Protein Deposits on the Eyeball! Run for Your Lives!

Ophthalmologist looks into my eye, eying the interior whence most of my knowledge cometh, and calmly states, “I see protein deposits that are a NORMAL part of aging.” Geezer that I am, the good doc does not want to send a message of alarm. Still, the prescription calls for me to gobble eye vitamins—goodies for the flesh and my pharmacist, and pharmaceutical manufacturers who usually do not write poems. But what do I know? I just won’t drop it, though. You already knew that. So I leap into the Internet and learn that protein deposits in an innocent eyeball are often a marker for dementia and Alzheimer’s. I’m sweating. My eyes are my tools, leading me to images, words, rhymes, and necklaces of poetry. Ahem. This is what I do. Think, before you lose it, says brain. I always thought I would be happy as long as I could see. Now a new template emerges: if I cannot remember words, why will I need those flawed eyes, or the quill pen to write down these INSIGHTS, get it? Not a good day, and the Mets lost.

Mary Kennan Herbert
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Thyroid, Typhoid

Brain looks at computer screen inside skull, cannot come up with the right word, duh, and scratches its head. Flummoxed, feeling brain dead? Must be Alzheimer’s! Don’t you hate it when Mr. Eyeball stares at the cross-hairs and cannot provide the word, the correct label for our griefs and our linguistic murders. Happens a lot, and I am getting older, full-fledged member of the geezer riders, and it’s making me weep to awake to green dots outside, and not the precise vocabulary I once possessed and tamed, trained to do my bidding. Now I wake thinking of mosquito-borne diseases, sneezes, and the language escapes that would make sense of my life once more.

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Editor’s Note: The author writes, “My ophthalmologist’s comment about protein deposits caught my attention and inspired these poems. I teach literature and writing courses at Long Island University.”

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