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Eye Action

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Eye Action

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Give her a little eye action.'

'What?'

'The girl over there. She just looked over at you. Give her a little eye action.'"

Cover Page Footnote

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PATRICK SHEA

EYE ACTION

“Give her a little eye action.”

“What?”

“The girl over there. She just looked over at you. Give her a little eye action.”

In the far corner of the room sits a woman, dressed in a white button-up shirt with the sleeves rolled up to her forearm. The top two buttons are open, revealing a bronze collarbone and a glimpse of what lies below. She plays with her shirt collar as she talks to one of her friends. Her eyes focus with intensity as she speaks. She puts her drink down on the table, a cappuccino, and then slides her hand around her neck, rubbing the back of it.

“The girl in the white shirt?”

“Yes. Do I have to spell everything out for you? Now you have to wait until she looks again. Then, slowly, look over as if you’re looking for someone you know and when your eyes meet, give her a little smile. Not the kind of smile that you give when you get your picture taken or when you have to pretend you like that god-awful sweater you get every Christmas. Give her a half-smile. Kind of like you aren’t sure if you’d like to meet her yet, but if you do, you’d have something up your sleeve.”

“What the hell kind of a smile is that? I only have one smile and I only have one look.”

“That’s not true, there are millions of ways to look, and just as many smiles. It’s like when you know you’ve done something really wrong, like the time you broke my lamp running around my apartment. You almost couldn’t bring yourself to look at me when I finished getting ready to go out, and when you finally did, you had those puppy dog eyes. I couldn’t even get mad about it since you looked so freakin’ pitiful. Those aren’t the eyes we need tonight, but it’s eye action. Tonight we need purposeful eyes. Like you’re getting ready to go on a long cruise, and you’re assessing the room as to what you need for your trip. Everything you look at is for a reason, and so is this girl, only you can’t decide if you need to bring her with you or not, so you take a second, pause, and then move on. Got it?”

“No. You’re crazy. Why would I be going out to sea? I can barely swim.”

“Okay, so you’re traveling across country and you’re looking for supplies. That’s not the point. It’s the way you look at her that matters.”

The woman at the table stands up and steps around the table. Her outfit is completed with a calf-long black skirt and black leather heels. Saying something to her friend, she lets her auburn hair down as it falls around her shoulders. She then walks over to the restroom, leaving the other girl alone at the table.

“There’s no way that a woman like that is going to be interested in me. I don’t care if I look at her a thousand different ways.”

“Come on, don’t talk like that, she’s all about you. You just have to play your cards right. Now, let me see the look.”

He looks over with a tilted head and squints, then shrugs his shoulders with indifference and raises one eyebrow.

“What the hell was that, are you giving a look or trying out to become a stooge?”

“It was the best I could do.”

“Just relax and go more subtle.”

He looks again, with less squint and no shoulder shrug.

“Better, just remember not to keep eye contact for too long or she’ll think you’re out to stalk her. Now, let’s move on to the smile. Don’t make it too big. Let’s see it.”

He looks up and grins, lips pursed together.

“Euh, stop it, you’ll gimme nightmares. You remind me of that movie about the killer clowns. It’s okay to show teeth, but drop the silly grin and pretend you’re a sly wolf. Come on, you’re a wolf out for the kill and you just saw your prey for the first time. Gimme that smile.”

He grimaces with his eyes lowered and shows his teeth with his lip curled.

“Okay, you’re not a wolf. Just try to pretend that you’re only slightly amused. Like you’re watching TV, but nothing good is on. You don’t feel like turning it off, so you just watch whatever is on and every once in a while you sort of enjoy it, so you half-smile.”

“Yeah, I get it now. Like those re-runs in the summer. You’ve seen ’em before, so they’re not really funny, but it’s better than finding something else to do.”

“Right.”

He then freezes one half of his face, only smiling goonishly with the left half.

“Try it a little more subtle, and don’t pretend to’ve had a stroke. That usually turns ’em off. You’ve got it, don’t worry about it. By the time you scan her over, she’ll be begging to get to know you.”

“Yeah?”

“Oh, yeah. Girls like these are all business, all day. They probably spend all day trying to run the world, but come five o’clock they leave that at the office. Here, they’re just waiting for someone to give them that look that says ‘I can’t make up my mind if you should be approved or denied.’ After that, they’re just dying to show you how worth your time they are. It’s all about confidence. That super-sensitive, male buddy stuff went out with the nineties. Women like a man who is decisive and sure of himself. Now, when she comes back from the bathroom, pretend you’re still looking for something worth taking on this trip of yours, and scan her over.”

“I’ll try.”

“No, don’t. The more you try, the worse you’ll look. Just act as if you could care less. That’s when you’ll get her attention.”

The restroom door opens, and she emerges back into the café. She looks around slowly as she heads back to her table.

“Now, while she’s looking around. Give her some eye action.”

He looks first over to the wall, with different prints of artwork lining it, and then down toward her path. Avoiding looking at her right away, he looks down into his drink. She sits down, smoothing out her skirt, and looks out into the room in his general direction. As he looks up from his drink, their eyes meet and he feels overwhelmed. Her eyes are hazel, her pupils slightly dilated, and her lashes are long and thick. As he sees her, he can’t help but smile at how her thin eyebrows move. First down, as she peers toward his glance, and then back up, causing a slight crease in her forehead. The corners of his mouth rise, only slightly, and his lips part, with less than an inch of an opening. She smiles back with a very amused smile. As if taking a pry bar to his chin, he turns away and looks back over to his friend.

“That’s it! That was so it. You nailed it. Soon, she’ll be walking over here all seductively, just hoping that you’ll notice her one more time. You’ve become a master, my friend. That was definitely the look. You could smell the attraction, it was hot.”

“It was definitely hot, but now what do I do?”

“Now you wait. In a minute, she’ll probably get up to leave, but first she’ll walk by us. Wait until you get eye action from her again and then pounce. By that time, it doesn’t even matter what you say. Just act like it’s no big deal.”

She gets up from the table, with the other girl still sitting and puts on her coat. Then, she takes the mugs over to the counter, close to where the two men are sitting and puts them down. As she looks over toward where they sit, her friend walks over as well.

“Her friend is pretty cute, too. Maybe I’ll give her some eye action of my own. After watching you, I’m inspired.”

Her friend walks up behind her and throws her arms around her. She yelps out of surprise and then turns around and slaps her shoulder. They laugh for a second and then kiss each other passionately. Entwining their hands, they begin to walk out. Both guys look over, stunned, mouths agape. As the two women walk by, the one that they had been looking at stops, smiles at them, and quips, “Now that’s some interesting eye service.”