

**His
New Glasses.**

His New Glasses.

He had wanted his new glasses to make a statement.

Now, as he studies his reflection in the art gallery window, he's not sure that they do.

Beneath the Artic-white, halogen-burn of the optician's lights they had looked so good. In the magnified circular mirror on its little swinging arm, he had nodded with satisfaction. They had said then what he had wanted them to say. They said: *'I can afford good things - I deserve good things. I deserve to be noticed.'* That's what his glasses said. And. And here's the important bit, they said: *'I don't conform. I won't be like everyone else. I am different. See these frames - they are different, like I am different.'* That's what they said.

He wonders at the art in the gallery window. It is derivative abstraction of the worst kind.

The assistant had been a slim wisp of a girl with dark, swimmable eyes. She liked his glasses, she said. She had tilted her chin and let a spiral of hair slip across her forehead. They made him "look eminent", she had said.

And, as she had said it, she had carefully replaced the errant curl behind her ear in a way that could only be matched by the *Aurora Borealis* as a moment of natural wonder.

Eminent. What a word for such a young girl to say to a man tipping the wrong side of fifty. He wanted to tell her he still had all the passion of his twenty-year-old self. He hadn't said anything though. Instead he had watched in wonder as she had parted her lips with a sticky-gloss smile and handed him a little bag on a string with his glasses in.

He studies his reflection in the gallery glass - in the part where an oil painting mottled with dreadful dark hues swings. The disturbed reflection of a distorted window is less reliable than the starkness of a true looking glass, he concedes. But, still, maybe his glasses are not what he thought they were.

Do they really say: *'Yes, I can buy this painting if I want to'*? Do they say: *'I know what I am looking at. I am clever, I am special'*?

Their hands had kissed as she handed him the bag. But their love - their oh-so-painfully-brief affair - had withered the moment he had stepped from the shop. She had turned to greet the next customer - a willowy teenage boy with stooped shoulders and popping eyes. Then she had smiled at the boy. With the smile she had sold *to him*.

The painting hanging in the gallery window is all big, sloppy daubs of black and brown and grey. It is like a thousand abstract splatters he has seen before. It is nothing special. Now, he is sure. Now, he is certain: He doesn't like his new glasses after all.