

To P i e c e s

Luciana was.

She knew that she

was

— and not that she is

(as it is expected of someone who is alive),

when she looked at herself in the mirror.

Alive,

nevertheless.

After an exhausting day at work

(the extenuating work of a secretary),

she went back to her tiny apartment

(that day, not only tiny, but cold, too)

((it was wintertime)).

Purse on the couch, she went to the kitchen

but gave up on eating

because she was too tired to eat.

She went to take a shower,

but gave up on doing it

because she was too tired to take a shower.

First, she needed to go to the bathroom,

at least

to take her contact lenses off

(her eyesight was 10/13)

((she always had a smile on her face and said it proudly))

((even when nobody had asked her)))

((((just because it was one of the few special things about her))).

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Standing in front of the mirror, she learned she is no more.

She just was.

Make up on her face, she sighed, tired and dispirited.

She took the contact lenses off, and with them

O two big eyes O

whole and round.

Her light-brown, open-wide eyes were on her hands

lOOking at her

(at least it looked like they were)

((looking at her)),

as her empty eye sockets were filled with **darkness**.

It wasn't the first time it happened —looking at herself in the mirror and seeing nothing. Not surprised, she looked for a place to put them. She didn't have a specific box where to keep her eyes.

She rushed back to the kitchen f e e l i n g her w a y,

which unexpectedly showed

the resourcefulness of someone who could no longer see,

(before then, she could see)

((she thought she could see))

and placed a hand here,

a hand there,

and found cup2.

She placed

her left eye in one,

and her right eye in the other,

then filled them up with contact lens solution

and covered them with a saucer.

They were safe.

Tired, she went to sleep.

Tomorrow is a work day.

Today is a work day.

She woke up feeling well.

She had slept the whole night through, and didn't wake up once, as it usually happened. Sleeping with her eyes off may be a good thing after all (ㄱ)

Hunger had taken over her body,

but she had better rush to work; otherwise she would be late.

She put her clothes on quickly, after a *qik* shower, then grabbed her purse *qikly*

on top of the couch

and,

(since she had never taken her eyes off before)

she forgot to put them back,

((like a new medicine you forget to take at the correct time))

she only thought about her eyes on the subway,

but if she went back for them, she would be late for work;

she shouldn't go back.

When she got to the building

(an old, tall building)

((it seems to grow taller with time)),

she rushed to her office, three minutes earlier,

and had some black coffee without sugar and some cookies

(sugar-free ones, so she wouldn't put on pounds)

that she kept in her drawer for emergencies

(routine emergencies)

right next to a copy of *The Private Life of a Bubble Wrap*,

which she should have read a long time ago

—had she read it, everything could have been different.

As she ate her third cookie, people started to arrive,

asking questions, asking for things, without even saying,

“Good morning.”

She was a little more tense than usual

(she's always tense and wants to do things right),

more tense still, for she could not see

(not that it's a bad thing),

and she knew what people were like...

Some people³ asked her where her eyes were, while some others¹⁴⁷ didn't even notice they were missing. To the former³, she smiled and said

(in a restrained manner, so as not to seem deliberate)

((or she would be flaunting something so mundane))

she had forgotten them inside cups at home,

and

since she had never taken them off before, she forgot to put them back on inside her now empty eye sockets.

Still, she talked to no one, for people were just trying to be polite, and as soon as the question came out, they'd soon turn their backs and walk away without minding her answer.

Without eyes, she could not see them leaving.

She went on with her day as usual, a l o n g d a y,

feeling tired, doing what was asked of her, eating one cookie or two, so she wouldn't crash.

And she had to keep going,
one coffee after another to stay awake,
her eye sockets wide open,
alert,

“The best secretary ever!”

(she’d hear someone say one day)

but not that day,

(because that day was like any other day).

It would have to be on a special day, with great pomp, on a day she didn’t need to skip meals,
when they’d ask how her day was going and really wait around to hear her answer, just be-
cause they cared... they would care.

Not today, thought.

Not yet.

She went back to her tiny apartment

(that day, not only tiny, but hot, too)

((it was summertime)).

Since she could not see anything, it looked l a r g e.

Darkness had no limits, for it was wide.

Comfortable. Tired.

Man,

she

was

so tired

tir

But she was alive

still alive.

She went into the kitchen to have dinner,

but she was so tired, she gave up on it.

She was going to take a shower, a *qik* one

but she gave up on it, too, so she could go right to bed and get some rest.

Standing in front of the mirror

(unable to see herself),

she touched her face and recoiled, tired and dispirited. Every curve, wrinkle, and bump whispered inaudible requests. Or were they curses—she was too tired to listen.

Maybe tomorrow.

She washed her face

and

remembered to take her earrings off, and with them

o her ears o

Her entire

o ears o

aware.

Her somewhat cold lobes on the palm of her hand. Now what!? She had no time to worry about that.

She put them away, wrapped in toilet paper, inside the medicine cabinet, next to her toothbrush and toothpaste. She would look for a better place later, since she didn't want her ears to think they were unimportant.

She just wanted to lie down.

Tomorrow is a work day.

Today is a work day.

She could not see the morning light through the window,

announcing the start of a new day,

nor could she hear the alarm clock vibrating in vain behind her.

She woke up in a daze, thinking she was late,

and she was.

No coffee, no shower.

Good thing she had gone to bed wearing work clothes.

She got her purse and left.

Pained, anxious.

If she got to work late,

instead of being told she was a great secretary,

which nobody had every said,

but one day they will

(she knew so),

she would be knocked down, hear complains, be written up.

When she got to work

she could feel there was no one there.

She had some cookies and some black coffee without sugar.

People started arriving a few moments later,

and came by,

and asked for things,

and even though she had no ears to hear, she did what they asked of her,

because she knew how to do it, and she did it so well

—that was just a small detail.

It made no difference.

No made it difference.

Difference it no made.

Someone she couldn't identify asked about her ears, and she told them

what had happened

(she explained in a way that wouldn't make her sound petulant)

((she wasn't petulant)).

And, even though she couldn't see or hear anything,
she felt it.

And, even though she didn't have eyes or ears,
she started to realize
that
no one had ever listened to her explanations.

She wanted to stop right there and then.

Maybe, if she didn't move, she would find herself the way
she used to be
(if she had ever been herself one day)
((she couldn't remember a point to which she could return and be again),
but she couldn't just stop.

There were things to do, and her empty eyes and ears
were somehow making life easier.

She could avoid distractions,
nonsense,
shenanigans,

and

“What are you thinking about, girl?”

“Life doesn't sit around and wait. You're important!”

she said to herself, since no one else did.

But someone would, one day,

and maybe they'd buy her

new eyes and ears,

and she would tell them, in a wise tone

(as those who say wise things when showing their appreciation)

((as a gift))

she'd say

“Life doesn't sit around and wait.”

She went back to her large apartment

(that day, not only large, but cold, too)

((it was wintertime)).

The silence and the cold were like a comforting pat on the head.

The kitchen no longer called out to her.

The shower didn't mind anymore.

Her bed had been waiting for her.

She went into the bedroom and, standing in front of the mirror once again, she gave up.

She thought about what she had said to herself that afternoon.

“Life doesn't sit around and wait.”

She didn't need it anymore.

She wiped the lipstick off, and her lips with them. She wiped her face, and her face started to go away—slowly, but completely. It hadn't been for so long. She had long been used to being, and now she no longer was. She didn't put away the parts that kept falling, and that had once belonged to her. She left it all scattered around the sink, as evidence that someone, something had once existed, just in case someone asked, someone cared. She could organize everything, but she was too tired to put an order to that mess. Tired. Without all that weight weighing on her, she would sleep well. Maybe tomorrow would be a better day. It would be.

Tomorrow is a work day.