

<https://thespinoff.co.nz/books/13-05-2016/the-friday-poem-monica-by-hera-lindsay-bird/>

When Hera Lindsay Bird wrote in her poem 'Monica' that Monica was among the worst characters in television history and only Chandler liked her, I read the Bible till my brain fried. I read the Apocrypha when she said Phoebe was everyone's favourite and didn't mention Joey once in the whole five pages, just as the Book of Esther forgets to mention God. Rachel appears only in a desultory list and Ross

is dismissed in the final line – Ross, the John the Baptist of *F.R.I.E.N.D.S*, lesser only than Monica the Messiah, whose convincing portrayal of obsession meant a footstool shifted by Rachel a few inches had to be returned immediately. Look at Chandler, smirking away. "Love is patient, anything-for-a-snog Chandler," I say. Joey and Phoebe

should have tried hooking up, but I get the sense Phoebe needed entirely different friends. All she and Ross had in common was discipleship of bad musicianship, and Joey chatted to anyone and stayed in touch with no one. But Monica alphabetized her address book by surname, the sexiest imaginable act. Chandler had no friends. They hung out, without scripture, in a coffee shop Rachel

had waitressed for, badly, during kooky moments before even Rachel found her destiny in aspirational fashion. They had few thoughts, no prayers. Phoebe had dreams of meeting Sting. *Sting!* Chandler loved Hootie & the Blowfish! Nothing 'Pixies' or 'Sonic Youth' about Ross or any of them, nothing heterodox, except for Monica: her secret life, dancing in the dark, with black dress and scarlet lipstick. I imagine Joey

hymning the *Lady in Red*, bonking to a Collected Epistles on cassette, testament to Joey's mercurial life choices. I was nonplussed when Elvis hula-ed drunk Rachel and Ross through Vegas matrimony in permanent marker beards. Monica was left holding things together, her eleven categories of towels balancing Phoebe's apocalyptic past and the lack of trust their parents had in Ross (explain why else they gifted Monica a flat and Ross got nothing). Honestly, Chandler

got lucky. Who else but the Virgin Monica would have fucked Chandler? He didn't even know his own job title. He was an uncool version of Joey,

who at least had a divinely inspired chat-up line, unlike Ross –
“So would you rather drown, or be burned alive?” No wonder Rachel
insisted on a break. No wonder Phoebe
married outside the cult. Hera Lindsay Bird’s poem ‘Monica’

was a foxy doxology to Phoebe and impossible love. She should have got started on Ross
and on Joey and Rachel’s squeaky affair – the show’s lowest point apart
from Chandler. When I think of love, according to the Apostle, everyone thinks of Monica.

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Favourite poem: ‘The Incognito Lounge’ by Denis Johnson