

Jellyfish

A t2-weighted axial scan of a baby's head, eyes two domes in a soft little system. Radiologists liken the shape to a martini glass. Unreceded as in held too tight—taut dry vessels choking the retina. Persistent fetal vasculature. *prev.* persistent hyperplastic primary vitreous. Within months, a cataract.

In my eye the hegemony of a matted tendrils, a jellyfish that blooms in the sun then floats dead against the surface of the water's window.

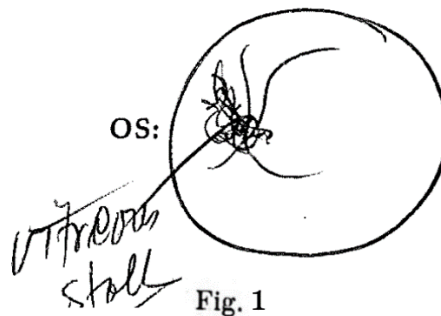
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YouTube the lens. A way in for those who can't remember. A doctor in Turkey uploads the procedure, paired with Tchaikovsky. Lensectomy on a child. Age restricted video. D major.

Knitting needles dig into the yolk of sight. Wrestling vision out of a black hole when the lens has already crossed the event horizon. Dig behind the iris root, sever the stalk, cauterize and withdraw.

Cineloop—a shivering arrogant tentacle rising, reaching to smear the lens in silt. Ultra sonography allows evaluation of vitreous chamber in spite of cataracts. Nod as the ophthalmologist says this. In the waiting room, my mother sees an excited little girl choosing her glass eyes.

Ever since they sucked my lens out with a needlesized vacuum, I'm half a corner, half a jump scare at the mirror, half of what's in front of me in another room.



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Flit and spark of memory, a kind of sight. A picture seen from the back of the brain. Mom and Dad holding me down to get a contact lens in my eye, the weak snap and suck of an alien disc, of a plastic mirror sharpening the static. The improvement of vision is minimal, but it strengthens the eye. Years of flinching after. The handsoap I could not smell without my eyes watering, its clinical vanilla curling my nostrils like a soft cayenne. After lunch, a thirty minute walk out back, the trail mowed through the grove of black jack oaks. Pawing at the patch, I run ahead and stop suddenly, looking all over, lost in a grainy slurry.

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Some helpful terms: *leukoria*—white pupil, intraocular moon, vampire eye, a glowstone in your glaze; *cataract*—a clouding of the lens, the albumen disc whitened around a crackedle frying of blood; *aphakia*—the condition of being without a lens, *amblyopia*—commonly called lazy eye, fr. Greek *amblys*, “blunt,” image of the eye ambling, fallen behind, sleepier than the rest of your face, drooping after too many blunts, tired of seeing too little of so much.

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My father is twelve and shouting “My eye! My eye!” My father is twelve and his brother my uncle has shot him with a pop bottle rocket, now very illegal in Oklahoma. Flit and spark of memory.

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I am sixteen. A friend suggests I swallowed a sister in the womb, that one of my eyes belonged to her. Why a sister and not a brother I don’t know. Or of course I do. Pacing the roof of our house shouting 70s glam rock lyrics, dreaming of being an emaciated rock star, of punk drag—Iggy Pop in the cover of *Raw Power*, but with sweeping bangs. Above me, evening clouds aiming slowly on, cruising marine life in the air, elemental programming, wires young with current. *Are you my main man? Are you now? Are you now?*

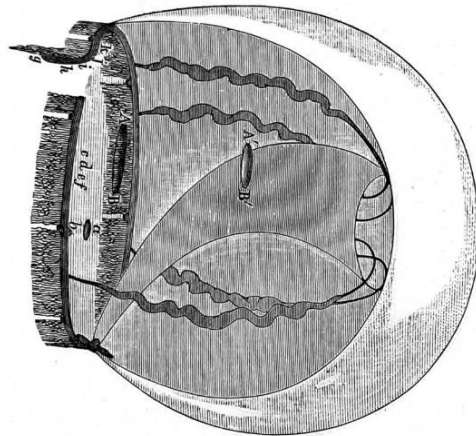


Fig. 2.

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Did you know jellyfish have eyes? Box jellyfish have twenty four. Some detect only light, others detect colors and sizes. Sometimes, I’ll try to walk outside with my “good” eye closed—detecting color and trying to discern size and shape, the information struggling to pull itself in. Makes me feel off balance. My eye wades into January and it isn’t long before I’m small and paused in the woods again.

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I type “my uncle has shot *me* with a pop bottle rocket” on accident.

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Navarre Beach, Florida. I am seventeen. White sand, green water. Five minutes in the water—a sting. A plastic bag floating near me, thin clear spaghetti trailing off it. Box jellyfish. A persistent burn in my foot. I was the only one in my family to get stung the whole trip. Three times.

Sister gliding in the murk, you have never left me.