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CUMBERLAND

by

Megan Gannon

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

(Women's and Gender Studies)

Under the Supervision of Professor Jonis Agee

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2012

CUMBERLAND

Megan Gannon, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2012

Adviser: Jonis Agee

Set in a fictional town on the coast of Georgia in July of 1972, *Cumberland* is the story of two fifteen-year-old twin sisters, Ansel and Isabel (“Izzy”) Mackenzie, who have lived with their frugal, eccentric grandmother since the age of eight when their parents were killed in a car accident and Isabel was paralyzed. Over the years, the burden of caring for her sister has fallen increasingly on Ansel. However, as Ansel cultivates a romantic relationship with a local boy, as well as an artistic apprenticeship with a visiting photographer, her growing desires for selfhood and independence compromise her ability to care for her sister, thereby threatening their sororal connection, and ultimately, Isabel’s life.