

The Girl in the Lavender Glasses

by John Zurn

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Play Title: **The Girl in the Lavender Glasses**

Author: John F Zurn

Characters: Marion Birch: young girl with vision disease
Mr. and Mrs. Birch: Marion's parents
Dr. Williams: eye specialist
Sam: Marion's friend
Will and Tony: bullying classmates
Mr. Jones: Marion's teacher
Family in restaurant (Dad, Mom, two small boys)
Martha, Laura, Susan, Allen: gossiping adults
Mr. and Mr. Adams: parents of Tina and Tommy
Tina and Tommy Adams
Officers 1 & 2
Extras: Several Officers and Detectives
Town Mayor
Jack and Sherry: students
Principal Ferguson
Miss Short: Teacher

ACT I: SCENE 1

Setting: Doctor's office. Marion Birch and her parents are sitting across from Dr. Williams in his modest office. Marion is twelve years old and has recently been diagnosed with an extremely rare eye disorder. This disorder makes it very dangerous for Marion to be exposed to any kind of light, both natural and artificial. Because of this, Marion has been wearing a permanent bandage specifically designed to cover her eyes completely. Mr. and Mrs. Birch appear deeply concerned while Dr. Williams flips through Marion's chart.

DR. WILLIAMS

It's been about ten months since your hospitalization, Marion. How are you feeling?

MARION

(sitting silently, pauses, then answers timidly)

I wish I could go back to school. It's really boring stuck in my room all day.

MRS. BIRCH
(interjecting)

Dr. Williams, we've modified our home to keep out all the light, so Marion doesn't need the bandage at home, but she is pretty down. The only person she really has contact with each day, besides us, is her tutor.

DR. WILLIAMS

Marion's depression is to be expected. But we all remember when her symptoms first appeared; the light nearly blinded her, and it could have been much worse. Unfortunately, very little is known about Marion's exceedingly rare condition. I'm very worried that without her bandage and your safeguards at home, Marion might be stricken even if she walks outside for a few moments.

MR. BIRCH

Is there nothing we can do?

DR. WILLIAMS
(more enthusiastic now)

Actually, yes, there is something we could try! I called you to my office today because I have some exciting news. A few weeks ago I contacted an inventor from Switzerland who has been advertising a revolutionary kind of night eye glasses that can transform any form of light. These glasses will actually filter out all types of light rays, especially those harmful to Marion. Marion, would you like to try them?

MARION
(excitedly)

Yes, Doctor Williams! Are the glasses here?

(Dr. Williams takes the rather awkward and unattractive glasses from his desk drawer and then places them over Marion's eyes while simultaneously removing the bandage.)

MARION
(excitedly)

Everything looks purple! I can see everything, and it's all purple!

MRS. BIRCH

Dr. Williams. Are you sure that Marion's eyes will be protected?

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes, Mrs. Birch. As you can see, the sides of the glasses are hugging her cheeks so no light can enter. In addition, since the glasses are lavender in color, they help to facilitate

the transformation of light into safer images. In other words, to be clear, Marion is completely safe as long as she always wears her lavender glasses.

MR. BIRCH

Will Marion still need to wear her lavender glasses, even at night?

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes. Marion must wear her lavender glasses at all times just like she did with the bandage. The natural sunlight and artificial light are still very dangerous for her. If she removes her glasses for any reason, she could die. Of course, in her redesigned home, it will still be safe for her to remove them.

MR. BIRCH

(sheepishly)

How much do they cost?

MRS. BIRCH

(frowning at her husband)

It doesn't matter how much they cost!

DR. WILLIAMS

To be honest, these special glasses would have been very expensive; but the inventor, after hearing about Marion's case, decided to donate them. It's a good thing too. Since Marion's disease is virtually unknown to modern science, there is no reliable diagnosis or cure. Not surprisingly, Marion's glasses would not have been insured.

MR. BIRCH

(with a sigh of relief)

Thank goodness! We would have paid for the glasses; of course, regardless of the cost, but it's nice that we don't have to worry about buying them. The hospital bills are really piling up, and there are so many things we already need to do to take care of Marion.

MRS. BIRCH

(more encouraged now)

Marion, how do you like your purple glasses?

MARION

I love them! Now, can I finally go back to school and play outside like I used to do?

DR. WILLIAMS

(empathetically)

Yes, you can now go back to school and have a normal routine. Your teachers and classmates should also be able to help you readjust to school life.

MRS. BIRCH

What should we tell her teachers? They should really know what's going on, shouldn't they?

DR. WILLIAMS

For now, just tell anyone who asks that you have a doctor's note. Let's not tell folks more than they have to know at this point.

MARION
(ecstatically)

I can't wait to start!

MRS. BIRCH

This is all very exciting, Dr. Williams. When do we need to come back to see you?

DR. WILLIAMS

Telephone my office once a week, but you can also reach me anytime on my cell phone if you need any help.

MARION
(jumps over to Dr. Williams and hugs him warmly)

You're the best, Dr. Williams!

ACT I: SCENE 2

Setting: Marion's Middle school Homeroom Class. Having been home schooled for most of the previous school year, Marion is self-conscious in class and has trouble making friends. Her lavender glasses are so large and heavy that they look more like goggles than eye glasses. As the scene opens, the students are stationed at their desks preparing for the day.

WILL
(teasing Marion as he talks with Tony)

It looks like goggle girl is ignoring us today. Maybe she's afraid we'll swipe her purple glasses.

TONY

Be careful, Will! The teacher's purple pet might tattle on us again! I don't want detention like last time.

MARION

(sits silently for a moment, then glares at the boys.)

If you keep teasing me, I'll tell on both of you.

MR. JONES

(finally walks toward the boys)

What's going on here? Didn't I tell you boys to leave Marion alone? Didn't I give you two detentions last week? Marion, were these two pestering you again?

MARION

(hesitates, then replies)

Couldn't you just move their seats?

MR. JONES

That won't be necessary. William and Tony will remain right here where they can learn to behave with proper respect toward others. In addition, they have both earned two added weeks of detention. Perhaps, now they will learn to be more tolerant of people who are different.

(Will and Tony appear stunned about their detentions. As soon as Mr. Jones turns his back, the boys make threatening gestures attempting to frighten Marion. They also whisper to their nearby classmates, and before long, the entire classroom is out of control.)

WILL

That purple princess sure gets things stirred up! She should go back to her nursery school at home, so maybe daddy and mommy can babysit her. Then we'll all be happy!

TONY

(laughing)

I wonder if her home school teacher is purple. Maybe she has purple glasses too. I'm sorry, I mean "lavvvender" glasses!

(As the class descends into chaos, a student named Sam jumps out of a seat and confronts Will and Tony.)

SAM

You guys need to shut up and back off. I'm tired of you picking on Marion every day! If you don't leave her alone, you'll be sorry!

WILL

Oh, really? What are you going to do? Report me to the principal?

MARION

(interjecting)

No, but I might tell everyone that you have a little crush on Sue Ann.

WILL

Shut up!

SAM

I'm just saying. I don't want to tell everyone your secret, but Marion is my neighbor, and you guys won't leave her alone.

TONY
(angrily)

You can't threaten us!

WILL

Shut up, Tony! They're not worth the trouble. We've got better things to do.

(As more misbehaving students become unruly, the principal, Principal Ferguson, enters the room and the wayward students quietly return to their seats. As the scene ends, the principal motions for Mr. Jones to follow him into the hallway for a private conversation.)

ACT I: SCENE 3

Setting: Marion and Sam are sitting alone in a booth at a local fast food restaurant. Up until now, Marion, has been concealing a secret that is so provocative, she has told nobody else, not even her parents. However, since Sam has been very supportive, she considers telling him about her unspoken gift.

MARION

Thanks for standing up for me last week, but you didn't need to worry. I'm used to the teasing by now.

SAM
(feigning sarcasm)

You're welcome! Just let me know if there's something else I can NOT help you with, Marion!

MARION
(sighs deeply)

Sorry. Actually, I do have something else that I want to tell you. You're probably not going to believe me, so don't say a word until I've explained the whole thing.

SAM
(jokingly)

Okay, Miss Mysterious. Go ahead.

MARION

I mean it, Sam.

SAM

All right. All right. I promise.

MARION

After I started wearing my lavender glasses, I discovered that I have a secret ability.

SAM

What kind of ability?

MARION
(more assertively)

You told me you would wait until I was finished explaining! Honestly, Sam. You have the attention span of a two year old sometimes!

SAM

You're right. Sorry. Go on.

MARION

Anyway, soon after I started wearing my glasses, I realized that I could "hear" the conversations of people long after they had gone. For maybe as long as twenty-four hours - I don't know for sure - I can remember the discussions of people at the places they were present during an earlier time.

SAM

I don't understand.

MARION

It first happened at home, just before my birthday. I was sitting on the couch when I heard my parents talking about a laptop I was going to get. I didn't ask for the computer or even know about it. Sure enough, the next day, I got a laptop for a present.

SAM

But you could have overheard them.

MARION

No, I didn't. I was out riding my bike when they were talking, so I couldn't have heard them. Besides, I heard their conversation when I was at home alone long after the conversation actually happened.

SAM

Are you sure you didn't imagine all that? You can't prove anything you're saying.

MARION

But I can and I will. I'm going to leave our table and walk outside. You pick any table from the other side of the room and listen carefully for a couple of minutes. Make sure you can hear what they're saying. After they're gone, come and get me, and I'll tell you what they've said.

SAM

This is really strange, Marion! But I really want to believe you. Go ahead and leave the restaurant, then come back in a couple of minutes.

(Marion walks out of the diner, and Sam casually sits down at a booth that is farthest from the door. He carefully observes a young married couple and their two small boys, as they are about to leave. He listens intently to their conversations and tries to remember all he can. After they're gone, Sam walks outside and waves for Marion to return. After a moment, she reenters the restaurant and sits down in the exact booth where the young couple had been sitting. She then immediately begins scribbling in a notebook while simultaneously speaking.)

MARION

(Scribbling and whispering, Marion reveals the family's conversation.)

- What time is soccer practice?
- It was canceled, remember.
- Oh, good, we've got time to get groceries.
- Jimmy! Stop playing with your fries and eat them!
- Okay, okay
- Why was it canceled?
- I dunno.
- Honestly, Bill. His fries are all over the table!
- Yes, Yes. Jimmy, eat your fries or no TV tonight.

-I have to go to the bathroom.

-It can wait till you've finish your lunch.

-Paul, take your brother to the bathroom and then help him with his coat, we're leaving. We'll take the fries with us...

SAM

(almost shouting)

Enough! I believe you! I don't know how you did it, but you're right. Why haven't you told anyone?

MARION

I've got enough problems at school already. Besides, no one would believe me even if I did tell them.

SAM

But what about your parents? Shouldn't they know?

MARION

My parents have been very worried about my health for almost a year. If I did try to explain my ability to them, and they couldn't understand, I'd be taken to even more doctor appointments. And I've seen enough doctors to last me for a life time.

SAM

I suppose you're right. But couldn't you use your ability to secretly freak out some of the people who tease you at school? You could tell about their secret problems that would embarrass some unsuspecting tough guys. You could even find out which students are cheating or stealing from lockers. If you told the principal anonymously, it might help you defend yourself, or at least you could get revenge.

MARION

Yes, I could. That's how I knew about Will's would be girlfriend even though I didn't tell anybody. To be honest, a person's private conversations are not meant to be heard by others. Discussions with you and my parents, for example, are nobody else's business. As a rule, I think it's wrong to talk about people behind their backs. Gossip almost never stresses the good qualities of a person.

SAM

I still don't get it.

MARION

Suppose my ability is a unique gift. If I misuse this ability for selfish reasons, I might not be given the chance to use it when it's really needed.

SAM

What does that mean? How are you going to use it?

MARION

Everyone has a purpose, Sam. I believe that someday my secret talent will be needed if I only have patience and faith. Otherwise, I may never discover all I need to do.

SAM

Now I think I understand. You're going to need your "hearing" gift in the future, so you must not ruin it by harming others.

MARION

That's right. Actually, to be honest, I do use my ability once in a while just to stay in practice.

SAM

That must be fun!

MARION

Yes, it can be – sometimes. I feel kind of like a spy who is invisible to people around her. It's more fun in town than at school though. Sometimes, I hear some pretty awful things about my glasses in the cafeteria or in my homeroom class.

SAM

I want you to promise me one thing. Whenever the moment comes for you to use your power, I want you to let me know, so I can help you.

MARION

I can't promise, Sam. But if I can tell you, I will.

SAM

I'll take that as a yes, or at least a probably.

MARION

Okay, Sam. Let's call it a probably.

ACT I: SCENE 4

Setting: Town Library. Three employees are standing around the Xerox machine at the back of the library. They're all quietly gossiping about Marion and her family.

ALLEN
(flirting)

What's so secret that you have to whisper? I'm guessing that it's more than library rules you're all discussing.

SUSAN

We're not whispering. We're just quietly discussing Marion Birch, the child with the odd looking glasses.

MARTHA

Some people say she has some kind of disease that could be contagious.

LAURA

That can't be right. If she were contagious, the county health department would have isolated her long before now.

SUSAN

I heard that they don't know what's wrong with her. Where are those people from anyway? I've never heard of a Birch family living around here until they came.

ALLEN

I'm sure they're all right. They did come from Smithville though, and I don't know much about that town.

MARTHA

It doesn't matter where they came from now. What matters is what disease that girl has, and if it might spread to our own children.

SUSAN

Maybe she's already given some virus to one of us, and we just don't know it yet.

LAURA

That's impossible! If somebody had the same illness as Marion Birch, we'd all know it by now.

ALLEN

You know, come to think about it, I asked Mrs. Birch about her daughter when I ran into her at the grocery store. She seemed very unwilling to talk about it. In fact, every time I see the parents, I ask about Marion, but they keep avoiding the subject. It's like they have some secret they're hiding. It's probably nothing, but it is a little suspicious.

MARTHA

I just hope our school district isn't paying for those fancy glasses. That happens, you know. Some parents deliberately move into towns like ours, just so they can take advantage of the system. Sometimes I wonder if that girl even needs those awful looking goggles. It wouldn't surprise me if she wears them just to show off. For all we know, she's wearing them more to get attention, and she has no genuine need for them at all.

SUSAN

Doesn't Mrs. Birch earn money working at the church?

MARTHA

She "volunteers" at the church. She's not qualified to be a secretary. But I think Mr. Birch works two jobs. That's probably why they're remodeling the inside of their house all the time.

LAURA

Must be nice! By the way, have you noticed how the entire family avoids the rest of us even when we say hello? It's like they think they're better than the rest of us.

ALLEN

Well, Laura. Not everybody's a busybody like you. All and all, they seem pleasant enough even if they do keep to themselves.

MARTHA

Just as long as they realize they're new in town and have no right to change the way we do things. Then I'll be okay with them, I suppose.

LAURA

And I'll be okay with them, as long as their kid, Marion, doesn't give my son some kind of disease.

ALLEN

Honestly, ladies. You're so suspicious. When they want to tell us about the purple glasses, they will. Until then we just need to be friendly until they're ready to tell us more about themselves.

MARTHA

You're right, I suppose. You know what they say patience is a virtue. I do think it's wise, however, to tell the mayor our concerns, just in case he doesn't know. You know how he feels about being "kept in the dark" about such things.

SUSAN

Agreed!

ACT II: SCENE 1

Setting: This scene takes place in the Birch family living room. Mr. Birch is alone on the couch reading. After a moment, Mrs. Birch enters the room and sits down.

MR. BIRCH

Marion seems to be doing all right despite all the teasing. I don't think we need to move on just yet, do you?

MRS. BIRCH

That depends. I would hate to move again, because Marion would have to start over at a new school. I would also hate to be uprooted right now since we don't have any savings. Marion's medical bills keep arriving in the mail almost every day. But, you know, this town hasn't been very friendly to any of us, and that hasn't helped matters. Maybe we should tell people about Marion's condition and be done with the secrecy once and for all.

MR. BIRCH

Absolutely not! At this point, everyone's just gossiping about something they don't understand. If we tell anybody, we can't "untell" them if they misinterpret what we say and take it out on Marion. Right now, they're forced to be more guarded around Marion than they might be if they actually knew the truth. Besides, once they do know, they'll still find some way to gossip anyway. In addition, Dr. William's is the best doctor we've ever had for Marion. I really don't think we should leave town and jeopardize that relationship. Please, let's leave everything the way it is, for now.

MRS. BIRCH

That's fine, but if this town becomes more hostile to any of us, especially Marion, we're going to have to move on.

MR. BIRCH

I agree. Let's see how things go this year. Marion seems to be able to take care of herself better now, and she also has her friend Sam for support.

(Suddenly, as if on cue, Sam bursts through the door without knocking. He immediately realizes that he shouldn't have rushed into the house.)

SAM

Whoops! I'm sorry I ran through the door, but I need to talk to Marion.

MR. BIRCH

That's okay, Sam. We were just talking about you. Now, what is so important that you need to run through the house like a wild elephant?

SAM

(centering himself)

I just found out that Marion and I are working on a project together at school, and I wanted to be the first to tell her.

MRS. BIRCH

(seems persuaded by Sam's fabrication)

Marion's in the garage organizing her CDs. I'm sure she'll be glad to take a break to talk to you. If you're going somewhere, Sam, be sure to tell Marion to be home for dinner.

SAM

Yes, Mrs. B.

(Sam scurries out of the house in the same reckless manner he rushed in and runs to the garage.)

ACT II: SCENE 2

Setting: Marion and Sam are in the Birch family garage staring out the window. They are both nervous as Sam's tone is ominous.

SAM

(anxiously)

Something terrible has happened.

MARION

(sensing Sam's fear)

What's happened? And why are you being so dramatic?

SAM

Two children are missing from the park.

MARION

What two children?

SAM

Tina and Tommy Adams! They've been kidnapped!

MARION

Kidnapped? Sam, this isn't another one of your attempts at humor, is it?

SAM

I'm not kidding! The Adams kids were kidnapped from the playground at the park this morning!

MARION

How do you know they were kidnapped? Did somebody see them taken from there?

SAM

Of course not! But they were there at the park earlier today, and they never came home.

MARION

(finally taking Sam seriously)

Are you saying that those two kids are missing from the park and have been kidnapped, or are they just lost somewhere?

SAM

Nobody knows for sure. But there have been detectives and police officers searching the park for evidence for over two hours. They haven't found anything, and the parents are really scared! I was thinking maybe you could help.

MARION

(already realizing she might be useful)

We must go to the park and see what is actually happening there. But we mustn't say or do anything that might make the police suspicious or angry. Agreed?

SAM

Yes, yes, we agree. But what if the detectives won't let us into the park? What can we do?

MARION

We wait. The police can't close the park forever. Everybody uses it, Sam.

SAM

But you have your ability to hear conversations for only a short time. The children have already been gone almost ten hours. Surely, you can't wait too long!

MARION

I know. I know. If I absolutely have to, I'll try and find a way to sneak on to the playground before dark.

SAM

Couldn't you finally tell the truth about yourself?

MARION

Certainly not! I doubt they'd believe me. They might even consider me to be a weirdo or even a suspect. They might think I'm seeking attention by solving a crime that I had committed myself!

SAM

You're right. But let's go to the park anyway to find out what's going on.