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MATT SOBER
columnist



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Read 'em and weep

By [Matt Sober](#)

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Friday, December 29, 2006

You know, if they really wanted to torture these suspected terrorists, they wouldn't send them to some secret CIA prison in Europe.

They'd send them to the eye doctor.

Yikes. By the time I got finished with my yearly exam a couple of weeks ago, I was ready to confess to being the 20th hijacker.

Perhaps you've endured a similar circumvention of the Geneva Conventions at your optometrist. You're escorted into a tiny, darkened room filled with large, strange-looking apparatus. They close the door behind you, sit you down in a chair and begin the interrogation.

"Do you sleep in your contacts?" "How often do you take them out?" "What kind of solution do you use?"

"Are you sure you're telling the truth?"

Then they get down to business.

"Cover your left eye."

"What, no blindfold? No barking German shepherds about to break free of their handlers?"

"Of course not. Just use your hand. Then try and read me the bottom line on that eye chart while I sit here and pretend not to be alarmed about how badly your vision has deteriorated."

You proceed to misidentify Q's as O's and E's as F's, and at that point, your spirit is broken. You'll do anything they want.

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Which is why you don't even hesitate when they order you to lean forward, rest your chin in a plastic fixture and press your face against a cold, black hunk of machinery. There is no choice but to fit your eyeballs into a pair of circular glass lenses.

"Keep your head still!" "Look straight ahead!" "No blinking!"

The tension mounts. You detect the sound of knobs clicking into position. You're not sure what's coming, but you know it's unlikely to be pleasant.

Flash! An explosion of white light knocks you backward.

No, that wasn't a supernova you just witnessed.

They just needed a picture of your eyeballs.

Disoriented -- not to mention highly vulnerable to persuasion -- you are turned to a similar apparatus situated to the left of the first one. Only this one has long, plastic pieces sticking out of it that look suspiciously like the barrels of tiny little air rifles. And by the time your head is locked into place, they're in dangerously close proximity to your eyeballs.

Pooooof! Your head snaps back.

You've just been blasted at close range with with enough force to lift a space shuttle from the ground. You feel like crying, but your eyes are already watering so badly that you can't.

Suddenly, however, the eye chart seems to be trying to tell you something:

C A L L T H E A C L U

Matt Sober is a copy editor for the Tribune-Review. E-mail him at msober@tribweb.com, and include the word "story" in the subject line.

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