

Author's Note: Magic Eye

In the early nineties there were really popular books amongst grade school children called "Magic Eye." Essentially these books were compilations of 2d repetitive images layered in such a way that if you could look at it just so- the creators called it "diverging the eye"- a 3d image would appear. The cool thing about these images were that not everyone possessed the ability to see. Magic Eye required that you see the patterns with one eye, and look differently at that same pattern with the other eye, at the same time. Only when you could marry the two perspectives could you see the hidden picture.

Magic Eye is a perfect metaphor for my life story. From an early age my life's timeline could be followed online via search engines. In middle and high school searching my name on Yahoo.com would return page after page of my track and field endeavors, perusing the archives of The Cleveland Times, The Plain Dealer, or The Chronicle Telegram would turn up dozens and dozens of articles about yours truly. Dyestat.com was the leading website in following the progress of prep (junior) athletes. In college, our Tennessee Lady Volunteer marketing department cranked out press releases weekly, additionally Facebook had just been introduced to college campuses. By the time I became a professional athlete googling myself would produce hundreds of images, articles, and results. I have a

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digital trail of posts, tweets, status updates, blogs, articles, interviews, photos, and god knows what else dating all the way back to when I was twelve years old.

Therein lies the problem. In my opinion my life is somewhat like the child actress that lived her life in public for so long that when she decides to become herself there is public outrage because it doesn't jibe with what we thought we knew about her. But ask yourself, what did you really know about her? You knew her characters that she played on television, you saw her give the right answers to questions during scheduled interviews where she was most likely more prepped beforehand than President Barack Obama was at his first debate versus Mitt Romney.

I deal with this problem in my life on a much smaller scale. I allowed people to believe I was open and happy. I was able to convince thousands of people online that I was living a fabulous life, that my posing for seductive pictures using a self-timer equipped camera in my college apartment was about self-love, not a lack of self-respect. I was able to fool the half-interested masses into believing I had a plan for my life, that I had my shit together and I had the most supportive family and friends to make all of my dreams come true. The reality is, that wasn't my reality. I became exhausted, tired, and lonely continually

projecting such a different persona than I actually possessed that I resigned myself to focus on just one thing.

In the fall of 2011 I realized that I was done. I was done with being broke, being dependent on people who didn't like me or were using me. I was so tired of fighting for success in my track and field career, tired of trying to scrap together dollars to pay tuition. Tired of logging onto twitter and Facebook for my hourly dose of validation, and tired of smiling when I carried my depression around with me like a favorite purse. I decided I had the energy to open myself up for one more thing and for one last time: Love.

Love, I believed, was going to save me from my life and from myself. I was right. I found that love, and that love was like an ointment that healed a lot of my other ailments.

Ironically, my coming into myself didn't sit well with many people including my immediate family, peers and authority figures in track and field, Christians, and the online followers I had amassed over the years. This is what I have to say to all of you who expressed distaste at my metamorphosis: you didn't know me in the first place to have an opinion about the "new" me. To my parents and little sister I'd say the same: if the

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three of you actually spent less time caring about how things “appear” and invested more time into taking care of the people you are supposed to love we’d have a very different family dynamic. To the “friends” that were appalled at my indifference towards them and my ability to just stop interacting with them cold turkey I’d say this: honestly, we weren’t friends. I may have let you think that, I may have even called you by that title but we weren’t. Ask yourself now what you know about me that you can’t find online. Think really hard about any conversations we may have had that featured me as the main talker. You’ll come up short, I am an excellent listener for a reason- because I rarely say anything. If we were acquaintances before 2011 I doubt you can recall a time where I went into depth with you about myself and my family, my philosophies, my feelings, and who I was deep down in my core. One thing I was most criticized about in my life so far is my inability or unwillingness to share what I’m thinking or feeling. I can say these heart to heart conversations rarely happened with extreme confidence because I didn’t know who the hell I was either.

Searching for truth within yourself is a painful process, to be yourself takes courage. I didn’t grow up knowing or believing I was strong or possessed courage. In fact the opposite was true, I believed myself to be weak, a pushover, unloveable, and

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flawed. The only respite from these emotions came when I was participating in sports. But my moment of truth is coming, as I approach retirement I must discover and declare who I am, I must possess courage, and give and receive love. This book is a part of that process and all I ask of you as you read this is that you "diverge your eyes" keep everything you thought you knew in the sight of one eye, but see and hear what I'm telling you with the other, and maybe just maybe the truth about me will come into focus for you too.