

A Short Pause to Remember her Eyes

by Erika Byrne-Ludwig

I can still remember her eyes shedding light over me. Sparks were gathered in them, always present, always radiating messages. They would have been there when she looked down at me, after her long ordeal of flushing me out, seeing me close to her, all soggy and red, taking a place in her life. Of my first visit into the world, my first encounter with her, I have no recollection. I can only draw images of the almost surreal moment when my heartbeat was responding to hers.

Her eyes were always my focus when I looked at her. I knew the various shades that veiled them as they guided me day after day. I have seen a light-blue once turned violet. It was one evening when she was angry for something or other. Maybe the falling darkness had had something to do with this change of hue. Whether blue or violet, even grey, though this didn't happen often, they were *her* eyes, my *raison d'être*. I felt carefree. Her pensive gaze saw deep in me and into my needs.

When reprimanding me, her eyelids would flicker in tune with her stern voice. This didn't frighten me so long as I could still detect a twinkle or two floating in her eyes; and I was confident that within moments her anger would settle down with calm and light restored to her face. Any reproach she might have made throughout my young years were just small incidents in life that burst like bubbles and disappeared as quickly as they had come.

When for some reason tears were gathering in her eyes, she would always appease my worried look with her arms around me pressing me against her body as if to prevent me from seeing her sad face. As she caressed my hair, I knew her hands meant to say

that it wasn't me the cause of her sadness, to just rest tranquil and happy as the storm would soon pass.

When illness took over her body, her eyes reflected it, though still glowing. A feverish, burning glow. In them I saw her deep desire to hold me, in spite of her limp arms, to spill even more light so as to warm me for a lifetime. And I climbed on her bed to lie over her body, nudging her neck and shoulder, right there in the hollow, embracing her as best I could, as if trying to give her some of my life, strands of my dishevelled hair covering her face.

When I was eight, she fell asleep, a deep sleep, one that takes hold of you and won't let go, even if you tried to shake it or to shout at it. I knew her eyelids were still hiding a spark underneath just for me. She was simply tired, that was my assumption. In a minute she would open her eyes, look at me as she might have done so when she held me close for the first time, the moment I left her womb.

So I waited and never doubted the power of her eyes. As I was little, I assumed she was listening to me. I talked into her silence, into her sleep, looking at her resting face, waiting for her lips to move. I had so much to say. The usual daily things, said for praise, approval or advice. Which dress should I wear for the party on Sunday, the green one or the yellow one? Little details that were so important to me, like the colour of my shoes, of my socks, or whether I should wear a comb, a clip or a ribbon in my hair. I told her all that, and more, babbling on in the same way I had done it every day, waiting for her guidance. And I was going on and on, absorbed in my own little monologue, when a hand took mine and gently led me out of the room.

