

HAPPY

BEGINNING

Sensibility Trumps Language

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A special thanks to my colleagues and friends
for patience, support, and insightfulness:
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Jean, Tom, Kurt, Seth, and Thea.

For Maruca

The visual material contained
in this pdf were produced parallel to the events
depicted in the narrative, Happy Beginning.

Reactionary oppositions suggests that events
move through space, swinging in one direction
than in an extreme opposite direction,
without tracing the same pathway.

Think Foucault's pendulum and gravitational
motion rather than a metronome
and binary opposition.

Mitchell Kane, June 2011

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Happy Beginning Sensibility Trumps Language

***When he was with her his erection lasted six hours,
Why didn't he think anything was odd?***

It was a mild Southern California winter evening at a grocery store parking lot. Sulfur lamps, no cars besides theirs. The first kiss was a perfect fit. There was nothing to be said. They met because they were both seeking something. They silently understood their feelings to be all about themselves: naive, willingly, and complicit, but in hindsight, they were not even close. The relationship began with an expiration date.

Did you know a person was able to walk for days in mental numbness and go without food for an equal amount of time when emotions take-over? It is extremely unhealthy and no cure exists to deal with raw sensibility. Language can try to explain emotions, but at best all it can only do is soothe.

There are things in us that need to get out. The following text is a narrative about two people. She is time and he is space. The two are captives through their own making. During the course of the telling of this narrative several major life events, such as stroke, cancer, death, divorce, and children, altered its arch. This text attempts to reconcile the events, which played significantly in a drama of fantasy, disaster, and denial.

I was told, “a relationship is good if it helps you move forward and grow as a person.” Nice. The deeper the pain means the bigger the growth? I don't know if I believe this, but right now, because of the circumstances, it doesn't really matter.

Black»»»»»

««««White

Spectrum»»»»»

««««Invisibility

Opacity»»»»»

Reactionary Opposition

For several years now, I have been interested in the primacy of sensibility over language: that is, language being a primary twentieth century communication tool, where the twenty-first century is multi-sensibility oriented: touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. I suffered a cerebellum stroke in 2009, and incorporated this experience and knowledge, shaping a new body in the process from the inside out. I had become neuro-sensitive and started listening more closely to my body. Yes, that sounds weird to me too, and I'm trying to figure it out.

Let Me Begin

Names were important: she was Sugar and he was Lover Man (LM).

S and LM walked straight into a dysfunctional relationship. They new it at the onset, but they both needed something. He may have been looking for what would eventually happen, but probably not. He loved what she offered, and assumed she loved what he offered in return. Though they agreed at the onset that they would talk when anything was bothering them, they rarely brought things up. Periodically, things would surface, and she would close down and become "bad she." He gave her all the space she needed to process what had just happened. Not discussing what happened was real a trigger from her earlier marriage and ex-husband. A quiet din filled the room, the car, or the walk. He just absorbed whatever was said, pretending he didn't hear, because it wasn't important enough to begin stirring the cauldron.

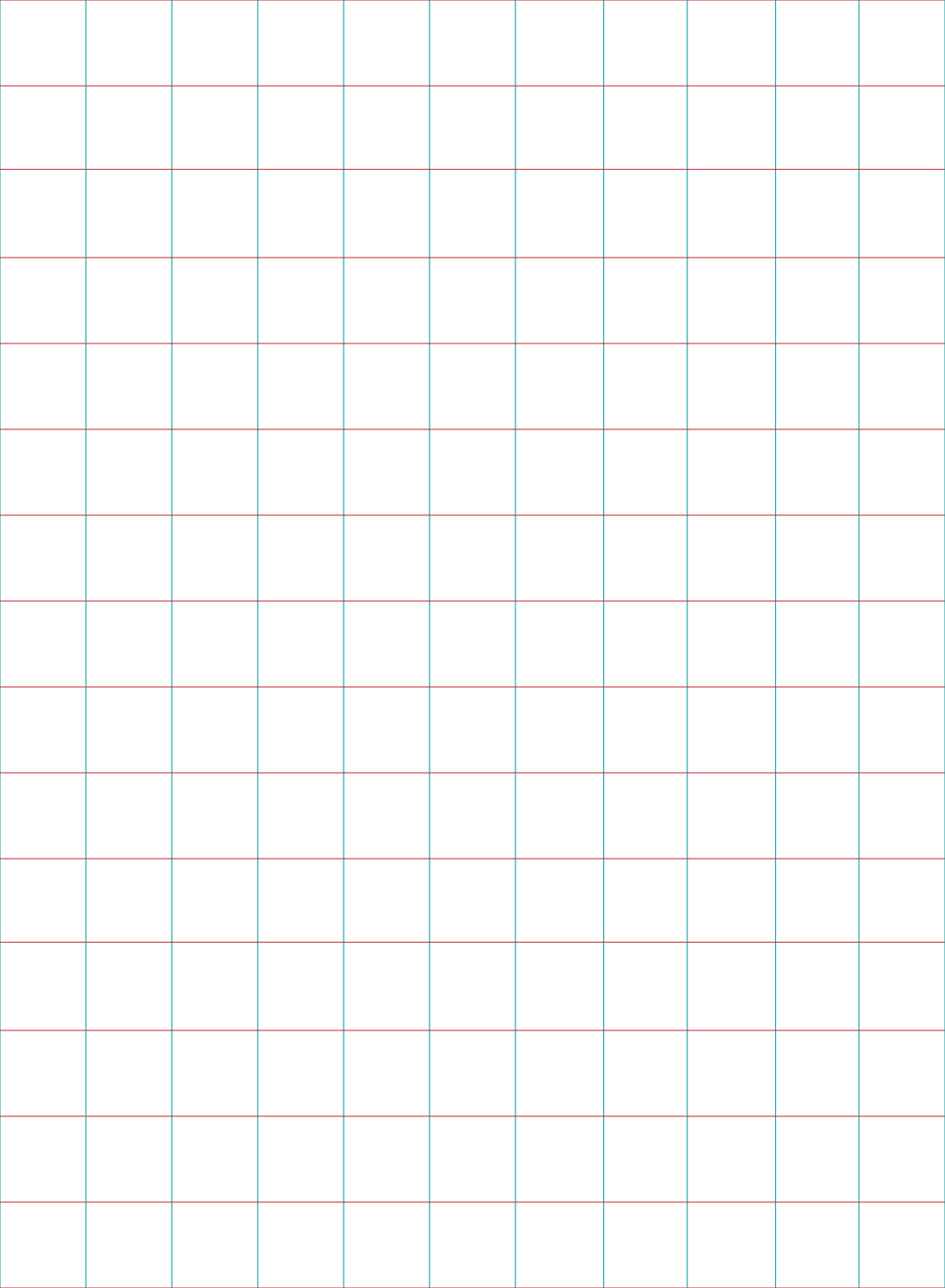
One issue difficult for her to accept centered on schedules, and scheduling their lives, and getaways, around school events for the children. It made planning inconvenient, because things changed. So the schedule hanged overhead, the two worlds remained psychologically separate. This was hard to accept, because she was self-employed, and carefully managed her business calendar, which included scheduling. She was sensitive to the task.

Besides this, the first six months were remarkable. They worked around their schedules. This was a Class A fantasy made from a huge pile of denial. He loved every minute of it. He loved her, and he was giddy about it. The touching heightened their indulgence into sensibility. Words would simply not matter. They were sensual friends with expectations.

They pretended there were no kids involved in their lives when they first got together. This was easier for her than him, because her daughter had decided to go live with the ex-husband immediately following her divorce. Getting away from the house was critically important for the daughter. In hindsight, he wished he knew that little piece of information, because it would underscore why she jettisoned so quickly. Knowing this information was impossible, because the daughter was estranged from her mom, and sensed that he was a replacement for her. It was too bad the daughter never talked to him, they may have had a lot in common.

When he first learned about the daughter, at the onset of the relationship, she was brought up as being troubled, suicidal, and on medication. As any parent can empathize, this is as hard as it gets when you have a child. She dealt with it as best she could. She was strong and determined, which was a different side of her, from the demure and quiet person he had briefly known. They didn't talk much about her daughter. The subject was hands-off, but it ran deep. The daughter, as a subject, would come up briefly, now and then, when talking about school and her taking days off. The ex would enable his daughter and try as best he could to deal with the moodiness of a teenager in this condition. The relationship between her and her daughter was rarely discussed, but it was palpable and hurtful to witness. The first, and only, suggestion he made about the daughter was to get her off medication. He was not a believer in meds. Thankfully, they were moving in that direction, and once it eventually happened, the daughter improved for the better.

Her son, on the other hand, was away in Brazil for college, and she lived vicariously through his adventures. The first image he saw of her son was the screen saver on her computer of a half naked adult male torso basking in the sun. It was her son. Odd? Yes, but he did not comment.



His son was much younger. He dealt with his son's schedule, juggling the days and weekends. He would shift whatever he could in order to make her happy. She wanted predictability. The scheduling was a constant reminder that there was a real world beyond the confines of their fantasy.

She was gracious and met his child on a couple of occasions at her home. She never came out to watch a soccer game, or attend a school event. He would have liked for that to happen at least once, but that was not in the game plan. Basically, he thought in the back of his mind, since her children didn't want to see him, his child would not be part of the bigger mix either.

The whole premise of their relationship was centered on the condition of love with an expiration date: the premise of an expiration date being a slow steady decay. The idea that at some point the relationship would end made it difficult to fully immerse oneself in the idea of a future. The expiration date was supposedly when her youngest child completed high school and was ready for college, and out of the house. What's peculiar about this date is that the daughter already estranged from her mom, and already out of the house. So in a way, the expiration date should have arrived early, but it never did. Instead, she announced a slight change of plans: her son was moving back home for an undisclosed period of time. Coincidentally, this occurred the very week their relationship concluded. The son returns, and the expiration date, clumsily sat scheduled on the new calendar.

She showed annoyance with him when he would change the schedule abruptly. She felt overwhelmed and confused by trying to keep track of his schedule, but she did not complain nor did she apologize for her abrupt changing of their schedule. Midway through their relationship the schedule created so much confusion that they agreed to do away with it all together. The new plan was to just call each other earlier in the week to see if they were available and a make a plan, i.e. treat getting together more spontaneously. This way the schedule was left out of the equation. It worked well for a while, but even in the end, the concept was never fully comprehended and there was lingering resentment. Basically, what

she knew, and cared for most deeply, was that she going to have her eldest child back home.

Throughout the course of their relationship she used to say this phrase to him when he walked around the house after a shower with a towel drawn around his waist. “I have a man in the house!”

During one of their final phone conversations, after her son moved home, she told him, “There is a man in the house.” How bizarre! Yes, there is another “man (SON) in the house.” Does she know the difference? Was she aware how this would affect both of them? Did she care?

She was very articulate, but she was not as closely examined as a person when it came to the flurry of personal matters surrounding her life. Her seamless transition from divorce to the intensity of their relationship without first addressing the hurt would resonant hard.

With the return of her son, she would now have her pre-divorce life back, minus the ex-husband. She is a mom to her child all over again, and excited about it: albeit he is an adult in his twenties, She has been eager for this day to come, and it had finally arrived.

Even so, her happiness was his pleasure. This transition backwards was signaling that their time together had probably expired.

Fantasy Bubble

They had a great time exploring the city and sharing time together. Their physical togetherness expressed a unique bond. A bond so strong that people would stop them in a concert hall or lounge to point out how perfect they seemed together. This was an unfamiliar occurrence, which

had never happened to him before. He asked her if this had happened to her before, she said “sure.” He thought, how strange it was when he heard her response, considering she had been in a long listless marriage for umpteen years. He didn’t inquire about when and where, and her comment disappeared into the air.

The two role-played house very well, but they did the yeoman like tasks of home repair and renovation separately. He was consciously aware of the house dynamics and he didn’t want to inscribe his mark on her home. She was refashioning her property to get away from her previous life. He knew that she needed to do this by herself: the drill seemed obvious.

There was a maelstrom of a romance to be carefully maintained within a domestic bubble. They both enjoyed a good belly laugh. It was a signal of their health.

The bubble was a fantasy for her, a respite for him. The bubble was unconsciously used to locate something that remained unclear. How’s that for clarity?

LM loved this woman from top to bottom. They spontaneously danced in the kitchen and living room. He wasn’t exactly sure what S loved about him. Soon enough, there would be reasons to bring the two closer, and the same reasons would be a regular mountain of expectations to climb, and a reminder that the expiration date still loomed overhead. They pressed forward, but resentment was present in the little forgotten acknowledgments. S and LM loved one another greatly, but they may have been too afraid to directly upset the fantasy, but there were moments when her earlier marriage would appear: ugly, and out from left field.

She was very hurt from her previous marriage and carried scars deep inside. She actually had it easy by comparison. His issues were so much darker and deeper than any one could have imagined. His issues were ghost-like form from when he was eleven, and there was no way anyone could to have seen them coming.

She Called Herself A Domestic Goddess

He adored her. Her friends enabled her to believe she was flawless. They lavished her in wispy adjectives. She deserved the praise and wore the words well. She was also the creative one of her group.

He loved her for the easy in which she coasted into a room. She had a geisha-like walk and glided to where she would come to rest. Her quietness was beyond stealth. Each time he arrived at her doorstep they greeted each other by first looking through the front door. He anticipated seeing her wide-eyed smile and her head slightly twisted through the glass. Her smile instantaneously put a grin on his face. She would open the door and they would always embrace.

“I think I have known you my whole life,” was one of the first things he said to her upon entering her home and seeing family photographs. This is a haunting thought considering it reveals a fully unconscious rendering of a story about to unfold. It’s a curious way to see oneself, a domestic goddess, since it immediately brings up associations with immortality. Mortality always raises interesting question, especially if you have children. Emotions run deep in him on this subject. He never dealt with his mother’s death very well.

She was his “big relax.” Anytime they touched, he was calmed immediately. It was a strange state of being, which was acknowledged, but left unexplained. Through all phases of their seeing one another, it was never clearly expressed what he really was to her.

As much as she is energetic, vibrant, fun loving, she was as practical, responsible, and fiscally oriented as a person could be. And though these words do not sound as light and airy when creating a profile for meeting new people, this was a huge part of her personality, which would come out at inopportune moments and create small fissures of doubt.

Everything was just fine

He checked his critical thinking at the door each time he came over to her house. She drove a lot during the day for her job, and he tried to ease the burden by coming over to her place. He would enter the front door, kiss her, and place his brief case near the doorway. He had no specific place to put his things. He regularly carried medicine and a phone. He would gingerly place them on the edge of the dining table or near the stereo. He was not offered a specific place or a drawer to make him feel at home. This was not his home. He was a visitor, who was treated very hospitably and welcomed as a guest, but even after two and a half years, and all the health events, he hoped for more without asking for it. Where were the signs of resentment? They never surfaced until the post-mortems began. It was a big surprise.

He felt content and didn't rock the boat, even though he knew better. There was no reason to upset the balance, since they were working with an expiration date. He knew the inevitable was moving closer, but that didn't justify his behavior. He totally fucked-up, and he wanted more, but it was an impossibility on so many levels. There was no way to normalize this fantasy. Each small dose of reality, which entered the relationship, opened another fissure. It was too much. They never really had each other, though their love was magical. The greater the disturbance, the more concise the distancing had become. He was there to the level he agreed to be there. She was better at being supportive, even though she rarely brought up what she needed. She was strong and carried her resentment tightly. The tenor of the relationship was always backwards. Usually, you are in a relation to grow, learn, and cherish with a goal of learning more deeply about your partner. The motivation here was reverse. They entered fulfilled. The escape narratives, which they exchanged through their bodies, were in actuality a carnal contract of bliss with no caveat. They indulged one another and expected the other to fulfill an unspoken qualitative need.

It was a perfect fantasy of denial, which was mutually sought out. She was interested in reestablishing her independence and domestic life. He wanted to escape his current life situation.

The beginning was tumultuous. It was fun, and it was passionate. Ever since the first kiss they fit so well together. The kiss was proof-positive that they had something special that would hold them together. They had yet to talk about the real world of her divorce, dealing with kids, expectations. They lived in space only. Time did not exist yet. This all changed after his stroke, her breast cancer, and her mother's sudden death.

The routine was dinner, then dishes, and followed by TV. This started to emerge as a lifestyle. TV sucks the life out of the libido. It cut into all bodily communications between them. They would entwine and wrap themselves around one another on the soft sectional as an evening ritual. After the hot flashes began, she would pace and be more pensive, roaming the rooms rather than sitting down next to him. It was rough on her and he felt bad. Because of her specific medications, she could not take other medications that might relieve some of this reoccurring discomfort.

They would be in bed having sex when a hot flash would take over. It was difficult to witness, and he cared about her pain. When this occurred he could not imagine how she felt. After she rolled out of bed, he would ask how she was. But what could she say. She left the room silently, absorbed in her body. He, then, found himself lying naked on the bed, feet straight ahead staring directly at a Gustav Klimt wall hanging.

Initially, their sex was calligraphic, flowing, and central to the existence of the relationship. It was animal and ran deep within them. It bonded them. He loved to pleasure her.



Major Events

The five by four foot museum reproduction canvas wall coverings of Gustav Klimt hanged in both the dining room (The Maiden, 1913) and the bedroom (The Kiss, 1907). Butterflies decals flurried across the lavender walls. The bed was thick and high, soft and billowy. It was easy for him to melt into the bed, then into her. His greatest concern was pleasuring her. They would be in bed for hours, she was always first, later it was his turn and he was always satisfied, just by being next to her. Finishing up was of no consequence. She would often ask him if he was okay. He would always say yes.

For first few months her house was an oasis. He had noticed its details, but did not care to comment. He was non-judgmental on the subject of interior decoration. They had different ideas concerning taste. It didn't matter to him, because he wanted a fresh life away from his familiar preferences and tastes. He remained open to her influence. She liked being in her home. She was excited when she re-did the floors, put fresh paint to lighten the mood in the living room and hallways.

One of her great seasonal outings was going to the Showcase House with her closest friends.

After her surgery, which, thankfully, was successful, she returned home. Her recovery seemed all too natural, immediate, and a matter of fact. Surely, there were concerns, anxiety, but they did not speak about her fears and feelings. The same thing happened during his recovery.

He wanted to help, but he couldn't console her. He didn't know how. His model for extending himself was imperfect.

His mother was a breast cancer survivor in the 90s and decided to go through the process alone, without any support from the family. One day, she sent out a letter informing everyone about what she was going to do,

but did not talk about it. She was strong, but private. This was a couple decades ago, when breast cancer treatment, recovery, and research were in its infancy.

Catalina

A lot has been happening to these two over the span of their relationship, so the two of them made plans to go to Catalina Island for a weekend. She was Southern California raised. He has lived in Southern California for twelve years. Neither had been to the island before. All local spots interested him. She really preferred more exotic locales. Barcelona was frequently mentioned.

The week before they were to go, she received a phone call notifying her of her mother's heart attack. She called him, and both of them drove to the hospital to wait and hear about her condition. Several family members were present including her stepfather. It wasn't positive news and a decision would need to be made about resuscitation orders. What more was there to say, it was just horrible.

Her biological mother had passed away soon after. She was a strong, Cuban born woman. She worked as a waitress for many years in Los Angeles. She had moved from Chicago to Los Angeles with a gentle-hearted Hawaiian-American man, who would become her daughter's stepfather.

He had witnessed the mother-daughter relationship only once or twice. The mother was aging and was always in a chair. She was the matriarch of the family and carried an authoritative air about her in presence and voice. As with all families, the grandchildren loved their grandparents, which made the next decision very hard for him.

The funeral was to be held the day they were planning on going to Catalina. Obviously, mourning the death of a family member is the first priority. Since he was new to the family, he did not want to upset the balance in any way. He knew that her daughter was very close to her grandmother and he didn't want to be a distraction and would respect the daughters grieving process and try not to upset her, since she was already super sensitive to his presence in her mom's life. It was awkward, because he wanted to be there to support her, but he knew they would be together in Catalina soon enough and he could comfort her there.

They made arrangements that they would meet at the ferry and go over together. They needed a break now more than ever.

On Catalina, they stayed at a hotel on the hill overlooking the harbor. The sun was bright, but the air was cool. She caught up on sleep. He read, glancing over to watch her sleep next to a huge window with boats coming in and going out of the harbor. She slept beautifully.

Deep Dive

As the relationship changed, the inner workings obtained other motivations. The fissure was becoming large enough to crawl through.

She enjoyed music and musicals. They put a big smile on her face, so he created an iTunes song list, which feature songs from his adolescent in the sixties and seventies: smooth R&B, sultry ballads, Latin jazz, moody dance music, etc. This was not typical of him, but he relished doing it for her. They would take his computer with them when they went away for the weekend travels for a local romantic getaway to Catalina or Joshua Tree. They did not travel to exotic locales. He had travelled extensively abroad before they met. She had been to Europe, but she was really

jonising to go to Barcelona. She wanted, and needed very much to go. He thought that she needed to go so bad that he even offered to give her money to go. He knew that their relationship would always be postponed until she took the trip. She didn't take him up on the offer, because she also had to maintain a schedule, as she was self-employed. Her time was well managed compared to his. She had times during the year when her industry closed-up. She said she was saving, and received an inheritance upon her mother's passing that would help her get there. (Subsequently, she gave some of her Barcelona money to her son to buy a car when he moved back home.)

In the back of his mind, he hoped that the situation was different. He loved her and wanted to see her fly, because he considered her his soul mate. A word that came out of his mouth rather easily when he spoke to her. Prior to their relationship, he would have chortled at the concept of a soul mate.

At the one-year anniversary of his stroke, he went to see his neurologist. The recovery was going well, and he was about 96% recovered. The Neurologist said that what you have recovered at a year's end is pretty much what you get. He was good with that result.

Besides having had to relearn how to walk he was very much recovered. His only deficit was his left leg and arm felt a little off, but no complaining. It was imperceptible to most people. In fact, he seldom complained during rehab. He worked hard and wanted to get back to normal.

There were times during the recovery when he got depressed at home, but didn't want her to burden her. Their agreement was to be easy. He thought the same was true with her recovery from breast cancer surgery. They didn't talk about the meaningful, scary parts, or the mortality concerns. These two had been through major life events, but did not share what their bodies and minds knew to well. They locked everything up. No vulnerability. They were acting strong, but there was resentment, and more fissures were developing.

A couple of week prior to the break-up, everything began to unravel. He had been getting horrible back pains followed by big night sweats. His body was in turmoil. This was confusing, because it was a sharp muscle hurt and he was unable to walk upright. The next morning he had 100% mobility in his left arm and leg, or it sure felt like 100% to him, and at least he could now move more naturally. His metabolism also returned, giving him more physical energy. He had not only recovered what he lost, but he had been provided an improved body in the process. She had been with him for the entire of the roller coaster, but he would not have a chance to reintroduce his body to hers, which was sad.

The shock of the ending brought him new insights that were connected to his mother not being able to protect him when he was eleven. This ending was about mourning his mother. His body had been electric since the stroke. The story goes that in the process of healing the physical body, his body decided that it might as well have a good time and heal the other long lost psychological areas, which had been haunting him since his youth. This was purely coincidental, and unintentional. You can't tell the mind what to do.

Their conversations focused on the vernacular and everyday. Topical issues in the newspaper, "how was your day?" Sometimes they even discussed the children, which more and more often found its way into their most private conversations.

When he left her house in the mornings he would go to the end of the driveway to get the newspaper and bring it to her door before he hopped in his car and drove away. It wasn't a routine, just something he instinctively started to do.

When the conversation shifted to the more esoteric issues of his work, she did not fully seem to understand what he was talking about. He was not easy to understand. She was a good listener, and would collect articles from the newspaper to save for him and share: articles relating to art, design, travel, and food.



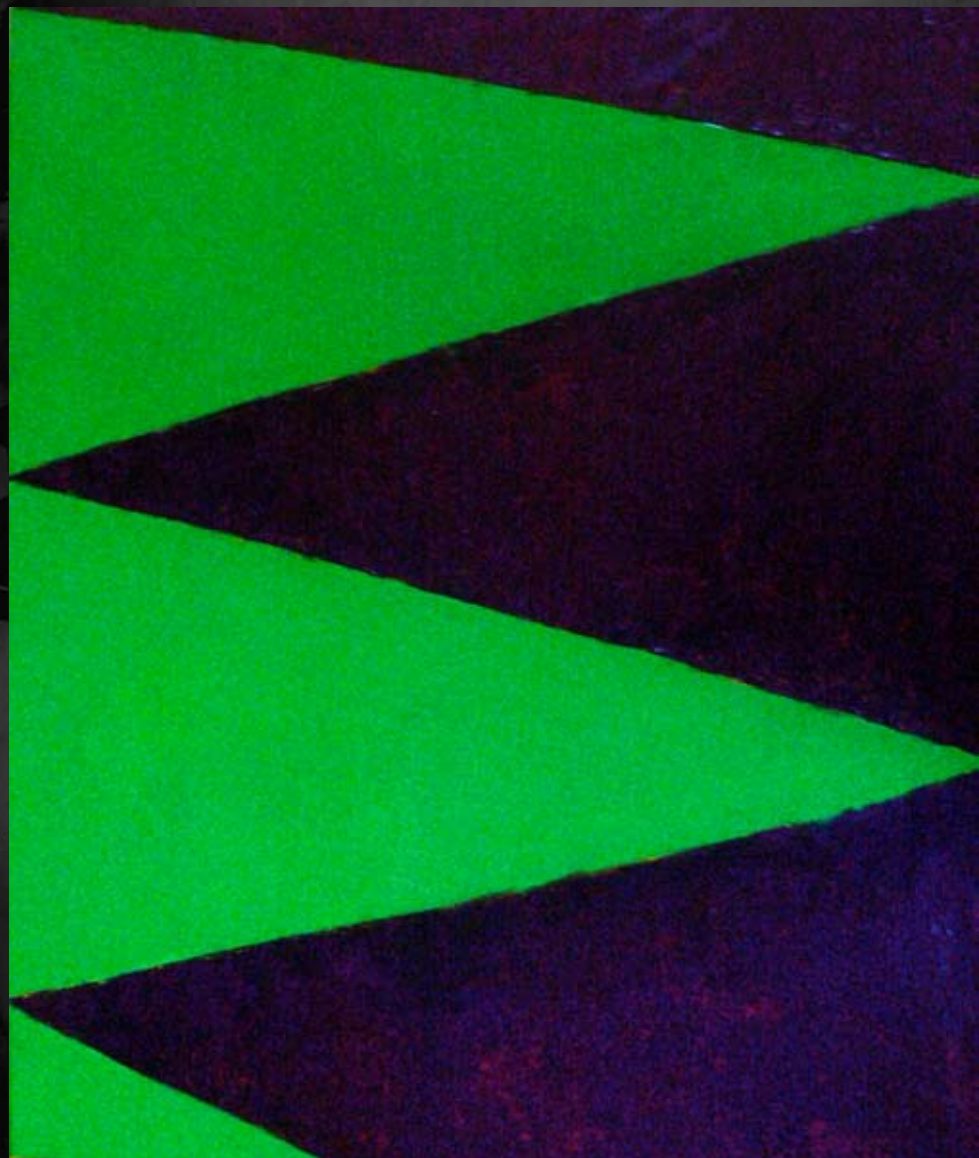
They enjoyed food. She loved to cook. She loved cooking for her family, and purposely made leftovers to freeze for the week to take to work. She was practical that way. She owned her kitchen. It was her domain. It was refurbished French Style with a large vintage movie poster and wire baskets hanging near the window, which contained garlic and onions. She was proud of what she had accomplished in making this room special.

The kitchen was a seductive place. She liked to spend time cooking, then immediately after dinner the routine shifted to doing the dishes. In the beginning he enjoyed the routine, and would walk up behind her when he came over and pressed his body against hers sandwiching her with the counter, then softly hug and kiss her on the neck. At the outset it was received and reciprocated, often they slow danced in the doorway.

Later on, she did the dishes, and he would sit in the dining room reading the newspaper waiting for her to finish and join him.

The difference between the beginning and the end was dramatic. Three major traumas had transpired in their lives in a very short span. Each took a toll on their psyche, but life continued to move along. Their compassion for one another was still strong, and in the latter months they would go from dishes directly to the living room. The first six weeks consisted of passionate sex on the sofa, or rug. There were candles, a fireplace, and music. The mood was magnificent. This morphed into cuddling, which always felt perfect. In the end, they would go from the kitchen into the living room to watch Comedy Central, the food network or as she called it “food porn” or real estate programming. It was a pleasure to be with her no matter what they did. They shared belly laughs, and then they would walk down the hallway to her sultry plush bedroom.

It took a couple months before he would cook for her. He was not a gourmet, but had one or two particular dishes he liked to prepare. He was unfamiliar with her kitchen, and she was very accommodating and gracious in her home.



With an uncanny deliberateness, and slowness, he would make mental notes about this or that. He was not intentionally compiling a list, in fact, the notes were so mentally buried that he didn't even know he was processing them. The stroke had made him sensitive. His body was in repair mode. The recovery was neurological and psychological, but his body was taking advantage of the generative process and began a deeper dive. Suggestive elements about the situation were developing that made him easy prey to his being his own predator. For what was about to happen needed a safe haven, but never in a million years, even as analytical as he could sometimes be, could he have imagined what was about to unravel.

They both walked willingly into this situation. Though as beautiful, passionate, and perfect as it was from the start, he now knew that there was no way this was going to turn out well.

Parade Scare

Only a couple months prior to the end, there was an event, an event that would bring the mother and daughter together to celebrate an accomplishment of the daughter. Whenever the two could meet, she was excited, but tentative, because their outings always ended badly. This vignette goes like this – the daughter and mother love pageantry, costumes, and musicals. This was and still is a bonding experience, because it reverts back to their earlier family life. The daughter was crowned as a queen to a local alt-culture pageant. She, mom, was throwing a pre-parade party at her house and friends were invited to celebrate, and later walk down to the parade route. He, and his child, was graciously invited to attend. They quickly accepted. He wanted to know her friends better, since he had hardly had any opportunities to meet her friends socially during the two years they had been going out. He was also excited to bring his son into the mix. This was new territory, with great potential, and some fun.

Well, a couple days after accepting the invitation, she emailed him and revoked the invitation. Just like that. There was a note from the daughter, which paraphrased read, “I don’t want him invited, if you invite him you don’t know what’s going to happen! He’s not invited to the parade!” Need anymore be said. Obviously, he was not going to put his son in a potentially harmful situation. He wrote back saying that “the parade is public and her daughter cannot tell people where they can go.” There was a muted apology from her, but that was it. She apologized often for her children’s behavior.

A couple of weeks after the parade, she has received images of the parade and excitedly ran up to him with her cell phone to show him, and express how much fun it looked. She had no idea that maybe showing the images of this parade to a person uninvited and threatened might be somewhat insensitive. She did not seem to have a clue, because she was so excited about the dress up fantasy with her friends and, especially her daughter. She apologized, and it was not mentioned again.

Third Strike

When the decision was announced that her twenty-something son was moving home, holding onto the fantasy was coming to an end. The process actually began several months earlier, and he was trying to think about the dynamics of his relationship with her after the son moved back to his childhood home. It was difficult for him to imagine. She was thrilled and was setting up his room. Figuring out rules for the house, so she could keep a lid on his cannabis hobby, girlfriends, and etiquette to her guests. He didn’t believe that she fully understood how awkward this situation might be for him, but her boy was coming home.

The three-strike promise was that it would never happen again. The “it” being “not having her back.” There were two prior occasions when his actions lost her confidence: abruptly changing plans in Santa Barbara and being late to drive her to a very important consultation, and of course, the third, not calling her in the morning per her request when she felt uncertain. He had promised that he would not do it again. He understood his words and met the third strike exactly when it arrived. He didn’t want to see the “bad she” again. He was a man of his word, but how foolish it felt to give up his love on a technicality.

That night he left her house and had gone home. He was preoccupied all day advocating for his son’s status at his school, and stayed up most of the night writing emails before going to work early the next morning. He wrote a note and left it on his desk, but he had forgotten to see it on his way out, so he didn’t make the call. He knew the consequences. They were clear as soon as he received an email from her. The ground had permanently shifted. The expiration date was tangible. Did he purposely forget to call, knowing the multitude of conflicting actions stacked against the success of the relationship? Did his body know that there could be no successful salvaging of this relationship and purposefully forgot?

Distance had grown between them as the need for the fantasy had decreased. The fissures had weakened the foundation of this once special space. Unfortunately, fantasy doesn’t hold candle to reality. Practicality is a powerful, and influential, a negotiator of relationships as there is. It’s bottom-line romance.

That the two survived this long is actually amazing. Any of the incidents experienced individually, whether children, health, or desire, would be a huge obstacle to overcome. The initial bond proved tight, even if it may have been for the wrong reasons.

Coincidentally, her son moved back home the exact week the third strike occurred. How’s that for planning?

A Note on Driving

He made the conscious decision to always drive to her home when they met. Early on in the relationship they took turns switching between their homes depending on their plans for the day or evening. He enjoyed seeing her and wanted to make her feel comfortable, and since she drove more than him during the day, he thought it a reasonable gesture. Eventually, he took on the role of driving to and from the suburbs regularly. Their lives had settled into her home life. The driving, though not far, had become predictable and draining.

He personally disliked the suburbs and the baggage it brought in terms of domesticity. As a youth he had cast off the idea of suburbia, moving away from home, and finding nature as a welcome replacement. It was actually an act of survival, which he was unaware of at the time, and revisiting it would carry some serious ramifications.

The domestic routine, especially without sex, was starting to seem familiar, even if it wasn't his familiar present tense.

Her responses and actions, however subtle to him seemed very similar to his mothers.

She periodically made subtle comments which were very scarring, such as when she said to him that "you have a lot of very hard years ahead of you," when referring to his son going into his teen years. She said it so innocently, but it was a body blow, which he regularly absorbed. He realized, that as much as she wanted him to have her back, she didn't have his. He felt a double standard was developing: she just didn't know. Their futures were internally separating. The expiration date was starting to be posted everywhere.



Only, If...

Without an expiration date he had exactly what he needed.

Romance >>> Intimacy (love)(sex) >>> Future.

He was lousy at burying his expectations. He didn't need a commitment.

Her expectations were different. Originally she wanted:

Romance >>> Intimacy (protection)(sex) >>> Unknown

Later, after they broke-up her needs changed.

Friendships (fun-loving) >>> Friendships (sex) >>> Retirement (no kids)

Their passion ran deep. They had most of one another's backs for a long while, but not all it seemed. Sustaining a protective coating on a moving relationship is complicated. First, you have to know what needs protecting, is it physical or emotional? Secondly, you cannot provide protect from the residue of a previous relationship, because the pain is private, and the roots are well buried. They broke, because of her roots.

His younger child was a pennant raised to announce the artificiality of this approaching date. She wanted a different future. He kept wondering if it was even possible to walk away from a soul mate, no matter whether or not it was good or bad? How can a departure even be an option? He was thinking: if you are fortunate enough to find someone who fits so well, how could a little thing, like a missed phone call, set everything in a downward spiral? No, he thought, this is phenomenal and it should be made to endure in some form. He couldn't comprehend the space that was now between them. It was unreasonable, and palpable. He didn't want to lose her. He needed to be close to her, to know she was in the world. He loved her. If she didn't think he had her back, he definitely, without doubt, had her soul.

Confession: in the ending

Unfortunately, he initiated the ending by not calling her four weeks earlier. It seemed inevitable, and so he thought he had emotionally prepared himself to accept the outcome.

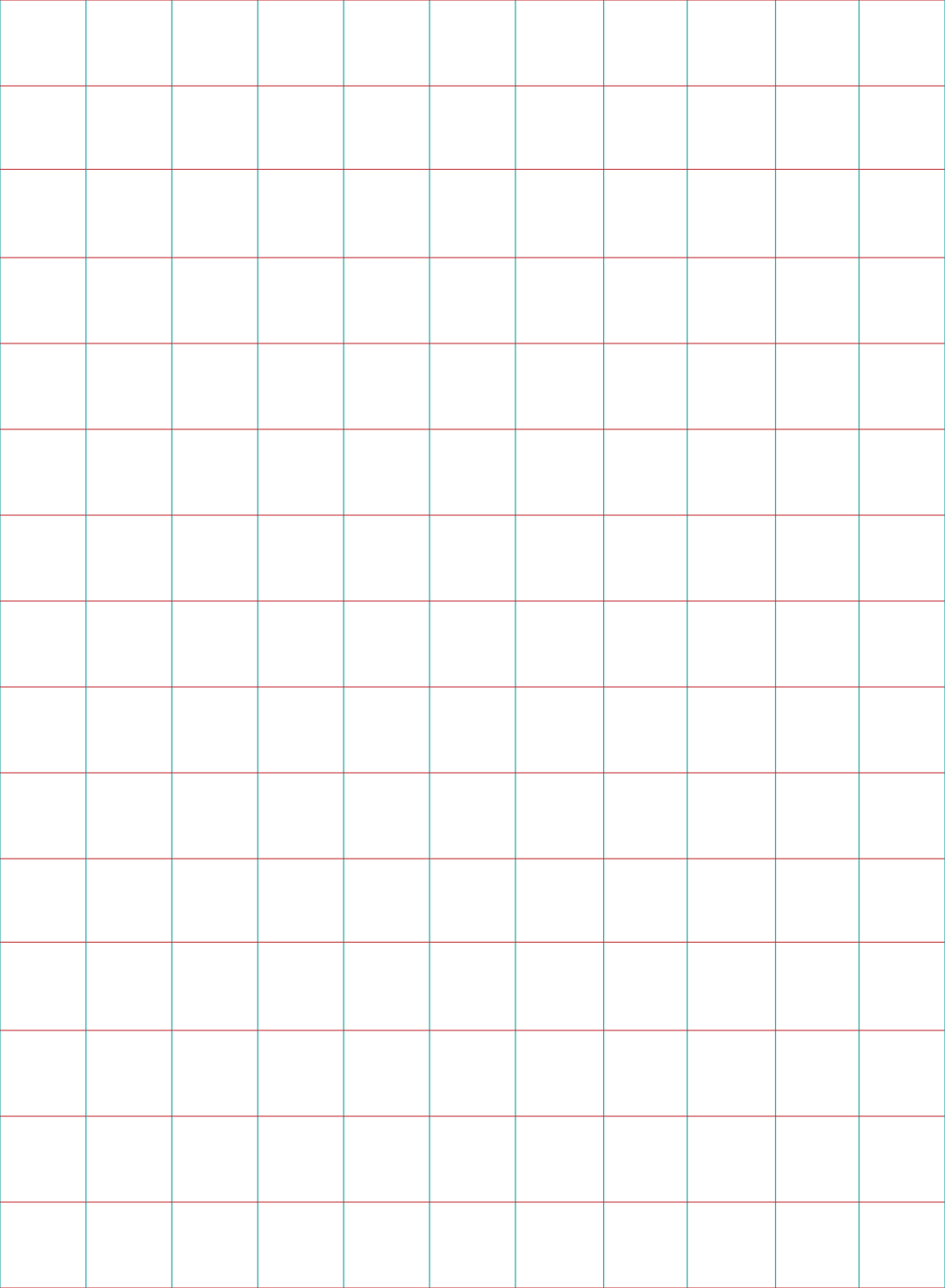
The week prior, she had spoken with her ex about something concerning her estranged daughter. The ex told the daughter something that they had privately discussed, and the daughter got pissed at her mom once again. This exchange finally instigated her breaking away from her ex, altogether. This was an incident of mistrust, for which she was most sensitive, and had no tolerance. This was a major transgression in her book. She had been hurt before, so never again. They should have fought harder, but they didn't.

The plan: having her son move back home was a done deal. His room was being prepared for weeks. It was the conversion of the daughter's room, which sat as an isolated shrine "for her return," but she never took up the offer and stayed away. It was now the son's room

She would soon become a mom again with a live-in child: though it would now be the unexpected return of the eldest.

She loved children. She was gentle, and enjoyed them. She often cared for her nieces, and lit up brightly when doing so. Her nieces were about the same age as his son.

Later that week, the two met in a park and discussed what had happened. It did not matter what was said, both of them knew there was still the damn expiration date, and that in another six months he would probably forget to call or do something equivalent, which she would find troublesome, and want to terminate the love, so why continue? A question still hovered over their heads, should they go their separate ways or remain platonic friends? The two of them had gone through some big life mo-



ments together and still cared for one another, but they were in different places in their lives. They would need to think about what was happening to them.

A week later, they met at a museum and spent the day walking around, lounging and people watching. They were physically awkward. They were used to being all over one another, even in public. Here they were side by side. They held hands, but it was different.

During the following week, a friend of his contacted him to say that he saw a profile of his girlfriend on an internet dating site. A horrible vacuum sucked the air out of him. His body went into shock. He was beside himself looking in. To say he lost himself would be a gross understatement. His bodily response did not seem proportional to the situation. He started experiencing symptoms of mourning and extreme loss. He tried to salvage what he needed at the time. He foolishly went to look, and saw a smiling picture of her reminiscent of her during their happy beginning. The supporting images were those of her and her estranged daughter on outings to the wax museum posing with figurines, exuberantly mugging to the camera at the parade. He knew these events to be different than a good time. It was a false fantasy of her and her daughter.

His body doubled over. How did it come to this? He wanted her to fly; to be the butterfly from their earliest correspondences, but this was about something else. He didn't know it, but this was his big one, his geological moment, period. The events from his childhood rushed forward. Events so tightly wrapped around his mother, which were impossible to name were percolating. His body was familiar with the pain, but it could only be expressed as neurological turmoil.

Out of self-preservation he communicated an interest to meet her once again. Not that she had an answer, because there was no way she could know about his youth, even though he talked about it on their first date. This is his baggage. His body was starting to add things up.

He understood that there were two options for a future with her: completely end the story versus moving into having a strictly platonic friendship, which could work into a limited future.

He was never thrilled by the middle class notion of only having binary choices: too limited and prescribed for it served no specific purpose or developed elegant ideas. He was curious, and wondered if there was the possibility of a third option. In design problem solving there is this mischievous adage: the answer to the question is not the solution. In the creative world, which he understood best, he believed in the mental mobius strip, because it can liberate thinking.

What was their relationship about? What was at its core? They enjoyed one another's company, and played well together. They knew about each other, but they didn't really know one another. Their attachment seemed purely carnal. The friendship was an expression through the body: a bond through touching where the intimacy was deep. How can this be proposed without sounding like a booty call, fuck buddies or friends with benefits, or sensual pals? All these terms, whether Gen X or Millennial in nature, literally named the activity, but did not address the deeper nature of the relationship he wanted. Anyone over twenty-five knows that a sexual relationship will turn into a personal relationship based on attachment alone, which occurs just by being together. They were older, and the words by themselves didn't resonant very well. They both understood the concept, but not why everything was ending right now.

They would meet once more. He would break the fantasy and tell her what he had been thinking, knowing full well that there could be a huge downside to what he was going to tell her.

"I love and adore your crooked smile, licking the scar on your breast, touching the discoloration on your neck, and your belly, and slightly stroking the flesh of your thighs," he declared looking directly in her eyes while holding both of her hands stretched across an outdoor café table in plain public view. This was the confession, accepting all of her, as in, no

compromises. The goddess was not important anymore. He only wanted her in this universe. The words were heartfelt, pure, and he knew it was risky. His words brought in the reality of the situation. It was a breath of fresh air, but scary as hell.

They stared at one another. He loved her eyes and referred to them as lanterns, because of how their greenness cut the light. Her so-called flaws were erogenous zones for him. They agreed to see each other once again, a few days later.

A couple hours afterwards he received a phone call where she declared, “how mean and insensitive he was to bring up all of her flaws.” In a sad, wrenching voice, “That was our last meeting. It is over! Good-bye!” There was no air left for talking. He tried to say something to her, but he knew from her response that she still believed in the fantasy. He had finally figured out the problem. We are all flawed, especially by middle age, and mortality is a pill to swallow.

This confession wasn't a “sugar-coated meanness” as she would decry. There are no domestic goddesses that he knew. He could no longer perpetuate the idea of immortality. In a way, it didn't matter what was said, there was still that expiration date hanging overhead. Confessing, now, when the pain was greatest could be happening for a couple of reasons. First, it was an attempt to continue the relationship in a new way, a third option, which was neither the complete dissolution of what they have been battling through together, nor remaining platonic friends. Though they had been through several major life events in a short period of time, they were closely bonded. They had battle wounds galore, inside and out. Basically, the relationship was a carnal affair from the very beginning. By honestly bringing up what she perceived as flaws may have been an all out attempt to see if, as a couple, they could move forward and begin to explore the carnal aspect of the relationship without the burden of a deadlines, schedules, etc. It could have been a game changer, and it was the only place the physical love between them could go. Both of them had to acknowledge their flaws, so their relationship could be made open to the light of day.

Her final words were reality. The arbitrariness of the expiration date had arrived exactly as it had been planned, but for different reasons.

Everything would ebb and flow. He was flotsam. All of his pending realizations and buried demons needed an opportunity to come out. He processed and processed. His body, by itself, was an act of defiance. Words streamed, thoughts about his past flooded forward.

The symptoms of withdraw, the jittering, and the aimlessly walking the streets was about healing. His feelings for her were habitual. Apparently, what was at stake was enormous, but he kept returning to the question, why close down the relationship now?

The following associative text is the raw form of what he discovered when communication stopped. His body was literally out of control. He had been through heat-breaks and disappointments before, but this was abnormal even by his experiences. All of his nerve endings were now exposed. He walked continuously for days. He could not sleep or eat. His friends were patient and indulged his suffering with candor.

He would have loved nothing better than to have been able to get over whatever was happening to him. He wrote, focused and hoped to get an answer. He needed an answer soon. He was now in survival mode and all he could do is rely on language. He had recently lost twenty pounds, returning his body closer to the physique of his youth. He was used to listening to his body, he was fashioned anew after the stroke, but now it was taking him over. He quickly, and sloppily wrote with a colored ink pen:

She could not help me

Uninformed

There she was

Quiet

Comfortable

She tried to understand me



*She is my “Big Relax”
Why run away from my life?
Mom’s initial passing was okay
I wanted something in her
My body needed an excuse to figure this out
This was a good relationship
A move forward
I can’t help her
I didn’t know anything about her
This is now about me
My body is telling me something
I acted strong
She loved to entertain
She was not a muse
She often didn’t understand me
I never saw my mother angry
I never saw my mother display emotion
She was quiet
She loved the idea of family and friends
Expiration dates are finite
An expiration date is entropy
The beginning was fantasy
Something he wanted, uninspected
Denial was important
I tried not to upset her.
I loved her tactile understanding of things
When I broke the fantasy, I broke the trust
I kept my son safe, away and distant, from harms way
She was good with kids
My mother could not protect him
I was sexually abused as a young boy
I wanted to ask my mother about what had happened*

*Did she know?
My mother was frail
I rarely touched my mother
I only hugged my mother later in life
I wanted to contact her, to tell her, to help her
My mother died before I could ask what happened
I didn't expect her to have the answers
The break-up brought it all to the surface
My body needed to express this pain
I was mourning my mother's death
I didn't cry at my mother's funeral
This pain was not about her at all*

Schedules are not ordained. Certain things are uncontrollable.
Biology is miraculous.

HAPPY

BEGINNING

Sensibility Trumps Language

[Visual Talking Point/i-o-i-p.com](http://VisualTalkingPoint/i-o-i-p.com)

