

7 LOVE'S WOUND

Gia and I had just pulled into the driveway and were sitting in the car.

“I think you should be in relationship with Rebecca,” she told me.

Rebecca was an attractive woman we had recently met. Gia’s abrupt suggestion took me aback. Tension gripped my body—although for the previous few days I had also thought about Rebecca as a possible partner.

“Why Rebecca?” I asked, feeling very surreal.

“I think she can offer you the kind of energy you need,” Gia said, her face pained but sincere.

Together, Gia and I felt into this possibility for a few days, and we talked about it extensively. Finally, I called Rebecca on the phone and asked if she would stop by for a visit. Rebecca and I were only acquaintances—I assumed she would find my invitation out-of-the-blue.

“I’ll stop by after work,” she said.

When she came to the house, I sat at the kitchen table with her and told her why I had invited her over.

“So, Gia and I are going to experiment with having new intimate partners. We are about to move to another city and teach for a few months. Would you like to come with us and try being my intimate partner?”

This felt very, very strange to me. I was asking a woman to be my intimate partner while living in the same house as Gia and the other people who help teach with us. To my surprise, Rebecca told me she had dreamt about this a few nights earlier.

“Will I have to have sex with you?” she asked.

“No. Maybe. I don’t know. This whole thing is new to me. I really don’t know how it will turn out. If sex feels like the right thing, we’ll do it. If not, we won’t. It’s your choice. It’s our choice. This is unknown territory to me.”

“OK. I’d like to try it,” Rebecca said. “I’ll have to give notice at my job, put my stuff in storage, and rent out my house.”

And that was that. We had never had a one-to-one conversation before, and now Rebecca was moving in.

I remembered Mykonos once telling me about the different kinds of relationships.

“We are bound to objects,” Mykonos said while we were in a small sushi restaurant eating lunch. While chewing, he motioned with his head toward a table nearby. Two men and two women sat at the table, nibbling at their food and talking. The men both had long hair and earrings, and one of the men had tattoos on his arm. The women were tanned and athletic looking.

“Those boys are *lost*,” Mykonos said. “Lost in women.”

Mykonos ate another piece of sushi and washed it down with a sip of green tea. A few pieces of rice remained on his lower lip, but he didn't seem to notice.

"Mykonos, you have some rice on your lip."

He wiped his mouth with a napkin and ate some more sushi, leaving more rice on his lips. I didn't bother to tell him.

"Those women have one thing on their mind. Look at them all prettied up. They spend *hours* preparing themselves for men every day. Without a man's adoration, they feel worthless."

Mykonos used his chopsticks to pick up a piece of tempura, which fell back to the plate just before he got it in his mouth. He picked it up with his fingers and ate it.

"And look at those two boys," Mykonos said, although the "boys" were probably in their early 40's. "All shiny and smiley. Chatting like women."

Mykonos suddenly looked at me and said, "You know what I mean, don't you? There's nothing wrong with women ..."

Mykonos loved women—truly *appreciated* women—more than any man I had ever met. He didn't need to add his cautious comments, but he seemed to feel it necessary.

"I know what you mean, Mykonos."

"Those men don't know their *death*, that's what I mean. Women *are* life, you know? But when a man gets lost in life without knowing his death, then he is no longer a man. You know what I mean?"

"Yes."

“Look at those two sorry fuckers. Carrying on like fish in a tank, proud of their little pebbles and seaweed, puffing out their gills. They haven’t the slightest fucking idea how tiny their world is, how they are dependent on a million things that could go wrong and they would be dead, just like that. All some kid has to do is knock over the tank, you know? Meanwhile, they are staring at some tits, hoping for some pussy, chatting like they cared about the conversation. They can’t wait to go home, jerk off, maybe watch a little TV.”

I looked over at the table. The four of them were laughing and talking.

“They’re singles, and all of them are hoping to get laid. Maybe settle down in a good relationship. Have some kids. Of course, there’s nothing wrong with any of that,” Mykonos said with a smile, and I remembered that he had a daughter in college. “But it’s never enough. Those guys will be looking at their girly magazines, or maybe have a mistress. Those women will long for their man to love them more. Maybe they’ll have an affair, or maybe they’ll just eat and buy dresses. Eventually, they’ll resign themselves to a tolerable arrangement, or get divorced and start again. It doesn’t really matter. If you are bound to objects—even people you truly love—then you suffer, because they can’t deliver what you want from them.”

“Mykonos, you’ve been married for twenty years.”

“Yesss,” Mykonos said, hissing through his teeth, “yes I have. But because of my teacher, I’ve also gotten to know the laughing

mama. You know, the big lady who doesn't give a shit about any of my objections. She shot me up in Vietnam, she laughs as my body ages, she'll be laughing when I die. I'm also married to my wife—but that's a whole 'nuther thing. In truth, my wife and I are each married to the Great One. We don't expect our personal relationship with each other to make us happy—we don't expect *anything* to make us happy. You are either open—which is happiness itself—or you are closing down and suffering. Those people over there," Mykonos nodded toward the nearby table, "don't understand that life is brief and all objects—and relationships—vanish."

Mykonos looked at me as he spoke. "You know, I've had my share of women. It doesn't matter how old or young, how sweet or mean, you are either doing the yoga, or you are not. You are either opening to the Great One through your sexing and talking and spending time together, or you are building in suffering, setting yourself up for disappointment, always about to be betrayed, one way or the other."

Mykonos finished the sushi on his plate and sat back. "Those women, they're going to go home and dream of a good man. Those boys, they're going to fantasize about fucking young women for the rest of their lives. And by the time the ladies are saggy and wrinkled and the men are too old to care, it'll be too late. They won't have the energy to open beyond their shriveled concerns for a better life. A day without too much pain will be good enough. And when they start dying, they'll be horrified. All the relationships in the world won't help them then. It'll all just

disappear—every person, every object, every moment of their lives will fade—and be forgotten like a dream.”

One of the women at the table began to show the men a new turquoise and silver ring she was wearing.

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“If a man can’t feel his death, then he drifts into the things of life like he’s getting lost in a movie. He forgets where the *room* he sees really is. He loses touch with the openness of consciousness. Day after day passes, money comes and goes, women come and go, and so what? Maybe you change diapers, maybe you change the world. It all disappears. It’s good to live fully, you know. But while you are living—while you eat and fuck and do what you can to help others—you’ve got to understand that the laughing mama doesn’t give a shit and death is the ground of your life, just as sleep is the ground of waking. At the end of a day, at the end of a life, no matter what you’ve done, you drift into another place. And the laughing mama’s there, too. And so is death, the place beyond appearance.”

The waitress came, and I paid the bill. On the way out of the restaurant, I looked back at the four people talking at the table. I imagined their lives coming and going.

Mykonos spoke as we walked to the car. “It starts with ‘s’ and ends with ‘x’ and rhymes with ‘sex.’ Nobody is willing to feel the bliss of the Great One because they are wrapped up in sex, or wishing they were. I say, better to go through it all the way. If you are going to fuck, better to fuck open to God, leaving nothing. Then, when you die, nothing is left undone, unopen. No stone is unturned to God. No regrets. You’ve done it all, and you know it goes

nowhere but where you are right now, in the boundless nowhere of the infinity of fuck, where something is arising, but you don't know what it is, do you Mr. Jones?" Mykonos said with a poor imitation of Bob Dylan's voice. "Everything is utter chaos—alive as love but going nowhere that fulfills—so you bind yourself to objects, to relationships, to feel that your life means something, that you have something to show for it, and that somebody loves you."

I was going to spend a few months teaching while living with both Gia and Rebecca. I didn't want to lose Gia's love. I was still holding on to her, hoping I could maybe have a relationship with Rebecca without losing Gia. I was definitely "bound" to Gia as Mykonos had described. I also could feel my sexual attraction to Rebecca. She was new, a shiny "object" for me to look forward to possessing. I felt caught by both sides of the trap that Mykonos talked about, unwilling to let go of the love that Gia and I had created together, desiring the possibilities and newness with Rebecca, and afraid I might end up with nothing.

Gia and Rebecca were both very beautiful. I felt full and proud that I was living with two women. Even though I was supposed to move on from Gia, we were more like a threesome, and I felt wealthy with women. I could also feel, as Mykonos suggested, that I was using the affection and flesh that now surrounded me to pad myself from the stark free-fall of utter surrender, from the nothingness of deep, open being.

One night, the three of us made love together. I looked into Gia's eyes. She was so deep, so wise. I could feel her commitment

to God, as well as her devotion to me. I felt so at ease with her, so at home. I loved her without a trace of doubt. And yet, my body did not respond as a man's does to a *woman*. Ever since I began to experience internal overheating—the fevers, nosebleeds, and heart arrhythmias—I found Gia's physical presence to be sometimes irritating—not emotionally, but physically.

She didn't have to say or do anything specific, simply the heat of her gaze, the passion of her touch, and the urgency of her love was enough to chafe my nervous system, turning me off sexually. Previous to my bout of "Shakti fever," as Mykonos called it, I loved hot, spicy Thai and Mexican food. I enjoyed staying outside in the sun for hours. Now, I couldn't tolerate spicy food at all, and five or ten minutes in the sun was all I could handle. Likewise, Gia's passionate demeanor, which I had previously cherished and found exciting, now felt like too much, even though my love for her had not lessened one iota.

Looking into Gia's eyes, I felt her pain. She knew I loved her deeply—there was no question of that. But she could also feel my body's reticence to combine with her energy. On the other hand, when I turned to Rebecca—whose disposition was very cool, calm, and laid-back to an extreme—my body desired her energy greatly. Gia felt, and suffered, my desire for Rebecca's energy. Particularly when the three of us were being sexual together, Gia felt hurt, Rebecca held back in deference to the deep love she could feel between Gia and me, and I was like a kid in a candy shop where all the candy bit me back when I tried to take a taste.

Whether Mykonos knew what his suggestion would bring about or not, the situation was fine-tuned to promise and frustrate my desire for just about every “object” to which I was bound. The most valuable “thing” in my life—Gia, and the love we shared—was suddenly threatened. The pattern of our comfortable bond had been taken apart, and I doubted it would, or could, ever be put back together again. I could love her, and she could love me, but our sense of “home” was shattered—unless open love itself was our home, a love without expectation or personal ownership.

Rebecca turned out to be exactly what I desired and needed energetically. She was so serene and graceful that I reveled in her energy. She healed me, and turned me on. She inspired me. Of course, she was not experienced in practicing love. I wasn’t used to being with a woman who couldn’t simply open and connect like Gia could so deeply, although Rebecca’s cool demeanor rejuvenated me profoundly.

Gia and I could connect our deep hearts in almost any moment, yet my body could no longer embrace her fully. Rebecca and I could connect our bodies deeply and revel in energetic richness, yet her heart was reluctant to open, and she left me feeling alone.

I now had two women, but found that I was more alone than ever. I also found that I preferred being alone. Dealing with the multiplied emotional melee was, for me, something akin to a nightmare. Gia was explosively jealous that I sexually desired Rebecca. Rebecca was icily envious of the depth of love that I shared with

Gia. Given my own tendencies, I would rather not deal with any of it—a weakness Mykonos often pointed out—and here we were tangled in a maelstrom of emotional and sexual turbulence.

Looking into Gia's eyes while we made love, her emotional pain was excruciating. We both cried. We held each other. Our relationship was over as we knew it. And yet, our love for each other was unperturbed. Our hearts were ripped open, ragged, bleeding, and raw with love's tragedy.

We telephoned Mykonos.

"Hello," Mykonos answered.

"Hello, Mykonos. I'm here with Gia, and ..."

"How is the Peepster?"

"She's not doing real well. Neither of us are ..."

"Mm-hmm. You've got your other girlfriend there as well?"

"She's here, but not in the room with us."

"And what *room* are you in?" Mykonos asked.

I couldn't help but smile. Here we were in some love-drama-tragedy and Mykonos instantly evaporated all heaviness into spacious humor.

"Happy birthday, Mykonos," I said with a bit of happiness.

"Yesss. Happy birthday to you, too. Now, what kind of mess have you gotten yourself into?" Mykonos laughed.

"Well, ..." I hesitated while trying to summarize the current state of affairs.

"She is all around you, my dear," Mykonos interjected, "and you are either able to open or you are closing down. She—the

laughing mama—doesn't care one way or the other. She doesn't care if you live or die. She certainly doesn't give a damn about you and the Peepster. The pain in your heart? Feel it. Love is a wound, my friend, a wound that never heals."

My eyes watered as I felt the hurt in my heart without closing. My breath deepened and I looked at Gia, who was also crying. God I loved her.

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"Feel the wound of love," Mykonos said. "Learn to live open, wounded, loving. You can't hold onto Gia forever. Be willing to feel the wound now, and love. If you never see the Peepster again, or if you spend the rest of your life with her, anything less than living heart-open is protecting your heart from real love now, a deep love that never ceases, never closes, never waits, even while you hurt. Love Gia, let her go and love her, keep your heart open, aching, churning in the wound of love that never heals, and discover what happens."

I felt the open rawness of my heart's hurt. I loved Gia. My heart wanted to own her, or else to close to her and turn away. I didn't want to suffer the pain of letting her go and losing her while my heart remained open and hurt. I breathed and practiced to stay open, feeling, loving, even though it hurt. Then my mind kicked in. I began to doubt what I was doing.

I confessed my fears to Mykonos. "I'm afraid I'm making a big mistake, trying to let go of Gia."

"Maybe you are, maybe you aren't. You don't know, and I don't know. You can never know. All you can do is open and act from your deepest love. What does your gut say?"

“My gut says ...that it is time to move on.” I couldn’t believe I said that. I couldn’t describe why I felt this way, but it felt deeply true. I didn’t want it to be true, but it was the deepest truth I could feel.

“And your heart?”

“My heart loves Gia more than ever.”

“Good. That is the best time to move on. My friend, it’s time to walk the walk. Now let me talk with the Peepster.”

Gia got on the phone. She was weeping and talking, but by the time she hung up, she was smiling through her tears.

We embraced. The front of our bodies softened and pressed into each other. Our hearts were beating hard and our breath became one. Our skin and bones melted and our bodies merged as one open love.

Rebecca walked into the room.

I could feel my body and heart harden slightly. Why was I afraid to love Gia in front of Rebecca? Why was I afraid to love anyone at anytime? I eased back to opening, feeling my body inside the *room* loving these other bodies and also feeling open outside the *room*, opening as the deep space of consciousness. My heart and body relaxed. I breathed deeply with Gia and looked into her eyes. The feeling of tragedy dissipated, leaving only a deep love, wounded to be sure, but also eternal. Gia and I were open as love. Our history together might be ending, but our memory together was lush.

We released each other, and Gia looked at Rebecca. Rebecca looked away for a moment, then looked back into Gia’s eyes.

They both started crying, and Gia walked to Rebecca, embracing her. They held each other for a few moments, and then Gia left the room.

Rebecca's eyes were wet and her face was flushed. I walked toward her and stood close to her. She seemed a little guarded.

"I don't want to stand between you and Gia. I don't want to be the 'other' woman," she said.

"You aren't the 'other' woman," I answered.

"Then, what am I?"

I didn't know quite how to answer. It was all too new. I wasn't sure exactly what our relationship was. I wasn't even sure what I wanted our relationship to be. I was still afraid to totally let go of Gia, and continuing as a threesome was far too painful for everybody—especially because I was so ambiguous.

I remembered Mykonos once teaching Paco and Erin how to go deeper than ambiguity in relationship. Erin was feeling hurt that Paco didn't know what he truly wanted with her.

"You've been with Erin for how long now?" Mykonos asked Paco.

"Six or seven months, I guess," Paco answered.

"But I never know if he is going to be with me another day," Erin added.

"Is he totally with you now?" Mykonos asked Erin.

"Well, that's not what he feels like. I don't know if he really wants to be with me. He's wishy-washy. He's driving me crazy."

"But I *don't* know if I want to be with you," Paco explained.

“Would you rather that I faked it and pretended that I was certain?”

Mykonos grimaced and sat back in his chair.

“Paco, Paco, Paco. Do you have a heart?”

“Yes. Why?”

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“Use it,” Mykonos said. “You are in your head. Your head is filled with doubt. Your head *is* doubt. Your brain is cramped as you think about the possibilities. Being with Erin is one possibility. Being with another woman is also possible. Maybe you should be alone. You are waffling in doubt, hmmm?”

“Yeah. I like Erin a lot. I love her, really. I just don’t know if she is right for me. And, yeah, sometimes I think about being with other women. I mean, she probably thinks about being with other men, too.”

“Yes, she probably does,” Mykonos replied. “And she will always be filled with conflict. The entire world, including every body and mind, is a realm of opposites. You and Erin are filled with contradictions. There is nothing singular about you. Today you love Erin, and you feel pretty certain. Tomorrow you may meet someone else and feel pretty certain that you don’t love Erin. Maybe what you call love isn’t even love, hmmm? The mind is an idiot box, filled with possibilities, each of which leads you in a different direction. You are reduced to weakness if you live in your mind, which always expresses doubt and ambiguity.”

“But my doubt is real. I really don’t know what I want.”

“My friend, you don’t know anything! You don’t know if you are going to be alive in ten minutes. You don’t know what

you are going to say next. You don't know if I'm going to punch you or kiss you, and you sure as hell don't know if Erin is the 'right one.'"

"So what am I supposed to do?"

"Relax your mind, first. Feel open, like you would feel warm wind blowing on your skin. Feel Erin, feel the world. Feel everything, and open. Open as everything, as the entire *room*. Allow everything to arise as it does, and feel into depth. Feel deeper than your thoughts. Your thoughts, and the rest of the world, arise in opposing pairs. She, the world, always comes in two. 'She loves me, she loves me not', you know? And both sides are true. Or, neither side is true. The real truth, your heart's truth, is singular, and obvious."

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"It's not obvious to me," Paco complained.

"Because you are not feeling deep enough in your heart, my friend. If you doubt, feel deeper. If you can't decide, feel deeper. Feel so deep, no thoughts move. Feel so deep, only openness shines. When you offer your life from this place of open depth, you act with absolute certainty, though you still might not have the slightest idea what you will do next. Without wavering, every action springs from love's depth."

Mykonos looked at Erin's anguished face.

"This depth of love is what Erin needs from you, Paco. Her mind is filled with doubts, too, so she might always seem confused about what she wants. She might always complain, even when you are not so ambiguous. All you can offer her is your absolute certainty of love, your depth of openness, now and now and now."

“I don’t know if I love her.”

“Feel deeper, then. Look into her eyes, feel the deepest part of her heart, and offer her the deepest part of yours. Do you want to embrace her?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want to combine yourself with her sexually?”

“Yes.”

“Do you want to have children with her?”

“No, not now, anyway.”

“Do you want to live with her?”

“Yes.”

“Will you still want to live with her tomorrow?”

“I don’t know.”

“EXACTLY!” Mykonos shouted. “You know nothing but the deep certainty of love, and how it wants to be expressed in this present moment. That is all you can ever know. Life lived spontaneously from your depth of love is a moment-to-moment gift. It is your art.”

Mykonos paused to see if Paco understood. “My friend, when you live from your head, you are always caught in dilemmas. But when you live from your deep heart, life is singular because love is singular. Erin can feel your depth of heart, and trust you, day by day, as you offer your deepest truth to her. But when you are coming from the contradictions that fill your head, why should she trust you? She’d do better to chop your head off!”

“Sometimes I feel like chopping his head off,” Erin admitted with a smile.

"Of course you do, ma. Unless Paco's mind is open like the sky, it's a box of complications, obstructing his love. Why not chop the damn thing off? Paco would be better off for it!"

"Yeah, I guess I would," Paco smiled.

"So, at depth, are you certain of your love for this woman, Paco?"

"Yes, Mykonos. I understand what you are saying. I can feel deeper than my doubt, but then I doubt that I will always be able to do it!"

"It's a moment-to-moment thing, Paco. Do it now. And now. It's a practice that grows over time, but the love itself, the openness itself, is deeper than time. Your mind and body are always struggling with contradictory thoughts and impulses. Feel deeper, open deep as love's certainty, and surrender your body and mind to be lived as love's depth, with Erin and everybody else. Erin, is there anything else you would want from Paco?"

"No. Of course not."

"Then that is it," Mykonos said. "Be lived as love, or be an asshole, Paco."

Remembering Mykonos's suggestions to Paco, I looked into Rebecca's eyes. Clearly, she felt my ambiguity. Part of me wouldn't let go of Gia. Part of me doubted that Rebecca—or any woman—could ever take Gia's place in my life. Part of me was afraid of hurting Gia. And part of me doubted that I was doing the right thing. Was I about to ruin Rebecca's life? Was I avoiding a deeper possible love with Gia by bringing Rebecca into the picture?

As I felt deeper than all of these thoughts and doubts in my mind, a certainty rose from my heart: it was time to change my relationship with Gia and begin one with Rebecca. If I thought about it, though, then doubts would clench me and indecision would freeze me. But feeling deeper than thought, feeling into my deep heart, I was certain. I couldn't explain it, to myself or to anyone else, but I was certain that love was moving me to change relationships. I didn't know how it would turn out, and parts of me were still afraid, but, deep down, there was no doubt.

As soon as I felt the certainty deep in my heart, Rebecca shifted her posture. She stood taller and breathed more deeply. Her guardedness vanished.

"I love you," she said to me.

I felt Rebecca's heart open wide. My mind began comparing her with Gia. Is she as wise as Gia? Does she love me as much as Gia? I could see my mind's doubt reflected in Rebecca's eyes and body. When I doubted, Rebecca guarded her heart. When I felt deeper than doubt, when I opened my deepest heart and offered love's certainty to Rebecca, she opened, too. Her openness was my openness. There was no difference.

"All women are *she*," Mykonos once told me. "Treat each woman as the Goddess, because she is. Women are built to reveal openness—they are nature's mechanism of surrender—and they wait for a man they could trust with their utterly surrendered heart. Few women ever meet such a man, so most women suffer terribly, longing their entire lives."

I remembered Mykonos's words as I felt Rebecca responding to my depth or to my doubt, instantaneously. Her body was an exquisite reflection of how deeply open I was, moment by moment. Her relaxation, the look on her face, and the openness in her eyes were based on my depth. She was waiting, and as soon as I opened deeply and offered love's certainty, she surrendered open deeply—and her body opened to mine.

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Opening as love with Gia, we shared unchecked affection, we shared our spiritual practice, we combined our talents to serve others. Gia and I shared subtle delights and life-changing insights with extraordinary ease. We could talk about anything—or simply exchange a glance or a touch—and understand each other in ways nobody else did.

Opening as love with Rebecca, our bodies were drawn together in sexual merger.