

The Eyes Have It

Category: Poems

written by Johanna Shapiro | June 5, 2015

Johanna Shapiro

If you're lucky
the doctor enthused
these drops will save your sight

Still trying to get my mind around
this new fact
that I was going blind
I asked about side effects

Hardly worth mentioning,
he said
his back already to me
as he noted in his chart
the decline and fall of my vision

Then he mentioned them rapid-fire:
Long furry lashes
dark circles around the eyes
occasional slight hair growth on the cheeks
and—oh yes—
your eye color may change
from blue
to brown

He seemed unconcerned
so I thought I should be too.

Later, driving home
the rain pouring down like
viscous, sight-saving drops
I panicked.

Weren't eyes the windows to the soul?
Would my soul change,
as well as my eye color?
If my new brown eyes
looked into the mirror
would they recognize the
face staring back?

The next day I called.
I've always been a blue-eyed person
I said.
I think I want to keep it that way.

Don't be silly,
the doc briskly admonished his
silly patient.
Which do you want?
Brown eyes or blind eyes?

Put that way
it was hard to argue

That night
in went the drops
Brown-eyed, furry-lashed lady
was on her way

I might not recognize her
but at least
I would see her coming

About the poet:

Johanna Shapiro, *Pulse's* West Coast poetry editor, is a professor in the Department of Family Medicine and director of the Program in Medical Humanities & Arts, University of California Irvine, School of Medicine. She is an assistant editor for [Family Medicine](#), specializing in the narrative-essay section; special editor, medical humanities, for [Journal for Learning through the Arts](#); and faculty advisor to the UCI-SOM journal [Plexus](#), an annual collection of medical student, patient, staff and faculty creative works. Her poetry has appeared in *JAMA*, *Journal of Medical Humanities*, [Healing Muse](#) and *Journal of Family Practice*. "I love building sandcastles at the beach with my grandkids, and imaginary castles in the clouds."

About the poem:

"This poem is about what happened when I was diagnosed with glaucoma. All ended well—I got long, furry lashes, but got to keep my blue eyes."

Poetry editors:

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer