For me August comes with deep dread, since the 3rd is the anniversary of my son's passing. It is so strange, yet all I want is Carl to be there on that day, to be held and shielded by him, to be safe within his arms. I hope this doesn't sound selfish. It certainly isn't intended to, because I know it will never happen, but who are we to caution the ways of the heart? I have taken to writing just random bits as and when my emotions overwhelm me. Many times, I thought of writing to you, but at those times I felt solo writing was more cathartic and it helped, but when the heart's sorrow cannot be silenced any more, I seek your help. I don't want therapy; I just want to talk, share and say how I feel; I wonder if he has thought of me during this time, even if it were with anger and hatred. Has he reached the third stair overlooking the graveyard with his wife? Maybe it is better you don't tell him that I have been in touch with you or that I have these thoughts, because I know he is happy in his safe haven, but as I said, sometimes the heart wants answers, and when it isn't content with justifications it spills open. So, it helps in these cases to talk to you. I won't take up more of your precious time; I just wanted to touch base again, having this desperate need to link up with him. If he does check in with you and asks about me, please tell him that I am fine, getting along nicely.

DOCTOR

Carl misses you more than words can say. He doesn't know how to cope without you. You are his ultimate love, but since you asked him to quit writing, he did so for your sake. He never stopped hoping though, that you would come back one day and here you are; he will be glad to hear this. In the meantime, he finished his diving course in the hope to dive in South Africa one day. It goes without saying that he would prefer, above anything else, to dive into you, but for the time being he does so under the water and thinks of you while doing so. His garden is also green like a virgin and when he looks at it, he thinks of no one else but you. He is happy in his marriage yet still hopes to marry you; he misses you and hopes to end his life in South Africa someday, only to share it with you.

RUBY

I am happy that Carl is moving along so well, reinventing and re-evolving in his love with his wife. Sometimes I am a bit jealous that he can love so many people at the same time with the same intensity. It also made me happy that he has intermittently thought of me. Then this line came: 'All I can say is that it feels good to leave her behind. Over the years I learned to ignore people who ignore me. Life is too short to waste time.' I guess even if I tried, I could not have summed up and said it as eloquently as he has. In a way he has left me behind, because I don't get his free love concept, and time is, indeed, too precious to waste on someone who seems not to move. In this case he is fair and just to have made that decision, but for the record: I have not ignored him in the conventional sense of the word. If I have been perceived to have done so, it was initially to shield my safe haven and now to protect his. I am no martyr, but just a family person and a mom, but that is water under the bridge now and of no consequence. I do love him, but who says this feeling has to be reciprocated or acted upon. It can be a silent emotion felt from afar, nothing wrong with that. So, I take my love and say goodbye to you for now. Thank you for sharing this with me and helping me limp along. I have a lot of growing up to do and who knows if and when he does come to South Africa to live out his days, I may have evolved into that person he ultimately wants exclusively. Wouldn't it be so ironic, if in this process I would end up outgrowing him?

DOCTOR

Dear Ruby, I won't tell Carl just as yet that you contacted me, because I can sense that you are emotionally unstable right now, and I wouldn't allow you to give him false hope. He would like you to be his girlfriend, but not one that leaves him alone every time she feels like it, not one that sucks information out of him without giving him full information in return, but rather a girlfriend who would trust and respect him for who he is and

would understand his free love approach. He admires you and knows you might outgrow him one day. You mean much more to Carl than you seem to realize. It hurts him when you say goodbye. He wants to keep you close, yet lets you go when you feel this need. You ignored him – at least that was his perception – and he had to find a way to live with it. He doesn't mean what he says, but tries to find a way to let you go without dying in the process. Do you realize that suicide crossed his mind? That is why I advised him to come and see me regularly. Even strong people can in the flash of a desperate moment take their lives and leave this earth. It is never for the right reason, because there is none to commit this final act, but it is human. Come and see me once in a while. Don't close the door of your heart. You can show me the solo writings you referred to, if you feel like. I can analyze them and give you my opinion on them. And just to put the record straight, they are planning to remain a happy family of four without a third child. I won't tell him you contacted me since I can sense you did so in a moment of weakness. You are doing fine Ruby, but feel free to hop in any time you want to. I love to follow the progress you are making.

RUBY

It is so painfully disappointing and sad that Carl keeps misunderstanding me. We share this love that defies a definition, but live in a society with duties and responsibilities. Love can exist on its own and does not need to be acted upon to enhance its validity or authenticity. It can be a reservoir of emotions banked away knowing that whenever you need comfort, unconditional affirmation and support, it is there. I don't contact Carl every time I need him, because if that were the case I would be constantly in contact with him; I only do so when I cannot contain what I am feeling; I tap into my reservoir – him – and this sustains and helps me to move along; I stay away mostly to protect him from leading a double life, like what he did years ago in respect of my situation. Why then does he perceive my attitude to be selfish? I thought he would appreciate the efforts I make to stay away for his peace of mind; I just give up and accept that he will always and forever misunderstand me. It is actually a classic case of darned if I do and darned if I don't. Does he think I get a kick by thinking that suicide crossed his mind; does he even know how this makes me feel? I have seen death too close and too often to want to go down that road again. How would I feel knowing that I was perhaps in part responsible for that? This suicide nonsense is so melodramatic and most unimpressive. I am glad you haven't told him I wrote. This was wise and prophetic of you, doctor. I guess you didn't steal your title after all.

DOCTOR

Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment, said Buddha, and this is also the advice I gave Carl. Since then, I didn't hear from him again. Is he focusing on the love he has, instead of dreaming of a third marriage in an imaginary future? All I know is that I am happy I did not tell him you contacted me again. Most probably he feels the same way you do: silence is gold, but sometimes the heart just yearns for contact. Is it love, passion or a combination of both? In each case it entails the future, which should not bother us too much, for even though we might think we have a grip on the events of life, we truly don't. He loves you so much, not knowing at times how to cope with his feelings, but I am sure he is strengthened by the idea that you love him too. Why don't you contact him directly and tell him how much you love him? He will be more than glad to hear from you. Don't be negative, like you have been so often in the past. The future is not in your hands, nor is it in his. Nobody knows what the future holds. Just allow yourself to love and be loved. Let both your hearts find each other at a distance and in silence. Enjoy the cocktail of love, which is brewed in the caldron of the angels.

CARL

Is Ruby a mermaid with golden fins who disappears for unknown periods of time to suddenly reappear? Why do I keep hoping to see her again?

DOCTOR

Are we captains on our boat, writing the script of our existence? Is Ruby a mermaid, swimming away, seeing you are sharing happiness with Megan?

CARL

Does she refuse to stay in contact with anyone who shows emotional weakness, such as never-ending love? I smile at the thought of having her around; I am sad every time I have to let her go, but it is life and I always hope that one day my heart will be able to step aside, if that is what life compels me to do, but thus far I cannot. My heart will bleed until she returns. Do I need to lose blood to feel that I live? Did I ever enjoy the bleeding? Is the blood loss a part of life or can we avoid it somehow?

RUBY

What makes him think I behave like a mermaid, doctor? I can't believe what I am hearing; I can't swim without him, let alone away from him; I want to make love to him right now, out there in the community.

DOCTOR

Carl is desperately in love with you and I try to keep him sane. If you too are dreadfully in love with him, you turtle doves have to make a plan to get together, but I don't see this happening right now, since he is part of a happy family and you still need time to get over your losses. Am I misreading you when I hear distrust in your voice where Carl is concerned? Do you wonder why he looks forward to spending his third wedding anniversary at the seaside if he misses you? Are you forgetting that for him it is perfectly compatible to love you and his wife, be it in a different way, since there are no emotional barriers in a world of free love?

RUBY

If he has it so good in his marriage, why does he push the envelope? Is it not foolish to ask for more than what he has? Should he not learn to be grateful for what life gave him? If he is in paradise at home, what good ever came out of giving into one's temptation? Am I merely that to him?

CARL

I have a déjà-vu effect, since a lover seems to be out there with even more apparent potential than my wife. At times I believe I should just close the door upon this new flame, yet at others I feel that true love is waiting to be born. Life gives us many opportunities. We don't always use them, bound by moral and social rules, but love is out there, and in all its sweetness it is also cruel. Does it keep knocking on the door of our heart, as long as we aren't fully satisfied? Megan doesn't believe in life after death. Does this sadden me? Do I prefer to live with someone who hopes to be reunited in the afterlife? Why is Ruby interested in me, if her past love life was truly satisfying? How could she explain our love in the light of past fulfillment?

DOCTOR

You shouldn't be too hard on your wife. Not many people get the after-life scenario, as it depends on one's beliefs, culture and socializing. It could be that growing up, this was just what she was told to believe. I guess as an adult we have choices and freedom to explore even stuff that is historically taboo. That she didn't find this topic scintillating is no fault of hers. She may find sewing totally exhilarating while you may battle to even muster up an ounce of interest in it. It doesn't diminish the fact that you still love each other and are a couple together for better or for worse. One day she might even get touched by the after-life idea. As far as your last question is concerned, I am perplexed. That you of all people ask such a question amazes me; you who loved so many women, married twice and possibly even will for a third time, you who believes in color coded love, at different levels and intensities, and all this simultaneously. Ruby once had

a fulfilling love life. Is it surprising to you that she wants more out of life, now that the opportunity presents itself to her? Isn't it nature at its best?

RUBY

That is right, doctor. You read me well. Today I miss the fulfillment I once had, which is why I feel at liberty to love again. There has been no lack of offers, but I am not interested. Is it because I had it so good and don't want to test the waters to become disillusioned? The answer is unknown to me, and I didn't find the need to unpack it more. Then Carl reappears and tugs so at my head and heart, coming with a connection that defies every rational thought. I accept that the link we share spans many lifetimes, because our bond is so strong and has stood the test of many eras; I am helpless to fight it, but to give into it can be disastrous as well. So, what to do? Today I opened up and lost myself in the knowledge that I am loved and love him. It seemed like heaven on earth, but then reality entered the scene and I made the excuse that I had a meeting to attend and that I had to go. There was effectively one, but I could have skipped it. I did that because today we crossed another line and pretty soon I may not want to move back behind it and take second place. Am I genuinely afraid? Why tempt fate, right? That I love him is a given I won't fight, instead I revel in it as it keeps me happy and warm, but I don't trust him since a commitment is binding to him only until the next opportunity presents itself to be explored, whereas for me love is all encompassing. I don't doubt that he perceives me to be the current it, until he accesses a conquest that seemed inaccessible at first or meets someone who has more potential or shares an interest with him which I don't. Shall I be his final love? Why does it still sound suspicious to me? Maybe I am a bitter lady, or am I a smart one who is looking after her well-being? Carl believes that love is eternal and never dies. He has been testing this theory on many subjects.

CARL

Maybe Ruby is right. Am I unable to give myself totally to anyone? Did I learn over the years to never put all my eggs in the same basket? This might result from my three-color philosophy of which the origin is still a mystery to me. I remember a prayer in my youth which might explain where this subdivision comes from. The angels spoke to me and said: 'We shall give you the three wives you wish for and thereafter you will leave everything behind to join us.' Am I living this scenario? I still don't understand it, which is why I just follow my heart. Do I do this at the cost of others? I don't think so, since I never push an ex-wife over the edge; I rather pull her along on the road of life. My first wife remains, thus far, my best female friend, and I am concerned about her well-being. This would be the same, so I hope, for my second wife if we would ever part. All I can

say, for the moment, is that I would love Ruby to become my third and last wife. If this would materialize, I don't think we shall ever get divorced, but the day she will die I shall know life has outplayed me. All I want is to live true love high up in the sky, totally free from any human limitations.

RUBY

I live my emotional life in absolute terms: in the field of true emotions there are no shades of grey; I guess my skepticism with Carl is that the probability of him fluttering off is huge; I am so confused.

CARL

We both tried, but failed to close the door of our hearts. I fear the day that she will do so anyhow, because I won't be able to forget her. She means the world to me, even if I cannot act upon my love right now, as she well knows. I wonder whether Ruby would accept my ex-wives to remain my friends and my little boys to be my top priority. Didn't I also accept to share her with her late husband, late son and two daughters?

RUBY

Can I accept his past wives and boys? Who am I to refuse this? They are his reality and I would be naïve to ask him to forget them or even renegade on his responsibilities. I may not always be happy about the links he keeps with them, but I shall never stop him. No one should ever prevent anyone from fulfilling his role to his children. The beauty of a beginning relationship is not to know, but to get to know each other, and we seem to like discovering one another. I would like to learn more about Carl's parents, his brothers, as well as his relationship with them. Does his twin know or suspect anything about us? What is Carl's darkest, deepest and sweetest secret he has ever kept about himself? What is his worst fear?

CARL

My parents are happily married for forty-five years. They are a good match, always there for each other. My father is a leading figure in almost everything he does, being the dean of the law faculty, judge in the court of appeal, lieutenant-colonel in the reserve force of the army and also a good husband and father of four boys to whom he transferred the love for justice, travel and human values. He is a strong, rational man. My mother is more the emotional type. She used to work in the medical field, but after the birth of her twins, she devoted her life to her family and the arts; she loves to draw and paint. My relationship with them is good, even though we have very different views on life, but since they accepted me to be different, I return the favor. Once in a while I had to stand my ground, like when I explained why I was getting divorced. I have three brothers whom

I love a lot. My oldest brother became, in the footsteps of my dad, an attorney at law; my twin brother specialized in criminal law and my younger brother is a senior legal adviser in a bank. It is nice to get along with all your brothers, but my twin brother is the one I am the closest to. Even though we are almost each other's opposite, we understand and complete one another. I have no secrets, except that I love Ruby; I prefer to carry this burden alone until the day I shall speak out, because it has the power to break many hearts. As far as my fears are concerned, I can be short. I don't fear death and therefore I don't fear anything at all, except to hurt or lose the people I love; I would like to know more about Ruby's family. If she has any fears, passions, secrets or special dreams, which she is willing to share with me, I am all ears, doctor.

RUBY

Very interesting. Contrary to Carl, I have only sisters. Growing up I had an amazing childhood. My parents were also a great couple with my mom being the focused one and my dad allowing us to do as we pleased, within reason. She was a stay-at-home mom. He was a long-distance driver who ended up buying his own fleet of trucks. They had a close relationship, but sometimes I felt that my mom was too serious, yet as I grew older, I realized she had to be, as my dad was very lax. He was well-known, highly respected and had a reputation to shoot first and ask questions later; he had guns mostly because he was a big cowboy at heart, which he justified as having for protection when he travelled. Anyway, he made sure we all learned how to use the guns, clean them and store them. We used to go to the shooting range for target practice. Now that I think of it, I guess we created quite a comical scene going out with my dad. He walked with two girls on either side of him and his gun in his ankle or hip holster. At school my guy friends used to tell me how terrified they were of him. So, I guess my dad's aim was fulfilled. He had a wicked sense of humor and a great passion for food. It is a known fact that I have inherited this from him. When he laughed, he did so heartily and his eyes laughed too. My passion to laugh out loud with gusto is certainly credit to him. Growing up in a house full of females I watched how my two elder sisters used to gravitate towards my mom, so I made a conscious effort to hang around my dad. As I grew, it was automatic that I was his constant companion. I shared my first cigarette, my first alcoholic drink and my first pull of marijuana with him. Back then, in a very conservative Indian community, girls were not allowed to go out to parties, but I went to all I was invited to. I would just ask and he would agree; I recall that my two elder sisters would agonize for weeks to ask him for permission to go out. As a young child I was able to read my parents: my dad would do anything for you if he trusted you, which he did until you gave him reason not to. In a huge way I am so like

that. My mom had insight far beyond her age. I often sought her advice, because she was almost always right. When my dad died in 2001, I lost my dearest friend. I have three crazy sisters whom I love most times and could cheerfully murder at others. My eldest sister who is three years older than me studied as a medical technologist, but during her studies she met her husband and abandoned studying altogether. She lost her husband in 2001, but prior to his death she was involved in a torrid extra-marital affair that ripped all our families apart. The damage remains irreparable. Now she is a financial advisor with two adult children, and single. She also has a crazy sense of humor and we share a close relationship largely because of this. My second sister is only eleven months older than I am and is a teacher with a degree in Education. Both my sisters liked my late husband Romeo a lot and secretly even loved him. He introduced my eldest sister to his cousin whom she married, but as they spent time together, I am pretty sure she fell in love with Romeo. She still maintains that he was her best friend and someone very special to her. Even my second sister used to get very upset when he used to ask me out to parties, at that time just as friends. I vividly recall the day that he bought me a single red rose in a glow-glass vase. She was so angry that she bust it. The fact that I married and had my three kids before her also didn't help, but as she matured, we became close. She is the sister I can depend on for whatever I want, as I know she is stable and will always be there for me. Sadly, she is married to an abuser and just recently told us about the horrendous physical violence she has endured for sixteen years. Of course we suspected it, but each time I asked she would deny it. Sadly, again, she has refused help as she believes he will change. My youngest sister is so money focused. Even as a child if she lent you a rand, she would charge an interest. She is five years younger than me and was perceived to be the kid who was always in the way; she has an honors degree in Business Economics and married outside our religion to a divorced guy with one child, a huge scandal. Their marriage is very turbulent as he is publicly engaging in extra-marital affairs. My sister refuses to file for divorce as she does not want to share her assets with him. That is my family and I love them dearly. Then Romeo came into my life and the truth is that after we got married, I didn't miss my family at all. He and I were so absorbed in each other and our kids that we became our own world. I don't mean to make it sound as if we cut people off, quite the contrary. We needed help with my son and the girls as there was a stage when we had all three in nappies, the girls on breast milk and just four hands trying to sort three kids, but those were the best days ever. At night when we collapsed into each other's arms it was always with a deep sigh of contentment. Romeo was my friend long before I fell in love with him. I see so much of him in the girls. They have his wisdom, his uncanny ability to figure people out and his charismatic personality. I love them

powerfully and fiercely and will stop at nothing to make sure they are fine. Like me they have a really witty sense of humor. Most days we laugh so much that we end up rolling on the floor. We share a close bond and have open discussions on any and all topics. As I have exposed them to travelling, they have become more confident and broadened their thinking. They love school and strive to always do the best they can. So, I remain very proud of them. I too don't fear death. In fact, I can't wait to die and be reunited with my boys which I believe will happen when I turn sixty. By that time my girls would be married and hopefully I would have seen my grandkids. Like Carl, I don't have any secrets except my relationship with him. I shall probably take it to my grave and have made peace with that; I am passionate about food and laughter; I don't have a love life anymore, but certainly have memories that will last me a life time being content with that for now. What we share I cannot consider as my own as Carl cannot love exclusively. So, I guess I share a kind of love relationship, which is enough for me, and when it ends, I shall live with that memory too. My desire is to fulfill the dreams Romeo and I shared for our children, and once I have achieved that, I can say I have lived my life to the fullest. For myself I dream to love and be loved again completely, but even if it doesn't materialize, I can safely say I have lived a full life.

DOCTOR

I detect lots of similarities and significant differences. It isn't easy to reconcile two lives filled with commitment and love, which is why you should both think carefully before taking steps. Your love is grounded in exclusivity, whereas Carl cannot love exclusively. This major difference in emotional perception has the potential to derail the path of togetherness.

CARL

Ruby's family story was not only very interesting, but also very touching. I think I would have loved to meet her dad since he was, like mine, an entrepreneur with a heart and an open vision on life; I met her mother once and she seemed to be the wise woman Ruby described her to be; I never met her sisters, but if life allows it, I would love to meet them one day. Her conviction that she will die at the age of sixty upsets me, and it is not the first time she refers to this, so I guess she believes this to be true. She says she cannot consider what we share to be her own, because I don't love her completely and exclusively. First of all, what I share with her, I do with no one else. She can, therefore, consider it her own, and secondly, if I cannot limit myself to loving one person only, it is simply because I believe this to be the essence of free love. She might not realize it as yet, but she also loves this way, or do her feelings for me kill her emotions for her late husband? I don't think so. It therefore seems to me that love is naturally

divisible. If I say that I cannot love one person only, it does not mean that I cannot love this person completely. I am sure my love for her is as strong as hers for me, even if I consider it to be compatible with other forms of love. If she cannot understand this, it could indeed derail our union, but I remain convinced that our way of thinking is not all that different and definitely compatible in its essence. The main question is how much we do want to be together and at what cost. She says she dreams to love and be loved again completely, but is she able to read the deeper meaning of my understanding of free love? If ever I could get married to her, I would not love her more than I do today, because the love I feel for her now is what it is: complete. The fact that I can love others at the same time, doesn't affect my love for her in the least, and the chances that I would ever love anyone else as much are slim, even if this possibility cannot be ruled out. That is the risk of love. Security for life doesn't exist in the field of free love. Rest assured though, it took me more than ten years of marriage and a lot of luck to finally meet my second wife, and it took me even longer to find in Ruby a greater love. I am not a butterfly who wants to fly from one flower to another. It is true though, that right now we can only share a long-distance love relationship, since I am involved in a marriage. I cannot break it, as it would break me. The person she sees in me today wouldn't be the one she would end up sharing her life with, if I would break up my marriage, but why would I do so if I love her? And would I have married her, if I didn't? Do my feelings for Ruby, which seem to have a greater potential, grant me the right to break up my marriage? Is there a limit I cannot trespass? I don't think I could be with Ruby at the cost of breaking up with Megan. Maybe my perception will change, but right now I would not be able to live with myself, if I would act this way. Fortunately, we can both accept our love relationship as it is. Shall we take this secret to our graves? I do not exclude the possibility of opening Pandora's Box, trusting that whatever is meant to happen, will. We cannot change that, but can we possibly influence the way in which it will happen? Nobody can stop a tsunami, but can one avoid it from causing irreparable damage, or am I just fooling myself to keep sane for as long as possible? Do I secretly want the tsunami to hit? Is fear the greatest evil in our society? Am I horrified by the idea that my relationship with Ruby will become public? Do I hope to overcome this paralyzing anxiety? Will the truth set us free of all this tension? I don't know as yet if and when the thunder will strike. Does she experience this process passively, waiting like Vladimir and Estragon for the never arriving Godot? I understand that if someone has to put a first step it will probably be me, but she could make it easier by telling me how she imagines a future together. Would she be a good stepmother to my kids? Would we get married; would we live in Africa or in Europe?

DOCTOR

I am not a judge and won't be drawn into playing that role, but I am here to listen and my advice would be to have some time-out. It is clear to me that something is going to give soon and in a very big way. You have not worked everything out as yet, but you love her and she loves you back; you won't leave your safe haven though, and she won't ask you to. Therefore, I would advise both of you to get back to your own worlds, live your respective lives and when the time will be right you can contact each other and explore where you left off. That is assuming you are both alive and free. This seems to be the only human, logical and unselfish thing to do. I am glad both of you realize the importance of preserving the sanctity of a happy home which seems to have no insurmountable problems.

CARL

From a logical point of view, you are right, but I do not know whether my heart will accept reason. In our human society it always seems to have the final say, but aren't emotions generally undervalued? Does reason guarantee quick fixes; do emotions promise long-distance solutions? To get back to our own worlds, to have a time-out, to lay low, and to live our respective lives, are rational decisions which might seem and most probably are the best solution on a short term, but they freeze the emotions in the process. This rational approach postpones what is meant to happen. We can't let our lives pass by, can we? Everything seems possible from a rational point of view, but is it the human mind or rather the heart that rules? Is it a matter of choice which is necessarily rational or is there also such a thing as emotional choice? I would like to know her opinion on the matter. Imagine, doctor, that she asks me to leave my safe haven. It would be hard on me, but can a price be high enough to be set free? One thing is certain, neither of us can put this step alone. Does she want our love to blossom; does she wish to be part of a slaughter? Life can be so easygoing and cruel at the same time. Can we put the step together and pay the price; can we envisage living happily, knowing that somewhere out there a safe haven has been ruined by our passion? Is our love selfish? To ask a question is to answer it, and maybe I have to take a time-out to let it rest. The road to freedom can be a long one, indeed. It might seem as if we don't move forward, yet we do. Is the apple ripe to be eaten? Am I subconsciously referring to the apple of the Garden of Eden? Is my Christian education getting the better of me? Am I scared to move on? To fear is not bad, but the challenge is to overcome it. Shall we succeed?

RUBY

Ten years ago, I walked away for the sake of my family. Now I do so for the sake of his. It feels right in that neither of us would be fulfilled knowing we hurt innocent children, which still is my inner conviction.

CARL

Why should I keep hoping, if she doesn't even try to trespass the river of guilt? My heart went through quite a storm last night, as I realized how difficult it would be – if not impossible – to let her go. Nobody knows what the future holds, yet I truly believe that we shall fuse in the year 2014. My heart knows where it is going, but my head must still accept it. I know it will be everything or nothing, but what do we do in the meantime? I would love to keep her as my secret lover for the time being, because I wouldn't know how my heart would cope without her for so long, but I am unable to figure out what she wants, since she is hot and horny one day, but cold and distant the next. Does she want me to stay away; do I expect her to ask me to get divorced, so that we can move in together? Shall I only do so, if my head follows my heart? Does it always, in due time?

DOCTOR

I have unpleasant news for you. Ruby called me this morning to let me know that she won't come back. She divulged her secret to a friend and doesn't feel the need any longer to speak neither to me nor to you. Her love seems to have vanished. Worse, she starts to get annoyed with the situation. I can help you to forget her, but it might take a few years. Remember, every beginning is hard, but nothing is impossible. She hopes to love and be loved again completely, looking for her new prince. Let her go. She has lived a full life and is content with it as it is. In a couple of years, she will become a grandmother. If she doesn't love you anymore, her love was not genuine. In that case you might as well forget about her. Imagine you had gotten divorced, left your country, ended up with her and realized only then that her love was weak and could not stand the test of time, that would have been a disaster. Be happy you can move on with a wife who loves you and whom you love. Enjoy having two great kids, one of which started his first day at school this morning. You have it all, Carl. Don't expect more out of life. This is your life. Maybe it is time for you to realize that you have been living a dream filled with butterflies and flowers. Ruby came to that conclusion by speaking to a friend. Maybe you should also tell someone about your feelings. This person might help you more than I do. I never close my door to patients, but would strongly advise you to burst the balloon and move on with your life. Divulge your secret to a person you carefully choose and let time do the rest. When I spoke to Ruby, I had the distinct impression that she was relieved to have

thrown this burden off her shoulders, and I am sure that you could do the same. Picture her as a grandmother who wouldn't feel for sex anymore, an old woman who is waiting to die to be with her boys. Image her to be someone who doesn't expect anything from life anymore. You might never forget her, but will be able to let her go. Don't even dream of reconnecting in a next lifetime. Break the chain that links your present life with your future ones; break free and let go what is not worth pursuing. Maybe love is exclusive after all. Will you finally be free on the day you will understand that? Don't curse her, rather be thankful for her guidance.

CARL

I believe in free love, Ruby in exclusive love. Does it mean that we are incompatible? Don't all forms of love find their roots in one ultimate source of life? There must be a connection somewhere.

DOCTOR

Ruby claims that you love the one you are with because you cannot be with the one you love, that you are wearing a mask, and that you have no conscience, flowing whichever way the wind blows.

CARL

What is a mask exactly? Is it a covering worn on the face to conceal one's identity? Don't we all wear one; don't we all have a secret garden? If I am wearing one, so does Ruby. No conscience? If conscience is the awareness of an ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong, my morals are guiding me to what I believe is right. We might not all have the same interpretation of what is right and wrong, but I definitely have my own moral code. It seems right to me to keep the door of my heart open to other forms of love while keeping it secret to avoid hurting my wife unnecessarily. I know from experience that divulging this love would instantly kill my marriage. Do I love the woman I am with, unable to be with the one I love? No. I love my wife independently from my feelings for Ruby; I love both women, but realize that my love for Ruby is a cannonball whereas the one for my wife is a bullet. Both can kill, but the intensity differs. Ruby is quick in firing questions, but does she answer mine? I still believe that exclusive love is for cowards: you love one person and close off your heart for other potential forms of love. When Ruby was still married eight years ago, she seemed unable to love me, whereas my first and second marriage never stopped me from loving her. My feelings for Ruby have not worn off. They have been constant with some flares of passion. Is that enough a proof to accept free love to be superior? Even though I am happily married, my heart still accepts other forms of love. It is not a sign of weakness but rather of strength to refuse

building a fence around the heart. A safe haven should not become a fortress, because people hide in it, like they do behind a mask. Is the pot calling the kettle black, doctor? Who is hiding here? You will figure it out.

DOCTOR

Ruby considers her relationship with you to be profoundly selfish and based on negative karma. She seems truly ashamed to have been part of it.

CARL

She is unable to cross the river of guilt, lacking the guts for it. It was my opening statement more than eight years ago and it is my declaration again today. I hoped she would be the one for me, but my future might turn out differently; I prefer to withdraw and give her time to make up her mind.

DOCTOR

The silence that is about to reign over both your lives will be a killer. Stay strong and avoid writing to her. She needs an awful lot of time to digest what you two have been sharing. Maybe she will never process it, but will keep this experience deep in her heart for the rest of her life. If she wasn't your soul mate, she was quite a woman anyhow with a great sense of humor and a strong character, but also one with a past that did not seem to allow her to cross the river of guilt. To her, crossing this river would be an act of betrayal. She calls you selfish, but isn't selfishness to be chiefly or only concerned with oneself? I don't think your feelings were driven by selfishness, but one can only understand that after crossing the legendary river of guilt. If you search hard enough you might find a woman on your side of the river who could be your soul mate. Maybe you know her already, but didn't find your soul mate in her as yet; maybe a loved one is on your side of the river even though you are still blissfully unaware of it.

CARL

Time goes by, but certain things never change. However happy I am in my marriage, however proud a dad I am, I cannot get Ruby out of my blood. I was accused of selfishness. I don't get it. How can such a pure feeling ever be perceived to be self-centered? To leave my wife and kids behind in order to be with my lover would be selfish, if by doing so I only care about my own feelings while disregarding my family, or to make my lover believe that I shall leave my family, knowing that I shall never do so would be selfish, because such behavior would disregard her feelings, but none of these scenarios apply to me. I never left my family and never promised I would. If I did such a despicable thing, Ruby would be the first one to hate me. Is it a situation without possible solution? How could I ever share my life with her without leaving my family? Does the idea of a

hidden relationship make her feel guilty? Is she scared to break up a happy family, trying to find a balance between her love and her desire not to be selfish? It isn't easy to withdraw in silence after each passionate encounter, even if there is something profoundly romantic about it. We meet, love, burn and withdraw, aware that we are bound to meet again. Will it last forever or will one of us give up and withdraw never to come back? That is what I fear, but should I? Why be anxious about the future, if it is written in the stars; why be frightened about anything for that matter?

DOCTOR

One could argue that love reigns supreme, that if you love your wife, you stick with her no matter what. You could accept your freedom to be limited for the sake of the love that you share in a happy marriage.

CARL

I consider free love to be a perfect mix of freedom and love.

DOCTOR

Being able to enjoy your wife's and Ruby's love, I am sure this makes total sense, but try to think outside the box. What about them? Do they enjoy the same privileges? Ruby loves you, but has no safe haven to fall back on. Your wife also loves you, but would most probably prefer to kick you out of her life, if she knew that you loved Ruby so passionately. You might realize someday that the narrow circle in which you keep on reasoning is the origin of your blind selfishness. In theory it is true that everyone could combine a safe haven with free love, but not everyone necessarily wants this, and when you got married to Megan, I don't think that this was part of the agreement. Didn't you accept the principle of exclusivity when you got married? Aren't you supposed to grow up at some point in time, instead of wanting it all? Shouldn't you accept the limits of your freedom and the consequences of your choices? Don't behave like a free bullet, destroying whatever crosses its path just because you believe you have that right. Stop your little revolution, believing you invented the wheel. Free love is like communism, beautiful on paper but a disaster in reality. It does not work because people do not accept to share their love. Only exclusive love stands the test of time. Therefore, if you love Ruby to an extent that you cannot stop the fire in your heart, tell your wife, get divorced and move on. You don't have to tell her immediately, though. Give yourself the time you need. Don't rush into anything. If Ruby loves you as much as you love her, her love will burn forever. Free love has its adepts, but I advise you to exchange this unreal-love-ideal for freedom and love within human borders. It is the best you will ever get.

RUBY

I am speechless, doctor. Even if I tried, I guess I may not have expressed what both of you did. How you dissected the crux of the issue and how it was debated, but this still stands out boldly: 'You don't have to tell her immediately, though. Give yourself the time you need. Don't rush into anything.' If this isn't a selfish line, I don't know what is. Bide your time in case your wife dies or leaves you, so you can blame her; bide your time so the guilt of leaving your kids is less when you take plunge number three? Another bold jump-out statement: 'I never left my family and never promised I would.' It is true and Carl is also correct that I would never want that, but to be with me he will have to do just that: the proverbial catch twenty-two. My take is: why risk what you have for something that only has potential to be better? Rather be satisfied with what you have. Didn't Carl repeatedly say that his home situation was lovely? Who knows what is written in the stars? Let it evolve, while we live our separate lives.

DOCTOR

Carl will fight for his dream to come true. Will he throw off his mask or will he hide behind it; will he be a coward who chooses for an easy life or will he dig into his inner powers? To be content with what we have remains an acceptable way of life, but let us see how this story unfolds.

CARL

When everything will be crystal clear to me, I shall act. It is not cowardice that stops me. I don't deny my feelings, but wonder whether she loves me or just wants to be loved, by me or anyone else. As long as there is doubt in my mind, I freeze things while living my life and letting her live hers. I need time to avoid burning bridges, because a connection to the past is one to the future. Should one not always be patient in matters of the heart?

DOCTOR

Any construction, be it a bridge or a house, needs the right material, a plan and the physical work to erect it. So, I suggest that you contract with yourself to do just that without any distractions, especially from Ruby. You may get rid of your doubts or they may just prove to be true, in which case your life experiences would have helped you in not impulsively burning your bridges too soon. I shall be happy to hear from you during your bridge-making-phase, and hopefully I can still provide a sounding board to bounce off any matters that may bother you. You have my best wishes in your vocation to succeed. Do you have any other questions?

CARL

Please explain this passage that I read in your notes about Ruby: 'I never get physically involved, but flirt, humor and tease them, and all of them fall hook, line and sinker. The best part is that I have not yet failed. As we speak, there are five guys whom I am currently working on and all are almost there. Once the guy whines about his love for me, I just switch off completely. Often, I miss the guy in question, because I genuinely did like him and enjoyed talking to him, but he was emotionally too weak and that turns me off.' I can identify with these guys, because when I try to be serious with Ruby she runs away. Meanwhile she would be the first one to claim being responsible, saying that life and people are pawns to me, that I enjoy games, but that for some people life is serious. She begs me not to hurt any more people, claiming that life isn't a game. I am flabbergasted. Am I the one playing with her emotions or is she taking me for a cheap ride? Could I be emotionally too weak for her? Should I just accept that she is stronger than me and a bridge too far? Is she out of my league?

DOCTOR

I got a phone call from Ruby in distress. She feared for your sake that you were going to break up your family to be with her, wondering whether you wouldn't be stupid to forsake what you have for a potential greater love; she was in tears after a second tsunami hit, feeling guilty for what she had done. How could she ever forgive herself? It had been a blast, but confusion and sadness seemed to overpower her now.

CARL

I know, doctor. She asked me to give her space so that she could be on her own; she told me that if I would leave my family, it would be over between us. The embodiment of fear. She wrote me a farewell note and I think this time she truly meant it. I needed a couple of days to get over it and cut myself away from it all. While analyzing your notes in future, you might think it is a whole load of crap, but this story can go either way. We never contact each other again and the passion will be neutralized, or we do, in which case the fire will undoubtedly ignite subsequent tsunamis which might crush everything on its path. The latter scenario would allow us to defy our own establishment, but would it be worth breaking down what we have built and loved over the years? The essential question remains whether we have a choice at all. Right now, I wait in silence. This experience made me stronger and I am able to wait for an indefinite time, or am I fooling myself? One thing is certain: Ruby and I love each other and enjoyed making virtual love to one another, by exchanging hot messages all night long. We both relished it tremendously. She came many times and so did I. The problem is a rational one. Our points of view on

passion are difficult to match, at least for now. Only if the situation changes dramatically new opportunities could arise. How this would happen, remains a mystery, but I trust my intuition that two years from now this will be the case. As much as I love my wife, I nevertheless pray for it to happen. Is it my destiny to be driven by passion, or am I wrong?

DOCTOR

There comes a time in life when one realizes it is best to walk away from all the pointless drama and the people who create it. It is better to surround yourself with individuals that add meaning to your life, not the fantasy-life you dream of, but the real-life you are living day in day out, which is based on physical realities, such as your investments and responsibilities.

CARL

There is no pointless drama in my life, doctor. All I search for is the true nature of love. If it is correct that we meet people for a reason, why then did I encounter Ruby? Is she possibly my twin soul? After one month of patience, I couldn't cope with the silence anymore and wrote her a short anniversary message. Result: she cut me out completely. This girl who loved me so much – or at least claimed to – couldn't care less about me anymore. Today I seem to mean nothing to her. It is barely as if she remembers my name. Life helped me to understand the reality behind the relationship we shared: horror. Twenty years ago, during my student years, I fell in love for the first time. I was young and inexperienced, but today I am older and supposedly wiser, yet got caught once again in the nets of a merciless mermaid. How do these women manage to erase the men they claimed to love, dismissing them as animals, whereas they are? If I learned anything over the years, it is that I shouldn't blame Ruby for it. I am the guilty one since I fell in love with her, yet should I be blamed if life is predestined? Was I meant to knock my head for a second time against the wall of passion; was I preordained to suffer? I won't let this rest before I have answers, even without her help. She never explained why she cut me out and probably never will, yet the only thing that matters to me is that I loved her, still do and always will without ever feeling guilty about it.

DOCTOR

Give yourself some time to rest. It is Diwali today, the Indian celebration of light. You survived two tsunamis and still believe in free love. I followed Ruby and you for quite some time now and even though I had some doubt I am convinced today that free love is the strongest form of love; I can see that your feelings for Ruby remained intact whereas hers melted like snow. She has no right to speak anymore, because it is too easy to develop theories about exclusive love to subsequently drop people you

claimed to love, like hot potatoes. In the beginning of your relationship she was scared that you would tell your wife everything, wanting to have nothing to do with you anymore if you got divorced. This smells like cowardice to me. Why did she make love to you, without being in love? You followed your heart, but she didn't. She just followed her flesh. I know you love your wife and are aware of your responsibilities towards your family, but I also know that, notwithstanding all this, you were seriously considering to move towards a clean divorce to be able to be with Ruby. The fact that she turned her back on you just before this could happen shows that she is not ready for you and might never be. I know how you suffer right now, but I shall always stand on your side; I am aware that she is the one who hurt you and pulled back even though she asked you not to hurt people again in future. Let all this rest for now and be assured that the wheel of life turns. The one sowing bad karma reaps it sooner or later. Try to forget her for now. Don't you see how ugly she is? Let her go. She is not worth it. If she is nice to people, it is just because they can be useful to her, but she is unable to love. Chase her out of your system, get her out of your blood, freeze or kill your love for good.

CARL

Maybe my love for her makes me blind. Do I need to pull back to grasp her true nature? Will good prevail? What is good and what is evil? It seems good to love and evil to ignore one's feelings. Could Ruby have transformed into someone so much different than she used to be or have I been blind for years? I am confused and tired, even exhausted. This battle drains my energy, but I prefer to keep on searching until I understand why things turned out this way. Shall I ever find out, though?

DOCTOR

Eight years ago, when you walked into my office for the first time, I took you for a selfish lunatic and my thinking seemed to be more in line with Ruby's more traditional view on love. I want to apologize for taking so long before grasping your true nature. After rereading my notes, I see more clearly which kind of woman she is. Let me quote a passage from eight years ago. Ruby, word for word: 'I deliberately and purposefully choose a guy whom I must make a victim of my love, this is to fall in love with me. Don't get me wrong, I never get physically involved, but flirt, humor and tease them, and all of them fall hook, line and sinker. As we speak, there are five guys whom I am currently working on and all are almost there. Once the guy whines about his love for me I just switch off completely, but he was emotionally too weak and that turns me off.' It seems to me that she switches off completely when someone shows strong emotions towards her. Does she consider it a weakness to fall in love with

her? The cause hereof might be a very low self-esteem. Does she believe that people who fall for her must be desperate and weak, unable to go for someone with more internal power and potential? Being unable to comprehend that your feelings are genuine, she portrayed you as a devil, while trying to kill your love by stinging you with her scorpion tail, convinced that you followed a diabolic plan, whereas you merely protected yourself for her evil side. My advice would be not to contact her again, even if it might seem impossible. Try to break the spell, which she clearly has over you.

CARL

When I love someone, it is for keeps. I could never ignore Ruby, because by doing so I would ignore my own feelings. Is vulnerability not a proof that love has been breaking down the wall around my heart? Could she have realized that I did not affect her deeper emotions? Is this the reason why she pushed me away? Her motive doesn't really matter, though, since freedom should always prevail in love. A free man is a happy one, and if I freed myself of someone who didn't love me, this makes me happier. I won't deny that I miss her, but I must have a good guardian angel, because my heart survived many storms, which is a wonder in itself.

DOCTOR

Carl squeezed the poison out of his heart and accepted the fact that Ruby didn't love him, but a few weeks later the unexpected happened. He received a text message while watching a movie with his wife: 'Good night and sweet dreams.' Would this love story never end? Fortunately, he had just gotten a phone call from a friend abroad so that he could easily lie by saying that he wished them both a good night, but what would he have done otherwise? He is so bad at lying. Later she confirmed that she missed him, but Carl wouldn't fall for this honey-sweet-talk anymore. She must have missed him like in: 'Often I miss the guy in question, because I genuinely did like him and enjoyed talking to him, but he was emotionally too weak and that turns me off.' No thanks. He didn't want to be missed like that. She would have to do better if she wanted to get him back. Much better. Would she ever ask him to break up his home to share a lifetime together? He would do it, even if it would cost him so damn much, because he could not deny that he loved her even more than he loved his wife. Ruby told Carl during their ensuing conversation that the 'us' is complicated yet so simple, if the heart and the head align themselves. Most times she wished they had never met. Somehow Carl felt the same way, but they did, and he tried to understand why. Even if some people might meet without any reason, he wanted to know why he remained so fond of her whatever she did. Their bond was not just an ordinary one and he

would search for its depth as long as he was alive. Whether she was present or not, whether she contacted him ever again or not, he would still search deep in his soul for the answer to this one and only question. Why could he not get her out of his blood? He believed, no matter what, that life was predestined the way it was. When Ruby heard that Carl almost got caught after her unexpected message, she felt so sorry and told me that she would never, consciously or deliberately, do anything to upset his home, but isn't that the danger of passion? Does it diminish the influence of one's conscience on the process of decision-making? She was so choked with emotions of loving and missing that she had to do something, yet her regret would have been to no avail. That same night Carl contacted Ruby by mail. While chatting they both knew that this couldn't possibly be the end. They had just survived another dip. How many more were still to come? Things might seem complicated, yet be so simple. What stopped Ruby from allowing Carl into her heart? Was it her insecurity? She told me she didn't understand why he felt the need to contact his doctor so often? Was it not a way to escape ownership of his feelings? Another point that seemed to hurt Ruby was that Carl could make love to her – albeit virtual love – and in a heartbeat do so again with his wife. She would never grasp this, even if it is so easy to understand. Did she stop loving her late husband while falling in love with Carl? She certainly didn't. You might argue that it is not the same thing since dead people are not physically present. Anyway, if Ruby would ask Carl to tell his wife the truth, he would and the physical relationship between Carl and Megan would end. Today he denies reality because he knows how hard it can be. Once it hits the fan everything changes, and if Carl ends up with Ruby she shouldn't be scared that he will love yet another woman more than he loves her. It is a miracle to him that there is a love out there that is even bigger than the one he shares with his wife, because it is so colossal that it is barely conceivable. The evergreen song 'Too much love will kill you' comes to mind, but as long as she doesn't tell him that she wants him for her, she cannot blame him for loving both his wife and her. He is not anymore in his safe haven, but also doesn't share a new one with Ruby yet; he is in the sea right now floating back to shore when the sea gets too wild, but hoping to leave it someday to brave the open sea. Only an idiot would leave his shore if there wasn't another one waiting past the waves. Ruby should understand that, but when she told him in a moment of panic that she would never accept to have any responsibility in his divorce, she forced Carl to get back to his safe haven. He wasn't scared to leave it behind, but wouldn't do so to keep floating in the middle of the sea. Every human being has weaknesses, but cowardice isn't one of his, otherwise he would convince himself that Ruby was just a mermaid who pretended to love him to get his boat to sink. As long as she doesn't have the courage to

say what she wants, she cannot expect him to brave the open sea in search for something that might just end up being a fantasy; as long as she believes him to be just a talker, nothing will change, but the day she will see that he is more, the barrel will ignite and fill the air with fireworks.

CARL

Doctor, I am so happy I could connect with Ruby again. She proposed to go on, like we did thus far: moments of quietness, torrid tsunamis and bouts of drought. Let me show you her last mail: ‘You can freely practice physical love and I shall live with my memories and make new ones, if that’s on the cards. If your situation changes, naturally or otherwise, and if I am still available then, for sure let us see if our roads cross. It is not that I don’t want to take my share of responsibility. If I say the famous five words, it is inevitable that I would be to blame equally or even more than you, but I am fighting damn hard to not blow your kids out of the water. It is a win-win for you: you will be home in a happy environment with your boys and your wife whom you love to bits. Your theory on free love can develop and you will have time to search for what exactly connects us. Isn’t it a far more attractive alternative for both of us? I am not going to promise not to write to you, but I shall try my utter best to resist. I am sorry that I cannot ask you to abandon your kids; I just can’t do it, hoping to talk to you face to face one day to make you understand. For what it is worth I want to say that my feelings for you are genuine as I know yours are for me. The reality is that you are not in a position to act on them, as I wasn’t ten years ago. I understand that, even if sometimes I disrespect or ignore how tough your situation is, but do you have any idea how desperately I want to say those five words to you? Having said all that – my head talking – my heart is beating to another tune: ‘Tell her you love me’. My heart will burst with love, if I don’t have you, yet I am also afraid, not for me or you, but for our kids, the pain we would cause, the upset, the irreversible bad karma. It is best to wait for the 2014 timeframe and then decide definitively. I guess we both know that what we have is real and cannot be denied, but also that over time we might lash out in anger, bitterness and silence. Don’t ever doubt my genuineness, but know that it is all about timing.’ This is the letter I have been waiting for, doctor.

DOCTOR

Then she wasn’t the devil I took her for. Something isn’t right, but what? Does the problem lie in your compartmentalization of love? When will you be able to break the invisible walls? Can you enlighten me on this aspect of your logical reasoning, which seems to influence your heart?

CARL

If I wouldn't have a problem, I wouldn't be here. That is exactly where the timing comes in. I believe that I need two more years of treatment to get over my compartments. In 2014 I shall be able to bring them all back together. I am happy that this sacred moment is getting closer every day.

DOCTOR

A regression on Ruby opened my eyes. She lived in Europe as Rose Laing and was married to you. It seems to me that your chances to end up together are growing. It is time that you start to know your enlarged family. Let me read you a passage from a transcript of one of my meetings with Ruby. She accepted that I show them to you: 'My eldest daughter, Kiera, is endearing, polite, sensitive and soft. She loves India, took to it like a fish to water and would like to study in the country of Mahatma Gandhi. My youngest one, Urendra, hated it. She is western in her dress sense, eating and mannerisms, adventurous with food, is a daredevil and an extrovert. She was so at home in Germany and Austria; she may do something in media, also plans to travel, but I know she would like to have a family as well. Unlike Kiera she loves kids. They are different potential future stepdaughters, indeed. Kiera hates white people. Carl is warned.'

CARL

I remember the day when I met Ruby at her home, many years ago. Her daughters were there and they didn't strike me to be particularly friendly. Today I understand why. Kiera grew up with her aunt who was very conservative and didn't like white men. Urendra was too young still to think for herself and did whatever her sister did: hate white people. With relation to race issues South Africa has been a sick country for many years. Apartheid didn't help to accept other races. I have a lot of sympathy and understanding for strong race awareness, but when this turns into racism it is a whole different story. This morning, I woke up with the thought that people fear free love, because they are scared of anarchy. Imagine that everyone would fuck everyone else. Women would not know whose baby they carry. Men would fuck the neighbor's wife while their own better half would be screwed by anyone else. Many scenarios are possible, but that is not what I understand by free love. It is sexual but also holy; it respects the unwritten rules of love: depth, joy and sensibility. Once you accept that love is a feeling with its own rules, you learn to follow your heart no matter what, but if someday I leave my valley, I don't want it to turn into a nightmare. Is good timing the golden key to success?

RUBY

You didn't expect me back, did you? We went through a third tsunami last night and even though I promised Carl beforehand that I wouldn't fall this time for any guilt feelings, I did yet again feel remorseful. It seems inhuman to me not to feel responsible when so much is at stake. One wrong move suffices for the wick to start burning. I wouldn't know what to do, if ever the barrel explodes in his household. I need him, I want him, but do I love him? Love in the sense of taking care of him, if he would be handicapped for example. Isn't that love after all, accepting someone in one's life for better and worse? Would I be able to love him for the rest of my life no matter what; would I manage living with the ruins of a broken household? Maybe I could, but shall I? I don't know, but it makes me feel better to talk about it to someone who followed our situation from the very beginning, and listens without making any judgments. I need someone like you, doctor, who admits not having answers to all our questions, but tries to reason through all this with us, someone who is as neutral as possible.

DOCTOR

It is natural that you cannot wait for your love to blossom freely; it is not your love, but the non-acceptance thereof by others, that will cause pain.

RUBY

You are so right. It is so simple, yet I couldn't figure it out on my own.

DOCTOR

As an outsider it is easier to stay neutral and objective.

CARL

I am happy that Ruby doesn't feel guilty anymore, but another problem arises: she cannot share me any longer, which is a new wall; I try to explain that the concept of sharing fits a logical, mathematical approach of love; I don't think I have to share her heart with her late husband. She can love him one hundred percent, yet love me with the same intensity; she is unable though, to see it that way. For her, my happiness at home is incompatible with her feelings for me. Could this innate jealousy be the iceberg that will break our titanic love? Is she too possessive to allow my heart to love freely or is my hunger for free love the wall that separates us?

DOCTOR

I asked a colleague of mine, who doesn't know neither of you, for advice. On base of my transcripts his judgment about you is rather negative to say the least. Here follows his opinion: 'It seems to me that Carl would go to extreme lengths to protect himself. He left his first wife, with whom he

was happy for more than ten years, because he found something better. I am sure he is genuine in his feelings for Ruby, considering to leave his wife for her in a couple of years, but I am also convinced that he will move on, not long thereafter, to conquer the heart of yet another lady whom he would consider to be superior. He is immensely egocentric. The sad part is that Ruby, who is an emotionally well-balanced and genuinely good woman, got herself involved in this pathology. No one can blame her for not feeling guilty anymore. It is a normal process of emotional evolution. She loves Carl, but shouldn't. I would advise her to forget this narcissistic creature she fell in love with, and as for Carl, I would urge him to leave Ruby in peace.' I do not share the views of my colleague, but think about it for what it is worth. In my opinion Ruby is jealous about your wife, which I can understand if she is in love with you, but no one can blame you for it. You are in love and try to follow your heart, even though it isn't always easy; you loved your first wife, but loved your second one more. Therefore, you followed your heart and moved on. You always loved Ruby more, but she wasn't available at the time. Now that she is, you have the courage yet again to follow your heart. All you do is love freely and I do not believe that you will simply move on to yet another woman.

CARL

Maybe your colleague has a point. I don't know what to believe anymore.

DOCTOR

People can easily draw wrong conclusions in the field of love. A first impression isn't always the right one, yet it might help to find a solution.

CARL

I have tried to erase Ruby many times, yet never succeeded, because I love her. Am I ready this time around, knowing that even when she doesn't intend to hurt me, she often does? When I asked her today whether she prefers to make love in the morning or in the evening, her answer was cold: 'It depends who the person is.' Can I live with a cold frog like that? Is it this same coldness that kept me hooked for many years? It has something terribly attractive, since you keep on wondering whether she truly is or just pretends to be cold, taking into consideration that she can be so warm, even hot, at other times. I could imagine her cheating on me while arguing that nobody compelled me to marry her. That is the kind of woman she is: cruel and hard, yet also beautiful and strong. I love her completely, but does she love me? Are we truly meant to be together?

DOCTOR

Maybe the two years you seem to need, aren't years to be with her, but rather to learn being without her. You could use the chocolate-addiction-trick: don't promise yourself never to eat chocolate again, which might be too difficult, rather try not to eat it too often. Every time you resist you win a point even if you keep on eating it. If you manage not to write to her once in a while, on moments that you crave for her, you will accumulate points. Cherish each and every point and you will manage to create a compartment in your heart where no place is left for Ruby, where you will experience a new love life without her. A time might come when you will not want to contact her anymore, even if it might seem intolerable right now. It won't be easy, but you can succeed if you give yourself a chance.

CARL

Your advice is well-intended, no doubt about that, but I am afraid rational tricks won't help to master passion. Last night a fourth tsunami hit the shore. Thus far the strongest one, but there is better to come. I can feel it. Every time we get closer, we realize that it will be even harder to go our own way if ever we split up. We both know that we aren't playing any game, that a split-up would be an emotional thunderstorm and most importantly that time without action won't solve our problem, which is why we decided to meet somewhere down the line of the next two years, to make decisions with regard to our future. We both realize we won't accept any grey. It will be everything or nothing. Neither Ruby nor I want to keep on doing part-time-loving. Many scenarios are possible, such as, we meet, make love and split up, or we meet, don't make love and split up, or we meet, make love and decide to stay together. Right now, we don't see what will happen to our relationship. All we know is that we love each other dearly, but that there is a lot at stake. May the angels guide us and give us strength. When I recall how difficult my first divorce has been, even though we didn't have kids, I can only imagine how difficult this one could become. I shall have to break-up with three people: my wife and two sons. That isn't a sinecure. Of course, I shall keep contact with them and remain responsible for their well-being, but if I leave the house, it will never be the same again. Would I feel like a traitor? I don't know whether I could live with that idea. Ruby often pointed out during our fourth tsunami that, taking everything into consideration, it would be far easier to break up, call it quits and go our separate ways. No one gets hurt, except both of us. I agree that on paper this seems the best thing to do, but I don't see how I could kill my titanic love for Ruby. Could I possibly freeze it?

RUBY

I am back and love him more and more, even shamelessly. When God took away my late husband from me, the latter was forty-five and within two years Carl will turn forty-five. Could this be a sign? Do you think he will be able to push everyone and everything aside for me? Am I selfish to hope so? I always believed I would die at sixty, but I would love to alter this perception. Could you find out through regression therapy where this idea originates; could it be altered? With Carl I would love to live longer.

DOCTOR

I am very glad both of you are on talking terms again; I know that Carl wants you as desperately as you want him. Whether he will be able to push everything aside for you, I cannot tell as yet. What do I read in my notes from more than eight years ago? 'To her, it seems that if she falls in love, it is totally: she gives her body, heart, mind and soul to the relationship. Having a part-time affair is against her nature.' If I am not mistaken though, you are living a part-time affair right now. How do you cope? I guess it is not easy to be a princess when one is used to be the queen. Did you ever consider the fact that Carl might fear leaving everything behind to see you return to your late husband at the age of sixty? Like you might feel sometimes as an intruder in his relationship with his present wife, he might feel exactly that in your bond with your late husband. How does the latter think about this situation? Do you speak to him in your prayers? Your conviction that you will die at sixty is linked to your emotions. Even if you are unaware of it, the regression therapy shows that your belief goes back to your father's passing. The former died at the age of sixty-one, and in a way, since you admired him and miss him dearly, you don't want to live longer than he did on this earth. Carl is convinced that he will die at eighty-two because his beloved parental grandfather, died at that age, but for all I know, he will live past hundred. Break the cage you built for yourself. You won't die at sixty except if you commit suicide, but I don't think that is your intention. There is something else, Ruby. I might be your doctor for now, but once Carl and you will be united the best doctor will be time itself, because to be together you will pay a heavy price which will leave wounds, and there is no better doctor to heal than time. I predict you will both hurt, hopefully without regretting your decision. The day Carl will tell his parents that he is getting divorced, they will not accept this. He might leave on bad terms and not be there when they pass on. This might leave a permanent scar. I don't tell you this to scare you, but just want you to be aware of the fact that love can be gentle, but also thorny like a rose, which can hurt. Are you ready for this? Both of you will share and lick each other's wounds. He will pay a higher price than you though, to unite with you. Will you be strong enough to help him through this?