

The Sparkly Eyes of Alan Ladd

(From: V. Alexander Stefan. MY PASSION.)

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I entered the hotel suite where Alan Ladd* was staying. My passion had been just comforted. I was face-to-face with Shane* himself. For several days I had been preparing passionately the plan to meet with the actor. This was in *Hotel Montenegro*, in Titograd, (presently Podgorica), the capital of Montenegro, in February 1961. It was early evening.

Mr. Ladd was sitting in the living room with two men from his entourage, looking very relaxed. The configuration of our positions was as follows, (this is important in order to depict the state of my mind in that very moment): Mr. Alan Ladd was facing me; his entourage men were to my left- and right-hand side. Following the conversation, I was moving my head left-and-right, similar to the motion of the pendulum. I was

* Alan Ladd (1913—1964), an American actor.

* *Shane*(1954), the Western movie with Alan Ladd as Shane.

standing in front of the coffee table; they were sitting at the table in a triangle configuration. I happened to be in front of them all... on the spot, so to speak. So, you had 3 relaxed persons, sitting, and me, standing... tense and highly alert. Next to me was an armchair. Mr. Ladd offered me to take a seat. I politely declined by saying that I did not want to disturb him... I just wanted his signed photograph.

He asked me what my name was.

“Sasha,” I answered.

Mr. Ladd talked to me slowly, so that I could understand. The light was coming not from the ceiling, but from the two table lamps placed in the corners behind me. Mr. Ladd’s face was strongly illuminated. There was a spark in his eyes as if he was smiling, but he wasn’t. He was quite serious. God knows what he was thinking: a 13-year-old boy jumps into his suite alone.

Shane

I told Mr. Ladd that I had seen his movie *Shane*, and that I liked it very much. Shane was a brave loner. At that moment I thought of myself as being exactly that, a Shane. The entourage men started to talk about *Shane*. They were telling Mr. Ladd, talking fast, something that I did not understand.

Mr. Ladd asked me how old I was; I told him 13.

PART II. ART

“I have a son your age,” he said.

One of his entourage men handed him his(A.L.) photograph. Before Mr. Ladd signed it for me, he had turned to the entourage-man, who spelled my nickname, mentioning Sasha Distel* and Brigitte Bardot.* Sasha Distel was a familiar name to me, as was Brigitte Bardot. I used to see their pictures in the magazines quite often. Mr. Ladd wrote on his photo: To Sascha... Alan Ladd.

Next day I was telling everybody about Alan Ladd. I was showing his photograph to everyone. I do not remember that I left a single soul in the city without knowing about my adventure.

Oriazi and Curiazi

Allan Ladd was starring in the movie *Oriazi and Curiazi*, dealing with the legend of the Romans of old. One part of that movie was being filmed in that area of Montenegro. Some parts of the passionate *Helen of Troy*, with Rossana Podestà* as Helen, and the movies about the mighty *Hercules of Thebes*, with Steve Reeves* as Hercules, were also filmed there.

“Action Impossible”

* Sasha Distel (1933—2004), a French singer-guitarist.

* Brigitte Bardot (b.1934), a French actress.

* Rossana Podestà (b. 1934), an Italian actress.

* Steve Reeves (1926—2000), an American actor.

I heard on the radio that Alan Ladd was in the city, staying in *Hotel Montenegro*. That was enough information for me to start the “action impossible.” I needed only the suite number. One of my school female friends had an uncle who was employed in the Hotel. She convinced him to give her the information. He told her that the number was 11, but that I should not go there. Firstly, to go there unannounced would be rude; secondly, I was just a boy age 13. True! I was a boy, but a boy with passion to meet with Shane. That made situation quite passionate. When I heard the number 11, I saw it as a good omen for my action. It was my favorite number. On the other hand the suite 11 was on the first floor and I had not to use the elevator and face the elevator boy. I took the stairways up there, running up in order not to be seen. When I had reached the suite 11, I got stunned. The door was open. You’ve heard me: the door was open. There was no my knocking on the door and my waiting “endlessly” for it to open.

A Movie Producer

In our short conversation, 10-15 minutes maximum, I told Mr. Ladd that I would like to be a movie producer one day, on which he commented,

“That’s better than being an actor like me.”

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