

LESSON 15

HOW TO TALK ABOUT A BROKEN HEART

That weekend, I found myself sitting in a big garage watching the Giants put away their instruments. I had watched the last half hour of their rehearsal, which was awesome-as usual. Sometimes I have fantasies of working as a reporter for Spin or Rolling Stone and traveling with grimy, up-and-coming bands as they tour the continental United States in a nasty bus waiting for their big break. And then I'd write an amazing, sensitive article about them and they'd become famous and dedicate every album after that to me and put little pictures of me in their liner notes.

Hey, it could happen. Haven't you seen Almost Famous?

Anyway, as the rest of the band started packing up all the equipment, Rex came and sat down to be interviewed. "Okay: I said, trying to look official. "First question. When did you guys get together as a band?"

Rex pushed the floppy hair out of his eyes. "About a year ago. Melissa and I played drums and guitar in another band, the Sabotages. When they broke up, we picked up Don, Mick and Rudy and started the Giants. Actually, you want to know a dirty little secret?" Rex leaned into the tape recorder and lowered his voice. "We all met in junior high, at state band camp. But don't put that in your article-it's not very rock and roll of us."

I promised it would remain confidential, and moved on to my next question. "What are your influences?"

He thought for a moment. "Well, we love stuff like Sonic Youth, Elvis Costello, the Strokes ... but lately we've been trying to experiment more with soul music. Lyrically, we just write about whatever we're thinking about. Girls, usually: he grinned. "But we all share the writing responsibilities, which keeps things varied."

Gulp. Time for the big plunge. Here goes. "Okay, final question...." I tried to keep my voice steady, but somehow it ended up coming out as one long word: "Willyougotothewinterformalwithme?"

The rest of the band looked at me, then looked at Rex, and burst out laughing. Melissa-a girl I had thought was cool until this very second-laughed so hard I thought her nose ring was going to pop out. Don made a big show of putting his hands on his knees and trying to catch his breath, while Rudy wiped tears of laughter from his eyes. "Yeah, Rex at a formal," gasped Melissa. "Real likely!" Then they headed inside the house, laughing and slapping one another on the backs all the way.

I was totally, utterly, completely mortified. Rex was laughing too and saying something like, "Yeah, I'm not really into that kind of thing," but I didn't hear him because I was already running out the door.

WORDS ABOUT DESTRUCTION

When Rex laughed like that with his friends, I felt like I had been annihilated.

annihilate (v): to ruin completely

RELATED WORDS

These are some other words related to destruction.

My already low self-confidence was **razed** to the ground. My heart was **decimated** and **obliterated**. I felt like it had had all the blood drained out of it, leaving it a **desiccated** and withered thing. Over the next few days, just thinking about my humiliation would make my heart **corrode** even further. I had just sunk into the depths of social **perdition**.

raze (v): to bring a structure down to the ground

decimated (adj): completely ruined

obliterated (adj): destroyed without a trace

desiccated (adj): dried out

corrode (v): to wear away, as if with acid or chemicals

perdition (n): complete ruin

Honestly, I've been **buffeted** by love so often, I'm amazed I haven't given up yet.

buffet (v): to hit something hard and repeatedly

My ego can't take all this battery. I feel like I've been **bludgeoned** by

a sledgehammer.

battery (n): an unlawful physical assault

bludgeon (v): to hit hard with a blunt object

Inside I was in **chaos**, but on the outside I was as smooth as butter.

chaos (n): state of complete disorder

I thought about all the **carnage** I saw in those zombie movies, and I thought I'd rather be one of those guys than me right now.

carnage (n): widespread killing and slaughter

WORDS ABOUT SURPRISE AND EMBARRASSMENT

I was totally **flabbergasted** by Rex's response. I totally thought he liked me.

flabbergasted (adj): bewildered, totally amazed

RELATED WORDS

Two synonyms for flabbergasted are

nonplussed (adj) and **baffled** (adj).

I just couldn't **fathom** it at first.

fathom (v): to understand something, particularly something complex or mystical

I was so sure he **reciprocated** my feelings.

reciprocate (v): to return, to respond in kind

I managed to maintain my **composure** till I left, though.

composure (n): calmness; control over one's emotions

It started so well, but the whole thing was such a debacle, I can't even bring myself to think about it.

debacle (n): when something goes horribly wrong

Walter Chen **accosted** me in the hall to find out more about the event.

accost (v): to aggressively stop someone in order to speak to him or her

At the moment it happened, I was in a total state of **discomfiture** – I was so embarrassed, I didn't know what to do with myself.

discomfiture (n): confusion and embarrassment

After a while, though, the painful **mortification** laded to a general sense of **chagrin**.

mortification (n): total humiliation

chagrin (n): feeling of frustration or shame due to disappointment (a milder term than something like mortification or humiliation)

I was convinced the **stigma** of it all would stick to me forever, and I'd always be remembered as "that girl who got shot down."

stigma (n): a bad mark on someone's reputation

Even though I was sure people had heard the story, no one at school treated me with any derision after it happened. I guess all that **ignominy** was just in my head.

derision (n): scorn, ridicule

ignominy (n): great personal disgrace, dishonor

I mean, it wasn't like people were **disseminating** the story on the stalls of the girls' room.

disseminate (v): to spread (usually referring to information)

Though I thought about writing my own little **obloquy** about Rex in there.

obloquy (n): an abusive verbal attack

I guess everyone has to deal with this kind of **indignity** at some point in her romantic career.

indignity (n): something that offends one's dignity or self-esteem

I felt really **slighted** by Rex – I thought we had a deeper relationship than that.

slight (v): to insult someone, especially in away that involves ignoring or overlooking the person

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WORDS ABOUT HEARTBREAK

There was no way I was going to **abase** myself in front of a boy.

abase (v): to degrade someone; to make someone feel horrible and small

My dad asked – loudly and inconsiderately – why I kept moping around the house and looking so **despondent**.

despondent (adj): completely unhappy

RELATED WORDS

Some more fun words about emotional pain.

I told him I was in **anguish**, and he shouldn't bother trying to talk me out of it, because I was totally **inconsolable**. I spent all my time wandering around my room, which seemed totally **desolate** and boring now. I think my dad knew I was **aggrieved** about a boy, but he didn't push the subject.

anguish (n): extreme pain

inconsolable (adj): so deeply sad that you can't be comforted

desolate (adj): sad, empty, gloomy

aggrieved (adj): bothered because of having been treated badly

No doubt my dad would say this kind of **tribulation** was good for my character.

tribulation (n): a great difficulty

Boys seem so sweet and cuddly, but they're really evil, **treacherous** creatures that are not to be trusted.

treacherous (adj): dangerous; betraying

I think I hit my **nadir** that day.

nadir (n): the absolute bottom

The antonym for nadir is **acme** (n): the absolute peak.

Janet bought me a huge Starbucks frappuccino to **alleviate** my pain.

alleviate (v): to provide relief

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It's amazing how expensive coffee drinks can act like an emotional **analgesic**. We joked that I needed a shot of **anesthesia** in my heart.

analgesic (n): a kind of medication, like aspirin, that relieves pain without putting you to sleep

anesthesia (n): something that deadens feeling so as to relieve pain

Oh well, crushes are **ephemeral** when you're my age. I'll probably get over it soon.

ephemeral (adj): short-lived

My affections are usually pretty **mercurial** – take my short-lived love affair with the Backstreet Boys, for example.

mercurial (adj): quick and changeable in temperament

I **abhorred** the thought of seeing Rex after that.

abhor (v): to hate

He became an **anathema** to me.

anathema (n): something that is hated

Janet swore she'd **avenge** me by publishing a nasty review of their next live show in the *Tatler*.

avenge (v): to take revenge on someone else's behalf

I'll still **cherish** the memory of the poetry reading, though.

cherish (v): to adore, to treat as a precious object

If I ever saw him at the Cup or anywhere else, I planned on seeking **asylum** in the girls' room.

asylum (n): a place where one can escape punishment or seek safety

That's it – I'm **renouncing** boys forever.

renounce (v): to formally give up something