



–Diane Sollee, [smartmarriages.com](http://smartmarriages.com)

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## Loves Four Journeys at a Glance

Beginning with love's advent, we savor the bedazzling properties of nature's own romantic brew. When the drugs wear off, we move across the arid terrain of inevitable disappointment (and you are still the same old you, and the very qualities you fell in love with in the other come back to haunt you). The third journey takes us into the heart of desperation. It is here that we realize that we cannot change the other person and that our relationship is not the cure for all of life's miseries. Instead we must look into the mirror at our own flaws. As the illusion dies, however, we move closer to the possibility of real love. To embark on this final stage in the journey is not inevitable. To reach the destination of mature love involves much personal growth and change.

We do not move through these journeys in one steady progress upward, like climbing a ladder, so that when the fourth stage is reached we return to a shared bliss with our partners. Our progress takes a form more like a spiral gradually moving upward to something new. Yet if and when we do embark on the journey, we can, in the final stage, regain some of the magic of early romance (which so quickly disappeared during our power struggle and its subsequent stand-off). Our progress allows us to become less defended and more spontaneous. Now the flames of early romance can be rekindled, returning unexpectedly and often as strong as they were in the beginning. Without warning, however, we may fall back into a sudden struggle for power. Our quarrels may echo one another in a series of what have been termed "negative infinity loops." We cannot believe we are back at it again! But the spaces between the troubles get longer, and we get up out of the trough more quickly. We learn to remain connected and committed, even in the hard moments. Give-and-take is not the stuff of romance—when total, unconditional love for one another seems possible to sustain forever. Learning to live with another person is hard; it has to be. When people refer to their partners (although not usually themselves) as "control freaks," I always marvel. Because who does not want to have his or her own way? Sharing your life with another person means ongoing compromises, doing things differently than you want to do them, being subject to someone else's whims and preferences.

Although difficult, the rewards of a vital and long term relationship are indisputable. More happiness, better health, a longer life, more financial security and all the wisdom, knowledge and satisfaction that come from learning to grow one's self in the best way possible.

## Journey One: Merging and Romantic Love

I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he  
asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first  
I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so  
he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was  
going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

—from *Ulysses* by James Joyce



### And for the older and wiser, another poem

Why don't we say goodbye right now  
in the fallacy of perfect health  
before whatever is going to happen  
happens

—Linda Pastan

## The Second Journey: Disappointment and the Power Struggle

### The Kiss

I hoped that he would love me,  
And he has kissed my mouth,  
But I am like a stricken bird  
That cannot reach the south.

For though I know he loves me,  
To-night my heart is sad;  
His kiss was not so wonderful  
As all the dreams I had.

—Sarah Teasdale

## The Third Journey: Despair, Giving up, Unraveling

In former days we'd both agree  
that you were me, and I was you.  
What has now happened to us two,  
that you are you, and I am me?

—Bhartrhari

Translated from the Sanskrit by John Brough

## The Fourth Journey: Vintage Love

### Decade

When you came, you were like red wine and honey,  
And the taste of you burnt my mouth with its sweetness.  
Now you are like morning bread,  
Smooth and pleasant.  
I hardly taste you at all for I know your savour,  
But I am completely nourished.

—Amy Lowell