

Slow Burn to Fame: Lyn Jones

Many years ago
A friend coerced me
Into accompanying her
To an event at Sydney University.

'It will be good for you, get you out,' she said.
She was completing
A 3 year course there
Of Adult Learning.

Socialising then
Was the last thing
I wanted to do
After a painful divorce
From my husband.

It was a time
Fraught with much trepidation
And yes, fear.
Not the leaving per se.

But because
He had become a man.
Of dark alcoholic moods
Unpredictable, frightening, violent.

I felt empty.
Devoid of much feeling
My two small children
My only joy.

The University thing
Was in a large hall.
Photos of past & present Alumni
On the walls.

It was packed with people.
The crowd
Loud, raucous.

The minute we arrived.
My friend disappeared into the throng talking & laughing with many she knew. She was a social butterfly.

I felt like some ground beetle.
Who didn't belong.

I tried to join into conversations.
But was ignored.
Once it was revealed
I wasn't a student.

I wandered over to the food tables,
Feigning interest,
Feeling angry with
My absent friend.

But really, myself.
Wishing I was safe at home.

In a while a man came over
Stood beside me.
'Hideous bloody affairs aren't they?'
He said.

He was a Lecturer, obliged to attend. I told him about my student friend.
He was cynical, sardonic, had gallows humour, I liked that.

We shared bits of our lives
Had similar outlooks, ideologies.

We exchanged first names
And when told my birthday was coming up. He said 'Give me your address'
'I'll send you a birthday card.'

I thought 'Well that's probably bollocks.' But scribbled my address
On a napkin.

A few weeks passed,
Then an envelope arrived in the mail. Just my first name on it & address,
And inside a note that read -

'Happy Birthday,
To Another Brief Brilliant Flash in The Universe.'

I remember thinking
Old Andy Warhol would be pleased.
As maybe that kind gesture had given me My own very small 15 Minutes of Fame.

But whatever it was...
It warmed my frozen heart.