

# The Green Eyed Monster of It

By Joe Riley

1.

Just Me, Just Her

The searing pain of realization is as swift and sharp as an icicle wind. The curtains are pulled back to reveal the world for what it truly is-- a disgusting pit of conceit and vanity. This is all her fault. THIS IS ALL HER FUCKING FAULT! She sullied my name, reputation and pride. For what? For a deep throat kiss. I don't know if it's true or not, but I assume the worst. That's my half-Jewish side, pessimistic. Why did he have to tell me, it was so perfect.

I call her.

Me: I need to talk.

There is more urgency in my voice than I would have liked, and it creates a sudden, desperate panic in her.

Her: "What is it?"

My voice, broken.

Me: "Just come."

These are the longest 15 minutes of my life. My brain is wrestling in a free for all of frenzied thoughts and forsaken memories. Every bad has a good, every good has a better, and every better has a bitter.

She walks into my room unannounced but expected all the same. We hug limply, she weary, I stiff. We break, our eyes meet. In this chaos of frenzy, suddenly everything goes blank.

Nothing matters, just me, just her.

Everything's okay. My eyes drift past her towards the window. The pain, anger, and jealousy return as quickly as they left. I hate her! How could she do this? Doesn't she care? Doesn't she give a flying fuck! Her fear grows, I can feel it. Her anxious tension rises to the surface of her skin. Her voice breaks the silence after what feels like a 100 years of aimless wandering through the fields of my mind. She whispers, defeated and vulnerable, "Is everything okay?"

Here it comes. I'm going to confront her, crush her, she doesn't stand a chance. I look into her eyes so she can feel my pain. I'm going to destroy her, but when our eyes meet, the pain is gone. I'm left with

the sight of those dark chocolate pools, gazing at me. A twinkle of feeling dances perfectly in her eyes. My anger, my jealousy, my pain vanish--it doesn't matter anymore.

Just me. Just her.

I wrap myself around her, she melts into my arms.

Her (pleating whisper): "Everything okay?"

Me: "It is now."

After all, it was only a kiss, and nothing else matters, just me, just her.

## 2.

### Good Night

We'd all been there and seen it before; the placid chaos of ol' Stan Evans' house. Choreographed spontaneity that makes the D.M.V. look like the antithesis of bureaucracy. We all smiled, we all laughed, we all put up the front that it was drugged out Disneyland, and we act like we're seven: Mickey Mouse doesn't get arrested for spousal abuse, and we don't get the injustice that Pluto sleeps in a dog house while fellow canine Goofy is allowed to gallivant and meander as a free dog.

Everyone was there; I guess that's why it was boring. Everyone was there, no one was missing, and no one new had arrived unannounced. Nobody new, just the same old boring prudes that we pretend to like so our parents and peers don't proclaim us as libertine homosexuals. When they speak, we laugh, we don't listen, we laugh and smile and everything is okay, everything's okay.

There's drinking. Of course there's drinking, everyone drinks; it's like rainy day woman #12 and #35, "Everybody must get... (insert [chemical] vice of choice here)." There used to be a time when people would drive drunk, stoned, fucked up, but those days are long gone, packed up in the lunch pails that we exchanged for designer sunglasses. We take cabs now, charge it on our parent's card. But everyone drinks, everyone must drink, and if you don't drink: speculation begins. "Why isn't he/she drinking? They too cool to drink now?" Or the always feared thoughts of inadequacy, the dreaded: "They're not drinking, they're not cool."

Why? Why drinking? Stop for a second and analyze what's actually going on in this delicate process. We're sitting there pouring amber brew down our throats as fast as humanly possible to drown our brains in bitter liquid with a kick. Puts our brains in a pool of inebriation so we can act like idiots, inhibition free.

Say stupid things, be sleazy and perverted, and express our love for each other that dissipates in direct correlation with the rising sun.

The main reason everyone drinks is to get laid. We all want to fuck. Girls, guys, everyone. We all want a warm wet feeling. We feel like if we drink we'll be able to screw and forget. Of course next day thoughts of last night yield regret, but that's beside the point, the point is we want to what my dad calls "make love" (not war).

She's here; she's not everything to everyone, but she's everything to me. I feel her mind like sometimes she lets me feel her breasts. She's beautiful, and free. She's smart, and wild. She's insanity in a bottle of volatile alcoholism. She's smashed, dancing, hugging, and kissing. While I'm sitting, sulking, and raging. The more fun she has, the drunker I get. Silver aide in hand. Barley taste with promised results. She laughs, I wince. Fortunately. I'm circled by friends, who laugh. We speak but I'm not listening. My eyes fall just pass my fellow drunks, my head onto hers. How dare she. Why is she speaking to him? Didn't they date millennia ago?

Everything you fear and know is going to happen--does. You convince yourself that it won't, the love that you share with the cute girl with the pretty smile won't fade, just because some older guy looks good shirtless. But it will. The friends you shared your childhood with won't fall into a haze of cocaine madness, they do. You'll never drink and drive, but you will. I hear her laugh.

The party's the same for hours. Everyone circling around like swimmers in a lap pool, back and forth, having aesthetic conversations with façade women, with caked on faces. They laugh uncomfortably and so do you. You smile. She smiles. He smiles. We are eating the shit radiating from each other's smiles. There's terrible music that sounds the same as the shitty music from the night before. It sounds like Passion Pit and Foster the People being tortured by Gnarl's Barkley. It's nice that he tried, Stan. It would have been a pretty quiet Saturday otherwise, but trying and failing is still failing. Never gotten a 'T' before, definitely have gotten an 'F.' But why is she talking to him?

We talk about sports, run out of things to say about sports. We talk about music, run out things to say about this as well. We talk about friends, but are too cautious to admit anything, anything at all. We talk about shit, we talk shit, but all the people we want to talk shit about are right next to us. We laugh, we drink. I think we half keep this charade up for tradition, and keep the other half up because we need the envy of the young ones in our group. Praise is powerful, and we all want some. We want them to feel for us like we did for the older kids when we were their age. We want the younger ones' attention as much as

they want ours, we just want it in different ways. They want our acceptance, we want their respect. What the in name of all fucks is she doing, why is she sitting on his lap, is she serious!

The cops always come; they always, always come. Normally before 11. We lose the beer, but someone who's too drunk to stash it gets a ticket. It's always the same picture just a different frame. We all leave trying to find a driver, try to find a place to go, to get more fucked up. We just want more, we always want more, always more. It will work out, we'll just have to drive, we draw straws, but who has had the least to drink drives. We've been trying to cut back, because the cops have been raising the stakes; one of our friends got the inevitable first D.U.I., Manuel Michaels. I couldn't believe it, but it makes perfect sense. Everything you know is going to happen does. Where is he? Where is she?

I see a dude I hate, but it's okay, because nobody knows. We speak briefly. Who cares? Who cares? We make plans to do something sometime, and agree we like each other. Who cares? Who cares? We try to laugh but can't even force it now. Who cares? I see someone else and say the same thing; we always say the same thing. This scene has become so choreographed it's mindless. She's outside, they're talking.

Suddenly. They all come running, excited--not her. Someone stupid is doing something dumb. We all run outside to witness the moron do something dumb. Jump! Jump! We all want the idiot to jump off the roof. My cheering is especially pathetic. He does. We cheer. YAY IDIOT! This is automated, we've all seen this 100 times. She's standing next to him.

Hot girls are the American boy's dream. We all talk about them, and about what we're going to do to them, but very few of us do. It's more fun to talk about it. If our dreams were ever realized, then we wouldn't be able to talk about them anymore. We wander over to some pretty girl with large breasts, they're desperate, we're desperate, we say despicable things in despicable tones, they laugh, we laugh. No respect for them, and none for ourselves, it's okay though, we're drunk. She's dancing, with him.

The night grinds on. We say we're having fun, but we're not. We try too hard to make everyone think we're having a good time. We say we're individuals, but we are the essence of conformity, there's no difference anymore, everything has become the same in under the pressing weight of the desire to be cool. They're too close, I can't stand it.

I reach into my pocket to feel rigid metal on a chain. It's chilling with my heart. I'm drunk. Too drunk. But I can't take it. Not anymore. I'm leaving. I say goodbye. When I say goodbye to her, she acts like nothing's wrong—nothing's wrong! I look at that piece of shit she's standing next to and spit in his face.

Fuck her, fuck me, especially fuck him. Oh shit. He's popular. Newton dictates this instance will

absolutely have an equal and opposite shit storm. But she's drunk, I'm drunk, he's drunk. Maybe nobody saw? No judging from the uproar and procession of shouting, a large amount of people heard. I decide running is a better idea than walking to my car. Open the door and get in. I'm leaving, for good. Good-bye Stan. Good-bye Party. Good-bye her.

The perfect night cap to what may be the worst night of my over-privileged life. I smash my 3 series into a palm tree 2 blocks from my house. A fucking palm tree. If palm trees were people, they'd be those coked out New York whores who suck dick in the back of perverse half-goth night clubs listening to that new-new wave bull shit. It's the skinniest fucking tree and my belligerence careens into one like it was taking my virginity. In a sense I suppose it did. That tree my car, my innocence, maybe my childhood. The real world is not a fucking TV show.

20 Minutes pass red and blue lights spin for America, like the dream still exists.

### 3.

#### Lying to Love

She arrives on time, for once, and lets herself in. This is a bad sign, she never just comes over, she always calls first. Makes me come open the door for her. Girls making boys do shit, birds dancing, same thing. This time though I hear her walk down the hall; every step of hers my heart beats, 10. I feel my brain numbing like Novocain on the gums, slow and uncomfortable. I can't think of anything other than the fact that she's about to dump me. I sit in my room trying to imagine the perfect position to be in when she starts talking, crying, shouting, whatever. I decide to lie down on my bed, very nonchalantly pretending like I don't give a damn about anything. This plan is quagmired as soon as I hear her knock.

Me: Who is it?

That was stupid. She doesn't answer, just walks in. She looks drop dead jaw to the mother-fucking floor beautiful. I miss her already. Her eyes quickly move to a safe corner in my room. This is strictly business. She sits in my computer chair, I take a seat across from her on my bed. She swivels slowly in my direction, facing me.

Her: "How was your day?"

Wow, she's going to throw down the gauntlet of the monotonous drawl, the formalities, before she tears my heart out. I'd laugh, if I wasn't so nervous.

Me: "Fine, went shopping with my mom, and stuff."

Jesus, how pathetic. I feel like nothing, I'm just too far gone.

Her: "So how was last night for you?"

Fuck.

Me: "I don't remember anything, I was trashed."

Maybe she's not going to dump me, maybe she just wants to talk? Maybe if I just play dumb all will be forgiven, and it will all just go away. Fat chance.

Her: "You don't remember anything? Nothing at all?"

This is going to be bad, this is going to be a big bad mean motherfucker. I'm not ready to say goodbye, I'm not even ready to say so long for now, or see you later. My pathetic testosterone driving imagination races with delusional thoughts: "Maybe she'll give you a pity fuck." Testosterone has no shame. She knows what I'm thinking!

Me: "Listen, can we go somewhere else, it's really hot in here, don't you think it's hot in here?"

Her: "Sure, where do you want to go?"

I don't have an idea in hell where to go; I'm just trying to buy time. Now that's a ridiculous expression, no one can buy time--Bill Gates can't even buy a second of time, we all die in the end.

I drive her car, since I don't have a car, let the car decide where to go. In my mind I practice saying exactly the perfect thing, something out of a romantic comedy, anything so she won't dump me. I build a skeleton out of romance, imagine myself victoriously saying the perfect thing and her swooning. Then I imagine her slapping me and walking the other way. Then I imagine something that I can't quite make out: I'm delivering my pitch, but it's like there's a web over her, a grey/white haze, and I can't see how she'll react. I am to the bone.

I come too and realize we're at the top of Barker Pass, one of the highest points in Santa Barbara, you can see the islands, you can see everything, the stars, the universe, heaven...the bones of hell! Now I know why her car took us here—this is where she blew me on our first date. She's not happy.

She sit's up straight, looks at me, moves closer, but stops at an awkward distance. She's closer than an acquaintance, but farther than a friend.

Me: "So what did you want to talk about."

I'm sweating, she's cold as ice.

Her: "Why'd you have to choose here?"

All sense of imagined, hoped for casual geniality is thrown to the wind. Silence. Tension.

Her: "Sorry, it's just that..."

Her anger has been replaced by vulnerability; maybe this wasn't such a bad idea after all. Tension lowers. More silence (except a coyote is howling out there somewhere).

After what feels like days:

Her: "So about last night, I..."

I interrupt. I decide brutally lying to her in the most honest way is the best way to approach this impending disaster-- hurricane Fuck Me.

Me: "Okay about last night, I'm sorry for being an overbearing protective asshole, it's just that I care about you, and I saw you with that other guy, and I got jealous. I didn't know what to do, so I drank myself shitty and didn't handle the situation well at all.."

My eyes drift to the view, mist starts to settle over the city, and it looks absolutely gorgeous. Better than Her even. I look back at Her, I don't think my pathetic attempt at a Seth Cohen moment worked, and I try again.

Me: "Listen okay, you're the best thing that's ever happened to me. You're smart (lying), you're interesting, (nose growing), you're beautiful (true), and you're wonderful (true at times); any guy would be lucky to have you (I would). You're everything I could ever hope for, though sometimes I feel less than you. There's just so much I like about you that I pressure myself into not losing you, which leads to me fucking up. After being with you, I just can't imagine not having you in my life, it would be unbearable. I..." don't say it, don't you dare say it, Mr. Needledick! "I l.o.v.e y.o.u."

That came out awkwardly; this isn't going to be good. Hopefully, I talked long enough that her goldfish attention span dwindled and she's off thinking about Abercrombie model cock or something of genre. She looks bored, like I just explained to her why a military leader you should never invade Russia.

I'm fucked.

Her: "That was really sweet." Yeah but? "But last night was just too dramatic. I don't think I can handle all this right now, I mean I think my feelings might have changed for you. Just all this stuff recently has been piling on. I don't know what to make of it, I'm just not sure I think about you like a boyfriend, I just don't know if I could see myself being with you."

You nut cracking bitch. You...whatever, I can't believe you just actually said that. I hope you choke on toothpaste. I hope the condom breaks when you fuck your Kelly Slater clones, and his vile scum sucking

AIDS gets in your pussy rotting your insides, sleep in hell you gorgeous whore.

Me: "What." What!

WHAT! SHE JUST THROWS MY HEART OFF THE GOD DAMN CLIFF AND ALL I CAN SAY IS WHAT!!!!

Her: "I just see us as more of friends."

If you say it's not you, it's me, I will rip your tit's off.

Me: "Listen, all I know is that I feel something different with you than I've felt with any girl, when I'm with you it feels eternal."

I just can't stop from fucking up. My mouth is spewing diarrhea lies.

Me: "I think it would be a huge mistake to throw something this special away because of a bad weekend, I need you in my life."

Her: "Well, I'm really sorry, but I just don't feel like that about you anymore."

Game over. She informs me she has to leave, or she might have said something else, my brain is shut down, she asks for a hug, I just grunt and lean.

She drives away. I sit on the edge of cliff and watch the sky. I'm not mad, I'm not sad, I feel nothing. It's like the butterflies in my stomach all died at the same time. The nervousness is gone and has been replaced by nothingness. This must be what it feels like to die, minus the vision; maybe if I close my eyes I'll never wake up. I sit there for hours, I watch the sun rise, and it's the most beautiful moment of my life. Here I am on top of the world, in the lowest pit of self-loathing I've ever been, but I just can't feel sorry for myself. I don't matter, nothing matters.

It matters though that it's cold. I get up, head home. I don't wish I were dead. I don't wish this didn't happen, I just wish my life was different. I get home. I don't have the faintest idea of what time it is. 8:00? 3:00? Quite frankly I don't give a damn.

I walk in. I'm loud, but could care less. Nothing matters but it. What the fuck is it? If I knew I don't think it would matter. My mind's clouded. I'm not hungry, I'm nothing, and nothing matters, except it and the fact that I'm crying.

I walk into my room. 9:30. I get into bed with my shoes on because they don't matter, it matters. I close my eyes, and hope for sleep. Thinking to myself about what it could possibly be?