

# Seduction and Betrayal

by Bill Herbst

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In a sense, it's fitting that I write this commentary for posting on February 14th — Valentine's Day. In each year, that day is the apotheosis for the worship of romantic love. It's the date that is dearest to the hearts of fervent lovers and romantic dreamers, as well as the pocketbooks of schmaltzy greeting card companies, candy makers, jewelers, and the ad agencies that hawk their products. This commentary will not be among the celebrants.

Seduction and betrayal. They go together. To some extent, they are mutually necessary. By definition, seduction requires an illusion, a dream, or an impossible promise that cannot be fulfilled in fact. One cannot be "seduced" by reality. Reality just is. Reality tells us plainly what we'll get if we choose it. No false promises. We are seduced only by things we wish were real, but which aren't. So, seduction has a built-in likelihood of disappointment, which is a form of betrayal, however impersonal or mild.

Betrayal happens only after a successful seduction. If you see someone or a situation for what it is rather than the fantasy you wish it to be, then no betrayal can occur. You could suffer harm or loss by what happens with the person or in the situation, but you won't be surprised by that, because you say clearly that those unpleasant experiences might occur if things went the wrong way. In other words: no seduction, no betrayal.

So, we have yet another Texas Two-Step Dance. First comes the seduction, then the betrayal. They are tied — inexorably and inevitably — as cause and effect. Situations can occur where betrayal doesn't follow seduction, but those are limited. One such circumstance is death. A person might win the fantasy prize, but die before the betrayal. How lucky! Another situation is when the person who agreed to be seduced gives up the seduction (i.e., realizes the falsehood) for one reason or another. For instance, someone might seemingly fulfill a fantasy but then agree to the seduction of pursuing an even bigger dream, thus postponing the betrayal.

And therein is one of my main points. Life never seduces us. It's doesn't happen to us from outside. It's something we do to ourselves. Wherever dreams and illusions reside within us, seductions and betrayals might occur. The key here is in finding a suitable object who will cause us to activate our own seduction and

which will later perform as the assassin who betrays us. That object can be either tangible or intangible.

An example of an intangible object would be a goal we wish to achieve. The fantasy/illusion we hold is that if only we could achieve that goal in the real world, then we will be happy and fulfilled. What might the goal be? Well, it could be damn near anything where we wish to enjoy the fruits of success — wealth, fame, security, creativity, respect, recognition, etc. Mere ambition is not the same as fantasy/illusion. Ambition can be fulfilled happily. Fantasy/illusion cannot.

The other kind of goal involves a person or a relationship. An example of that kind of tangible object would be the wish to have an experience with an actual person who represents our fantasy, such as being married to the perfect partner, or sleeping with someone we regard as completely beautiful or desirable. All pornography — both the literal kind and the more private versions that exist in our minds — is based on that impossible-to-achieve fantasy.

By impossible to achieve, I don't mean that one can't marry someone who seems ideal, nor that one can't find a lover who seems perfect. What I mean is that the reality will never live up to fantasy. Oh, maybe it will seem so for awhile, but not in the long run. So, I'm not talking about being frustrated in the search for a partner who seems to embody our fantasy.

One of my favorite quotes is by the 19th-century English playwright Oscar Wilde: *"There are two tragedies in life. One is not getting what you want. The other is getting it."*

So, not getting what you want means that the seduction didn't occur, since you never discovered a suitable fantasy object who would perform as the eventual assassin of your dream. The dream may have existed inside you, but it remained indistinct and didn't firm up into an obsession by becoming attached to a suitable object.

Betrayal, on the other hand, is the result of getting what you thought you wanted. The seduction was the carrot waved in front of your donkey. You went for it hook, line, and sinker, and you ate the whole thing. That's when betrayal becomes inevitable.

Another way to say all this is to be careful about what you want.

Now, I'm not suggesting that all fantasies, dreams, or desires are inevitably part of a seduction-betrayal dynamic. Some are, others aren't. The difference between them probably can't be reduced to a single variable or simple reason, but certain obvious generalizations apply. Fantasies, dreams, and desires are not the same in thought, feeling, and motivation as they are when manifested in

reality. Once outwardly materialized, they operate according to different rules, and our attitudes toward them must adjust accordingly. The perfect and ideal don't exist in reality, so we need to change our expectations and lower our standards. If we do that, we have a better shot at maintaining our humility and maturing into wisdom. If we don't (or can't), however, betrayal will necessarily follow.

Either way, life will teach us about ourselves.