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I love words

(k, so y dnt u?)

I love words. Always have. Always will. It's an affair de la coeur which will never result in heartbreak, discontent, broken promises or engagement rings angrily hurled across rooms.

When I was a baby in a Moses basket, busily sticking my feet in my mouth and making big eyes at butterfly mobiles, I enjoyed a language all of my own. (According, at least, to the reportage of a mother who has oft said, and not unfairly, 'You never did shut up from the moment you were born.') I gurgled and burred and enjoyed early experimentation with assonance, alliteration and, I fancy, iambic pentameter.

I was born to be a word geek. There's really no doubt about it. I mean, I'd rather be a supermodel, but, you know, you get what you're given.

The sad thing is: we word geeks, those of us who love the syllables and the metre, the cadence and the rhythm, the ones who can find a phrase so wonderful, so powerful, that we become infatuated with it, captivated to the point where we wake in the night, speaking aloud, running our teeth and tongue across its magnificent form – yes, us – we are a dying breed.

Chav-speak is taking over.

Can you see it happening? Do you visibly wince as the cruel, brutal 'txt me plz' of the orc hacks axe of 'c u l8r' against the shining Elven shield of 'Light seeking light doth light of light beguile'?

Do you cringe when your old schoolfriend invites you round for coffee and then plonks their offspring in front of a television screen littered with crass characters who say *nothing at all*?

Do you swallow down vomit when modelling for your significant other an outfit of unparalleled and prohibitively-priced sheer and unadulterated sensuous-visual divinity and they tell you it is *nice*? *Nice*?

Nice?

Have we evolved far from early homo sapiens I, when 'nice' is the most impressive adjective we can summon from a lifetime of speaking and listening and reading and writing? *Nice*?

Apparently, the average educated British human being has a vocabulary consisting of 20,000 words but regularly uses only 2000 of them. In my local supermarket, the number seems nearer 200, but such thoughts have me breaking out in hives and reaching for the valium, so I tend not to entertain them too often.

Why don't we use all those beautiful words? And where are they when they are not on someone's tongue or being cursively formed into being by pen on paper?

Are they silently crying out for the Burberry-shirted twenty-something leaning at the bar with a pint of synthetic lager to bring them forth from his jabbering jaw, constantly moving but saying nothing at all?

An associate of mine, a great man of almost unparalleled education more devoted to study than to breathing, is in the process of completing a work documenting the origins of language; of how words and their meanings, their variations and diminutives came into being. For word geeks such as I, it is a tour de force like no other and I grow wistful waiting for the finished book to be printed and placed (in thematic order) on one of my many shelves.

Mayhap in one, two, three hundred years time, it will be dug up by curious but mute archaeologists, hungry to learn whence they stemmed. They will frown and shrug and grunt at one another, with no hint or inkling, of what it all means.