

Main Headline:

At This Very Moment, Some Poor Soul Languishes in Squalor, Darkness and Despair Because They Are Blind

Sub-Headline:

Their Fate is in Your Hands

Dear []

That's a heavy burden to lay at your feet, we know.

And forgive us for doing so, but you see – we are bearing the very same burden. Because right now, there are 45 million people suffering from blindness worldwide. Half of them – more than 22 million people – are blind because of cataracts. But we could restore sight to every single one of those 22 million...

If we only had the resources.

Subhead:

Cataracts Are the Leading Cause of Blindness

You're probably familiar with the scourge of cataracts. It's the leading cause of blindness, and odds are good that someone you hold dear has been afflicted with this disease.

Cataracts are caused by a clouding of the eye's lens. If you were developing cataracts, you'd first notice a bit of blurring of your vision. Colors would begin to lose their luster. You'd still be able to see, but your vision would gradually worsen. Eventually, it would be as if you were constantly trying to see through the haze of a frosted windowpane. But the layer of frost would gradually thicken, and your vision would grow blurrier.

And then one day – with the cataract left untreated – you'd become totally blind.

Subhead:

That Won't Happen to You

We're blessed to live in a society where treatment for cataracts is readily available. Treatment for cataracts involves no more than a relatively simple, 30-minute procedure to replace your eye's natural lens with an artificial lens.

In fact, for you and me, a diagnosis of cataracts is really not much more than a nuisance. It might even be that you're able to read this letter only because you were fortunate enough to have been treated for cataracts yourself.

But if you happened to live in a society where treatment was unavailable or unattainable, then you'd be doomed to total, irrevocable blindness.

Subhead:

Just Imagine...

After the cataracts took your sight, you'd be unable to make a living, unable to provide for yourself or your family. You'd be reduced to begging, living on the charity of others. You'd never see the faces of your loved ones again – your husband or wife, your children, your grandchildren. No more sunrises or sunsets, no more rainbows, no more fleecy white clouds in a brilliant blue sky. No more of the magnificent sights this world has to offer. Just darkness.

And you'd agonize over the pain of having become a burden to your family.

In the developing nation you lived in, life had always been a constant struggle against poverty. Even in the best of times, it took the efforts of everyone in the family, day in and day out, just to eke out the necessities of life.

But now, in your blindness and your helplessness, you can only add to your family's struggles. It's not your fault, of course, but you have made it even more difficult for them to survive. And you will live with the darkness, the helplessness and the guilt for the rest of your life.

Unless...

Subhead:

There is Hope

We've shared a bit of our burden with you; now let us share some of our joy.

We're SEE International, and every single year we rescue thousands of people from the very fate you've just imagined. Since our founding in 1974 we've been privileged to restore the sight of more than 390,000 people. In fact, in just the last year we restored the sight of more than 14,000 people in 44 countries.

We organize, manage and support traveling clinics that journey from country to country and village to village. At each stop, our volunteer ophthalmologists perform free cataract surgeries for as many as 200 people. Those that we treat would have no other hope of ever seeing again.

The blind come to our clinics being guided or even carried, completely dependent upon others. They leave our clinic on the very same day with their eyesight restored. And, oh – if we could only share the joy that they express! Photos just don't do justice!

But you can well imagine...

Someone who's been blind for years, even decades in some cases, suddenly able to see the faces of their loved ones again. Suddenly able to relieve their family of the burden they had become, and instead once again contribute to their family's welfare.

Subhead:

You Wouldn't Believe What it Costs

Each year, our clinics travel hundreds of thousands of miles and use millions upon millions of dollars worth of medical supplies and logistical support. If you were to guess the per person cost of restoring sight to each of those we help, what would you guess – \$1,000, \$2,000, \$5,000?

In fact, it's less than \$100 per person.

We're very proud of that fact. And very grateful. Because it's only through the generosity of our volunteers and corporate contributors that we're able to give the gift of sight at a cost to us of *less than one hundred dollars*.

All of our ophthalmologists and other volunteers donate their time and services for free. They even pay their own travel expenses. And nearly all of our medical supplies are donated by generous corporate sponsors. That's how we get the cost down to less than \$100 per person.

And where does that \$100 come from? Kind-hearted people just like you.

But here's the bad news: Being able to eliminate a person's blindness for less than \$100 is somewhat of a two-edged sword. Because that also means that for the lack of only \$100 dollars, someone is condemned to live in darkness for the rest of their life. And that's the burden we bear. Though we have helped many, there are *so* many more that we cannot help. We just don't have the resources.

Subhead:

Will You Help Us?

Think of it...just a \$100 contribution means that you *personally* will be responsible for restoring someone's sight. Someone who would remain blind for the rest of their life without your generosity.

And if you can only give \$50, then your contribution along with someone else's \$50 contribution will save someone from a lifetime of blindness. *Any* amount will help. Any amount you give will reduce the number of unfortunate souls who must live out the remainder of their lives in darkness and misery.

You'll never feel better about a donation, and there'll never be a more grateful recipient of your charity than the person (or persons) that you save from a lifetime of darkness.

Thank you for your compassion and for your help.

P.S.

We tend to think of cataracts as being an affliction of only the elderly, but in fact, 10% of the people we treat are children. So 10% of your donation will be used to restore the sight of young children, giving them the gift of a full and normal life. Just one more reason to feel great about your generous donation.

SIDEBAR:

You can be assured that your hard-earned money will be used ethically and resourcefully. In fact, SEE has been awarded the Seal of Excellence by the Independent Charities of America for its lofty standards of accountability, program effectiveness and cost effectiveness. Less than ½ of 1 percent of all non-profits qualify for this prestigious honor.

And in fact, less than 3% of donated funds are spent on SEE's organizational overhead. That means that for every dollar donated, more than 97 cents goes directly toward restoring someone's sight. Few charities can even come close to matching such an efficient use of donated funds.