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Define My Eyes

By Will Fernandez

I have a different set of eyes – whether or not I had them at birth, I'm unsure. Harsh brown in the iris, further blackened under my brow, unmistakably dark. I wish I had brighter eyes.

It seems selfish to ask for a new set of eyes – they can see, after all. I can see near and far, small and big, clear and detailed. Function, at the very least, is not an issue. If torn away from my skull, dissected and analyzed, the doctor would likely agree: they are a set of functional eyes, not physically damaged in the slightest. I wish that were true, but things are never that straightforward and easy to see.

Rather than the dilemma of not being able to see enough, I find myself seeing too much. Ever since I could remember, I see large, rusted chains upon my wrists and legs, weights trailing behind me. Once noticed, these weights become more than a sight – they become my full burdens, regardless of whether I wish to ignore them thereafter. I'm lethargic and the world around me abandons my desperate attempts to move forth. I become weak, exhausted, vulnerable once at the whim of these blackened weights of mine. Ultimately, I know it is my corrupted vision, eyes forever bound to the sight of my own restraints.

Unfortunately, my dilemma is not a lie – it remains a fact I could not ignore, as diagnosed professionally. The diagnosis is reliant on a different type of doctor, one that comes to disagree with the physical deception of my eyes. To identify the problem, the doctors abandon their own sight of the physical to diagnose: only a psychologist is able to identify the affliction with precision. Even sickness beyond the body has names. One would think a diagnosis would tame my corrupt sight, contain it within definition, but a label does nothing but make it easier to reference.

Secretly, I had wished for there to be no diagnosis, for my difficulties to be completely falsified – it is much easier to get over a lie than a truth. If only it were that easy. My wrists burn from struggle of resistance. My ankles tremble from the aching pains of dragging pointless metal behind me. My jaw cracks from grinding together my teeth from the pain. A burning numbness

pulses through my veins, and I feel like I'm alive only because I'm dying. This body, equally as capable as any other, falls prey to the overwhelming restraint of a broken vision.

Physical pain is nothing though; that's not the point of broken vision. All the false aches in my body could not compare to what it feels like. What does it feel like. It feels like. Like. Abrupt. Time stops. It's right there. In front of you. Whatever series of events you were just in comes to a stop, a sense of time breaks in lieu of memory and nightmares. It doesn't matter what you were talking about before, what you were doing, what you were thinking about. Faces become foreign, voices become silenced, the world becomes unknown. Your skin becomes paper, your breath is squeezed out, your blood begins to freeze, but most of all, your eyes focus on nothing. You focus on nothing, until your eyes force images and memories to reality. They always vary, even if they've been replayed thousands and thousands of times before, they always feel new. Two towering figures glaring at you, the paralyzing fear before you were to be beaten. *You're not worth the time.* Hearing murmurs from adults, disgusted eyes peering down on the embodiment of sickness. *You're not a child.* Watching the kids stay away, scared of the thing who didn't know how to talk normally. *You're not a person.* Eyes everywhere, staring as you stare back, and they all speak in silence: *you're not normal. You're not normal. You're not normal. You're not normal. You'll never be fucking normal.* Remember that at least, since you can't remember anything else anyways. Do you really think you can keep going like this? Remember that pain. Remember it good, remember as good as you forget. How long will we keep playing this game? Thepastiscatchingup—

Black. A single blink can start time again, and suddenly everything resumes once more. In fact, it never stopped – the world could care less if you pay attention to it or not. Blinking doesn't make it disappear though. It was there before you disappeared, it was thereafter. It will always be there. It is the lens that twists the world, it is the lens that anchors the body, it is the lens that stands as the barrier to every friend. On the other side, they ignored you as you disappeared for a brief moment. Maybe they did notice, but they don't care. How would they even know? From what it seems, you simply zoned out for a moment – maybe tears came too, maybe your expression twisted too, maybe you whimpered too, but these things slip between the lines like your memory, my memory. People don't need to see these things, nor do they want to –

people with eyes like mine get isolated, distant, and foreign. They, we, are the other, and nothing more.

The other, the ambiguous, the unknown – I despise being in this category, being under this definition, cursed under this label. No matter how close I may be to another, there exists this specific obscurity over my eyes, the barrier between real empathy. It makes me question the very concept of reality, memory, interpretation – how could I ever trust what my eyes tell me? How can people trust what I tell them with corrupt vision? I sometimes wonder of when this began. If I had been born this way, or if I had been damaged to see this way. Time is just as untrustworthy as my eyes, and all I know is that it all lies in my eyes. I wish I could tear my eyes from my skull and crush them under my boot, giving up my sight forever in hopes that the torment will end. I would rather be blind than continue viewing through these tainted lenses.

But this is ultimately my life. My burden, my window, my perspective. These are my eyes, even if a burden, they remain my only true possession. A part of me wishes I was strong enough to see past what I've been given...but I have eyes to complain about, and many of the deceased cannot say the same. I can see that point, at least.