Autobiography of My Hungers

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i lost my eyesight in Oaxaca for three days. A type of cyst on the eyelid I had been ignoring for months finally caught up with me, and so I had emergency surgery just hours after arriving by plane. The necessary blindfold after the removal of the cyst added to the injury—I’d be unable to devour the Oaxacan sights I had heard about for decades—though my sense of smell remained intact and I could appreciate the spices even if I couldn’t see the artistry of the arrangement on the plate.

The textures made more mysterious the bites of food in my mouth but the flavors were dizzying and I realized then that the most important part had been taken away: that immediate pleasure of watching the meal being served. That initial excitement was very animal-like. Cats and dogs, goats and pigs: all responded with the same instinctual bliss at the impending moment of overcoming their hunger.

All I had was the sound of the loaded plate striking the surface of the table, the scent of the server’s perfume, and sometimes the subtle hint of a temperature change on my face. I had been robbed of recognizing portion, of knowing ahead of time whether I’d go to bed with a satisfied belly, or whether I’d have to reach into the hotel drawer in the middle of the night for the granola bars I left sitting on top of the Bible.