

Dear Sally Hobart Alexander,

Before I read your book, *Do You Remember the Color Blue?*, I worried that when I went blind I would not be able to dream. I worried that I would not remember what anybody or anything looks like. I worried that I would be incapable of doing most things for myself. I might go completely blind one day. The thought has always scared me.

My left eye is totally blind, since around the time I was born. Like you, I had a retinal detachment. The problem is I can't dream out of this eye. It feels like nothingness, like it is just another part of my cheek. I don't even see blackness, nor the constant smoky white fog that you experience. There's nothing. My right eye has glaucoma. I assumed that if it also went blind, it would feel the exact same way as my left eye. I feared that I would be enveloped in infinite nothingness. Forever.

Successful retina and glaucoma surgeries on my right eye didn't ease my worries. It brought them all to the front of my mind. After my recent surgery, right after Thanksgiving, my doctor reminded me what to look out for - random things wriggling around in my vision, similar to what you saw when you were swimming in California.

Relief flooded through me when I read about your experiences going blind. You helped me realize that if I lose sight in my right eye, my life will not be an isolated world of darkness. I will still have great friends and a successful career. I will still dream in full color. My life will be just as fun and exciting. The one thing you said that made my heart sing, is that as long as I practice visualizing, I can keep memories of the ones I love, of indescribable moments, of childhood - laughing and playing.

You also warned me that people might treat me differently. I feel prepared for this reaction. I will make sure to stay independent like you are. You could only see very little when you took your 15 week residential course for newly blind adults. However, I've had braille and cane lessons for as long as I can remember. After reading your book, I am confident that I can use these resources effectively when I need them. Perhaps I'll get a guide dog like Ursula, so I don't have to rely on my cane the entire time.

Ursula sounds like a very special friend, so helpful and loving. I think she would suit my personality very well, since we both like to work hard and play hard. Two summers ago, my friend Annie and I went to puppy camp. I was delighted to meet and take care of black and golden Labrador puppies who were training to be guide dogs for the blind. I fondly remember the retired guide dog, a golden retriever, who was actually losing her vision. I felt sad that she couldn't work anymore, but glad she was loved so much. The care goes both ways. I think the moral for guide dogs is the more you take care of your owner, the more someone will take care of you.

As I read your book, my worries lifted, like mist on a cool summer's day. I have faced my fears about blindness, and whisked them away with your help. Thank you with all my heart for teaching me that if I do go blind, I will still be able to have a formidably happy and successful life.

Sincerely,

Sarah Rose Smale