

# It's Your Friends Who Break Your Heart

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It is an insolent cliché, almost, to note that our culture lacks the proper script for ending friendships. We have no rituals to observe, no paperwork to do, no boilerplate dialogue to crib from.

Yet when Elisa Albert and Rebecca Wolff were in the final throes of their friendship, they managed, entirely by accident, to leave behind just such a script. The problem was that it read like an Edward Albee play—tart, unsparing, fluorescent with rage.

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This is, mind you, how most friendships die, according to the social psychologist Beverley Fehr: not in pyrotechnics, but a quiet, gray dissolve. It's not that anything happens to either of you; it's just that things stop happening between you. And so you drift.

It's the friendships with more deliberate endings that torment. At best, those dead friendships merely hurt; at worst, they feel like personal failures, each one amounting to a little divorce. It doesn't matter that most were undone by the hidden trip wires of midlife I talked about earlier: marriage, parenthood, life's random slings and arrows. By midlife, you've invested enough in your relationships that every loss stings.

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