

Everything to do with you

by Sean Taylor

I used to know this character, he would tell me stories all day. No, they weren't stories. He said they were currencies or profiles or hopes. They were really just people.

He, himself, wandered in pockets alone, slept only in trench coat robes and his eyes were always moving up and down like a Japanese typewriter that doesn't exist. Upon the question of his name, well, he would squint real hard and say something to the effect of... "Charles? Or Charels?" It was almost as if he cared less for himself than anyone else.

Still he said, "there was this couple last night on Gough and Pine that longed for blinds in night time windows, that tortured the fireflies with screens and screams, tortured their neighbors with fake exciting things, like fire drills and de-railed trains on loud TV screens and perpetual fainting scenes."

Like gunfire this one, a real Tommy gun, crop-dusting his memory.

There was a bird with one good wing, it would fly in circles around his loft, lie dizzy on the ottoman on its back, swearing it was going somewhere, but always like a homing pigeon, proud it found its way back.

He even told me about this homeless man that spent most of his time in the airport, on the baggage terminals, that his family were frequent flyers and he was full of hot air hopes. Sure, they never got him off the ground-but he thought, he knew, he thought that baggage was what was worth picking up.

I don't know, I could go on all day with these little niches he found in every person that made them at least a little interesting.

Everyone collects baseball cards.

I know this one time he told me he rode the train all day, from nine to five, so he could find this old operators' eyes, he promised me that they hid in his cheeks and when he blinked they plummeted to his feet if only for seconds to once again fall asleep beside his Mexican wife on the beach. The man would go without socks and

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with the most uncomfortable of shoes, if only to prove he needed her to rub his terribly sore feet. He earned every second of her affection and he was the only train driver to work without gloves, telling his co-workers he had only hoped the blisters would last another night for him to procure another set of her delicate crooning kisses.

They were all very short though, and I could never understand that. It seemed as soon as he started one he was out the door looking for another.

I'm pretty sure the shortest one went like this.

This girl the other day, just smiled.

And I told him "and," I asked him "and?"

But that was the first one he ever told me, he said you have to start somewhere, that he told a thousand people "This girl the other day, just smiled"

And he would watch the faces of his listeners and wait for their reactions as if they were telling him a story. I had no stories, I immediately felt foolish, I had a question, and I was waiting for him. How I wanted an answer, to know exactly what he meant. He told me half of the people asked the same question as I, or just walked away. The other half left lit candles in their eyes letting their ideas parachute out like confetti, full of other niches.

They would finish his sentences. "This is what missing you is," they would say when they were finished. They would tell him about her hips; the way they themselves smile the way belly dancers smile with their hips. Or those cynical girls, you know the ones. With lips small and sure of straight lines that begin with a smirk, lips tight, then to sneer, followed by relief tied ear to ear. That when she really meant it she didn't have anything to do with it and oh how she hated it. But it was a smile forced upon her face. Then there were the ugly ones, but they never knew it. Those big brassy smiles that pinched tight their eyes as if their faces were over worked contracting orifices of happiness. And it was beautiful and she never saw it. The

real ones never come before mirrors and photos, he tells me; well as often as lightning if you get the timing right.

Some days he would swear he was hearing about the same girl, he would put off the old bag woman that haunts the dairy isle, he wouldn't even care about this great hole in one man's cheek, he just wanted to find this girl. And after his listeners were finished finishing his stories they would wipe their eyes and say, "this is what missing you is" and thank him. He didn't write because he called it therapy, if it was for him or them I'm not sure, probably both.

So he would tell me every other month or so how his great chase was going. He had the same kind of caricatures you find at crime scenes, his listeners mere witnesses. Descriptions narrowed down to what any eighteenth-century artist would conclude to be Venus. And I told him there was no girl, no specific girl.

He slammed the door twice that day, once when he came in and once when he left. About a month later I received a check in the mail for a new door or something. It was two thousand dollars and attached a note read, "thanks for the title."

A week later I got a phone call from an old friend saying I was mentioned in some new book, linear notes or something said it was called "No Specific Girl." I picked it up the next day and sure enough he had kept all those descriptions of all those smiles, each page dramatically different, but still in love like the last. A lot of people are saying they only read it to find theirs, to read theirs over and over again. I'm pretty sure that's why anybody reads anything, to feel like they are part of it, to feel like somebody's listening even if they have to hear it in print.

And then there were the girls, there were the girls that stood on witness stands like testimonials, point to their supposed page and wait for their royalties. The courtroom drawings drew through their best hopes, because we all look so god damn smiley on those watercolors and pencil shavings against the great oak countertops of a cold as hell courtroom.

He came over again just last week and told me all this, my friend,

my character. He told me none of the trials ever presented any amiable evidence. They were acquitted, like smiles, and then he smirked.

So I asked him one last time and sincerely about the first one, the first girl the other day that just smiled, I asked him if she knew.

He told me in a second, "she didn't know at all, none of the real ones did, it's how I knew I'd win every time in court."

And I said "how" I said "how?"

He told me something he only just learned about everything.

"There are some things one can not see in the mirror, it's the right angle I suppose, it's sublime. Nobody can ever see, personally what their lovers see in them. They can't escape their eyes, their angles, and their mind. Art in general alone in a hallway is nothing, it is the critics or the audience or the ones lost in its shades that know it best. Humans are no different. They will never know themselves the same way the people that love them do, they will never understand who they are from their unilateral point of view."

"Sure thing, but who was the first?" I begged.

He told me he once held a mirror to the Mona Lisa, he told me she didn't flinch for a second, didn't even recognize herself.

