Name: Milan LINHART

Gender: Male,

Age: 62.

Country: Czech Republic

EBU Member: Czech Blind United (SONS)

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**The End of Good Old times or Just Look and See**

It was shortly after my cataract surgery; the replacement of the old non-functioning lens with the new artificial one was successful. My eyesight, however, was not that much improved. The retina, not visible in the course of the pre-surgery examination, had been seriously damaged. I had to mobilize myself for combatting even that option. Although the surgery was undertaken at great risk, not to have tried it would have been a lost chance. Thus, for the rest of life, I’ll have to make do with just a little fragment of my eyesight. Even for that insignificant fragment, I am, however, grateful. While I have not yet been visited by the expected miracle, in many cases the magic has worked. People who, for many a year, had lived in darkness being dependent on the outside assistance, can now see again.

In recent years, our eye surgery has made substantial progress. Cataract surgeries are considered routine operations. Restoration of vision, however, remains in the realm of little miracles and gifts from heaven.

Just several days after the planned surgery, I am sitting in the waiting room of the outpatients” ward. There is a large group of patients including me who are awaiting examinations carried out by head physician of the clinic. The majority are in their senior age. Lively conversations are buzzing around, people sharing impressions from their operations. "have you also had an operation?" asks an elderly gentleman sitting next to me. "Yes, yes, I have." I replied. "And what …?" He continues, manifesting his interest. I briefly explain how, due to a serious injury, I almost lost my eyesight and how I could again, after the surgery, have enjoyed good vision were it not for further serious eye damage. "I’m here with my wife," continues the senior. At that moment, the door of the consultation room opened and a nurse called the next patient. "Hedvika dear, it’s your turn now," was the response of my neighbour. "You don’t need to tell me, it’s not my hearing thats faulty!" snapped back his wife. "Shall I escort you in?" asked the caring husband. "What you could possibly see to there. I can manage on my own. You stay here sitting on your bum and stop annoying people with your chatter, will you?" The woman slipped into the surgery. For a while, there had been silence, and then her husband resumed his talk. "You know, Sir, Hedvika is not that bad at all. We’ve been married for almost fifty years. In our relationship, it was her who was always playing the role of the dominant partner, and I have let her hold that commanding position. What was fairly difficult to bear was her perfectionism. Dishes were not clean enough, floor not properly mopped, carpets not sufficiently beaten, washing and curtains faded, garden unsatisfactorily dug, potatoes badly peeled, vegetables dirty, etc., etc. Both our two children and myself experienced years of sheer bullying. Oh, my …!" he sighed. "Everything had to be done twice or even thrice. Decorating, cleaning, Christmas, Easter – all that represented in our household total military manoeuvres. My wife gave instructions and supervised while the rest of the family were busy meeting her orders. Her eyesight was like that of a hawk, nothing could have escaped her. I can even now hear her notorious phrase: 'I can see those smudges on the mirror even from here'." for a moment, the gentleman fell silent. "Well, it all seems not to have been that easy for you!" I commiserated. "Where did I stop?" he continued after a while. "Ah, now I know. The children had flown out of the family nest and we two remained on our own. Well, then my wife started to lose her eyesight. Her cataract was progressing very fast. With her ever-growing dependence on me, her attitude towards me gradually changed. She became nice, good and friendly. The number of my chores increased, the unpopular and humiliating fussing, however, disappeared. Suddenly, I began to enjoy cleaning, cooking, washing, shopping. I accompanied my wife to her doctors, read for her, took walks with her. I loved those times and it looked as if we embarked upon the path of experiencing a beautiful autumn of our lives."

"And what has changed?" I interrupted his confession. "This happiness has, however, turned its face from us." continued my neighbour. "For many years, Hedvika hadn’t even wanted to hear about eye surgery. Later, however, an eye specialist convinced her to agree, and, I, naturally, supported her decision. The operation has returned my wife’s vision in both eyes." "For you, that must have been a marvellous piece of news!" I responded. "Do you really think so?" the man said sadly. "For me it signalled the end of golden times. Suddenly, everything turned foul again. Why are those dirty dishes in the sink? Whenever were those curtains washed last? Can’t you see the black crust on those windows? Have you ever defrosted the fridge? What are those mouldy potatoes doing in the pantry …? She calls me a dirtybag, blaming me for not taking proper care of her. She threatens that she will take over everything again. In short, my wife is again in top form. I’m not that young any more and am afraid that both my psychological and physical toleration may burst. Despite all that, I still love her and hope that her eyesight be good."

At that moment, the door of the surgery opened. "Well, I’ll have to go now," said the man despondently rising from the bench, "in order not to make little Hedvika wait!" We shook hands and wished each other all the best. "You don’t even have to tell me what you’ve been doing here all that time" was the welcoming phrase of his wife. "You are sure to have been complaining about me!" "But, Heddy, how could you possibly know that …?" "Because I know you much too well. I just look and see!"

They were already quite distant from me when I overheard her reproachful voice: "one can’t let you get out of sight even for a moment. Worse than a small child!"