

Evaluate a significant
experience,
achievement, risk you
have taken, or ethical
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I would rather turn around than to look him in the face. His genuine need for connection and compassion always met my constant need to escape from the harsh reality the boy faced.

Two long scars, one running across his left eye and half the right and a second from his lips to his chin, made Ty's face a haunting sight. During my first summer as a volunteer at the Springfield Healthcare Center, Ty seemed to long for my company, turning around his wheelchair looking for me, even when I was not there or had turned in the other direction. I gave him his snack and bingo board without so much as giving him the respect of looking him in the eye, since that would have meant looking not only into his eyes, but into his scars. The courage to look at Ty as a human being would only come after an experience in Jamaica, from which I gained the strength to use my heart instead of my eyes.

It was getting late. My stomach rumbled to the thought of jerk chicken. Even though I was ignorant to what exactly the "jerk" component to the chicken was, I still wanted some to ease my demanding stomach. An American tourist, whom we had met earlier, had told us, "It's an authentic Jamaican must-have. And the woman down about a quarter mile from here sells the best. Just look for the pink roofs."

I moved down to the beach from our cottage, letting my legs transport me to the transient line between the wet and the dry sands. The wind had stopped, leaving only calmness on the ocean surf coming in to greet me. Being alone, I could be myself, and allow the natural beauty open my mind to the foreignness of the landscape. I moved slowly down the beach, and as the pink roofs came into view, I emerged out of my reverie.

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The marketplace was crowded. There were no tourists in sight, and populated by merchants with dark metal food stands. Before I arrived, the community stood lively and laughing. After I arrived, the crowd fell silent. As I started to search for jerk chicken, a group of men approached. Their forearms and hands bulged with muscles. Their clothes held the dark dirt of the fields and were severely tattered in some parts, as if the men had just been done with a day of work. A familiar emotion came over me: fear to look into any one of their faces. I remember one of the men stepping to the front of the pack. Venturing no further up than his chest, I noticed a long diagonal gash running down his midsection.

I wanted to cower down and crawl away. After a moment of silence, I mustered the courage to look up into his eyes dark, unforgiving, and questioning. He taunted, “ Hi, litt’l girl! Dis ain’t da beach!”

I ran, the gravel beneath my bare feet did not even faze me. My peaceful journey along the beach only moments before was now erased from memory. My feet did not stop moving until I reached the cottage.

I searched for my mother, but I could not find her. She was nowhere in the house. I fumbled with light switches, opened all doors, and looked back outside. Defeated and lonely, I resolved to just sit on the bed and forget. As I moved to the bed, a heavy knocking on the door put me back into my state of shock.

Immediately, the man’s scar shot back into my memory. The woman’s voice, which I recognized as the American tourist who had spoken to us earlier, came through the door. She said, ““ It’s alright dear. I only wanted to tell you that Jamal came from the marketplace, and he said you looked lost. I was wondering if you were alright. You see, you’re not supposed to wear only a
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bathing suit outside the beach areas,” she whispered.

I looked down at my outfit. “... It’s illegal.” I realized with great regret that this man, Jamal, was not taunting me or threatening me, he was protecting me. She continued, “ I forgot to tell you when you got here. Anyway, Jamal is such a sweetheart. He gave me your book, too. I’ll leave it on the doorstep.”

I hung my head in shame, realizing the mistake I had made: judging a person from a state of ignorance. Guilt swept over me and I began to cry at the thought of my naiveté. It was only later that I remembered my copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* sitting on the doorstep. I knew just the right passage to find meaning from what had just happened.

Scout tells her father about Boo, the man who had just saved her life.

Throughout the story, Scout had blindly believed Boo to be a monster. She says, “ An’ Atticus, when they finally saw [Boo]... he was real nice...” Atticus turns his attention to Scout and says, “ Most people are Scout, when you finally see them.”

Ty noticed the change in my behavior since my arrival back from Jamaica.

The look of appreciation on my face prompted him to ask, “ I don’t scare you no more?”

For once, I answered him sincerely. While I felt ashamed of my lack of compassion and concern for him, I was filled with the kind of joy that can come only after revelation.

Only now did I realize that to see a friend is not to look with one’s eyes, but to accept with maturity and compassion.