

ROGER NASH

## An Appointment with the Beautiful Lady Optician

"Remove your glasses. Now, what can you see on the chart on the wall?" The wall promptly sails off in a thick lake fog, presumably bound for some unreported destination where the illegal fishing is better than good.

"Take your time. Do you recognize anything, the lie of the land, or the blue and distant slopes of a language?" I remember my mother, singing a lullaby to me as a child, her voice grassy and young.

"If I cover this eye, what happens now?" I suddenly see, a long way off, the Judean hills, perhaps; or is that the Scarborough Bluffs? But your hair is so close, it makes me electrified friends with your tickling face.

"Can you shut the other eye, and see in a louder voice: you're getting so lost." I gaze intently, and think I can just make out the damp silhouette of a fishing smack drifting back.

It flies a much-faded pennant from its mast:

"I E B O A Z N"

A Sumerian oracle, much out-of-practice, interprets slowly inside my head:

You are condemned, for all the rest of your sight, to long, unrequited, to stroke her face.