



Here's to the Beautiful Losers... Johnny Depp

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BY LESLIE NIPKOW

UNCATEGORIZED

Women like danger. At least, this woman does. And Johnny Depp is fraught with the stuff. His still, barely blinking gaze through the camera's eye into mine sends a clear message: "You and I can put our feet up on the furniture and shoot the shit all night long, but the very second either of us obfuscates, exaggerates or bedazzles the truth in any way, the romance is through." Because Johnny doesn't compromise. Not since *21 Jump Street*, when, mullet notwithstanding, Depp smoldered onto the scene to earn instant teen idol status playing an undercover cop in a troublesome high school. As his co-stars babbled and jiggled in the name of "Acting", Johnny just watched. I felt like I could read his mind: "What am I doing here? And how do I get out?" I do so know how that feels.

Two decades later, in the requisite *Inside the Actor's Studio* interview, Johnny describes *Jump Street* as the bewildering time "the network had their hands all over me." "Don't let anyone put their hands on you," he cautions the audience of young actors. (I shudder, flashing back to my acting days — so many unwelcome hands in so many unpleasant places...) "Move forward. Don't compromise," Depp continues. And you listen, resolved, because he walks his talk. That's what makes him irresistible.

"Depp" in German, means "idiot," he chuckles to James Lipton, and, again, I get exactly what he's saying. (If only he knew me, he couldn't help but love me...) Johnny subscribes to the Zen concept of "beginner's mind." Like Alice in Wonderland, he is "curioser and curioser," perhaps as mad as the *Hatter*, which makes for a life and career filled with endless surprises. In other words, danger.

This is the guy who smokes hand-rolled cigarettes while James Lipton asks him his favorite curse word. ("Shit," for its descriptive value.) He's played an untalented but crazy-obsessed cross-dressing director, a saintly boy with scissors for hands, deadly heartbreaker John Dillinger, (maybe) Don Juan and pirate Jack Sparrow, whose fluid sexuality and Keith Richards edge makes him the sort of equal opportunity swashbuckler for whom many women would happily walk the plank.

Depp's beautiful losers, flamboyantly broken, touch the heart (and other places) because Johnny won't judge their

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obsessions and bizarre-ities; he slips under their skins with unbridled glee. Watching him work makes me feel that, maybe, I could let my inner freak out over a rum and coke or twelve, and Johnny would not only understand, he would take her home to his seedily perfect hotel — the real thing, not the “distressed” version — and show her his ... appreciation.

By jumping off the leading man track and making a career of following his fascinations, Depp has guaranteed his longevity as freaktastic sex symbol, benevolent tour guide to the weird side, pure, authentic and absolutely one of a kind. Which is unfortunate, because it means we women may have to share. But I don't like sharing, so I guess I'll just have to go back to the movies.



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