

A QUESTION OF RELEVANCE

He knew those eyes,
peered downward from above and found them there,
looked up and met their stare.

(Wayne Wilks)

Wayne sat before the glowing blue of his laptop studying a small electronic photograph of a woman displayed on the screen before him. Malou was her name.

Dressed in a simple cotton two-piece swimsuit striped with alternating lines of green, yellow, and blue, she lay alone in the center of the frame. Arranged comfortably, one side facing the camera, she rested. Her slim and slight body slightly curled atop a mat of blond colored sheets shone like new silk in the bright golden-haired light of the tiny sun lit room. She appeared at ease, posing coyly and provocatively, with only a hint of awkward or bashful temperaments. With a flush of slightest pink in her cheeks, she meekly blushed.

The shutter captured her lying prone, somewhat curled, directly in front of the lens. Her knees, slightly bent and curved, drew faintly up and inwards towards her chest. The ultra smooth and blemish free surface of her bare shins and miniature childlike feet evenly reflected the harsh light of the flash giving them

the appearance of tawny porcelain. Her well-rounded hips and full-length trim legs stretched tanned and bronzed.

Her slight hands and slender fingers added to her youthful even childish appearance. Her painted nails, the color of luminous violet pink phlox, drew Wayne's attention as they captured and released the vibrant light. The open palm of her right hand supported the weight of her head while her left arm draped lazily across the length of her body.

Her one free hand, bent at the wrist and resting upon her hip, drooped downward at her waist with fingers dangling just above her firm even tummy. Circling that wrist was a plain red and green bracelet consisting of small round beads of polished natural jade, across the other a thin simple watchband of etched gold.

Atop the solid print of the well-illuminated sheets and against a backdrop of lighter hued patterns of flowery printed pillows, her tawny skin seemed to radiate youth, flawless in sun-tinted hues of coco butter, saddle soap and almonds. It drew the eye away from her face, down her thin neck, to her scantily yet colorfully clad chest.

Her reticent budding breasts, modestly concealed beneath her minutely strapped top, spoke to him in hushed syllables. Their muted advances suggestive of things wordlessly promised in subdued tones. Warm as breath, evoking images of splendid finery hidden beneath the fabrics thin surface they promised affection and soothing comfort.

He allowed himself to imagine for a moment, yielding and round, coco hued circles in subtle hues of browned duskiness, topped in slight flushing pinks.

The plain unremarkable features of her face stood in sharp contrast to her alluring body, boldly feminine form and charming diminutive appeal.

Her vibrantly painted lips of dark crimson drew perhaps too much attention to the plainness of her facial features yet blended well with her medium length jet-black hair. The deep reflective black locks, a powerful compliment to the deep palpable red of her lips, tied in the back with cords of yellow ribbon, cascaded freely over one shoulder.

She appeared shady and gloomy against the effervescent lightness of the room, lying

prone amid the golden background and the floral colored surfaces surrounding her. She seemed as a charcoaled moon silhouetted against the lighter lit sky of wheat colored summer dusk.

There was a simile of a smile across her thin lips, a bit forced, exhibiting just a tinge of sadness, discomfort and a sort of lonely distraction.

Her large deeply set eyes, remote orbs of ebony, unfocused and distant, refused to be studied or fixed upon. They stared blindly back at him, just bottomless pools of gall gazing from within the digital image now displayed before him upon the lighted phosphorescent screen.

He knew those eyes, seen them before, her eyes, or ones akin. He had peered downward from above and found them there, looked up and met their stare. He had studied them, searched and found little. He had wiped them dry of all tears, watched them twitch in sleep and tightly close in passions fold. He had seen them flash with anger and untold blackness.

He knew them as an emotion, a flavor, and a scent, as a memory forever fresh, still pregnant with unplanned and undeniable intensity. He knew them as one knows a caress

from long ago, deeply felt and softly warm, yet regrettably distant and forlorn. As eyes at once full of fury yet capable of passions intense, as eyes whose desire brought pain to his limbs, scars to his heart and tears to his eyes. Yes she had those yes, those very same eyes, eyes that nursed like springs rain and cut like winters frost.

But those eyes that he knew were another's eyes from another time, a time as far removed from now as his own birth and as inescapably loathsome as thoughts of his own death.

Yet even then, in that long ago time, when he had held another in his strong hands and pressed his lips to hers he knew. When he had looked within seeking the truth, those long years ago, he knew. He knew there was nothing there, not really, nothing more than the eyes of a stranger.

Perhaps he'd read too much within them, then as now, or perhaps far too little. Perhaps Malou's eyes were just as hers before. Perhaps all he saw within them now was all that there was, like before, squid ink and lies.

Yet the eyes he saw now, Malou's eyes, were not the same eyes as those before, the eyes of a lost lover, the stranger who slept beside him all those years. Hers were not the coal black holes, icy in embrace, cold in caress. No, he had found no lies within Malou's eyes. He had seen no hatred nor read any malice.

Malou was a stranger, nothing more. How could he blame her for all that came before? She was but a photo upon a screen, a name in a form, a signature ending a letter. She was merely an entity, a persona, a response to a question. She was a profile, an answer, a distant friend, a dreams lone phantom or a hopes desperate cry, but nothing more.

Why should he fear her? He had no reason to doubt her, no reason for mistrust, no cause or wrong for which to blame her. Having no reason to trust cannot be considered a reason to mistrust, can it?

Could her eyes be different and new?
Could she be different?

Was it possible for truth to live in the eyes, if but a hint?

Was all that he saw only that which he
desired to see, that which he himself planted
within?

Was there inside them any thought of
itself, any shred of an object, an emotion or thing,
not placed there by him?

Was all that he saw in her eyes simply
that which he chose to see?

Did her eyes hold a truth? Do anyone's?

Are the eyes truly a window to the soul?

Suddenly he felt the lateness. His head
swam lightly, sickly, from the beer and cigarettes
as he continued to study her photo.

The focus of his eyes faded in and out like
the glow of a distant star pulsing alternately
weaker then stronger then weaker still. He had
been sitting there before the computer now for
hours just thinking, thinking and writing, gazing
questionably at her photo and the blank dark
void of her black emotionless eyes, shark eyes.

He thought of his own mother and of her
eyes. His mother's eyes were blue, he had heard
from someone. They were blue from the
Cherokee blood thick within her veins and his, or
so he was told. He struggled to remember them,
to focus, to picture their color or their size, their

shape or depth, but found it impossible. All was vapor and haze. Perhaps their image lay somewhere beyond recollection eroded by time and circumstance. Perhaps he had never seen his Mothers eyes, not simply forgotten them. Possibly the memory of her eyes had never existed within him, merely a wistful summers dream, existing only within the bottomless cloudy shadows of his mind perpetually concealed from view.

Yet that could not be.

Of course, he had seen them, he must have. Once he had been born. Once he had been a child. Once he had laughed and played and ran. Once he had kissed, loved, and softly sighed. Once he had seen his Mothers eyes. It must have been, if only once while gazing upwards from the warmth and safety of a suckled breast.

It all seemed pale and insignificant, disconnected and lost, as distant and foreign as the sound of his Mother's name. Yet still he knew it once was. It once must have been.

His own eyes were not blue, nor black but rather a color unknown; a changing array of hues, once blue, once green, often gray, yet

seldom either, fading to a shade of unknown
hazel.

Hazel, an odd little word describing a
color indescribable, a hue unknowable, a color
not blue, not gray, nor green, but an ever
changing blend of them all. Like droplets of
Easter ink accidentally splattered and mixed
upon the kitchen table by the childish hand of
God.

Once again, distracted and unable to
concentrate he focused on Malou's eyes. They
seemed to speak to him, beckon him with their
promise of silent submission and the hope of
tepid forgetfulness. He saw them just as he had
before, blunt and dangerous, endlessly deep; cool
as the winter's night and as empty as his own
barren heart. Glossy ebony pools, inviting,
baffling and deadly. Her eyes were mysterious
and terrible and he knew, God and Devil were
fighting there and his heart was the battlefield.

It was impossible to write with her eyes
staring back at him through the screen, never
wavering or casting aside, continually fixed upon
his. How easily he could give in, how simple it
would be to plunge downward into their

blackness, drifting eternally into ever thickening gloom and blessed forgetfulness.

Yet for all of their promise they were still empty and void.

He'd been restless and mostly without sleep for a week now not fully knowing the cause yet sensing, in some vague and indistinct fashion, that it must be those eyes, her eyes, those jet black eyes.

Stretching sleepily he sat upright at his writing desk, his thoughts still distracted disjointed without cause, but for a photo and formless disquieting thoughts of a woman unknown.

Clicking on the electronic frame that held her photo, he extinguished her image, clearing his thoughts for the work to come, the words that must be found.

He had so much to say if he could only discover just what it was. There were so many things to write if he only knew just what they were.

As he pushed Malou's image further from his conscious mind his thoughts began to flow more smoothly. He typed, and he typed as the

minutes stretched into hours and the night grew ever closer to the morning.

As the first beams of gold crept over the rooftops outside his second floor window, his thoughts were streaming now faster than his ability to capture them, rushing outwards from somewhere he did not know heading towards somewhere, he had never been.

He was often a writer, or had been, yet more often not, most usually only in his sleep and wake full dreams. Tonight and today, he had been and still he was. Still he was a writer struggling to form the words, get them just right, saying neither too little nor too much, only, that which was just right. That was the thing. That was the hardest. Using the just precise amount of words was the aim, the correct ones the purpose.

Attempting to organize the words into lines with meaning and purpose, arrange them in order, conveying emotions so others could know, understand and feel and more importantly so that he himself could know, that was the rub.

His thoughts flowed faster and faster now, unstoppable, his mind bursting with ceaseless imagery. Ideas and word filled thoughts stampeded through his head in

numbers vast, marching and blowing through his open mind like the howling wind at the edge of a sheer high cliff. Yet even as the momentum built, he sensed the moments passing, ending as rapidly as it had begun. That is how it was, as always before. Even as he struggled to place the words in logical sequence with ever-increasing determination, the fears and doubts seeped and trickled like sewage into his unlocked psyche poisoning the rare purity of the moment.

He knew too well that there were but only few moments, singular and exceptional in a human life, when both mind and heart joined, spilling forth in power filled words. These moments, like the words themselves, came all too rarely then were gone. He fought and he struggled, setting them down in true and actual fear of their certain demise.

Yet as the words came, the questions followed.

Does wanting to say something give one something to say?

Do the words themselves bring forth the desire?

Does merely saying something, anything,
give meaning to the words if the right person
reads them?

Does a desire to write, no matter how
keenly or vaguely felt, cause the writing to
happen, the words to flow? Is want enough to
spill meaning from within, to gel disjointed
thoughts and sentences into paragraphs? Do
wishes cause words to be like molten sugar, once
hot and energetic, full of chaos, flowing easily
before cooling into splendid little crystals sweet
to the tongue?

It had all been said before, all been asked
and all been written, but not by him. The world
knew these things just as he knew them. He
knew them not by knowledge gained or learning
pursued but rather by wisdom earned, scraped
out and paid for with experience and the endless
repetitions of life. He knew them by the pride
less self-loathing of failure.

Others, whose words fell from the pen
like large perfect droplets of unattainable
perfection, appeared in the eye of his mind.
Always, as before, the metaphors and words
came with a spark of insight and a tinge of fear,
the fear of experience, the knowledge of the

impossibility of the task and its assurance of disappointment. Each minute, each word and each new line drew him closer to knowing that which was unconscionable, that winning what was unwinnable was not possible because that would be perfection.

“Malou,” he thought. For reasons he could not find, for no sake he could recall. He spoke her name aloud. It filled his mouth with its odd foreign strangeness before clumsily escaping through his lightly parted lips.

“Malou,” he murmured once again, as the resonance of her name filled his ears. It was a simple sound, short and unusual. It fluttered in and out of his consciousness, floating, through his mind as a moth in the wind, un-tethered, un-directed, destination unknown.

How had she accomplished this unexpected thing? How had she broken the seal revealing what once he had so carefully hidden? With nothing but a single photo and a few simple words typed across a screen and two eyes of night, she had disturbed him.

She tugged at something within, deeply concealed, pulling on long forgotten strings. To

what end, and for what purpose he remained unsure.

He thought of their brief conversations of the week before and her few words repeatedly typed.

“Ask me a question,” she would say. “Ask me anything and I will tell you true.”

“Ask me anything my dear.”

“Ask me everything and I will answer you honestly. Just ask me ok? Maybe in this way we can perfectly know each other my dear.”

He questioned.

Can desire make words ring true and longing create trust?

Does simply wanting want, bring desired results?

Can a penance once paid bring future rewards?”

Do eyes hold a measure of truth and can values and motives be measured and judged by gazing within?

Can trust and belief ever live in the eyes or fall from the lips. Can questions asked and answers delivered ever truly be believed?

“Would you love me Malou?”

“Could you?”

The screen went blank and the room dark as he switched off the computer and the lights making his way down the short hallway to his bed.

The deepening pallor surrounding his eyes and the ever-lengthening lines of his face gave credence to the passing of the long night and the aging of his heart.

Quickly undressing, his clothes found their own spot scattered upon the hardwood floor just as water seeks its own level. His scruffy blue jeans cast casually aside, clinked metallically as they struck the floor.

Distracted by the jingle he paused. Reaching down he searched his pockets for the source of the noise. Inside was a dime, a quarter, one penny and an odd-looking coin cast of bronze. In the center of the coin was engraved the image of a far away city, silvery etched aluminum surrounded the core.

A memory of other questions captured his awareness, other answers, another dark eyed girl and what he'd found buried deep within her abysmal eyes of blackest ink, and of what looked back.

Maybe he would write her in the morning,
maybe.

He slept fitfully that night.

The End

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