

Dinty W. Moore

Transparent Eyeball

TOKYO, Japan (Reuters) —Japanese scientists have succeeded in growing artificial eyeballs for the first time, Kyodo news agency said on Saturday.

Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, Makato Asashima cups a tadpole in his uncertain hands.

Just an hour earlier, the biologist determined that an artificial eyeball had indeed connected itself to this tadpole's optic nerve, and now Asashima rushes blindly through his own front door, to show this odd miracle to his American wife.

"*Ta da i ma,*" he announces. "I am home."

He blurts out the good news, forgetting to offer his wife a polite bow.

Emmie, holding a thick white towel, looks into her husband's cupped hands, and after a moment asks, "Where is the other eye?"

"Here." Asashima, careful not to spill any of the small puddle of water that sustains the tadpole's life, must point with his white-bearded chin. "Here it is."

"No," Emmie scolds. "The one he was born with?"

"We removed it." Asashima's voice drops in volume. "For science."

"And where did *this* eye come from?"

"An embryo." His voice grows even softer. "From the cells of an embryo."

"And why did you do that?"

Now Asashima can barely speak. "I have created an eyeball, out of cells, Emmie. Embryonic cells. No one else has ever managed such a feat."

"Why would they?"

Asashima winces, then brushes past his wife, hurries to the back of the house, drops the creature and the remaining water into a small lacquered bowl.

Emmie follows, uses her towel to wipe a minor spill.

"The tadpole can see," Asashima pleads. "Do you understand? This tadpole with the artificial eye can see as well as you or I."

"Yes, love," Emmie answers. "You have blinded the tadpole, and now he can see. Are you happy now? Dinner is ready."

