

## **O for Optician**

I dreaded Mr P, the pock-marked Maths teacher, pointing me out in class, inviting me to work out the equation he had just written on the blackboard. I stammered and stuttered until he gave up and moved on to the next person. Truth was, I couldn't see the blackboard. Eventually, I was found out by the school nurse. I was despatched to the optician and became the reluctant owner of a pair of blue plastic framed specs. I hid them in my underwear drawer and tried not to think about them.

My short sightedness had other unexpected side effects. I had to hope that boyfriends could recognise me waiting outside the cinema as I certainly would not recognise them until they were practically under my nose. The films I saw in those days were always a blur. I have since discovered details in 60s movies that I missed the first time around. After I began working in the library, I saved enough to afford slightly more stylish specs. I bought some dark brown tortoiseshell frames with upswept corners which must have made me look much older than my years, along with my back-combed beehive hairstyle. From then on I wore the specs as a necessity at work but only for work, being far too vain to wear them outside. So I'd get on the wrong bus (couldn't read the number from a distance) and friends would complain I'd cut them dead.

After college, as soon as I began to earn a half way decent salary I made an appointment to have my first pair of contact lens fitted. Those hard plastic circles, with the amazing power to enable me to see well, transformed my life. Admittedly the first few weeks were painful but I persevered, despite the tears, and soon my eyes grew used to the insertion of foreign objects. I felt liberated. No more red marks on the bridge of my nose, no encumbrances separating me from the world. I could see with remarkable clarity. I could view life with confidence and shed those specs.