

When I was very little, various members of my mother's family would in turn tell me the story of Uncle Roger.

That he was kind and gentle and most of all that he was devoted to his mother. Then, when his mother died, Uncle Roger disappeared off to San Francisco with a black man.

They said this without any anger, certainly no disgust. But just a hint of confusion. Emotional confusion is something of a family trait.

And so, here we are. Here I am standing before you in a state of emotional confusion, trying to find something profound or original to say about love. It's not helped that nowadays any attempt to say something romantic or funny in a church-like setting and you instantly owe a royalty to Richard Curtiss.

So instead I'll begin with an overshare – get used to it, there'll be plenty more later. A few years back Jason and I spent some time in couples counselling. Having exhausted all of our friends, we thought it only fair to pay someone to listen to us instead.

Anyone who has been to couples counselling will know that there are three of you in the room: You, me and us. The counsellor is on the side of us and you and me spend their time trying to persuade 'us' to like 'me' more than 'you'.

Anyway there was this day when 'us' seemed to be in a really good mood. I like to think it's because he decided he liked 'me' more. Anyway the counsellor threw up her hands in exasperation and asked "How happy are you?"

I thought about this and replied: 73%. Actually it was the percentage of cocoa butter in the perfect bar of chocolate but it felt about right. Jason nodded in agreement. By then he had gotten used to my divvying up emotional states into percentages and optimums and Venn diagrams.

And it was then that I realised that I'd found my Happy Ever After. My answer to Life, The Universe and Everything was 73. Strangely the year Jason was born – unless he has told you otherwise.

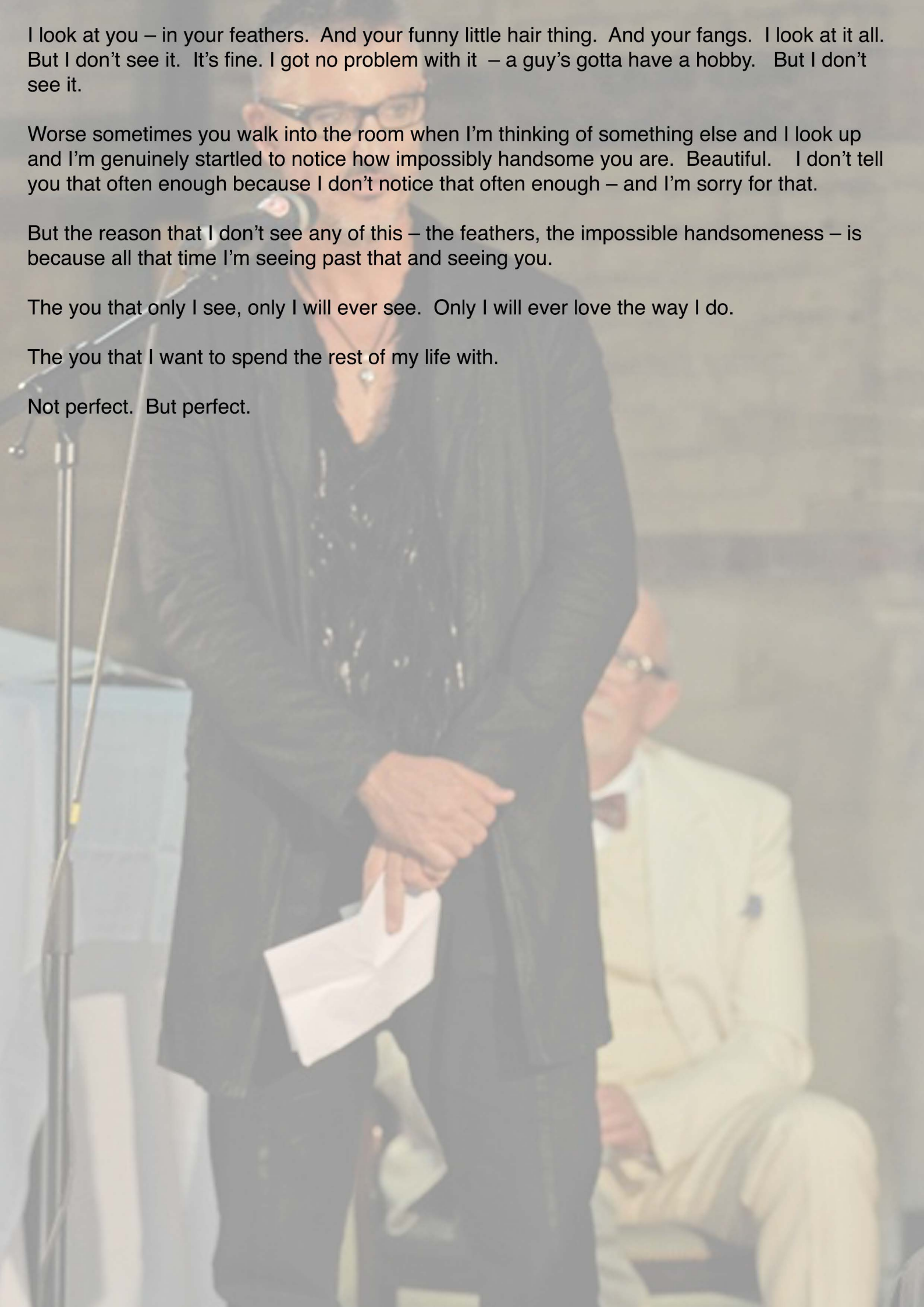
How did I know that this was it? In a brief attempt to sound like Sex in the City, how did I know that I'd found 'The One'?

Because I thought about the other 27%. If I was 73% happy what was I the rest of the time?

I was sad, pouty, grumpy, bored, angry, hurty and yet more grumpy. And then I realised that this is just life. The very Stuff of Life in fact. For there is no happy without sad, no love without anger, no life without pain, no ecstasy without a comedown.

And I realised that I didn't just want the 73% with you, Jason. I wanted the full 100%. In fact I'd push for another 10% on top – even if that means that we end up with our brains in adjoining jars.

Because even when you're shouty and I'm pouty, I love you. Even when I'm trying to be emphatically logical and you're being insufferably magical, I love you. And even when you hurt me, I know you're hurting too. And the only way we can heal ourselves is together.

A woman with glasses and a black jacket is speaking into a microphone. She is holding a piece of white paper. Behind her, a man in a white suit and glasses is seated and looking towards her. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

I look at you – in your feathers. And your funny little hair thing. And your fangs. I look at it all. But I don't see it. It's fine. I got no problem with it – a guy's gotta have a hobby. But I don't see it.

Worse sometimes you walk into the room when I'm thinking of something else and I look up and I'm genuinely startled to notice how impossibly handsome you are. Beautiful. I don't tell you that often enough because I don't notice that often enough – and I'm sorry for that.

But the reason that I don't see any of this – the feathers, the impossible handsomeness – is because all that time I'm seeing past that and seeing you.

The you that only I see, only I will ever see. Only I will ever love the way I do.

The you that I want to spend the rest of my life with.

Not perfect. But perfect.