

It's All About Chemicals¹

*Emilia Haljala*²

Direction notes:

The monologue is performed by one actress in a small studio. The performance can be performed for a single audience as one-to-one performance but also for a small group (max 10 people). The situation should feel cozy and realistic. The performer is speaking directly to the audience creating an intimate and intensive connection between the spectator and actor.

The atmosphere at the beginning should be awkward but positive and gradually towards the ending turn anxious and horrific.

The small studio is staged as a darkish living room with some simple decorations. Audience is told to wait behind the door, this is the only information that is given to them. The performance starts when the actress already as the character opens the door as if someone would have knocked on it. She is confused as she did not expect to see these people behind the door. After the first moment, she invites the audience in as her guest.

The text contains some possibilities for a verbal interaction with an audience. During the monologue, the character asks a few questions and the audience is free to answer. The actor should be able to adapt the script slightly depending on the audience's responses. The performance was originally part of a research project and therefore the police officer hands a questionnaire to the audience at the end. They have to fill it in before they go.

The actors do not come back on stage for a bow.

¹ The monologue has been performed for the first time in February 2017 in Sitges (Barcelona) directed by Emilia Haljala, starring Annamád Hjortaa as "The Woman" and Emilia Haljala as "Police Officer".

² Emilia Haljala is a Finnish artist, actress, author and performer. After a BA in Acting and the IAB – Institute of the Arts Barcelona, she has started an independent theatrical and performative company, specialized in creative workshops. Fascinated by adapting real life stories to stage and film, she is also a documentary short-film maker with a collaborative artist group.

THE WOMAN

Hi, hello... come in. Sorry, this is really strange, I mean having visitors. I didn't expect anyone. Don't take it wrong, it's nice. It's just been a long time since... anyway. Have a seat. Would you like to have something to drink? (*Audience's response*) How are you? (*Audience's response*)

To be honest, I've been here just thinking, thinking about life. I mean more specifically about love. Trying to find a definition. What love actually is. Have you ever been in love? (*Audience's response*)

All the clichés become true, butterflies tickling in your belly, you are so full of the feeling that you forget to eat, it's impossible to focus because your mind wanders, all the time. You don't even want to sleep cause you are too busy thinking about the one and when you are together everyone else disappears. You become like a horse with blinders who obeys only one master, the love.

Isn't it scary that love actually causes a very strong physical reaction. The body releases neurochemicals called monoamines which speed up heart rate, triggers an intense rush of pleasure and replicates the effect of a Class A drug. It has the same effect on the brain as taking cocaine, and I'm not even kidding. Yes, love is a drug, in fact one of the most dangerous one. I wonder when they'll ban love, make it illegal like other drugs. It doesn't make you only high but addicted too.

All that happened to me three years ago, addiction at first sight. His charm was unexplainable and I was straight away high on this drug. You know the feeling when you see everything through the pink glasses? It was amazing how fast we bonded, sharing our deepest fears and secret dreams. He had the right answer to all my questions, even to the questions where I had never found any answer myself. He made me feel very special. I admired him more than anything, and he knew that.

Catch! He had finally got me in his hook realizing that this fish was dumb enough to be his pet. I was put in a fishbowl where I could not escape, and I didn't even want to. I became an object in the bowl that he could feed or watch starving. Things started to change. His words became my law. He started poking me instead of petting. Strong jealousy came into the relationship but I was even flattered because I thought he just wanted to protect me.

All I wanted was his best so I started changing, for his sake, I avoided all the attention from other people, I stopped wearing any make-up, I even cut off from my male friends.

But that wasn't enough. I was just a disappointment to him. He got upset if the coffee wasn't ready on time in the morning, if I forgot to wish him a lovely day, if I didn't reply immediately to his messages he believed I was cheating on him. I was there for him 24/7 but it wasn't enough. I became a liar who was holding the curtain so that nobody would see what was actually happening behind the scenes. Nothing was seen but felt.

Little by little, my pink glasses started to discolor and day by day I saw more shades of grey. The butterflies in my belly nested larvae which started to gnaw my guts. It wasn't because of him, it was because of me. I wasn't good enough. Every time he called me a fat selfish whore, I wasn't insulted, funny isn't it? Each time I just became more terrified of losing him because I couldn't imagine my life without him anymore.

It's said that romantic relationships are like rollercoasters. But I honestly think this is more like an endless tightrope walk above the Grand Canyon without any safety equipment. You do your best to keep the balance but there is a constant fear of slipping off. Is it the adrenaline that makes you still do it? I know you might be thinking, why don't you just leave. I know, but it's not that simple. I feel like part of him lives underneath my skin, controlling everything I do.

Yesterday morning we fought, again. Last days I had been busy with my work and I was not able to give him enough attention. He threatened that he would easily find someone else to replace me. I was well trained to know what to do when he was sad or mad. Usually it was sex. Not for our but for his pleasure. I guess I felt horrible that I hadn't been there for him last couple of days so I wanted to surprise him. I bought new underwear, bought some really good wine and cooked him dinner. He got home really late which was very typical of him. He seemed happy about the surprise, we actually had quite a good time and for once everything felt right again, until we had sex. It was very far from making love, he came very fast and snapped at me "If you continue, I will piss inside you. Move away, I've had enough sex today." Yes, he did get the attention from someone else if I wasn't enough. He went to the bathroom and I stayed in bed crying as usual. When he came back to bed he whispered: "Sleep tight, let's smile in the morning if you are still alive."

I'm tired of crying.

I'm tired of being sad.

I'm tired of pretending.

I'm tired of feeling lonely.

I'm tired of being anxious.

I'm tired of feeling crazy.
I'm tired of being controlled.
I'm tired of remembering.
I'm tired of living on the edge.
I'm tired of missing people.
I'm tired of feeling worthless.
I'm tired of wishing I could start all over.
I'm tired of dreaming of a life I will never have.
But most of all, I'm just fucking tired of being tired.

It's all about chemicals, isn't it? Euphoric, addictive, poisonous chemicals that guide us to either jump off from the cliff or push the other person off.

(Knock on the door, "It's police, open up!", a police officer opens the door and walks in).

POLICE OFFICER

Miss, you have to come with me. Hands behind your back. *(Police Officer arrests her)*

THE WOMAN

Finally I am free.

(The Police officer takes her out and goes back to the audience.)

POLICE OFFICER

As a witness/witnesses, could you answer to a few questions. When you are done you can leave the paper on the table and you are free to go. *(Leaves)*



Annamåd Hjortas in *It's All About Chemicals*, photo by Emilia Haljala.