

MARIA'S WEDDING

We were such opposites, it's a wonder we ever got together. Even our first conversation was an argument; she overheard me make some comparison between Ireland and the U.S. and told me what I could do with my "rainy little island." That was Maria - blunt as a hammer and honest as the day is long.

Still and all, we were like two magnets. I'd no sooner be with someone else than I'd be thinking of her. It's not that she was the last of the red hot Brooklyn virgins either. She'd tell me right to my face that she "had feelings for someone else." Which meant that she intended hopping in bed with him, at the first available opportunity. And after the inevitable conquest, she'd drag this bozo into the bar and flaunt him before my outraged, hurt, supersensitive, masochistic, puppy dog eyes. Oh Maria, you drove me to drink so often, it's a wonder my liver is not pickled and mounted in some Bay Ridge saloon.

And yet, she was the most loyal person I've ever known. From the moment she told me she loved me, she never once cast eyes at another man. And when Maria loved you, you knew all about it. That fiery Mediterranean blood could thaw out the coolest of Celtic hearts and it did, for a while. But I was young and stupid and didn't know what I had. When all was said and done, she was just too much woman for me.

What breaks my heart is that I can't remember who she finally caught me with. Just one brief aching glance of betrayal and then the cold metallic sheen of total unforgiveness. Still it was like a kick in the stomach when that bartender told me about her wedding. Because deep down, I had always assumed we'd get back together. And the boys should have known better than to fill me with Cuervo and Bushmills.

She didn't blink an eyelid when I came crashing across the altar, but neither did she lift a finger when the ushers dragged me out and beat the living shit out of me.

As far as I know, she hasn't heard the song yet, but when she does, she won't be pissed. Not Maria! She'll just toss back her lovely wild hair, smile for a moment and whisper ever so quietly, "you blew it, buddy, you blew it so bad."