



Vicious CIRCLES

You may be an all-star at work, on the fast track to corner officedom, but those dark shadows under your eyes tell your friends and colleagues a different story. *Lea Goldman* takes on tired eyes—once and for all

Now and again, following publication of an article, I'm invited to appear on TV to chat about it. I'm not ashamed to admit that my favorite part happens a half-hour

before we go live, in the makeup chair, when I am transformed from ordinary me into a teased-and-tousled glambot. I like my TV face like I like my pasta—heavy and overdone. So there I was, comfortably ensconced in the chair at

the *Today* show, chattering about Hoda's crazy-toned arms as my makeup gal dug around a black satchel and pulled out a pot of concealer—"the heavy-duty stuff," she called it. Using her index finger, she scooped out a meaty glob and spread it every which way around my eyes. Punched walls in frat houses require less spackling. "Those are some serious circles," she muttered. "Rough night, huh?"

I get that a lot. Trouble is, it's been years since I weathered the kind of rough night she was hinting at. The last time I partied hard—*do people still say that?*—was pre-Y2K, when a blind date suggested we snort a line of Ritalin and stay up until the Sullivan Street Bakery opened at dawn. (That ought to tell you all you need to know about the men I used to date—carb-loving mama's boys whose idea of a wild night meant abusing their study aids.) I've long since settled down, had a baby. Now it's lights out at 11:30 p.m., rise and shine by 6 or 7. For a busy working mom, I'm surprisingly well-rested. But you'd never guess it by looking at the manholes under my eyes.

I wouldn't get too hung up on my dark circles were it not for comments like the one from that makeup artist. Concerned coworkers sometimes tell me I look pale. I don't really—maybe just in comparison to the deep purple half-moons that have taken up residence under my eyes. But there's a subtext to these remarks: that I look perpetually exhausted and frazzled, that if you were to follow me home, you'd find a squalling baby, a sink full of dishes, and past-due notices for the cable and heat. Dark circles suggest that I don't have my shit together, the facial equivalent of showing up for an interview with a run in your stockings.

A couple years ago, I started wearing glasses all the time, though I only need them for driving. Silly, I know, but the frames do a decent job of obscuring my under-eye shadows. I've also tried every concealer on the market, from drugstore cheapies to hard-to-find imports with French >>

prepositions in their names. I never intended to take it any further than that, but isn't it funny how the rules we invent for ourselves when we're young and cocksure—I'll never have a face-lift!—mellow with time? I once swore I'd die before I'd own a sweater set, that I'd sooner live in an ashram than even consider leaving the city. Well, you know where this is going, right?

Last month, I made an appointment with Dr. David Colbert, a soft-spoken, Matthew Modine-ish Manhattan dermatologist and founder of Colbert M.D. Skincare, a favorite among the city's fashion set. (Before I can even ask the question, he nods impatiently. "Yes, Stephen Colbert's my cousin. We're not close, but I can get tickets whenever I want.") What the good doctor lacks in humor, he makes up for in brisk efficiency.) Because I had little fat or collagen below my eyes, the purple facial muscle was visible beneath the skin, he explained. Genetics aren't solely to blame: Alcohol, smoking, quick weight loss, lack of sleep, and dehydration are also factors. But aging, with its attendant thinning and sagging, is what really drives most patients to Colbert's office. The fix: Restylane fillers, which, at \$1,800, would minimize my Captain Sparrow eyes for as long as a year. "You're a great candidate," he told me.

While Colbert filled up his syringe and snapped out the air bubbles, I considered bolting. Not because I worried about my age—that at 35, maybe I was too young to be nudging open Pandora's box. (Today, under-eye circles, tomorrow, the Ray Liotta Special.) Nope, my issue was way more visceral: The prospect of needles beneath my eyes evoked Mengele-levels of agita. Cue the flop sweat.

A word about the pain: Many fillers, including Restylane, are made with a numbing agent that mutes some of the hurt. But not all of it. And even after Colbert swabbed the ultrasensi-

tive under-eye area with a topical anesthetic, those 10 or so pricks of Restylane stung like 100 rubber-band snaps to the face. More unsettling: I could hear the needle move beneath my skin and the *whoosh* of the filler flooding the hollow space.

When it was over, Colbert held up a mirror for me to *ooh* and *ahh*. Still

"THOSE 10 OR SO PRICKS OF RESTYLANE STUNG LIKE 100 RUBBER-BAND SNAPS."

reeling from the woozy mix of adrenaline and fear, I only pretended to be impressed. Truth was, I couldn't see a damn difference. He sent me home with ice packs and his own soothing cream made with horse chestnut extract. (Arnica tablets, available in most health food stores, also reduce the swelling.) I ducked out wearing sunglasses, certain that if I pulled them off, I'd be bum-rushed by good Samaritans wanting to escort me to the nearest women's shelter.

I wish I could say the results have been astounding, that minus the manholes, I was transformed into a Jewish Gisele. Hardly. Once the

swelling subsided, I was startled by how much I looked exactly the same, only brighter, healthier. The shadows aren't entirely gone, but they're much, much fainter and virtually invisible with concealer. My couples therapist told me I looked "positively glowing" and wondered if I was pregnant. ("Ha!" my husband snickered, a bit too loudly.) Some coworkers asked if I'd lost weight. (Always a good sign.) But I just don't see it. Maybe I'm so inured to *Real Housewives*-inspired cosmetic work that I can't appreciate the subtlety of the treatment, or maybe I expected too much. Though second and third rounds of injections are typical for fillers, Colbert advised against it when I saw him again a week later. "You're young and new to this. I think you look great, so I'd leave it be," he said. At the time I appreciated his conservative approach. And, frankly, the procedure is extravagant for someone whose costliest splurge (second to Restylane) happened at Ikea. So I doubt I'll be seeing Colbert any time soon, but I'm not foolish enough to swear to it. **mc**



SHADOW BUSTERS

1. Elemental Herbology Eye Elixir, \$60.
2. Clarins Total Eye Concentrate, \$82.
3. Colbert M.D. Nourish Eye Cream, \$110.
4. Clinique Even Better Eyes Dark Circle Corrector, \$40.
5. Smashbox Photo Finish Hydrating Under Eye Primer, \$29.
6. Chanel Ultimate Regeneration Eye Cream, \$225.
7. Laboratoire Remède Alchemy Advanced Night Crème, \$165.
8. Restorsea Revitalizing Eye Cream, \$85.
9. Origins Plantcription Anti-aging Eye Cream, \$44.