

A thunderstorm is a beautiful event-with its magnificent lightening, gorgeous cacophonous thunder, and heavy sultry rain-but it is dangerous. It (a thunderstorm) is a beautifully violent disturbance.

A Beautiful Man
By Sharron Scott

Eric Teal, one of my closest college friends, was probably one of the most physically attractive men I've ever shared words with. However, he seemed unaware of his good looks. He was too busy following his dream of becoming a film director and playing his saxophone to notice.

I loved Eric because, he was beautiful, but he didn't know it. He was beautiful not only because of his physical attributes, but also because he was humble, creative, and passionate. Paradoxically, his greatest strength, his passion, was also his greatest weakness.

Eric had a magical beauty that transcended culture and race. He was 6 ft 3 with a slender athletic build. Sometimes he wore a diamond stud in his left ear. He had caramel brown skin with reddish undertones that reminded me of an October sunset. He had tight black curls and a sexy Denzel Washington-like smile. And even though we were strictly platonic friends, when he looked at me with his iced tea brown eyes, I had to catch my breath

Though Eric received a lot of attention from college coeds, he was humble and unassuming. He never seemed to notice how women would stop mid-sentence and gawk at him when he walked by in his faded jeans and Addidas windbreaker. Women often stopped him and asked, "Don't I know you from somewhere?", or "Can you tell me how to get to...?" He was always so gracious. Eric would try his best to remember if he knew the deceptive temptress from somewhere or to help the damsel in distress find her way to a place that she already knew how to get to.

The bolder women would come right out and ask if I was his girlfriend. He would explain gently, "No, Sydney is one of my best friend, my girlfriend goes to Charleston University." He had a warm voice with a slight hint of a southern (by way of Atlanta) accent.

One of the things that made Eric beautiful was his creativity. He played the saxophone, wrote poetry, and painted. But his true love was creating films. In fact he was a film major.

He had made his first movie on his parents' old camcorder when he was six. The movie even had sound effects—quite impressive for a first grader! His mother still had his first video tape, and she had showed it to me when I visited their home one summer.

The short films that he made in college were more politically conscious. One of my favorite films by him was a documentary, *Joe's House*, in which he actually spent 72 hours on the street with a homeless Vietnam vet. When he accepted a student award for it that year, he graciously said, "All I did was hold the camera, Joe told the story."

Eric Teal danced to the beat of a different drummer, but the beat was exotic and sweet. And even though he was in his own world, he would never hesitate to

come out of it and visit. "I always have a movie in my head," he once told me. That's why I don't always hear you the first time call me," he added apologetically. But the beautiful thing about Eric was that once you had his attention, he made you feel as if you were the most important person in the world.

For instance, after I dived into the deep end of the pool for the first time in my beginner's swim class, I ran back to my dorm and called him. "I did it!" I shouted. "I jumped into the deep end all by myself!"

"I'm so proud of you," he said sincerely. Then he asked, "How did it feel?" Even though he had been jumping into the deep end since he was eight, he let me tell him every single detail. He made me feel like I had just qualified for the U.S. Olympic Swim Team.

Eric was passionate about his craft and about the people in his life. For the most part, his passion was a good thing, however, it had its downfalls.

Once he called me well after midnight. He didn't even say hello. All he said was, "Sydney, I shook her." His vice was jagged like a broken soda bottle. "I didn't mean to hurt her. You've got to believe me."

Eric said that he had accused his girlfriend, Zora, of cheating on him with a guy at her college. He said that when he confronted her, she blamed everything on our relationship. She said that he basically had two girlfriends, and one of them had to go. Eric apparently snapped and shook her violently. When he let her go, she fell and hit her head. Zora was not severely injured, but she did get a bump on her head.

I said very little that night. I mainly listened to what he had to say. The next day, when things settled down, I told him the truth. "It is NEVER acceptable to hit a woman."

"I am not like him," he said referring to his father. "I didn't hit her, I shook her." I was dumbfounded by how he thought that shaking and hitting were two different things. I was angry because he didn't know that what he had done was horrible, and hideous, and violent. And I was hurt because he wasn't perfect anymore. I suggested he get counseling. He told me I was wrong.

Zora and Eric eventually got back together. I stepped aside because I didn't want him to have to choose between the two of us. I also stepped aside because I could not tolerate a man hitting a woman. After our friendship died down, I made many new friends, but all of them put together couldn't fill that void that he left.

Eric and I created memories that 20 years couldn't erase. He was the most complicated and magnificent human I've ever known, an humble and brilliant artist, a tormented violent soul—a beautiful storm.

Questions: Literary Terms and vocabulary

- 1. The narrator compares Eric to a storm. What is this an example of? Why does she compare Eric to a storm?**
- 2. The narrator says, "Paradoxically, his greatest strength, his passion, was also his greatest weakness." What is paradox? Why is line a paradox?**

Questions: Literary Analysis

1. Eric is described as humble, creative, and passionate. Give specific examples from the narrative to support this description.
2. The narrator says, "Eric Teal danced to the beat of a different drummer, but the beat was exotic ad sweet." What does this mean?

Questions: Character Analysis

1. With regard to their relationship with Eric, compare and contrast Zora (Eric's girlfriend) and Sydney (the narrator).

Questions: Personal Response

1. What was the main reason that the narrator ended the friendship? Was she justified in ending the friendship? Explain.
2. The narrator is reflecting on a friendship that occurred 20 years ago? Why do you think she is reflecting on the friendship at this time?