

Launch

The Pain of a Break-up. 2006

At 11:00pm in a little inner city bar last week I launched my young friend's Zine. She's twenty-five and I have watched her grow up. Her parents are close friends of mine - I met her mother when she was the age her daughter is now and we were at drama school together. She played Acardina to my Nina in ~~Cherov's~~ ^{The} Cherry Orchard for our graduation play - the one when my grandmother called out wanting to know what I'd done to my hair. ~~and why I looked like~~ how I looked so different.

I have watched my old friend's daughter for more than twenty years move from an angelic and luminous child to an impressive, if not ^{rather} melancholy young woman. And she is a writer, amongst other things, and I gave the speech that launched her self-published book of music writing at nearly midnight last week and just before the band came on.

'The band still hasn't set up & yet - they can't get a level on the or something...'

Apart from arriving at eight o'clock all ready to go and unadorned with the ~~prescribed~~ 'sparkle' requested on the invitation - I have usually pretended to forget to wear anything appropriate when so requested - I met my ex at the door and was so confused I bought two more Zines to detract from my discombobulation. I actually did one of those corny double takes I think. I think I ever said something inspired like, 'Oh hi, ~~the~~ what it's cold out isn't it?'

I waited around for hours and even though the bar was filling up with lots of lovely looking and very groovy young things (which was great because the party girl had been worried no one would show up) I didn't know where to focus, who to talk to and what to drink. There was only so much reading over my speech I could do without looking like I was nervous and I was still too surprised having just seen the ex. I barely spoke - ~~uncharacteristically~~ - while he chatted away amiably about books and films and how crap my last piece was and why didn't I just write the piece I wanted to write and not the half-

arsed crap ~~that~~ I had?

He'd assumed such a significance in my ~~best~~ hysterical imagination during that break up week that now seeing him - an ^{very} odd ~~and~~ man really - I just felt foolish - exposed.

During the week after we broke up I had texted and phoned and emailed this unapologetic critic with the compulsion of an addict so I just felt I had nothing left to say now that I was actually sitting with him. ^{also} And when my work is attacked as brazenly as he'd done, I am so impressed and shocked with the candour ^{can} I just agree with everything. He was right in this case. That piece had been half arsed crap. He had ignored most of that awful week's ^{misadventures} ~~overtures~~ or responded with such enigmatic economy I had gone even crazier. My principle excuse for my insane behaviour had been pre menstrual tension that is so bad these days ~~that~~ I am either consumed with grief or fury or sometimes both at the same time. I am capable of doing ^{very stupid} extremely foolish things ^{at these times} and lots of the time; ^{panic} if there is a man involved I ~~can humiliate myself with~~ ^{such} my unedited over-wrought and paranoid outbursts.
I am prone to

My ex has always told me to never call him when I am in that condition and I have always thought this very unreasonable and paternalistic ~~to say the least~~. So I would usually ignore his decree and drive him and myself bonkers instead.

So we are sitting in this little bar last week and I am drinking ^{too much} vodka ~~and getting drunk~~ and even though I had started out the night looking a little bit stylish, understated but stylish, I was starting to look jaded and middle-aged and beginning to feel ^{really} angry that everyone in the place was twenty years younger than me.

How does this happen? What's a nice girl doing in a place like this when she is actually tired, middle-aged and waiting forever to give a speech to a bunch of young funksters who probably think ^{she} I look like someone's mother. I am someone's mother of course but that's beside the point.

Then a twelve year old finally hands me the microphone and I get the girl closest to hold up the lampshade close to my face so I can read my speech and I realise that what I have written is all wrong and that it is a lead balloon I am holding. My students are the same age as this crowd but I don't want to be anyone's teacher tonight, this crowd is all a bit drunk and most likely very bright and full of hope, ~~energy~~ and ignorance and here I am talking about the remarkable drawings of half women and half horses my young friend did for me when she was eight and how smart and talented she was and how I used to drive her around when she still couldn't see out of the car window. I made pathetic jokes at my own expense about how little I knew about *modern* music and even tried some more philosophical stuff about the post-modern world and writing's disposability and all that. ~~But~~ all I could see was my adorable and shy young friend sitting right up the front, my ex boring a hole in me, as usual, and a crowd of jammed up against one another, smiley, peachy, youth and I felt completely and ridiculously ~~out of place~~. *wrong.*

At

For that moment I had no idea who I was and who they all were and had I really been in love with that giant curly headed man who was so good in bed and so bad out of it? Who did I think I was telling these young people about anything when I was such a bloody mess myself?

I couldn't sleep when I finally got home because it's hard to ~~close your eyes~~ when you feel so wound up with inappropriateness and aching vulnerability and when you wish the bed would just swallow you up and deliver you the next morning, sweeter, younger, stronger, *smarter*, ~~kinder~~ and well...just better.

When I woke up the next morning before the sun had, I did have one or two of those blissfully ignorant seconds when I didn't know where I was and what day it was. ~~And~~ then it

all came flooding back to me – the funksters, that lamp light doing my face no favours, my miss-pitched oh- so -witty - speech, my beautiful, shy young friend and my not so beautiful and filthy - honest ex. (And the three cigarettes and three vodkas ^{& takeaway Nachos.}) So I turned over and went back to sleep. I could do this; luxuriate like this because my son was at his father's.

And I needed to do this, ^{like half-set jelly} ~~marooned~~ in ~~that~~ a half-awake moment, because some days you just know are going to be bad. Some days are simply left unsaid.