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Myopia, by Cole Messinger

[maɪ'ɒpiə/migh-OH-pee-uh]

noun

1. Inability to see distant objects clearly; a refractive condition in which the image of distant objects is focused in front of, rather than on, the retina; short-sightedness, near-sightedness.
2. *figurative*. Lack of imagination, foresight, or intellectual insight.
3. My conversation walking with Eve

WE ARE



“Let us be lovers, we’ll marry our fortunes together
I’ve got some real estate here in my bag”
So we bought a pack of cigarettes and Mrs. Wagner pies
And walked off to look for America

Simon and Garfunkle

What is a name?

If language is fiction
then today I’m Spin Scooter
so Scan me and ride me
Tomorrow I’ll be Cole

Eve

knocks during an inconvenient time

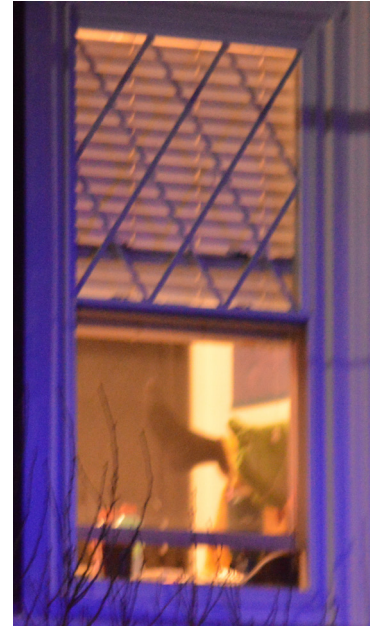
Sometimes I don't recognize the hairs that fall from my head in the shower. Maybe they belong to someone else.

But whose hair?

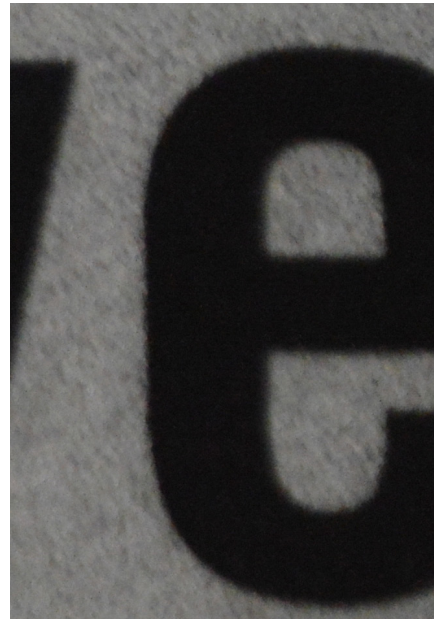
Who's hair—

Who's here?

Hello?



Sometimes, I try to take out my eyes, to show everyone else what I see, but I can never seem to find them. I try as hard as I can to focus my sight back onto my eyes, to find that which sees. I never find them, but occasionally, for an instant everything vanishes. Like when you look at a word long enough the word and its meaning vanishes into lines and alien sounds. When you close your eyes and realize instead of blackness, you can still see a visual field, and it's not dark and black but active with colors and light flashing and dancing around. Then you open your eyes and it's still there, that TV static, cosmic dust of light and shadow in strange incoherent patterns. I found the button to turn off the part of my brain that makes meaning out of experience and when I press it all sense and knowing disappears. But I still want to show my eyes.



I asked my friend Eve to join me for a walk in America. Showed up at her door and called her name. She asked me how cold it was and I said a number that meant *it's cold, but warm enough to go on this walk together*. Like me she wears glasses. She knows all sorts of specific words like transversal and myopia. Once I doubted she knew what she was saying and she verbatim quoted the dictionary definition (or she did a good job of making it up). She said she's trying to make words out pictures and pictures out of words. She doesn't sound pretentious, she's just sharp. Not many people tell jokes anymore, but Eve does and her humor is so quack you might miss it.

DUCK.



Eve's joke, 1

Christian children learn Jesus turned water into wine. It's supposed to be a lesson about His divinity.

Jewish kids hear stories about Chelm. In the town of Chelm, whenever there was a wedding, every family would contribute a bottle of wine into a large barrel in the town's center to be shared among the village during the wedding reception. For the upcoming wedding between Sarah and David, Mendel, thinking himself clever, decided to put a bottle of water in the barrel instead of wine. After all, it was just one bottle of water, nobody would notice. On the day of the wedding, after the ceremony, when they opened the barrel to fill the glasses, instead of wine, out poured a clear stream of water. This story is supposed to teach the importance of seeing ourselves as part of a larger collective.

Christians learn it takes one man to turn water into wine, if that man is the son of God. Jews learn it takes a village to turn wine back into water.

Eve's glasses were dirty and so scratched up the glass didn't look clear. I told her when you see the world long enough with scratched lenses, you forget the world underneath doesn't have any. She said it doesn't take someone with 20-20 vision to know it's a scratched up world.

Eve's father is a Rabbi. She told me not to worry about her glasses, she'll get a new pair eventually. I asked her, *if not now when?* She smacked me and my glasses flew off my face. While I picked them up, she read me a poem.



In the third grade, I sat in the back of the classroom and realized I couldn't see the words the teacher wrote on the whiteboard without squinting and my head hurting. Both of my parents suffered from myopia (see definition 1), so I knew it was bound to happen to me. Thankfully, we live in a country where the problem is cured quickly by sticking a lens in front of our eyes.

In his office, the ophthalmologist, pulled the phoropter in front of my eyes and had me look across the room at a snellen chart (thank you Eve for these words). I read outloud letters of decreasing font sizes through what looked like a mechanical set of spider eyes with lenses at different degrees of magnification. The doctor would flick a new lens into place, "how does this look? Better? Okay, how about this? Are the letters clearer here? Or how about now?"

A book, a joke, and a film

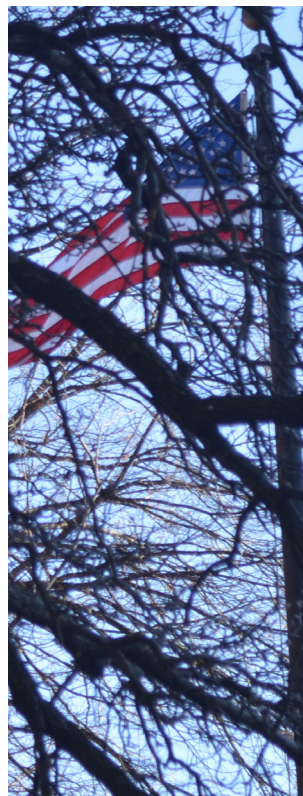
In *Crime and Punishment*, by Dostoyevsky (Eve said, *4.5 stars: dense but funny. dark*) it is only through submission to Christ that Raskolnikov is able to find the strength to confess to his act of murder.

“In heaven, god passes by three men who died in the Holocaust laughing together in a small huddle. He overhears one of them, Dov, saying, ‘... and your face, Mendel, when they dragged you—’ he can’t speak, he’s laughing so hard he’s out of breath. The others are laughing along with him. After a minute of listening to them laughing, god can’t stand it anymore and says, ‘what’s wrong with all of you! You can’t joke about this.’

“Dov looked to god and said, ‘You wouldn’t get it, you weren’t there.’”

In the final scene of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, by Woody Allen (*4 stars: ew woody allen*), Judah Rosenthal, played by Martin Landau, the highly successful ophthalmologist, seems to have freed himself from the guilt of murder through rejecting god.

As the film progresses, a rabbi and patient of Judah named Ben, played by Sam Waterston, loses his vision. At his daughter’s wedding we see Ben, wearing a thick pair of dark glasses, holding onto the arm of his wife who tells him which person is standing in front of him. Judah, as his ophthalmologist failed to treat Ben’s condition. One explanation could be god has gone blind, Judah as a murderer lives his free and successful life. On the other hand, maybe it is Judah who becomes blind to god, and must live his life without seeing him.



And the first time I put on my glasses, I could see every detail in my eyes with perfect clarity, down to the smallest twigs on the trees. I had been seeing through broken lenses for so long I forgot how my eyes were supposed look.

