

Hollow Chit Chat

Sometimes it takes an unpleasant experience to spark self-reflection, to make a person look in the mirror and think about whom they are, what they are, who they want to be and what they want to be. For me, it took an alcohol fuelled fight with my girlfriend in full view of the press and the ex-England football team manager.

Sarah called me at work on Friday afternoon just after the yearly round of redundancies had been announced, she seemed excited yet I detected a hint of reservation in her voice. She had called to tell me that she'd managed to get me an invite to the charity event at her wealthy friend's pub later that evening. The reservation in her voice I detected was probably her fear of my lack of appreciation for what she had done for me, a sign of how things had got between us by this point. Her excitement, well... the former England manager Sven Goran Erikson would be in attendance at this lavish bash, along with the local media, press and many cash drunk 'players' from the local business networks. Great! this won't cost me much I thought; just a new suit, a haircut, as many cocktails she can throw down her neck and a smile to wear on my face for the evening. If I'm lucky I'll even get to pay for the taxi ride home, just the thing I needed whilst being put through redundancy. I remember hoping for a moment that maybe the charity night was in aide of me, and then saner thoughts prevailed, but never the less, I'd get to meet Sven Goran Erikson and hob nob with the local hierarchy.

After being looked up and down by the doorman at this supposedly friendly, family establishment, I was greeted by two ageing female socialites, which to me felt more like a confrontation. Peroxide blonde hair, Botox grins, and faint wrinkling seemed to be the dress code for this occasion. As they demanded twenty pounds worth of charity from me to enter, I couldn't help but notice that they shared the same vacant, slightly desperate stare. It's as if they had one thought on their next Louis Vuitton handbag and another contemplating what they would have to do to get it, that though I could only imagine.

Walking into the bar area I could see Sarah across the room, she stood out to me like a glistening gemstone lying amongst a carpet of discarded tooth fillings. Ironically, her dark brown hair, blue eyes and pale skin seemed to stand out when surrounded by a sea of blonde and false tan. Her naturally defined cheek bones were even more prominent when compared with the chemically injected complexions of others in the room. All the hair dye, Botox and false laughter in the world could not stop my star from shining. She looked up at me from the table she was sitting at and told me how glad she was I could come and how lucky I was that she was able to invite me, to which for some reason I replied with the only honest words I'd said so far that day. If there was ever a time to be false, it was then, not the hundred or so other times I had managed that day. It was at this point her adorable glistening complexion morphed into a hurt, angry and slightly intimidating glare. I'd never seen this look before, I'd seen the hurt and sometimes the anger, but I'd never felt intimidated. I thought it was best to leave things for a few hours and reflect on the events of my day alone.

Perched on a bar stool at the corner of the bar, I contemplated which one of the many expensive champagnes to try first. Trying to fit in and embrace the occasion I asked the barman to allow me to sample three champagnes, to which he surprisingly agreed. Standing up, I picked up the glass admired it for a second and then swilled the champagne around in my mouth only to remember that this was something usually done with wine. The barman cast an amused yet non-judgmental look at me for which I was grateful. The first glass tasted slightly sweet for champagne, it had a fruity yet crisp tang which you could taste long after swallowing, the other two were even worse, beer it was. A beer gave me the comfort I sought after in this cosy but crowded environment with cameras flashing every other second amongst the loud hollow chit chat which surrounded me. The more I drank the less I had to think about the disappointment I saw on my girlfriends face. No longer did I have to contemplate whether it was my arrogance or negative attitude that had got me to this point and whether it was my lack of contribution at work which has led to my redundancy. It was obviously everyone else's fault and I had my beer to confirm that for me. Sven Goran Erikson had not long finished giving his speech and now the local press and

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