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## The Eyes Have It

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**Author Bio**

Julia is a sophomore student who infuses her writing with her passions of art, social justice, and the environment in order to make better sense of the world. She seeks to craft engaging and thought-provoking works that readers can both enjoy and ponder.

# The Eyes Have It

Julia Rentsch

A mere few years ago (feels like ages now, really) my only pressing problem was that even though I had a pretty good job and a pet fish named Luther, I was quite a lonely person. Nowadays, my problems have become many. There are times when I think I just can't bear all that's happened on my conscience, the same way a turtle couldn't bear to carry a pool table.

"Get a boyfriend, for God's sake," my mom had nagged when I told her about my loneliness.

"Don't worry, I'm sure there's someone out there for you," was what my lovely friend Betsy had said to my face (although I'm sure behind my back it went something like, "if only she'd stop dressing like an octogenarian.")

I knew that my life needed a bit of zest, like a new hobby or a new friend. Maybe I should do as mom suggested and go out on an odyssey looking for potential husbands, I thought, or maybe I should go take Betsy's advice and get a new look.

This thought process was how I decided to finally go about getting glasses, which was something I had been vainly avoiding for years. I never would have guessed it'd be an endeavor that could take me down a winding, convoluted path to a messy and ethically ambiguous triple life.

Everyone's probably seen TV shows about situations like mine—reality shows full of fake-tanned people with petty personalities and muscle-flexing tendencies that end up really belittling people like me, who struggle daily through what they're only pretending to. My life has been overtaken by the drama of multiple relationships, multiple people I depend on for the same support, the same care, but I can't bear to give up any of them out of sheer attachment. It's that old human vice, where the grass is always greener on the other side. I'm sure by now one can guess what it is that I have done, been doing, and can't stop doing. That's right—I have fallen into the lifestyle of having not one, not two, but *three* optometrists.

My first optometrist's name is Larry. I have terrible vision, so Larry and I were perfect for each other. I think he initially considered me to be a bit of a challenge, because despite my vision problems and related klutziness, I was reluctant to commit to glasses after having gone stubbornly on so long without them. Slow to adjust to this new person in my life, I at first saw him only sparingly; over time, though, our bond became strong. When

he looked deep into my eyes to conduct my retinal refraction assessment, it was like my very soul was naked and on display. And when we did automated perimetry together for the first time, my mind was blown like it had never been before! Soon the bare vulnerability became an addiction, and at every visit my pupils would dilate with eye drops and love.

With this new development in my life, I blossomed into a version of myself that I hadn't known existed—one that smiled at random passersby and was excited to wake up in the morning to see each brand new day. I could see clearly now, in more ways than one.

A few months later, however, the company I worked for underwent some internal turmoil and decided to move headquarters a few states away—I had to go, or I'd lose my job. I was heartbroken that I'd have to leave my dear optometrist, because no one could ever replace him in my heart. Desperate to hang on to the relationship I had steadily been building, I rationalized that I was only moving a couple hundred or so miles away, so making appointments was still possible. Of course I'd make the drive! I intended to stay faithful—he was the only optometrist for me.

But a few months after my move, disaster struck with a prejudiced blow. I came down with a rabid, raging, ruthless eye infection that attacked my sclerae until they were as red and watery as a sea of Hawaiian Punch and as itchy as poison ivy leaves in one's underpants. But it was definitely my eyes, not my underpants. I did not have genital warts, I had an eye infection.

Oh, the humanity! The urge became too strong; I had to see someone, anyone, immediately! And the drive to see Larry was just too far, when I was so desperately in need of care. So I did what only a few days ago had seemed strictly out of the question: I sought out another optometrist. At first I was scared and regretful (what if Larry found out?) but the instant I sat down in Sophie's office, I knew that this was meant to be. As she peered through her ophthalmoscope into my eyes, I was shocked to experience the same feeling I had experienced with Larry—to be the subject of her gaze was to lay bare my soul and let her carefully observe the very essence of my spirit. I decided to start seeing her.

You may judge and shun me, but I have accepted my decision. From that point onward, there was no going back to monogamy. My mind flashed back to the cheesy after-school specials I had watched in middle school and how they had insistently warned against this type of two-timing. At this point I felt was old enough and wise enough to ignore all that televised preaching. My situation was perfect—whether at work or away, I had someone who would care for me, give me what I needed.

Everything worked flawlessly for a while, and I wore my glasses with a sense of pride, like on my nose sat a secret symbol for the glamorous

life of intrigue I was leading behind closed doors. Not a single person at work guessed that I spent my time off the clock with two different optometrists, but I was prepared to lie if anyone were to ask—my secret would be kept safe at any cost. Yet I began to wonder if what I was doing was wrong, and my conscience began a slow burn inside me as if it were a case of acid reflux. It made my stomach ache like I had eaten too many waffles, and made my breath stink like those waffles had just melted in my mouth and stuck in my teeth. But I still never told a soul.

Day after day, like a blooming fire-poppo from hell, the secret burned within me. During that time I came to the conclusion that it was definitely immoral to not tell each about the other. I imagined richly dramatized situations in which I would arrive at each of their offices and reveal that I had been unfaithful. My fantasies quickly became more and more drastic, complete with vivid detail of how Larry might scream and cry, or how Sophie might give me a harsh ultimatum to choose between them. Soon I was so wrapped up in my worries, hardly sure of what conversations had actually happened and which I had imagined, that I was too fearful to face either of them. I would have to stay away from either eye doctor for awhile and try to rebuild my life in a more honest way.

But like a circus monkey chasing a banana on a stick, I yearned for what was just out of reach, just one phone call away—I craved another appointment. Just once more I needed to feel that connection with another human being, a bond deeper than an ocean trench, felt as my optometrists stared into the blue of my iris to check for defects. Besides, I had lately been getting sick and tired of wearing my glasses, feeling jealous of the fresh-faced girls who didn't have eye problems (or secret double lives). What had once been a symbol of glamour had become a weighty one of guilt. At that moment I wanted contacts more than I had ever wanted anything, and that included the Barbie dream house when I was six and the job I coveted just a few years ago that I now hold. But I was prepared to give it all up if I had to, just to feel that wondrous, life-giving connection once more.

But I still couldn't bring myself to face Larry or Sophie. Trust me, I tried—I even went so far one time as to get in the car, determined that I'd end this charade once and for all, and then drove to Sophie's office. But I couldn't get out of the car and walk in. I just couldn't bring myself to see the disappointment on her face when I revealed that I was seeing someone else. So I stayed for a while, a prisoner in the driver's seat, until I resignedly pulled out of my spot and drove away. I hope she didn't see my car.

This third time around, I absolutely hated myself as I frantically Googled other optometrists in my area. I wanted my glasses gone, and I regretted being so dishonest with Larry and Sophie, who were good people

who didn't deserve this kind of treatment and back-stabbing. But transcending it all I craved the euphoria that could reassure me that I was not alone in this world after all.

Finally, I found the perfect one. His name was Frank, and the internet said he was one of the area's foremost authorities on contact prescriptions. With trembling hands, I dialed him up. When the appointment was made, I relaxed in my favorite armchair and smoked a cigarette to calm myself down. I had never been a smoker before, but recently it had begun to appeal to me. Everything was going to be fine; I would go in tomorrow.

The next day I arrived at my appointment, early as I always was, to wait with bated breath next to the receptionist's desk. But the uplifting happiness and hope that usually accompanied a visit to the eye doctor was tainted. The world seemed to be closing in around me—I imagined Larry and Sophie and how much I had already been betraying them, and how I was about to do worse than I had ever done before. I owed it to myself and to them to just get up and walk out right now.

"You're up," said the receptionist, gesturing to me. Too late to back out now, I thought, and with a rush of heady, guilty pleasure I rose and ambled into the office.

Afterwards, I smoked another cigarette and reminisced sweetly about how Frank had tested my eyes for refraction errors, and the rhythmic whirr of the machine that spat puffs of air at my eyes. With contacts in, I felt freshly freed from the symbolic weight of my glasses. I could easily forget the contacts were even there.

A couple of days later, I went shopping at the SuperMart. Even today I still remember what I had in my cart: bread, cheese, paper towels, and Nutella. I remember everything because it was there in the dairy aisle that my fears were realized: I ran into Sophie.

"Wow, you got contacts!" Her red-lipped smile looked incredibly fixed on her face.

"Yeah, yeah I did," I replied, my heart jumping in my chest as I carefully studied a display of pineapples.

"They look good. Hope I'll see you for your next check up! It's coming up soon, you know. Plus it'll probably be a good time to do a little glaucoma screening too."

"Mmm hmm," I said in a high little voice. "See ya soon."

I knew it, I thought in despair; she hated me! Suddenly weak, I dropped heavily to the floor and slumped against a freezer door. The guilty rotten waffle taste was back in my mouth, but it had worsened to the stench level of a full English breakfast, sausage and all. It was like bits and pieces of everything had wedged and rotted between my teeth to create hellish cavities of malice and evil that ate right through my enamel until they had

poisoned my roots.

Maybe what I really needed was a dentist.