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Seeing Clearly

Vincent had absolutely no idea what he was looking for. Tubes of color swarmed in front of him, clouding his vision. The aisles of grey continued for what seemed like miles. “Ahem, Miss?” he called tentatively at an employee.

“Hello! What can I help you find today?” her chipper voice squawked.

“I’m looking for a lipstick in the shade plum?” he whispered. “It’s for my wife, Shirley. I’m just so clueless about this type of thing,” he laughed nervously. Immediately the woman began tearing through the store, making sharp, frequent turns into different aisles. It should have been obvious to the woman that Vincent was in no shape to chase someone around a Sephora. After all, he walked with a cane. He felt silly bumbling in the store after her in his khakis and sweater. He didn’t go out much, so today he had worn his best outfit. Or at least he thought it was his best outfit, he couldn’t really tell if what he was wearing matched.

After checking out, Vincent moseyed over the JC Penney on the south side of the mall. Shirley detested the busyness of the mall. She hated the bustle of the people. So, Vincent had offered to go solo while she waited in the car. *Crew neck, beige sweater*, he thought to himself over and over in order to stay focused on what he was looking for. The racks of color surrounded him, but thoughts of color perpetually plagued his mind too. His life was an elaborate lie, but a necessary one. Shirley couldn’t possibly love him if she knew he was broken. *Still, I get tired of this impersonation act*, Vincent battled with the voice in his head. He grabbed a sweater that seemed like it could be beige. Over time he had learned what shade of grey corresponded with which color, but he still made mistakes every so often.

“Hello darling,” he called to Shirley as he opened the car door.

“Did you find it alright?” Shirley inquired.

Vincent responded instantaneously, “Of course I did, why wouldn’t I have? It’s just lipstick and a sweater. How hard could it be?” Shirley was a bit taken back by his response, but just kept talking. She talked about the fall foliage’s beautiful colors, and the hues of the sky’s

sunset, while Vincent just nodded along in agreement. It seemed to Vincent that all she ever liked to talk about was color. The color of this and the color of that, and, oh wasn't that such a nice color? Color color color. That's all everything ever was. He had thought about telling Shirley he had achromatopsia before but had always chickened out when that silly voice in his head cropped up.

Shirley kept talking as usual and Vincent's urge for honesty began to sprout again. *He could just tell her, she wouldn't care. Yes, she would, Vincent, she would leave you. Do you want her to leave? Shirley doesn't want damaged goods,* chided his subconscious. Now normally, Vincent would've solemnly agreed, but this time something felt different. *She wouldn't leave me. She wouldn't, and to hell with her if she did. I should tell her,* his own voice taunted back.

As they hopped off the highway Vincent saw one of those road signs, the ones with the cheesy phrases telling you to stay off your phone. This one read "check the foliage, not your phone." He foolishly looked out the passenger side window, as if his condition had magically faded. He realized, his expression turning somber, that he couldn't see them and never would. However, this wasn't his only realization. He knew he couldn't keep lying to Shirley either. The voice in his head was about to protest, but he refused to let it dominate this time. He mustered up his minimal courage and spoke before his thoughts could shut him down.

"Shirley? I-I-I'm colorblind. I don't see colors dear," he whispered almost inaudibly as they pulled into the drive.

"What was that hon? I didn't quite catch that."

"I said I'm colorblind, Shirley."

"Oh. Well yes, I know" said Shirley, "I've always known. Vince you showed up to our wedding with a yellow tie and purple socks for Christ's sake," she giggled between words. "By the way dear, the sweater you bought? It's red."

"Why the hell didn't you say anything?" Vincent felt his confusion slowly turn to a sizzle of anger. She had been standing by just watching him struggle? For how long?

Shirley began solemnly, "When I realized you weren't going to tell me, my heart shattered. That's why I kept sending you on errands and mindless tasks alone, just wishing you'd

eventually tell me. I couldn't just blurt out that I knew; I wanted you to want to tell me, when you decided to."

Vincent stepped out of the car, seeing more clearly and brighter than ever before.