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Letter to a Lover

by Pauline Walden

I want you to understand that I never meant to leave you. This I have done, not because of the alcohol - which you always said you could take or leave but unfortunately there was more taking than leaving; not because of the Cannabis, which you needed to relieve the pain caused by over consumption of alcohol and subsequent - often spectacular - nosebleeds; not because of your love of animals - particularly horses; after all, being unable to work you needed a little diversion. Neither is it because of your volatile, often violent, temperament due - as you have suggested frequently and at considerable length - to an appalling childhood.

No, my reason for leaving is my own addiction.

This, I now realise, has developed over many years and has been a long, insidious process. Indeed, I would not have realised it but for the advice of my doctor to seek therapy for my depression.

My therapist introduced me to the concept of 'toxic relationships' and insisted that these can become addictive. It seems that I have been in such a relationship. The constant criticism and undermining, which I accepted as part of your insecurity; your attempts to isolate me from friends - which I took to indicate the depth of your devotion; your insistence on driving me to every appointment or social event, as you worried about my driving. I didn't see any of this as controlling or manipulative but rather as an demonstration of your caring. Then there were the violent outbursts, the mood swings - which you always persuaded me were caused by my lack of sensitivity.

This type of addiction was explained to me as similar to the Stockholm Syndrome - which I don't pretend to understand. However, this is not too surprising as nobody else seems to, neither doctor, therapist or psychiatrist. They all insisted that slow withdrawal never works; 'cold turkey' is the only way to conquer this addiction and the truly amazing thing is, that as soon as I made the decision to leave, my depression started to lift but as the weeks, then months, passed I began to worry about you; how you would manage without my support and I've often feel that I should return to take care of you.

I miss you so much.