The Lifestyle of the Visually Impaired

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I’ve been having the same dream for over a month now. Sometimes I am changing my Facebook status, texting a friend or searching the internet. Other times I am downloading music or uploading a video onto YouTube. As I take part in these normal teenage activities, I am happy and carefree. The scene abruptly changes and I am now running. Although I cannot see anything, I can feel something watching over me. I begin to panic as my strides become longer and exaggerated; my body is shutting down. In the end, my pursuer is relentless and I cannot escape.

Following a familiar pattern, I sit upright. Drenched in sweat, I feel around in the darkness for my glasses, but I cannot find them. Jumping out of bed, I reach for the nearest lamppost and turn on the lights. Without my glasses I cannot clearly focus on my surroundings and I stumble onto my futon. Within five minutes, I’ve taken my room apart, but still cannot find my glasses. Giving up, I turn off the light and climb back into bed. I’ll find them tomorrow, I assure myself.

A few hours later, I awake to the beeping of my alarm clock. I hit the snooze button and turn over. For a fleeting moment I imagine myself skipping class and sleeping an extra few hours. I groan, climb out of bed and make my way to the shower. Although I skillfully maneuver around a pile of clothing and unread textbooks scattered around the floor, I still manage to step onto the television remote. As I turn on the shower, I faintly hear the buzz of the television screen and the sound of ABC’s Good Morning America’s opening news story:

> A Rutgers University freshman posted a goodbye message on his Facebook Page before jumping to his death after his roommate secretly filmed him during a “sexual encounter” in his dorm room and posted it live on the Internet. (ABC)

Twenty minutes later, I unwillingly step out of the hot shower and begin to assemble the perfect outfit, black skinny-jeans paired with a simple white button down. As I begin to straighten my hair, I look into the mirror. You’ve been having a stressful week and today you deserve to feel pretty, I tell myself. Ten minutes later, finally satisfied with my hair, I add a little bit of blush and mascara. I look at the clock, 9 a.m.; I have an hour before class. I decide to check my email and go to breakfast. As my computer slowly warms up, I continue the search for my glasses. They are not on top, underneath or inside any of the desk draws. Giving up, I turn back to my computer and check my email. I delete a campus-wide email and a few messages about last week’s practice schedule. It is now 9:15 a.m. I put on my winter jacket, a wine-red scarf and brown boots. It’s still snowing outside. As I walk out the door, I ask myself, how bad could one day without glasses really be?

SUNY Cortland Students: In 1991, researchers in a University of Cambridge computer laboratory searched for a solution to a very practical question—was there coffee in the Trojan Room? They pointed a video camera at the pot, wired it to their network, and created the world’s first web camera. For student convenience, SUNY Cortland’s new webcam system will now give students live-stream access to SUNY Cortland dining facilities, Dunkin Donuts, Dragon’s Den, Neubig and Hilltop. (SUNY Cortland)
It is freezing outside. In an attempt to drown out the cold, I turn up the volume of my iPod and tune out my thoughts. A few moments later, I arrive at the campus dining hall. I grab a copy of the New York Times and head upstairs. I pour myself a bowl of cereal and a glass of milk and sit down at the nearest table. Midway through breakfast, Brittani sits down beside me. She and I have been best friends since our freshman year of college. Brittani is shorter than I am, almost by a foot, blonde and muscular. A lot of guys prefer her muscular, stocky build to my thin, lanky body.

“Brenna, I’ve been trying to get your attention. Couldn’t you see me waving to you?” she asked.

“No,” I sighed. “I lost my glasses and I can’t see much of anything.”

In response, Brittani closely held up three fingers to my face and asked, “How many fingers am I holding up?

“I’m not blind!” I added defensively.

I honestly wasn’t blind. I was nearsighted, meaning I could see images better closer than farther. My ophthalmologist explained nearsightedness as having eyes too long to focus on an object far way. A simple solution is glasses because they offer a concave lens that bends light outward, correcting vision. As a child, I quickly accepted the social awkwardness associated with a four-eyed nerd and decided to stand out with bright, bold glasses. My first pair of glasses were lime-green and as a sophisticated college student, I’ve traded in the lime-green for a matured magenta.

Confused, I turn back to Brittani. “Why are you here? I thought you had a class at this time.”

“I do. I’m actually leaving right now. I was just checking my email before class and I stumbled across the link for SUNY Cortland’s webcam system. I watched you sitting alone in the dining hall from my Blackberry and I thought I’d visit you!” Without any further explanation, she got up and left. For the rest of my breakfast, I couldn’t shake the feeling that someone was watching me. I look up at the clock, 9:45 a.m. “Ah!” I exclaim, “I’m going to be late.” I quickly throw away my trash and recycle the New York Times, leaving the front page exposed.

The popular iPod may be doing more harm than good, especially to the hearing of the user, doctors say. According to Christine Albertus, an audiologist with the Marshfield Clinic in Marshfield, Wisconsin, iPod users should limit their use of the device to two hours or less per day. (Betanews)

I should have skipped Spanish class. As I sit there listening to students mispronounce the entire vocabulary list, I try to pass the time by counting down the days until I’ll see my boyfriend again. After three months and twelve days, I stopped counting. For homework, I have to create an account on VHL Central, an online version of the Spanish textbook. After class, I quickly walk to the computer lab. I sign onto a computer and open the Spanish supersite webpage. It takes five minutes for the site to load and another five minutes to successfully set up an account. Before I can make a username and password, I have to fill in my name, gender, age, address, birth date, telephone number and email address. I then decide to play a few games on Facebook. A few minutes later, I shut down the computer and mentally prepare myself for my next class, Communications: Law and Ethics. As I’m leaving I notice that someone has forgotten to sign off a computer. I look around for the computer user, but the room is empty. I turn to the computer screen and realize it is frozen on a Yahoo: Technology page; I shut down the computer.
Many of the most popular applications, or "apps," on the social-networking site Facebook Inc. have been transmitting identifying information—in effect, providing access to people’s names and, in some cases, their friends’ names—to dozens of advertising and Internet tracking companies, a Wall Street Journal investigation has found. (Wall Street Journal)

My professor for Communication: Law and Ethics is technologically illiterate. I watch as my classmates turn on the television and hide the remote control. Normally, I would disapprove of this immature behavior, but without my glasses I won’t be able to see the chalkboard or take decent notes. The more time wasted, the better. When the teacher finally arrives, he fiddles with the television for twenty minutes before unplugging the monitor. While the class watches in amusement, I listen to an unsettling news story broadcasted on ABC.

_A woman is dead after a crash in southeast Houston, and investigators believe she may have been texting and driving. Police say Cindy Alvarez lost control of her car at Long Drive and Chaffin early Sunday morning and hit some metal poles. She died at the scene. Authorities say her phone was found between her legs._ (ABC)

After class, I walk back to my room and change into comfortable clothing, sweat pants and a sweatshirt. I still cannot find my glasses and I’m beginning to get worried. I’m also hungry. I had had a difficult time ordering lunch because I could not read the small print on the electronic menu.

Depending on the material of the frame and the strength of a lens, glasses can be priced as low as $300; I cannot afford another pair.

I turn on the television and begin to surf the channels, but I am having a difficult time making out the images on the television screen. Irritated, I shut off the television during an advertisement for E!’s reality show, “Bridalplasty.”

_One part "Bridezillas," another part "Extreme Makeover," E!’s new reality T.V. Series "Bridalplasty" pits brides-to-be against each other in a competition for nose jobs, implants, liposuction and the ultimate prize: a celebrity-worthy dream wedding._ (ABC)

As I lay back down in my bed, defeated, I notice my glasses lying on the windowsill. A wave of relief washes over me. I sit upright, put my glasses on, and my vision instantly becomes clear. As I begin texting Brittani the good news, I jump out of bed and start walking to the bathroom. Somehow, I misjudge the distance between my bed and the bathroom and slam face-first into the bathroom door. Laughing, I realize I have learned one thing from today: even with my glasses, I am still blind.

Works Cited


<http://www.cortlandasc.com/neubig-dining-webcam.cfm>