# Desperados: Love in a Time of Broken Heart

Contributed by Benig Mauger
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DESPERADOS

Love in a Time of Broken Heart

By BENIG MAUGER

Desperado, why don't you come to your senses
You've been out riding fences for so long now
Oh you're a hard one, and `I know that you've got your reasons
These things that are pleasing you, can hurt you somehow
Don't you draw the Queen of Diamonds boy,
She'll beat you if she's able
You know the Queen of Hearts is always your best bet,
Now it seems to me some fine things have been laid upon your table
But you only want the ones that you can't get
Desperado…….
Oh you ain't getting any younger
Your pain and your hunger they're driving you on
And freedom, oh freedom, that's just some people talking
Your prison is walking through this world all alone
Don't your feet get cold in the wintertime
The sky won't snow and the sun won't shine,
It's hard to tell the night time from the day
Your losing all your highs and lows
Ain't it funny how the feeling goes away
Desperado……
Why don't you come to your senses
Come down from these fences
Open the gate
It may be raining but there's a rainbow above you
You'd better let somebody love you
You'd better let somebody love you
Before it's too late….
(The Eagles)
Desperados

Love in a time of broken heart

Many of us can identify with the sentiments immortalised in the words of this song. Perhaps such difficulties are part of the age in which we live. An age of disconnection, where ironically, communication has never been easier. With our advanced technology, we have transgressed physical and geographical boundaries previously not thought possible, and yet we have never been so lonely. If the escalating suicide rate particularly amongst young men is anything to go by, profound emotional alienation and high stress levels are part of modern life. At the time of writing, world events have shattered the heart of man. I believe that we are living in a time of broken heart. Nations are traumatised and shocked into a place of fear. Individuals are searching for deeper meaning in lives that have become increasingly disconnected from soul.

The loneliness however, is nothing new. It seems to come with the modern age. CGJung wrote about it in the middle of the last century 'Through scientific understanding, our world has become dehumanised. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos' (CW18) Jung's work and writings brings home to us how deep is our alienation from nature. Our economic prosperity and technological advances have been at a cost. For though modern life offers us practically everything we

desire materially, it doesn't fulfil the deepest desires, those of the human heart. The huge growth of 'mind/body/spirit' or positive living consciousness is witness to this. Why, in an age of material 'plenty' are so many seeking help in counselling, therapy, new age healing methods and spirituality? Modern living has given rise to a deep and pervasive soul hunger. Starved of soul food we rush to our nearest mind/body/spirit bookstore, alternative practitioner or spiritual healer to be healed from soul wounds we cannot identify but know only as a gnawing sense of lack. As Jung wrote, modern man is in search of his soul.

In our soul hungry world love is often elusive, sometimes seen as an ideal, and frequently equated with pain, with suffering and, as in Desperados, with the loss of freedom. There is great confusion around love. Disconnected from our inner voice, we imagine love is out there in someone else. We form relationships out of need and when that need fails to be met or when the relationship breaks up, we are devastated. We imagine that love is not something we can ever count on, and since we are out of touch with our inner lover, we often close the door of our hearts with a sigh vowing never to love again. We may put a skin around our hearts as a protection. We may join the no commitment brigade; we are careful not to become too emotionally involved in any relationship. Short-term 'light' relationships which do not carry any great degree of emotional demand are increasingly common and are part of our emotional reticence in a time of broken heart. This is because in our present climate of fractured relationships, a commitment to another is often approached with trepidation. Our emotional disconnection from each other as well as from our inner selves is part of our culture's fragmented life-style. There is a great fear in man's heart. We have a fear of loving. Of truly opening our hearts to life and to another human being. And so we may prefer to 'cruise' along life, to 'ride fences', not to get too involved.

In our present climate, many people find intimate relationships too difficult to handle. I believe that the ability to be truly intimate with another is almost lost to us. There are many reasons for this; it is part of the lost vocabulary of the soul that we are now seeking to rediscover. Relationships, particularly intimate relationships, are hard work. If we've experienced a relationship breakdown, it is not uncommon to feel that in order to have peace and harmony in life one has to be alone. And yet, for most of us, being alone is not what we want. We all seek love; it is part of our nature. And after a while, riding fences doesn't work. As the song goes, you lose 'all your highs and lows, and your 'feeling goes away'. You live in a sanitised bubble, emotionally cut off from others. Mistaking love and emotional commitment for lose of freedom, you end up in a prison of your own making.

And so, love in a time of broken heart is fraught with difficulties. It is not easy to heal the heart and to learn to trust. Yet one must, for love is a sacred gift and we are all born with the capacity to love and be loved. We know about love, its sweet memory is buried deep in our souls awaiting a chance to live. As spiritual beings we are made in God's image and I believe that our greatest challenge is to learn again to give and receive love, and that restoring our ability to love is the key to healing our soul wounds.

The Heart that Loves is Always Young

Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead. The consciousness of loving and being loved bring a warmth and richness to life that nothing else can bring. (Oscar Wilde, In Conversation)

Love is an ideal to which all human beings aspire. It is said that love is the prime motivator of all human action. It is an archetypal force present in all of nature. Love inspires us, challenges us and moves us. It is also said that there are but two human emotions love and fear. Because the human condition and our life experiences make it difficult for us to trust and maintain the love ideal in practice, we often succumb to fear and this blocks our ability to give and receive love. We cease to trust. When we make life choices that are motivated by fear it is because we have lost touch with our essence, our divine natures. At those times our light and our ability to love and to trust become opaque and we forget who we really are. We are souls clothed in human form and our essence is divine.

One of the ways to heal the heart and recover soul in our lives is to take a spiritual and sometimes philosophical approach to our difficulties. Accepting that life has thrown particular challenges at us, such as the breakdown of love and marriage, in order to help us to grow, can aid our pain and hasten our recovery. When we take this approach we cease to be victims of life and we empower ourselves. We recover another aspect of our souls, our inner feminine, which symbolically represents our ability to feel, to love and to suffer .We accept that since it is the nature of ideals to both inspire us and disappoint us, during the course of our lives our hearts will be broken. Although we aspire to love and be loved, most of us at some stage in our lives face the death of love in a relationship or a marriage. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In many ways, suffering the death of the heart helps us grow.

It was Oscar Wilde who said that hearts are meant to be broken. I understand this as having to die in order to be born again. In order to grow we have to let go of what we were in the past. Like a plant, we have to shed the dead leaves of our past to make room for new buds to sprout. If we don't shed what is no longer useful to our growth and progress, then we stifle and prevent further growth. This is the essence of life and death. It is the cycle of life, one which we are all destined to experience. It is also said that 'the heart that loves is always young'. When we love, we live. When we have suffered the death of love in a relationship however, we feel pain, and we vow never to fall in love again. This is natural, as meeting the challenge to grow and change is rarely accomplished without suffering. However, when we heal and allow ourselves to open to love again, we feel life and we grow. A heart that loves is constantly renewing itself.

It is interesting to note that after a traumatic life event such as the loss of a loved one, it is common to have dreams of love. A woman who had lost her husband of thirty years was appalled when a short time later she began to have erotic, sexual dreams. With the death of her husband, and being past middle age, she had thought that that part of her life was over. However, her dreams signified the stirrings of renewed life and suggested that her soul was healing. Sexual relating in dreams symbolises the desire to connect with life, with one's creativity and life force. In a bereaved person these dreams often signify the beginning of the healing period. The irrepressible push of new life is part of nature. Life always seeks to express itself.

I had an interesting example of this in my own life. Some two years after I had suffered the break-up of my marriage, I attended a healing workshop. We were set into pairs in order to practice healing techniques based on intuition. The woman who was paired with me reported afterwards that as she was working on me, she could feel a strong energy emanating from my heart. She described it as the bursting of spring in a garden, as though a million spring flowers were ready to bloom. Later I understood why. I had just two months previously met a man I liked, and though our relationship had not yet come into its fullness, there was a great anticipation of love and fulfilment in my heart. It further transpired that on that very day, hour maybe, he was thinking of me and missing me, also anticipating our next meeting.

## Death of the Heart

All human beings experience loss during the course of their lives. Every time we suffer such a loss we experience a 'death of the heart' in some form or another. With the great increase in marital breakdown, we are fast approaching a time when everyone will have experienced the death of the heart in the severing of a major intimate relationship at some point in their lives. Although, as previously said, the experience of loss is often a catalyst to growth, I believe that there is cause for concern about the emotional wellbeing of modern man. To live in a time of broken heart presents an extra challenge to us not to remain stuck in the pain and to live out of fear. I believe that there is a great heart wound in general consciousness; many men and women are hurt emotionally. Many men are in the desert. Many women are also in the desert. We are there perhaps because those men we love cannot relate to us or us to them. Because somewhere, somehow, the art of truly relating to one other has been lost. And although our hearts are still beating, they are beating to a different tune. A less open tune, a more muted tune laced with tentative hope and incipient loneliness.

True emotional and physical intimacy involves trust and the ability to open up to the other. So many of us, who have had our trust betrayed in the past, find it hard to relate on an intimate level and we remain isolated in a protective shell. In the grip of fear, we assume all sorts of veneers and behaviour patterns, which are designed to protect us but which in reality, actually isolate us not only from others but also from ourselves. Emotional and sexual celibacy can be positive life choices for those who make them, but very often they are imposed on us because of our own fears of relating to other human beings. Too many of us are cut off from our true feelings and from the voices of our souls. And so we find ourselves living in an emotional wasteland.

If the cultural and emotional climate into which we are born is not conducive to opening up and flowing with our Divine natures then we become disillusioned, gradually closing down our heart centres. By doing so, we encounter a great many difficulties because, in effect, we are blocking our life force, our true essence. When we form relationships with our heart centres closed we are operating from lower energy centres and our relationships will be based less on love and more on such things as sex, money, emotional and material security or power. These relationships may be functional but, ultimately, they will not make us happy and, as a result, they will often fail.

## Loving from a Wounded Place

Often we love from a wounded place. Our greatest challenge as human beings is to learn to love unconditionally,

however few of us manage to do so in any consistent manner. Usually we love conditionally, and when our lover lets us down, or when our expectations are not met, we are distraught and disillusioned. We clothe our lover in the robes of a King if we are women, and then wonder why he doesn't fit them. And men will often elevate their lover to the status of a Goddess so that when she turns out to be a mortal woman complete with flaws, she topples from her pedestal and he, disillusioned, moves on.

We enter relationships because consciously or unconsciously, we want to grow. This is a natural part of our evolution. Our soul will guide us there if there is a particular experience we need to learn from. It often takes great courage however to accept the challenges that the soul sets up for us. If a man has a secret heart wound for example, and he is challenged strongly enough to heal it, then usually he will meet and be drawn to a woman with a similar wound. In each other they see mirrored what most needs healing in themselves. His heart may be protecting a great fear of abandonment, something he may have experienced as a child. She may also have experienced abandonment, though she may or may not be conscious of this. These two souls will come together so as to learn to deal with loss and abandonment. How they relate will be laced with the unfinished tapestry of their lives. What happens and whether each individual soul heals their original wound is left to them and how willing they are to free their soul and to grow.

It is generally the inner child in us, activated by our relationship that brings up our wounds. And so our relationships are not always easy, for it is in them often that we are guided for healing. Our inner child may be wounded in a particular way and in relationships, the child will be reawakened to its need for love, and to its wounds. We want our partner to be different, to meet our needs, to be there for us, no matter what. Often we are disappointed because he or she has let us down and is not what we expected. If we refuse to look within and continue to remain unaware, we may leave that person in the mistaken conviction that we have made a mistake and we can find what we need in another. We will continue seeking in vain. For we need to see that what we seek in the other is in fact what is missing in ourselves. That in essence is what 'falling in love' is. We fall in love with a lost part of ourselves that we see in the other. For the man it is his anima, for us it is our animus or our inner man. This man or this woman will hold and carry all the qualities we desire and the energy of our soul at that time. He or she will represent everything our soul desires.

Sometimes though, we are blinded by our idealism and so we cannot see what is in front of us. When the light of our blind love fades and we begin to see the person we have invested with such adoration, our idealism takes a tumble and he or she falls from God or Goddess to ordinary mortal complete with flaws. The ordinary mortal will disappoint us. We will miss the elevated feelings of loving a King or Queen. We quickly become disillusioned with the work involved in maintaining a relationship and understanding the needs of the other if we remain ignorant of our own inner needs. Awareness and connection with our inner child is necessary if we are to heal these wounds and maintain healthy, loving and harmonious relationships. When we are willing to do our own work, then we free our soul to love. We no longer love from a wounded place.

Into the Desert

When we fall in love and it doesn't work out, our ideal along with our dream of love is smashed. We retreat into the shadows of our disappointment. We may become hard and cynical and decide to close the door on our hearts if we have been hurt many times. Eventually, we may become so cynical we forget that we are spiritual beings of light. We imagine then that love does not exist, and worse, that we do not need it; that it is for the foolish and for the hopeless romantic. After the break-up of a marriage or a love relationship many of us retreat to the desert, to a cold place of no heart.

And yet there is a time to be alone. A time of loneliness and solitude can be a very important part of our soul's journey. In my own life, I have more than once had to suffer the pain of parting from a lover, not because there was no longer any love between us, but because in some deep place we both knew that we needed to grow alone. For when one has not healed the wounded lover within, it is very hard to love another outside. At some far from conscious level, a battle begins in our hearts, and we are torn between loving oneself and loving the other. As we saw earlier, loving another can pull at the unfinished tapestry of our unlived lives as we enter the battlegrounds of the heart. Unless we strive to remain conscious, our partners will carry all our projections and our relating will be tainted by our childhood and past experiences. And sometimes, being in relationship can be an avoidance of relating truly to our deepest selves. This is particularly so when we are using our partners to fill the great void inside us. Retreating into the desert alone, we have a chance to find our own hearts and to fill that void for ourselves.

In my personal life I have encountered this desert experience. Some years ago, while struggling with the break-up of a relationship I wrote this poem which I called Golden Boy. This was my name for the love ideal embodied in the man I had loved and lost. It also represented, I saw later, my soul at the time, my creative energy, which I had invested in him.

Borne on Divine wings
The golden boy is swift in motion
Passing this way and that
Hardly leaving a mark so light is he
Those fortunate enough to cross his path
Are sprinkled with the gift of joy
He brings on the wings of his desire
But desire once born to mortals is fatal
For it hurls us headlong into an endless search
Destined only to failure
He, being unattached, can move on
And does not try to harness what is free
I've met you golden boy
We danced together for a while
Your soul and mine held hands
There was magic as we loved
The kind lovers only dream of
A million stars burst into song by night
And a warm golden sun followed us by day
Then, as suddenly as you came,
You disappeared
The stars dimmed their lights
The sun went out of my life
The magic gone
I was left alone
Empty after you left I lived in a dark world
With only memories to lighten the bruise in my heart
And the tear in my soul
With bitter tears I called you back
But you were gone and only the wind answered
I grew thin with pain
And when finally I buried you on that still day
I had no life or hope
But a shell I carried wearily along.I had loved him so much I had put everything into him and so, when I lost him, I imagined I had nothing. So many of us do this when we fall in love. We imagine we cannot live without the other person. In essence though, what we have lost is that part of ourselves we saw mirrored in the other, a lost fragment of our soul. Although we cannot see it then, what we are being challenged to do is to find that lost part in ourselves. I suffered as anyone who has lost a lover does. Initially, I too closed the doors of my heart and dragged myself around as though mortally wounded. I turned inwards. I wrote and my writing helped me. I returned to my soul home and found peace in walking by the sea and immersing myself in nature. In the struggle to regain my sense of myself and heal my heart of this love wound, I grew. I learnt about my own ability to love. In a sense, I found my inner man, my own golden boy. I once read that nothing ever ends without something better beginning. I gained solace from that. Finally, some months later, I was able to write:

Then one day
As I walked in the wet land of my tears
The pain in my chest grew too much for my soul to bear
And I sat down on the damp earth to rest
Fearing death, I covered my heart with my hands
And lowered my head till it rested on the grass
I heard again the beating heart of nature
And then my own
I saw you rise from the earth, a small flame at first
Then your body of clay formed around the golden light
And there you were, my golden boy
But a boy no more
For as I looked you grew into the strong man
I had mated with
You stepped across and lifted me up in the strong arms
I had once known

In a timeless embrace
The circle closed around us and I knew
I knew then that it would never break again.After this time of loss and grief, I found him again. What I had found was my inner lover, that part of me that my outer lover had represented. He was a man who radiated optimism and joy. When we were together I thought of him as my sunshine. I later saw that he represented my creative energy, the part of me that was joyful and liked to play. In that fallow period of loss, I reconnected with my own creative spark. The spiritual challenge for me was to find and claim an aspect of my soul.

Sometimes, almost always, the desert experience is a prelude to healing and to growth. To be in the desert is to be uncrowded, unguarded, vulnerable and alone. Like the physical desert, it is a place of space, of bareness and of essence. It is only in this place, away from distractions, people, and the regular demands of our daily lives that we can reconnect with our true essence. There we are naked and alone. There is no other. And if, as is common in relationship, we have been very taken up with our partners, here, in the space left by their absence, we have a chance to see ourselves and in time to regain what we have lost.

The Lover Within

When we retreat to the desert in order to lick our wounds, we have a chance to heal. If we are willing, we are able to connect with the lover within. Who is he or she? The lover within is that part of us that has been in the shadows, perhaps the part of us that we have projected previously onto our lover. Usually, the qualities that we are attracted to in the partners we choose are aspects of ourselves in potential. Aspects which we have not yet activated. Jung wrote about this too. How in the course of our lives we develop certain aspects of our personality at the expense of others. He referred to these inactivated parts of us as the shadow. Most depth psychological work is concerned with integrating the shadow. With bringing in to our conscious awareness buried aspects of the self. When we integrate shadow into our lives we become more real, more authentic. This is because as we grow up, we repress parts of our personality that we deem to be inappropriate. Our parents and the cultural mores in which we are brought up dictate this last to us. However, later on in life when we have matured to a stage where we can differentiate our own needs from those of society, we are drawn to recover our shadow. The shadow gives us breath, it makes us real. It makes us more whole, because the soul above all seeks wholeness. And to be real is to be beautiful.

Recovering Soul: Mourning the Death of the Heart

In order to recover soul we need to heal the heart. This is not easy for it involves having the courage to acknowledge our wounds and suffer them. However, if we do not do so, we are left in the desert. One of the greatest stumbling blocks to love is failure to deal with loss. The death of the heart must be mourned. If we have suffered the break-up of a marriage or long term relationship, then we may carry over these losses into the next relationship, particularly if those losses and other losses in our lives remain unresolved. We may carry the corpses of past relationships, with thwarted expectations and unmet needs around in our hearts. We may see our current partners through the lenses of past experiences. Our hearts can be catacombs, incarcerating our former partners and the memories that we retain of those partnerships. We confuse then the present with the past and our new lover assumes the mantle of his predecessors. We lose touch with the here and now as our future is mapped out by our fears. If we believe that we are unable to sustain healthy relationships then we will project these negative beliefs into the present and literally make it a reality. If we have suffered great loss in love then our fears of loving again will be very great. We will do almost anything to avoid the pain involved in betrayal and loss but unconsciously we will attract it to us through the power of negative energy unless we are willing to overcome our fears.

It is well known that lack of mourning blocks creativity. Unshed tears can fill up our heart space so that it becomes a block to loving again. When we release the pain and grief associated with loss, the energy of love can flow freely again. Grieving for a lost love is always painful, particularly if this parting happened before time. The nearest symbolic equivalent that comes to mind is of the loss of a child. The loss of a child is always the loss of unfulfilled life and this adds to its impact. To the trauma of loss is added the pain of losing 'what might have been'; the loss of potential in all its manifestations. Many broken relationships take on that quality of loss, since often one or other partner does not want the relationship to end. If it has come to a timely end and both partners are agreed on that, then the parting although painful, will not have the same impact as an unresolved ending.

Some four years after losing my last child in pregnancy and well after my marriage had broken up, I experienced the premature ending of a relationship. It was a brief love affair that ended abruptly just as it was developing. To me it felt like a terrible loss quite similar to a miscarriage or an abortion. What was most difficult for me yet again, was the loss of 'what

might have been', the potential of a love just budding. I suffered great pain. As a result of my awareness and the inner work I was doing at the time I know this loss dragged me back not simply to my lost babies, but to my own premature birth. In the depths of despair and in the struggle to heal that loss, I did what I had to do what I always do. I wrote. In this poem I created an ideal. I did not kill off my lover in a fit of rage and pain as I might have done. I let him live in the airy realms of my dreams and my imagination so that I could speak to him whenever I wanted to. In the poem, I buried the child that symbolised our relationship, but I immortalised the love ideal. This meant that though I mourned the death of the heart, I kept love alive, I did not shut down. Something in me knew that this love had not been completed. Expressing what was in my soul was very much part of the healing process. My lover was immortalised in my poetry. In my writing I gave birth to the creative spark in me that had been ignited by our love affair.

Whatever way we seek to express our grief, we must do so in order to heal the heart and to move on. Mourning is a process and it cannot be rushed. The body heals in it's own time and so does the soul. The important thing is to dare to go to that place of hurt in the first place instead of closing up and hoping that the pain will disappear. Time heals, and the pain of hurt eases. It is always important to express the feelings involved in loss however. To feel is to heal. People express their feelings in many different ways. Some will resolve their feelings of loss alone. Others will seek out another person to confide in. Writing, painting, working with one's dreams, drawing or simply working in the garden or walking in nature, all these methods work. The most important thing is to follow the dictates of the soul and to listen to its voice.

Reclaiming our souls means having the willingness to suffer our heart wounds. If we do not take up the challenge to suffer and to heal the death of the heart, then at a deep level we cease to live. To dare to be lovers in a time of broken heart is all that is necessary to keep the heart open. The heart that loves is always young. It may be a sad and battle scarred heart that guides us to healing, but it is also a wise heart. Having experienced life with its ups and downs, pains and joys, we can move forward armed with the wisdom of the heart. We will be able to 'open the gate' and 'come down from these fences'.

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