

CHRY'S ROMEO



FIRST LOVE

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The magic voice

Eric had moved to a Western country from Eastern Europe when he was ten years old. He had been born in a difficult time of communist regime in Romania and his parents escaped the hunger and censorship by finding work in the West, closer to his ancestor's origins. He not only found his roots where he moved, he also found love.

At first, adapting to the new conditions was not an easy task; but Eric was a resourceful and adventurous boy, so he went exploring the neighborhood and quickly made friends with some other boys who were playing soccer, hide-and-seek or building rockets from paper and needles. Soon, he was doing just fine.

He wasn't lonesome because he had brothers and sisters at home: but his family was sometimes regarded as an immigrant tree that was casting shadows over the wealthy people of the neighborhood. Some of the rich kids watched Eric and his siblings with contempt because of it. At school they would sometimes mock them and give them nicknames, which made him angry. Their parents weren't very wealthy, so their clothes were most of the time the same, which added to the distance between them and the more wealthy children. He didn't regret the company of the pretentious, though: he preferred to play outside, free from any constraints of etiquette and schedule. There was a little river crossing the edge of

the town where he lived and he would go there in the afternoon and evenings to play by the water.

That was where he heard it for the first time.

He was just looking for shiny pieces of colored glass that he saw in the river, digging through the muddy leaves with a branch. He liked to collect colorful pieces of glass and stare at the world and at the sun through the rays of transparent hues that changed everything into a different view. It was a secret world he had access to, by looking through the pieces of broken glass. He found them in the streets, in the dirt, in the river... green, red, blue, yellowish or brown pieces of broken glass in many shapes. They had something mysterious: they were like portals to another space and time.

He had just seen a light blue piece underneath the leaves in the water and was trying to get to it, when he heard the sound. It was coming from somewhere nearby: it was a melody. He listened attentively: it had something magical. It was unusual. It was something he had never heard before. A voice so warm like the sunshine, magical like another universe, sweet and enticing like a spring day of freedom and happiness was connecting to his soul, linking the sound to his ears and beyond, to his mind, in a hypnotizing glow he could feel infusing his thoughts instantly. He dropped the branch and looked up. He couldn't see anything from the riverbank, only the rooftops of some nearby houses. The melody went on; the voice was charming and mesmerizing, as if calling him closer.

What is that music? Whose voice is that? he asked himself, in bewilderment.

It was too out of the world. It was like nothing else he knew. He climbed up to the street and tried to get closer, sharpening his ears. It was a melody he enjoyed a lot, even though it was the first time he could listen to it. He felt completely mesmerized. His heart started beating faster. He knew he had a new purpose: he had to find out whose voice had captured his soul so intensely. He looked at the houses, passing them by, trying to locate the one where the sound came from.

But then, the voice stopped. In just a few minutes, it disappeared.

Eric felt deprived of something, but also thrilled by the discovery: the neighborhood was magical and it had a voice from another world, singing of sunshine and captivating his imagination.

He returned to the river and picked the piece of blue glass he had found. He plunged his hand through the dirt and cold water, ignoring the wet sleeves and getting his knees muddy from leaning on the edge, taking it out to light. It was pastel blue and polished, almost round like a marble.

“What did you find there?” he heard someone ask him.

It was his friend, Jerry.

“A new treasure!” he exclaimed and showed him the piece of glass.

“It looks nice...”

“Nice? It’s magical! I’ll see Andromeda galaxy through it.”

Eric smiled and felt happy. It wasn't the glass that was making him feel like something magical had happened: it was the voice and the way it thrilled him down his spine and up to his most imaginative thoughts. He felt so enthusiastic and elated, like floating on clouds. He was in love and he didn't realize it.

In the coming days, he tried to find the voice again. He walked to the river each afternoon, listening attentively. He spent hours and hours roaming along the riverbank, but it didn't happen.

And then one day, he heard it again. Only he wasn't by the river: he was at school. He heard the voice coming through the corridor, resounding in the halls, between the walls and the windows, brightening the place with its surreal magic of sunshine and spring. Colors started flowing in the air like fireflies before his eyes. He felt his skin tingle with excitement. The voice was there again!

"Did you hear that?" he asked the other boys.

"Sure. That's our new colleague", a twelve year old answered him. "She's rehearsing for the school festivity next month."

"Do you know her? What's her name?"

"Of course I know her, she's in my class", the boy bragged proudly. "She just moved in town recently. Her name is Estelle."

Eric was staring along the corridor. Her name sounded charming and magical too. *Estelle*, he thought. It was just right. He needed to meet her immediately. He stared nostalgically and curiously along the corridor.

“Take your mind off her”, the boy warned him. “She’s out of your league. She doesn’t mix with immigrants like you... Besides, you’re still a kid. And she’s got enough real men in her class”, the boy continued, grinning defiantly and flexing his muscles mockingly.

Eric didn’t listen to him. He was used to that attitude, so he discarded the words like empty dry leaves falling from a tree. He was determined. He needed to meet her.

He turned around and walked towards the door to the music hall, much more preoccupied with what was inside. He placed his ear on the door, listening to the flow of the melody... and the magical voice. He closed his eyes blissfully. He didn’t realize how time went by.

And then a hand grabbed his ear, tearing it painfully.

“Why aren’t you in the classroom at this hour?”

The break had been over for twenty minutes and the school principal was walking along the corridors, checking on the children - standing in front of him unexpectedly.

“Go to your class at once, or I’ll call your parents and tell them about this!”

Eric ran away, but he was still happy and smiling he had heard that voice, even if his ear was strangely giving him the feeling of sudden ache and detached stinging burn.

He wanted to see Estelle. What did she look like? he wondered.

He imagined her like a summer day... like a spring trip in the fields... like sunshine rays touching his face as he closed his eyes, dreaming of her voice.

The diamond eyes

He asked around the school, inquiring about her classroom. It was on the first floor. So he went there when he heard the bell at the end of the school day.

The door to her classroom was open. Children were gathering their books, zipping jackets, stuffing hats on, going home. Eric leaned on the doorframe. There were many girls still in the classroom, arranging their school bags. He knew girls took longer to prepare for leaving, so he was sure she was still inside. She hadn't left. And he was right. She was there.

"Estelle, here's your coat" one of the boys said courteously.

"Thank you", he heard her say.

It was that voice. And now it was a person.

He thought he was prepared to see her. And yet her appearance was just as stunning, surprising and hypnotizing as her singing. It bewildered him just as much. It had the same effect: it sent him flying to another space and time. As she turned around to look casually in his direction – because he was standing in the doorway – her bright eyes reached him, directly in his mind, fixing him there, nailing him next to the wall. He stared, mesmerized. She stared, unaware of what she was doing to him, watching indifferently.

Hair as electrifying as a night lamp, neither blonde nor creamy, but flowing freely on her shoulders, like a waterfall, contrasted

softly with the pastel pink woolen hat and the fluffy white winter coat; gestures delicate and gentle, yet firm and decisive, her attitude as majestic and elegant as a swan, floating on smooth water, as intimidating as a dangerous feline. And yet it was her eyes that were the most impressive: bright and direct, powerful and enticing. He couldn't decide if they were silver, green or blue. He couldn't decide if they were clear like water, evocative like the sky or mysterious, from another world, like the pieces of shiny glass he collected. He decided they were bright like diamonds. They were unique. They had something wild and absolutely mesmerizing, something words could not express.

This is her... he thought, as he couldn't take his eyes off her.

She walked past him, as if he were invisible.

He followed her, unable to speak and unwilling to let his newfound delight out of sight, strutting behind her like a lunatic under hypnosis.

It was snowing outside and the soft white flakes were covering everything.

They crossed the schoolyard and went out in the street. His steps almost matched hers, like echoes. At some point she heard it and turned around. He stopped. Her eyes went through his mind again, leaving it in blank stare. He was trembling from the cold and the thrill in his bones, as she was looking in his eyes. He was covered in snow, like a snowman. He stood speechless under those sharp bright eyes of hers, diamonds cutting his heart in pieces.

"Are you following me?" she asked him.

The voice brought the spring and summer over the winter streets, in an instant. Fields of colors were dancing above the snow.

He felt awkward and shy. He shook his head. He tried to speak.

“I’m Rick – Eric. I heard you sing”.

But she didn’t hear him because she had turned around, continuing her walk home. And his voice was stifled by emotions and by the cold air. He wondered if she at least had heard his name. He looked up: a gray sky was pouring snowflakes in silence. He watched the steam from his mouth, mixing with the colors that were disappearing above the white as she was turning the corner of a frozen building.

Eric had forgotten his gloves in his desk in the classroom and his hands were freezing. He grabbed his school bag closer.

And then Jerry patted him on the shoulder, waking him from the vision.

“You didn’t wait for me! You left sooner. Why?”

Eric stared into the space where the magic singing wonder had been.

“I think I’m in love”, he said.

Jerry laughed.

“Really? Who is she?”

“Her name is Estelle. She sings... her voice... and her eyes...”

Jerry laughed.

“You’re talking like a drunk man. Come on! Let’s go home!”

Jerry grabbed his sleeve, making him walk.

“You’re talking about Stella, right? Of course... the entire school’s in love with her. She just appeared out of nowhere and became every boy’s fantasy in just a week.”

Eric blinked. Snowflakes were melting on his eyelashes, blurring his vision.

“Stella?”

“Yes, that’s what they call her because everybody thinks she’s gong to be a star, by the way she sings. I don’t know, some girls have that something special... but you shouldn’t get your hopes up with her.”

“I know. She doesn’t even know me.”

“Not only that, Ricky... but she’s twelve and you’re eleven. She’d never go out with you. She’ll probably go for a higher grade guy. And knowing where you came from... she probably wouldn’t want anything to do with you.”

“It doesn’t matter. I love her. I’m certain of it.”

Eric was so sure how he felt, he was determined nothing else mattered.

She was his magic wonder. He wouldn’t give her up. He couldn’t.

He ignored the older boys who were teasing him when they saw him next to her classroom. He had a better aim in mind.

He made a habit of waiting for her by the door every day when she went home, but she hardly noticed him. Most of the time she was with a group of girls, walking home in endless chatter. He made sure she wouldn’t see him tracking them down half of the way. He

could spot the pastel pink hat anywhere in the schoolyard and in the street, no matter how many classmates were surrounding her. He could distinguish her voice in a noisy classroom and could recognize her bright eyes in the darkest night, with his eyes closed.

He was attentive each time when she was looking for her coat, but every time a boy from her classroom would get it for her, from the hanger. He knew he would have his chance one day. And one day, he did. It was the happiest day he could ever imagine. She turned around for her coat and he saw the distance between the door and the hanger: it wasn't too much. He could run for it. There was no other boy around. He swiftly made a jump. In a second, he was reverently touching her fluffy coat like a precious jewel. He brought it to her, hardly breathing.

"Here... your coat." he said shyly.

His heart was racing like a sparrow in a cage, beating out of his chest.

She looked at him and smiled.

"Thank you", she said and her clear voice awakened his mind to another season.

He danced his way home that day, ecstatic and dreamy.

He felt he could do anything: he could conquer the world.

She had smiled at him.

Music for marbles

In spring, Eric discovered that she was actually living across the street from him, two houses distance. It was when Stella's father bought her a synthesizer that Eric found out she was actually closer to him than he had thought.

Eric was doing his homework and his window was open; the spring warmth came in with noises of birds and cars passing by, when he heard the magical voice and the surreal singing above everything.

He stood up, threw away the notebook and ran in the street. He was determined to find the source of the melody.

The voice was accompanied this time by electric sounds, from her new toy.

Eric stopped under the window and listened. When the song was over, he clapped his hands enthusiastically in applause, not realizing what he was doing. She probably heard it because her fuzzy hair appeared in the window. And then, her sharp bright eyes sent shivers through Eric's skin. Her eyes were intimidating and fascinating at the same time. He was smiling ecstatic in total surrender when she looked at him a bit surprised. He hoped she wasn't upset because he had clapped his hands.

She wasn't.

“That’s like a pirate’s applause”, she laughed. “I wasn’t aware someone was listening. Did you like my song?”

Eric was exhilarated she was really talking to him, after many months of his secret adoration from a distance. He wasn’t going to miss the chance of having a conversation with the girl of his dreams.

“I did, very much. Is it yours?”

“Yes, I invented it.”

She leaned her elbows on the windowpane and looked to the end of the street.

“I hope I’ll sing it on stage one day.”

“I’m sure you will”, he said without a doubt.

She glanced at him more attentively. His enthusiasm pleased her.

“That’s nice of you to say. I think I’ve seen you around... did you come to my classroom once?”

So she remembers, he thought, feeling a sting of warmth traveling up from his toes to his ears.

“I brought you your coat one day...” he mentioned.

It was a day he cherished as a bright dream.

“Possibly...” she accepted and there was a glimmer of amusement in her eyes.

“I’m Rick”, he said boldly.

“Nice to meet you, Rick.”

He smiled, light filling his eyes.

“Nice to meet you too, Stella.”

“So you know my name?”

“I do.”

The whole school and neighborhood knew it, but she was still surprised.

Eric decided to take a risk.

“Can I come again under this window to listen while you’re singing?” he asked.

“Of course”, she agreed.

And then she went inside. He remained there for a few seconds, his mind enlightened by another miraculous day.

He thought he was walking in the highest sky when he returned home.

On the following days he went in the street as soon as he heard her through the window. He sat on the sidewalk and applauded after each song. Sometimes she came to the window to ask for his opinion. She confessed she was recording her songs on tapes, hoping to send them to some recording studio someday.

Eric’s under-the-window adventure didn’t go unnoticed in the neighborhood. The other boys started coming too, making much noise, playing with a ball and soon Stella’s father had to close the window and shoo them off.

Eric had another idea.

He thought of something.

He was addicted to her music, so he needed to listen to it.

On a Sunday afternoon he came under the window again and whistled. He was afraid to throw pebbles: he didn’t want to cause

damage and get in trouble. He had to whistle a few times until she heard.

“Why are you whistling?” she inquired after she opened the window.

He spoke very fast, trying to overcome his fears of her answer not being yes.

“I want to ask you something. It’s a business proposition: I’m inviting you to have ice cream at the coffee shop on the corner. I want to discuss something with you.”

“What kind of business?”

“About your music.”

“When?”

“Now?”

She was silent. He hoped for the best and clutched his fists in his pockets.

Seconds seemed like years. Minutes felt like centuries. She was considering it, stubbornly taking her time and evaluating the situation. And then she finally decided.

“Fine, I’ll come. Give me half an hour.”

He breathed deeply.

“I’ll wait for you here.”

He rushed home, suddenly happy to have a date with Stella and knowing he didn’t even have too much time to be blissful about it before he had to get ready. He grabbed his cardboard box where he kept his marble collection, then looked around again. He saw some change on the table and snatched it without a second thought. He

knew his parents might notice it, but he needed it more than he feared being punished.

He waited for Stella wearing his jockey costume that he had gotten for a school festivity. She came in a summer dress, wearing her mother's perfume and eyeliner. He didn't know enough of makeup to wonder about it. She looked stunning to him anyway. Her electrifying hair had a sparkling sticky spray over, which made it even more surreal. He stared at her, amazed. She was absolutely beautiful. Her clear eyes met his for a second and he felt his heart melt away like the ice cream they were about to get.

"What's in there?" she asked him a bit curious, as he was clinging to the box under his arm.

"I'll show you later. You'll see."

They walked to the coffee shop. He couldn't believe she was really there by his side, taking each step with him. Her warm presence made the asphalt of the sidewalk turn into a bright meadow. He saw colors and magic around her. She seemed more delicate and kinder seen from a closer look. He sensed she was a bit nervous and insecure about going out with him. He realized, with surprise, that she needed reassurance and safety, just like any other girl. Her diamond eyes had made her seem so invincible and determined – and there she was, walking by his side, a real person, with a delicate soul and a kind smile... she was also a warm girl, besides being a magical impressive ideal in his mind; he discovered she was sweetly human too, and it made him love her even more.

They sat at a table and he bought a tall glass of ice cream with the change he had taken from his home. It had strawberry and whipped cream flavor. They tasted the ice cream with teaspoons, in the beginning taking awkward turns at it. In the end, they seemed to feel a lot more comfortable eating together. When their teaspoons touched one another, making a clinking sound, they started laughing.

He let her finish the ice cream.

“You can have it. I don’t like ice cream very much anyway. But this was good.”

He placed his marble box on the table. He took off the lid.

She stared at the colorful pieces of glass, looking interested.

“What are these?”

“It’s my marble collection. They are portals to another universe.”

“Really?”

She looked at him seriously. Her deep eyes seemed to believe him.

“That’s wonderful! Can you travel anywhere with those?”

“You can travel in your mind... you can see through them to the other world. It’s a parallel universe and it’s very beautiful.”

She picked a yellowish one and stared through it. Then she picked another red one. And another green. Then blue. She was trying each one, attentively. He was watching her, delighted. His marbles in her hands seemed even more magical.

“You know what? You’re right”, she said after a while. “You can see a different world with these... radiant and bright... it’s really beautiful.”

He smiled. She was enchanted.

“Here’s my proposition”, he decided to reveal to her his idea. “I’ll give you my collection of doors to the other universe, and in exchange you give me one of your recorded tapes, so I can listen to it at home. I’ve got a stereo. I can listen to tapes.”

She was hesitant at first.

“I don’t know... what if my father doesn’t want to?”

“You don’t need to ask him. It’s just one tape... and you’re the star, right? You should do whatever you want with your music.”

She looked at him and smiled. Something about his idea made her content – the thought of him listening, the vision of the colorful glass... and the perspective of being a star and doing whatever she wanted.

“Okay. I’ll give you a tape. But don’t tell anyone.”

“I won’t.”

“It’s a deal?”

“Deal.”

She extended a hand over the table, to seal their agreement. He held it and as their fingers touched he felt they were better together than apart. The energy they shared doubled and amplified. It was magical, like the glass marbles.

They returned home. He gave her the cardboard box and she went in the house. Rick waited under her window as she came quickly with a tape.

“Catch!” she said.

He caught the tape into his hand. Then they separated.

He didn’t want to see the day end, but it was getting dark and he was sure he was expected at home.

His parents had noticed the missing money and confronted him about it.

He saw no reason to lie or hide it.

“I took it”, he said. “I bought ice cream with it.”

“That wasn’t a good thing you did, Ricky. Taking money without asking is not good. You’re going to cut those logs in the back yard for the rest of the week, to make up for it.”

He was too happy to have spent the afternoon with Stella to be worried about the work ahead of him.

As it turned out, the boys in the neighborhood heard about his date with Stella and they weren’t pleased.

Rick was playing soccer in the street when older boys came to interrupt it. One of them that he recognized as being in Stella’s class pushed him to the sidewalk.

“So, the little immigrant thinks he can have a girl in our class?” the boy grinned menacingly.

They were angry because he had already done it. And it made every boy envious of him.

“What do you mean?” Rick asked.

“You were seen together... you and *Stella*, of course.”

The way he said her name made Rick furious.

“So what?” he replied and the other boy shoved him into the wall of one of the houses.

“So what? I’ll tell you so what! Because you’re just a gypsy, you and your immigrant family, that’s why!”

Rick pushed back with both his hands on the boy’s chest, destabilizing him.

“We’re not gypsies! You take that back!”

The other grabbed Rick’s cap and threw it to the ground.

“You see? This leather cap you’re wearing all the time is probably your grandfather’s, from the war. And this jacket – don’t you have another jacket? It’s worn out and it was probably your brother’s before you got it for your birthday! How much did your parents pay for it? Worth a bottle of milk?”

“Shut up!”

Rick struggled to break free from the other’s fist that finally tore one of his buttons.

“And you think *Stella* wants you?” the other continued. “She wants the boys from the whole school to worship her! She wants real men, not you!”

Rick felt the need to defend her.

“She’s popular because she’s a singer and she’ll be a star someday!”

“She’s no singer and no star! She’s just a conceited little girl!”

“Don’t speak that way about her!”

Rick jumped and punched the boy in the nose. He wanted so bad to punch his enemy in the face, he felt so angry that temperature was boiling in his temples. He didn't see the fist that sent him to the wall again, and he fell on the asphalt. He jumped up again and rushed head on into the other, knocking him down, even though his enemy was taller and bulkier. He wanted to erase the words that hurt more than the hit. None of them had realized that Stella's window was open and she was staring down at them the whole time.

"Stop it!" she suddenly shouted at them. "Stop it, all of you!"

Rick didn't stop. He held his enemy down, keeping a knee on his chest and he punched his nose again.

"Take it back!" he shouted. "Take your words back!"

And then her voice resounded in the street.

"Rick, stop it right now!" Stella told him severely from her window.

He looked up, bewildered. He didn't understand. He was fighting for her honor. Why was she upset with him?

"Why?" he asked confused.

"Just stop it. Stop this fighting! Please."

And then she left, closing the window.

The boys spread out, walking back to their homes.

Rick was desolate, not really grasping Stella's view on the situation. He didn't consider himself guilty of what had happened. He had tried to defend himself – and defend her, more than anything. And yet she had scolded him for it. He couldn't wrap his

mind around it. In any way he thought about it, it still seemed unfair. He understood only one thing that was very clear to him: she was embarrassed by his presence. And that made him sad.

He didn't play under her window anymore. He listened to her tape endlessly, while doing his homework or just hanging around the house. For the rest of the week he worked in the backyard, cutting the logs, until she appeared one day, still upset and angry about something. He saw her behind the wooden fence. She had been there for a while. He stopped and placed the axe down.

"Hi Stella".

"You're making so much noise with these logs. I can't concentrate on my music anymore".

Her voice had the same tone as the last time she had spoken to him: she was still upset and distant. And yet hearing her so close made him melt in delight. She was brightening the backyard just by being there.

He explained:

"I have to do this work. It's my duty."

"Yes but you're cutting these logs too roughly. I think the whole town hears you. Can't you do it in a smoother way so I can sing?"

"I'll try to use the saw instead", he shrugged.

She was silent for a minute.

"I don't like you fighting", she said.

"They started it."

"It doesn't matter who started it. I don't like it."

"What should I do? Nothing? Just let them say stupid things?"

“Don’t answer arguments. Don’t fight about me again. Please.”

“I’ll try...”

She sighed.

“It was wrong of them to label people like that. And it wasn’t true – what they said about me. Thank you for defending me though”.

And then she left.

Rick smiled. At least she was speaking to him again.

He had been ashamed at the thought of her hearing what they had said about him. He knew he wasn’t good enough for her from many perspectives. But he knew it wasn’t his fault that people were closed minded and envious of him loving starry magical Estelle. She was his miracle and they couldn’t deprive him of that.

Only she could.

But she didn’t.

The next day she came to his classroom after classes were over. He just saw her in the doorway, waiting casually. He blinked, not sure she meant it – being there for him.

“Are you waiting for me?”

“Yes, you. Who else?”

And she smiled. He felt the spring meadows brighten his mind and the summer sun warm his heart instantly. Her blue jeans jacket was diffuse in the rays of light, the aura expanding like pastel blue sky over the horizon. He grabbed his school bag.

“I’m coming!”

As they went out of the school building together, walking side by side, he could feel eyes watching them in silence. And then something miraculous happened: Stella took his hand in front of the entire “audience”. He just felt her fingers reach to his, the warm holding touch enclosing firmly and undoubtedly like an embrace. She held his hand steadily, walking with her chin up in front of all the boys and girls staring at them in disbelief. Rick felt his heart beating faster and faster. He couldn’t even feel the ground he was walking on. It was as if they were flying together – or so it seemed to him, despite the fixed eyes that made the silence tense and uncertain. He walked adjusting to her rhythm, not looking back. He was only looking at her, happy and grateful she had decided to choose him to go home with – and to show it to everyone, admitting his presence openly. She was looking ahead, steadily determined, apparently unaffected by the multitude of glances. He admired her courage at that moment. He wondered if she was proving something with it. He wondered if she did it because she felt something for him too. He could only hope she felt as intensely as he did – it was like a dream come true. He didn’t want to ask her anything, as long as she continued by his side.

They walked home together, holding hands. He felt it was right: being with her was in harmony with the world – and with the other world of colorful marbles too. It was meant to be, he thought. It was written in the book of life.

The poster and the jacket

After that bright day of bravely holding hands in front of everyone, the neighborhood and the school accepted that Eric and Estelle were somehow together, in some unexpected, unexplained way. It was left at that and nobody contested it again.

Rick continued to listen to Stella's music day after day as she continued to sing. Occasionally, they went for ice cream together and glanced at the world through colorful pieces of glass – because he kept collecting them and giving them to her. He was also collecting her songs on tapes.

Sometimes they took long walks along the riverbank where he found many mysterious objects like metal badges and pieces of shiny glass. On one of those walks she let him kiss her – they actually kissed for the first time.

He had just found a new piece of colorful glass. He looked through it.

"I see ice cream in the other world", he laughed. "Let's see how it tastes".

He stuck his lips to the glass.

"Oh it's good", he said.

She was amused by his idea.

"Wanna try?" he invited her.

Yet he didn't offer her the glass. Instead, he waited with it stuck to his mouth. She smiled and came closer, touching the other side of the glass with her lips. He felt his eyes lost in her direct glance. Her deep bright eyes were shining intensely and there was a glow in her cheeks that he hadn't seen before. She was so close he felt her warm breath on his face, sweet and overwhelming, in a direct rhythm of energy. She was smiling gracefully, as they stood with their lips separated by the colorful glass. And then he slowly and softly moved the glass away, extracting it from the space between them, until the touch became the warmth of a kiss. He closed his eyes for a second that felt like an eternity. She tasted like sunlight and new spring, sending a blissful intense shiver in his soul. In that moment he felt their hearts beating together and their souls embracing in a light so intense, it made them shiver.

It felt indescribably good that she didn't retreat immediately.

When he opened his eyes, standing back, she was smiling in acceptance.

"You kissed me", she said.

"You let me... and you kissed me back!"

"I did."

"I love you so much", he said.

He couldn't be silent about it anymore. It was overwhelming; it was burning in his heart; it was miraculous infinite love he felt he needed to share with her.

"I love you too", she answered suddenly.

He stared in her eyes, afraid to believe it; afraid she would take it back.

“You really mean it?”

“I do.”

He breathed deeply.

“Uhh”.

He sat on the grass of the riverbank. It was summer holiday and he felt free and overwhelmed by happiness. He felt he had waited his entire life for those words. It was absolute happiness to just stay there, enjoying the ecstatic truth of love like eternal light. She sat next to him, leaning her head on his shoulder. He wanted so much to hold her, so he placed an arm around her, keeping her close.

“Should I not tell anybody about it?” he whispered dreamily.

“It doesn’t matter if you do... I don’t care what they say about it.”

They watched the river reflecting the sun in the flowing water, moving slowly with time.

In two years they grew up fast. She turned into an amazingly agile, shiny girl and he became a confident and impulsive teenager. They were preoccupied with exams and plans for the future, but they were still meeting by the riverbank on the weekends. He still listened to her songs, even though they changed. She still recorded tapes.

And then there was a singing contest in town.

She became the singing sensation and got a deal from a producer.

In just two weeks she moved out of town, to a bigger city.

Rick remained to walk alone by the riverbank. He only had her music and an occasional letter, telling him about her new life and enthusiastic plans. And then the letters stopped. They had both finished high school and he felt she was lost to him.

He met a girl Simone and the first thing he did was play the tapes to show her how magical Stella's music was.

And then Jerry came to him with a newspaper showing an article about her.

"Turn on the radio, man! She's everywhere now!"

The article described her as a new sensation. It also said her manager named Andy was her boyfriend.

"I don't believe it", Rick frowned.

"I'm sorry, man" Jerry said. "Did you really think she was alone? Of course not..."

Rick didn't want to think about it. He was glad for her – he could still be happy with hearing her voice. He heard her on the radio. He heard her in every disco in town. He understood why the world was at her feet: they felt the bright sunlight of her voice. They were thrilled by her magical music. They were charmed, just as he had been. But she was still his miracle. They couldn't deprive him of that.

Only she could.

And she didn't: one day, she came back.

Jerry brought him the news that she was coming for a concert in town. He showed him the poster: Stella with her hypnotizing eyes

and her electrifying hair, wearing a black leather jacket with metal spikes. It was galactic. It was majestic. It was overwhelming. Rick felt his heart drop. The poster was on the glass window of the concert hall, which was a guarded building.

He stared at the poster.

“Jerry”, he said, “I must have this poster. I’ve got to have it in my room. If she’s not with me, I’m taking this poster. I’ll come tonight and take it.”

“You’re crazy! You’ll get in trouble because of it. Besides, it’s stuck to the window with glue.”

“I’ll bring scissors. Come with me.”

“No, we’ll get in trouble.”

Still, Jerry came. And they got in trouble. Just as Rick was folding the poster inside his jacket, a policeman grabbed his arm in the dark.

“What are you doing here?”

He had to go inside the guardian’s booth to explain. He had to pay for the damage to the building’s property. But the policeman didn’t inquire where the poster was, so Rick got away with keeping it, close to his beating heart.

And later, it was on his wall, in his room. He could see her every day. Her blue-sky eyes looked at him endlessly... as if from another universe.

“You’re chasing a dream”, Simone told him. “But if you enjoy her music that much, keep dreaming...”

She shrugged and left.

Rick went to Stella's concert the next night. She hadn't made any attempt to contact him. He was certain he wouldn't get past the bodyguards and her boyfriend manager.

"I really want to get her back with me again", he told Jerry. "I love her and she means a lot to me."

Jerry warned him against getting his hopes too high:

"It might not mean as much to her as it does to you. She doesn't know who you are anymore: you've grown up, both of you. You were children years ago. You're a stranger to her now. She'll think you're crazy..."

But Rick was convinced otherwise.

"She knows who I am. I'm not a stranger, not to her... she knows me. I'm sure it's still us... she just needs to remember how she feels... and how I feel."

"How you feel is clear, but it's not enough to make things the way you want them to be... And you don't know what she feels about you."

It's true, Rick thought, remaining silent while realizing that she had a life far away from him and they weren't inseparable anymore. Jerry saw his sadness and tried to give him a consolation discourse.

"You're a fan of hers, and you were together when you were children. You were friends, right? Maybe she'll see you."

"I'm not a fan", Rick answered reluctantly. "I don't want to be one of them. And I don't want to be just a friend either. She's my love. I want to be her love too. I can't have it any other way. It's either 0 or 100% with me. I can't live with half measures... it's not

the way I am... and it's not how I feel. I can't be just someone in a crowd. I'd rather be no one. Don't you understand? I want her love."

"Her love? She's got someone else now, man. Give it up. Get her off your mind."

"No way."

"If she talks to you, her fans will get envious of you when they see you get her attention. Each of them will want the same. They all want her."

Rick grabbed Jerry's coat in his fists.

"Whose side are you on anyway? I'm not the same as any of them! It's not the way it is..."

He didn't want to accept the idea that she was just an audacious, improbable, unrealistic dream. He didn't want to live with the thought that he didn't mean more to her than the countless people who came to her shows. He believed love was a miraculous truth and it could make anything possible. He didn't want to let it disappear from his life. It meant too much to him. He decided to go to her concert alone and give her a message somehow.

He wrote a few words on a piece of paper: *"I'm in the other universe across a colorful glass wall. Meet me tomorrow by the riverbank. I love you. - Rick"*. He tied the note on a plush toy and bought a front row ticket to the concert.

As it happened, he really felt stuck beyond a glass wall. She had become distant from that sunny dream when they were together. Time had changed everything and yet he felt it unfair to let so much love slip away. He wished he could get her back.

He was nervously waiting for her to appear on stage. She came, shiny and impressive, bright and energetic. People were enthusiastic. Rick understood it meant everything to her: to have become the star she had dreamed of being, singing her songs and turning into an ideal for the crowd. He was content she had achieved what she wanted. But he doubted she needed him in her life anymore.

For a few moments he thought her eyes stared directly at him. As happy as he was to see her so close, after so many years of absence, he felt a subtle shade of sorrow that it was the only time he could be in the same place with her.

She looked at him a few times, but he couldn't guess how she felt. He was sure she knew him, but was not sure she needed him: she was a successful singer while he was washing cars, hesitating about going to university.

He left the plush toy on the stage and after the concert he didn't try to find her. He was sure there was no way for him to get closer and talk to her.

He didn't go to the river the next day.

He had no idea that she came to meet him there.

She had picked up the plush toy and read the message – and the next morning she waited for him, taking a walk along the river. She basked in the memory of colorful lights from pieces of glass reflecting the sun. She listened to the water and the birds. She remembered blissful moments from years ago. She eventually went to his backyard to ask about him. He was not home. He wasn't in

town anymore. He had left at midnight to join a boxing club in another town that hired volunteers for street shows and paid enough money – more than he was making by washing cars.

His decision had been sudden and an act of rebellion against the glass wall that he felt between him and his dream. If only he could have known that she would come, he would have been there in a blink of an eye. But he didn't know. And he had not much hope left to believe it could happen.

He couldn't trust his chances in the new situation to think she would return. He was afraid to believe in something that would be irrevocably unachievable: being with her again. Had he trusted his love instead, he would have believed in that light that used to make life bright. But he didn't have enough hope – and he didn't wait anymore. He ran away.

And so when she looked for him, she discovered that he wasn't there anymore. After that she left, while he was boxing, taking bad hits and throwing decisive punches at strangers in another town.

A few months later, he read in an article that she had married her manager. He was devastated, but didn't say a word to anyone. It didn't seem fair, but maybe life wasn't fair. *Maybe I'm not the best for her anyway*, he thought and went on boxing matches that tore his face to pieces, breaking his jaws and bones. His blackened eyes were swollen and he couldn't see too much.

He ended up in hospital. Stella's music was the only thing that gave him some soothing solace – that kept him closer to that light

that made life better. However, the light was backwards. He didn't see it ahead. He didn't see a way out for his future.

When he got out of hospital he finally decided to go to college.

It was when he found another piece of colorful glass in the street that he remembered the enthusiasm, the bliss and happiness, the light of love that had made life so bright, on the other side of another universe.

On the same day that he found the colorful glass he read in another article that she had divorced her manager and was free again. He looked at the news and felt something he hadn't felt for a long time: hope. It seemed that he was waking up to a new daylight, leaving behind a troubled night of pain and darkness. He started to believe in his dream once more: the sunny dream of summer and spring, of happiness and light. He stared at the piece of glass in his hand and realized it sent him a glimmer of brightness. Somehow, he knew that as long as another universe existed, he could still find Stella. He could reach her through the glass. He could bring her back to him. He could be with her again. She was his miracle. Love was his miracle. He wasn't going to give it up. He was determined to find it and keep it in his life for good.

The angel in the meadow

He looked for her in the news and discovered that her next concert was in a big city: Paris. *So far away*, he thought. And yet he was determined to be there. He went and got a ticket.

His wounds hadn't healed and the trip was painful, but he took headphones with him, listening to her music on the way. He closed his eyes and her voice went through his mind, into his bones, under his skin, infusing his being with a light that erased any trace of hurt, easing the pain away. It was magical. He felt a lot better with her songs in his head. He envisioned her presence like an aura around him and he realized many years had passed since they had been close.

He felt the need rising in his chest. He needed her presence. Just remembering her warm and delicate touch, her determined and firm energy, her bold and unexpected moves and the vast immensity of her mysterious eyes with an intimidating and fascinating stare, everything he knew about her made him need her more with each minute. It was burning under his skin. He wanted her there. He imagined her looking at him, reaching out and touching his face. He imagined holding her close and it was so thrilling that he couldn't think any further. It was a shiver that electrified his thoughts like a short circuit and only light remained, overflowing in his heart and soul. He felt it was unfair to love someone so much, to long for

someone's presence and be apart by so much distance. And yet, whenever he closed his eyes, he could see her and feel her right next to him, shining from another universe where the colorful light brought them together, anytime, anyplace.

Finding his seat in the concert hall he wondered with anticipation how she had changed over the years. She was already twenty-five and the many years of meeting countless people, traveling on tours and being in the spotlight had made her wiser. Her eyes were deeper, more peaceful and focused on the thoughts in her mind. Her attitude was more detached and relaxed, as if she was looking for something above reality, for another universe that remained unseen to most.

As she appeared on stage he saw the magic light and the summer meadow around her. He smiled. He knew there were many people around her and yet he was certain she would recognize him. He hoped she remembered him as the boy with a colorful universe. Her eyes turned in his direction, while she was singing. *It's me, and I love you so much*, his eyes told her. She seemed to feel his unspoken message because she smiled with a familiar warm light in her eyes, brightening the big room full of people. For a moment, he felt they were together again, walking along the river, holding hands and looking through colorful glass.

She kept singing, but she came closer to the edge of the stage. She leaned over and her hand reached out to him, as if to say hello. It was unexpected and he extended his hand, touching her fingers. There was something else: she had a hidden note that she passed to

him. He took the folded paper, blissfully happy, waiting for the end of the show to see what it was. She waved one more time before exiting the stage and her eyes met his again. *I love you and I'm yours*, he said to her silently, smiling ecstatic to see her so close after so many years of absence and dark solitude in his life.

In the light of a stage lamp he unfolded the paper. It was an address in the city. It also said in her handwriting *"If you want to meet me, come before the weekend. Love, Stella."*

Rick wondered if he was daydreaming. How did she know he would be there in front of the stage? How had she found the courage to write a note to him? And by what miracle did she mention love again? *Maybe she still loves me*, he thought and he felt as if heaven had sent him a gift, blessing his life again into a beautiful story, written in the sky.

He went to the villa she had rented for the summer. Nobody answered the door, so he walked around the steel fence. He found a meadow behind the yard. It was the edge of a residential area and the view expanded on a pond and a bright horizon over the hills of grass and flowers.

She was in the meadow, by the water, painting something. She had wrapped a pink scarf around her hair and her blue light summer dress camouflaged her in the field. She was like a patch of blue sky sent on earth. He thought he hadn't ever seen her so beautifully and peacefully harmonized with the heavenly view. She seemed bright like a shiny angel. She was like a painting herself, sitting there by the pond, covered in light.

He walked towards her.

She heard his steps, long before he approached the place where she had set up her painting tools. Her feline-like instincts made her look over her shoulder and see him coming. She smiled. Her pastel pink scarf was making her blonde hair softer in sunlight.

“Hi Stella”, he spoke when he stood by her side, near the pond.

“Hi Rick. So you came”, she answered.

It was wonderful just being there. He stared at the painting. The water on the pond was glistening in sunlight. It was a bright summer morning and something from the colorful universe of glass reflection seemed to hover above the meadow.

Stella seemed enveloped in an aura of pure light, as she was peacefully adding brushes of paint on the canvas in front of her, dreamily glancing to the horizon then back to the canvas again.

“You look like an angel”, he told her. “And this place is like heaven. What are you painting?”

“It’s just a landscape... and somehow I’m trying to immerse my vision into the colors, you know? Like something you see with the eyes of the soul. You have to feel it. You have to adjust your perception to the subtle energy around... let the brush have imagination, let it flow...”

He sat down on the grass next to her.

He was happy just being there, watching her paint.

“What’s with the bruises?” she asked him after a few minutes of silence.

She had noticed the scars and bruises on his face, the blackened eye and the stitches on his brow. He looked down.

“I got into some fights. I joined a boxing club, but I’m out now. I won’t do it anymore.”

“Good. You know I don’t like to see you fighting.”

“I know.”

“Why did you do it?”

He shrugged.

“You weren’t there anymore...”

She placed down the brush and turned to look at him.

Her deep eyes were still intimidating and fascinating, making his skin tingle.

“I was there by the river that morning”, she said. “And you didn’t show up. You didn’t come. I went there to meet you – and you weren’t anywhere.”

He was surprised. He didn’t know about it and he suddenly regretted it profoundly. He instantly understood that it could have spared him so much pain and struggle if only he had believed in their love a bit more.

They could have been together earlier.

“I’m sorry... I didn’t know.”

She came to sit closer, in the grass. Her hand reached out and touched his face slowly, going over the bruises in a careful caress. He closed his eyes. He could feel warmth and light in his skin, starting from her touch and expanding over the scars, easing the pain.

“Does it hurt a lot?” she asked him softly.

“No, not so much anymore... not now...”

She watched him attentively.

“I’m taking a break from music and I’ll be painting and doing some thinking, away from the stage. I’ll be here for a while. You could stay with me. What do you want to do?”

He had thought about his future. He could see it in a better light each day.

“I want to study architecture and build houses of colorful glass. I think I can make buildings that connect to the other universe... if I gather enough portals, I could do it.”

She seemed interested.

“Houses of glass?”

“Yes... buildings of light and colors... they would be ways to get to another universe. Places where space and time are not fixed. I think it could be done. I think I can do it.”

“I’m sure you can.”

He looked at her.

“I hope you don’t give up singing. Your songs are good for the world... you have such positive energy that you bring with your music. I know there are many people who admire and love you and I understand why.”

“I love my fans equally”, she said.

He sighed.

“Of course you do... “

He added, passionately and somehow melancholic:

“And what about me? I think I need you and adore you more than all of them put together... you’re my lifetime miracle...”

She smiled and her hand touched his shirt.

“You...” she started, pushing him slowly and he willingly laid back on the grass. “You”, she said leaning above him, “you’re an angel of light and you touched my heart with your beautiful soul...”

He couldn’t believe she was saying those words to him. He opened his mouth to say something, but her hand covered it gently. She rolled over to come closer, adjusting comfortably above him. Her lips touched his bruises softly, then the blackened eye, going down his face, tracing the jaw line. After she retreated her fingers away from his mouth she leaned directly and her lips finally met his. He closed his eyes, surrendering to the sweet overwhelming light, while his heart was beating madly in his chest.

He realized he had hungered and longed for that moment for so many years and letting his mind drift while her lips were softly enclosing his mouth in unexpected heat, sending shivers in his heart, he knew she had longed for it too.

It felt like ecstatic seconds of eternity before they paused and looked at each other again.

“You know, we never really...” he started and didn’t continue.

Her warm presence above him was making his skin feel electric tingles traveling up and down his body. She could guess his thoughts so easily, instantly, effortlessly, as if she was reading his mind because his entire existence was enlightened by her presence at that moment.

Even though he hadn't spoken the words, she knew them. She answered:

"Yes, but our souls have been together so many times".

He looked at her hands, resting on his shirt. The closeness was making him feel ecstatic and shivering. Waves of emotion stifled his speech.

"Take it off..." he said and she understood he meant his shirt.

He didn't want anything to separate them, not even a piece of clothing. He wanted to be closer to her: to feel her directly on his skin, in his soul, melting away his heart. He wanted everything.

She smiled. Her cheeks blushed a bit.

"Are we reversing roles here?"

He was too eager to hesitate: he felt irresistible desire like unquenched thirst and hunger rising in his soul. He answered immediately:

"Yes, whatever, I don't care... just do it. I want to feel this love with you and it doesn't matter how... you're so much into my life, my mind and my heart that I don't even know anymore in this energy where we are, where I am and where you begin... please do it now. I need to feel you... Let only love between us... I want you and I – and this heaven... forever."

He looked at her in absolute adoration. Her eyes were indescribable; the sparkling light that appeared in her fascinating stare was something feverish he recognized in his own soul and he knew what it meant. She didn't hesitate. She just smiled and the next moment she moved.

Her hand unbuttoned his shirt with unhurried rhythm, as her eyes remained steadily fixed into his. Each move was sending a new shiver in his skin, making his heart speed up.

“You don’t know” she whispered leaning closer to his ear, “how deeply in love with you I am.”

“Am I about to find out?”

“Yes...”

She wanted to make him feel better. She wanted him blissful. She wasn’t going to stop until she saw him absolutely happy, oblivious of everything except love and happiness.

He trembled unknowingly as her hand went down the buttons one by one, releasing his naked skin in the sunlight, sensitive to her touch. When she finally unfolded the open shirt, he breathed deeply with anticipation. His arms went around her waist. She untied her scarf in a releasing gesture and her hair went freely around him, touching his ears, like soft blonde rays of light. And then she leaned over gently and kissed him again, making magical lights and colors dance around them as he felt his soul already as one with her and the eternity above them, breathing alive with one heart.

Light was blinding him and it seemed they were an infinite expansion of love in a universe of pure energy.

The golden secret

Rick and Stella spent that summer in the heavenly surroundings of the meadow. They stayed together for as long as they could, blissfully walking around holding hands the way they had years ago, as children. They enjoyed being outdoors. They painted together and playfully went swimming in the pond. They became invincible together, so naturally encouraging each other to become the best they could be. It was so good when they were near each other that they didn't want to be apart anymore. It was like a summer holiday in heavenly scenery and they didn't want it to end.

However, soon their activities sent them to unpredictable ways again.

Stella didn't give up her music, so she went on tours and was suddenly away most of the time.

Rick went to university to get a license in architecture. He kept on his desk framed pictures of her magic smile and bright angel eyes, as he was studying for exams, listening to her music endlessly while she continued her shows in various places around the world.

He graduated and built his first glass building. It was a construction meant to become a water park. It took him one year to design and two more years to see it built. When it was finally complete it had three levels and multiple water slides, waterfalls, swimming pools, sprinkling fountains and other recreational spots.

From the outside it looked a multitude of colors, as if the walls were made of pieces of glass. It was just a beginning. He wanted to show it to Stella and he was convinced she would love it.

He also wanted to see if there was another universe inside the glass building, but with Stella's absence he doubted it would appear.

They kept in contact by written notes and online video sessions.

And yet one day, Eric read another article that turned his world upside down.

It said Stella had a new manager and was going on tour with him.

He immediately envisioned her with a man much taller than he was, richer and maybe stronger, probably more interesting. He wondered if she was going to get married again – to someone else. He was so troubled and anxious that he climbed up to the top of his glass building, where he remained for the following days.

Jerry came to talk to him, to convince him to come down.

Rick didn't want to. He saw no perspective if she had a new manager and would get married – and be lost to him again. He saw no way out. He just stood there, not willing to jump, not willing to go down the stairs either.

Jerry made a phone call to Stella. He spoke quickly, alarmed:

"Rick is on the roof and he hasn't come down in three days. He'll get hypothermia because it's freezing out there at night. He might get struck by lightning if it rains. He might be dehydrated or get a

cold. He might fall off or he might even jump. I'm worried about him."

"I'm out of the country right now", Stella answered. "But why is he doing this?"

"He thinks you're getting married again. I don't know where he got this idea."

She was silent. Jerry was uncertain.

"Are you?"

"What?"

"Are you... coming? Stella, you're the only one who can save him now. I tried, but he doesn't listen to me. You mean everything to him. Only you can help him."

"I'll take the next plane," she said.

Rick was looking down into the abyss under his dangling feet. He was sitting on the edge of the building, staring blankly ahead. He felt cold and his vision was blurry from the dizziness of sleep deprivation, hunger and thirst. He didn't want to go on, but he couldn't give up.

And then, Stella was suddenly by his side.

"Why are you up here?"

She had come and was sitting on the edge, next to him.

He looked at her.

"Aren't you on tour? Are you real?"

"Yes, I'm real and I was on tour but I came to see what you're up to. What's happening with you now? Why are you on this roof?"

He realized she was really there. She had really dropped everything to come and rescue him.

Her eyes were brightening his thoughts, as she watched him calmly.

He suddenly asked her the thing that had been on his mind, burning his brain, tormenting his heart and troubling him for days, ever since he had read the article:

“Are you getting married again?”

She smiled.

“No. Why do you think that?”

“I heard you’ve got a new manager.”

“So?”

“So are you going to marry him?”

She laughed.

“No.”

“Are you sure? Because the last time...”

“I’m very sure.”

She placed her arm around his, looking at him amused.

He still felt afraid of trusting the truth as being brighter than he had imagined.

“I don’t want to ask you this, but... how can you be sure?”

Her eyes sparkled, even more amused.

“Because it’s my father. He’s my new manager.”

Rick looked at her. And he knew. She was his miracle indeed.

He smiled. He still had another dream he would take a chance with. It was frightening to ask, more risky than standing there on

the edge. He didn't want to get her upset with it, but it was irresistible to ask anyway.

"If you're not getting married to your manager... would you consider marrying me instead?"

She seemed to have expected the question. And yet she didn't answer immediately. Her smile didn't diminish. She didn't get upset. But she was silent.

He confessed:

"I must say I never really liked the idea of marriage. I hate wedding ceremonies and costumes and everything that goes with it. I don't understand why girls grow up thinking about their wedding dress. And I don't believe that unions last too long here on earth. However..."

He searched in his pockets. He had bought it during that summer holiday they spent together in the meadow by the pond and had secretly carried it around with him for years. It was a little golden ring. He wanted her to have it, but he hadn't found the right time to give it to her. He realized the right time was that moment, even if he would have liked to ask her that question in a different situation. However, being on top of that colorful building of glass seemed somehow right. The open horizon ahead and the sunrise encouraged him to go on.

He offered her the golden ring.

"Here... this is for you."

She took the ring carefully between her fingers, watching it in the sunlight. She hadn't expected such a gift from him. He hadn't

measured how it fitted, but he felt she liked it anyway, as small as it was. The golden ring had two hearts and a sun on it. It was just right. She stared at the symbols on the round small jewel. It reflected a glimmer of enchantment in her eyes. He continued convincingly:

“I believe this love is a miracle and I like the idea of something infinite and eternal... and I think this is what we have. If there’s something permanent in my life, it’s the truth that I love you more than you can imagine possible and that will be with me for as long as I live. And I think it’s much more than a ceremony or a social convention. It’s beyond these superficial things that don’t really last. Loving you is who I am, it’s a truth of light from another universe – and there’s nothing more eternal than that. I think it’s what this ring means. You know... we’ve been together for so long and I’m very sure I’ll love you forever. I would do anything to see you happy. I can’t imagine life without you. I’m serious about this: will you share forever with me? I want to spend my life with you. It would make me the happiest... “

As she was silently smiling, he asked, a bit unsure of her reaction:

“Will you at least think about it? If you want a ceremony, I’ll even go through with it too, if you want something for your family or your audience or the media... I’ll do it for you. But what I need to know is... I’m asking you if you want to share this eternal love with me...if you want to be mine. ”

She was listening somehow amused, somehow enchanted.

And finally, when he was silent, she said simply:

“I don’t need to think about it. I accepted to be yours years ago, when you asked me out for ice cream...”

He smiled instantly. He hadn’t expected that answer. He hadn’t forgotten their first date either, and somehow he felt that the innocent children they had been were still there, in that moment. Something from that day had stayed with them. And yet over the years it had become an endless truth, so intense and so deep. He could see it in her eyes too. Her words made him feel lifted in the sky, as if his soul was up above that roof.

How could he ever be happier in that moment? It was another dream come true. It was more than he had ever hoped for.

“Is that a yes?”

Her eyes were shining brightly, confidently.

“Yes.”

He was suddenly ecstatic.

He felt so blissful that he believed he would be able to walk on air that very moment. Her acceptance made the truth of love even brighter. It was indescribable and it was right, as if things were finally the way they were meant to be, in harmony with every world and universe that existed, seen or unseen, inside or outside their existence.

He took a step closer to her and she wrapped her arms around him, closer to her heart, melting away every trace of sorrow that had ever overshadowed his mind. She held him close, while people down in the streets were watching them as they stood embracing on top of

the colorful glass building, near the edge - in an instant only happiness had remained on that roof and it was them together, melting in the morning light. The sun that was rising looked like an immaculate golden ring in the horizon, an everlasting glowing truth, spreading its aura in their lives.

They went back home together, holding hands and enjoying the new perspective of really sharing love as an eternal truth, after having discovered once again that life was a miracle.

Eternal Ascending Light

It turned out that Stella didn't want a ceremony either. She wasn't very eager to choose the usual package of marriage for them. She was aware that their love was something absolutely special that surpassed the limits and conventions of the world and didn't need to follow the established setting. She knew they were above it and beyond. Being together was so much joy, it was more than enough... it made life suddenly complete.

Days went by and didn't leave traces of regret. It was forever summer for them... life had become undeniably bright... and it was eternal love like a light beyond the limits of a world that couldn't keep them away from each other anymore.

One day, they celebrated a new beginning of their being together by making a vow in a sacred way, more like a blessing declaration of eternal love in the meadow near the pond. They decided to have a moment of absolute confession of love that would be like the beginning of a new life.

“How did you start loving me?” he asked her one morning, happy to discover her by his side, as he did each new day and hoping it would never end.

Her presence with the blonde hair spreading on his pillow, in the bright morning light seemed heavenly. It was a pure delight to wake up and see her there, after falling asleep in her loving arms each night, alight with intense lovemaking. Mornings had become peacefully ecstatic, brightly uplifting. It didn't matter if it was a rainy day or a sunny one when he woke up. Her presence there made the room brighter; it made his mind peaceful; it melted his soul to happiness, even if the transparent glass ceiling was softly blurry with drops of rain or letting the sunshine come through.

Her deep eyes were looking at him, reflecting the blue sky that was spreading above the ceiling, opening an endless horizon in his soul. *She has no idea how much I love her now*, he thought. He didn't think it was possible to even describe it to her – or to himself - the endless infinity he felt.

She smiled at him, answering simply, in a charming way leaning closer:

“I just did... because you are... as you are... you have a kind heart and you shine a bright light around. Can you tell me why are you so addicted to me?”

He looked at her dreamily.

“I think your soul was sprinkled with shiny glue and stardust before you were born, that’s why you hypnotize people without any particular effort. You’re unique. And it was decided in heaven to give you an angel’s wing. It was decided that I should be the one having the other wing, so our souls can fly together. Every time we got lost from each other they threw pieces of colorful glass in our way, so we would find each other again and see to the other side, remembering that life is a miracle. And love makes us eternal... ”

“You say such beautiful words...”

“It’s my talent”, he smiled. “I got it from the other universe. I perfected it along the way...”

She watched him amazed. She enjoyed his speech without attempting to hide her feelings. They had learned to trust each other so much that it was easy to feel each other’s heartbeat without any doubts.

“Let’s make a declaration by the pond”, he said and she agreed.

“Instead of a wedding?”

“Yes... more like a new beginning. It would ensure we start again for better and whatever we do from now on, we’ll never be apart and we’ll never be astray from love. You and I are meant to be forever.”

He thought for a while. It wasn't only her voice, her eyes or her soul. It wasn't just his marble collection or the fact that he could see what others couldn't. It was beyond that. It was a powerful love, sent from heaven. It was his entire life given to the most enlightening, the most inspiring love that could be – a first love that matched his soul in bright light. And that gave them immense power over any situation.

On that day they went to the pond in the meadow. Holding hands and looking into each other's eyes, they felt they weren't just in a random place on earth: they were above it and surreal wings of light enveloped them in an aura of delight, peace and higher awareness. They saw colors from another world dancing around and the sky seemed to expand above them like an approving light of endless intensity. It seemed as if sparkling flashes of electricity were somewhere in the atmosphere, coming from another space and dimension even though the sky was clearly blue. The air was swarming with sparks like fireflies and it seemed they had never been so close to the doorstep of a brighter view that they saw in each other.

"I love you more than I can describe", Rick spoke, "and I hope this eternal light will be your joy every day, because I swear I only want to see you happy. I'll love you my entire life and I feel this love is infinite."

Stella was holding his hands and smiling, as her eyes were shining with a deep energy that seemed to affect him on every level, more than he had believed possible, as her presence was changing

his sensations, inspiring him physically, emotionally, mystically and spiritually, adding to his perceptions that intensified in stronger beliefs.

Her words and her voice had an absolute effect on his mind. It was like a miraculous gift to listen to her voice in the meadow of that surreal universe intertwined with a world of elusive limits, erasing every apparent boundary and reaching his soul instantly, completely:

“I hope you’ll be blessed with happiness in eternal light”, she spoke. “You have my love and that is already a lot. I am grateful for meeting you in my life.”

He smiled.

“Say it again... that word.”

“What word?”

“Love. Say it again, please. I like to hear you say it... it makes me so happy.”

“Love? “

She smiled, giving in to his prayer.

“Here it is... love...”, she said in a brighter tone. “Love”, she whispered taking a step closer to him, while the colorful lights were dancing around. “Love... “ she spoke secretly, intimately and her warm breathing touched his face as her arms went around his neck.

He felt her fingers in his hair, snatching him closer still.

“*Love*”, she said softly and as her lips moved, approaching him carefully, he could feel the word slip into his soul while she kissed it away, as if passing it to him directly, surrendering together to the

meaning of it, ascending with it in a bright universe where they were alive as infinite light.

In that moment it was as if a higher level brought them together upwards, into a dimension unseen, but immense and powerful above and beyond reality. It was as if their reflected belief had amplified and intensified their access to another universe, a higher dimension out of space and time. Their existence included that universe that had been there since the beginning of their encounter as children. They had had glimpses of it through the colorful glass, but the door opened and let them in completely only when they became aware of the eternal love that was such a miracle in their lives, through the years. After feeling their soul in bright ascension, they were somehow living in another place too, walking through the parallel world that they sensed, saw and enjoyed, including in their lives a redeeming heaven of light.

It was there and it was visible only to their eyes.

Rick built a colorful glass house for them, on the other side of the pond, in the meadow where they had spent a blissful summer together. It was their special place – and soon they discovered it was out of time. It was a phenomenon that didn't seem unusual anymore. It was a part of a higher truth.

There was something timeless and energetic about that place, after their access to the ascending heavenly light had become a reality of their daily lives.

It was the aura of the glass house, or maybe their combined souls that amplified the sunlight and the invigorating spring-like

atmosphere that kept the area in a different set of another universe. It was the place, the house - or their love that made time inexplicably absent, because they remained young and resourceful, despite the years going by.

Stella kept singing along decades, without ever seeming to be affected by the passage of time. Rick built more houses of colorful glass and realized, with the number of years adding to his life that they were both actually ageless. He could feel younger and younger, more and more powerful, as if he was going back to his adolescence while advancing ahead to a blessed eternal happiness. He was amazed to see the world and people changing with the passing time while he was just feeling as blissfully young and eternal as the light of his glass house where he had infinite love with Stella. For some reason, he and Stella were enjoying the years without counting them anymore - because it didn't matter. They seemed unaffected by the fast, endless passage of time. They were simply out of it.

It didn't get to them - or to that place - ever.

They were so happy being in love, it made them like two children again. They would start each day playing with pieces of colorful glass; they would later behave like teenagers jumping in the pond. In the afternoon they painted the sky and embraced in the grass. In the evening they even went for walks in town, among the people who were pressured and measured by time. She still tried to change the world with her singing, making people more positive in their souls. He still tried to show others a different universe by building houses of colorful glass that would open their minds to a

higher level of awareness. They both wanted to bring something good into the world – and yet they knew it wasn't an easy thing to do. The world was a vast place that couldn't be changed overnight. People were influenced from many directions.

Eric and Estelle were different... and eternal. They shared an absolute light and lived in a parallel universe, even if they were seen by the world. They never got a day older than the way they had been in that meadow by the pond, long ago; instead they felt younger and more energetic, as a happy couple.

He sometimes wondered if something inexplicable, surreal, mysterious and miraculous had happened on that day they had made love for the first time, invoking intensity above them, opening unseen doors to a powerful higher level. He wondered if they had ascended to a brighter light when they spoke their vows to each other, naming love as the energy of life and becoming eternal because of it. He wondered if love had done it to them and was keeping them young because they felt so much of it. And maybe the energy that amplified around them was letting them exist on the other side, in the parallel universe of bright light and colors where time was an absent phenomenon.

In any way it was, for whatever reason it had happened, it made them newly defined and ascended to the best version of what they could be – and that was a certainty.

It was love that had brought them there... it was love that had been written in the book of life... and they discovered it again with

each new day, blissfully intense through time, a love endlessly uplifting, eternally bright as absolute light.

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