

2000


Reflections 2000

Kelly Harrison

Brooke Buchanon

Jennifer Carlile

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REFLECTIONS 2000

*A Literary Journal of
Gardner-Webb University*

Reflections

Volume 32
2000

Editor

Kelly Harrison

Art Director

Brooke Buchanan

Assistant Editors

Erin Boyd

Sarah Donaldson

Mary Gettys

Sasha Habel

Brian Robertson

Haley Tycer

Jason Whisnant

Abby Wolford

Starr Wright

Faculty Advisor

Jennifer Carlile

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Poetry Contest

Each year, the English Department of Gardner-Webb University sponsors a poetry contest for students in conjunction with the publication of *Reflections*. This year, awards were given to three students whose work was judged excellent. All works were judged anonymously. This year's poetry judges were Lynn Keeter, June Hobbs, and Ed McKnight.

Poetry Awards

First Place:	Jason Whisnant, "Shore Leave"
Second Place:	Kelly Harrison, "Love Poem"
Third Place:	Sarah Donaldson, "My Life According to You"

Art Contest

Each year, the Art Department of Gardner-Webb University sponsors an art contest for undergraduate students who have submitted work to be included in *Reflections*. The art judges were Susan Carlisle Bell, Doug-Knotts, and Chris Parsons.

Art Awards:

First Place:	Mary Jones, (Cover Painting)
Second Place:	Meryl Scott
Third Place:	Ashlie Pence
Honorable Mention:	Roger Kollock

Photography Contest

This year, the Communication Studies Department sponsored a contest for undergraduate students' submissions of photography. The judges were Ted Vaughn and Bob Carey.

Photography Awards:

First Place:	Joy Marinelli
Second Place:	Joy Marinelli
Third Place:	Meryl Scott

Dear readers,

Writers use poetry and fiction not only to please, to convey the everyday in sensory images, and not even just to confuse you, probably to your surprise. Writers also utilize these methods of communication to confront serious issues. I gladly found the Gardner-Webb community full of society-conscious individuals as I read through the submissions my editors and I received, and unfortunately only a limited amount of material could be selected. The poems and pieces of fiction you'll read address gender issues, rape, ethics in war, alienation from society, and the emotional baggage that accompanies intimate relationships. Besides confronting and dealing with such issues, these writers have also employed creative poetic devices and touching prose to speak to you, the reader. I hope you find the beauty in this work. I hope some of it makes you smile with a deep-felt satisfaction and appreciation, and I hope some of it makes you think. Most of all, I hope you hear the voices in each piece of writing and discover what each writer, or artist, is trying to communicate.

Your editor,

Kelly Harrison

College Freshmen

Summer Jeffcoat

Open sunroof frames
Never-aging Orion
And invites
New November
To tickle our throats
As we belt out
The melodies
Of country freedom
That pour through cracked speakers.

With closed eyes,
And hands pressed on chests,
We harmonize our independence.

Twelve years of accomplishment
Dangle from the rearview mirror,
And bright headlights illuminate
One dark mile at a time

While we sing “Wide Open Spaces.”

My Life: According to You*Sarah Donaldson*

I am clearly confused.
I wonder what you mean,
As I wander through the woods.
The cold air burns my face
The hot air from my lungs makes smoke in my
eyes.
I really hated the way you said
That you loved me
But I loved the hateful expression you used
When you said it.
You made me remember
to forget my self,
And I learned in an instant
That I knew nothing of you
Every look made me shrink.
No words ever made my enraged heart larger.
I silently scream "It is not fair"
But you do not hear my mind.
I am absolutely sure that I have no idea
Where I am going
And the map that you have forced upon me
Is full of invisible roads
From where I am
To where you want me
To be.

Tree*Courtnie Walton*

Rooted in the clay
 that stains my carpet,
 It sits.
 Peeling layers of life
 Sprout green, red orange hands
 Waving at the wind.
 Unmovable.
 Embedded in generations.
 It makes a great third base—
 So steadfast.
 Hide and seek from Cowboys and Indians,
 It drinks in adversity

L
 I
 K
 E
 R
 A
 I
 N.

Perspective*Courtnie Walton*

say it again.
 tell me how i should feel.
 give your two-cent answer
 to my billion-dollar question.
 i dare you to see what i see.
 write songs about it.
 quote cliches,
 tidings of joy.
 didn't anyone tell you?
 you aren't God.

Craving

Lori Moore

i drove 20 minutes
for
potato salad &
doritos
i got an
empty tank of gas
and a
burned out
headlight

Best Man

Lori Moore

walk down
that aisle
come on
walk to me
sweet man

paper-cut

Jason Whisnant

i think i could be a whore.
selling my body to some
roughed-up chick with edges
jagged from the inside.
i could be roughed-up too,
if i could
 close my eyes
 and memorize
the way she holds -me-
a lonely body below me;
 she needs (love).
and, damn, it'd be so
hard to leave

alone again.

**New Zealand,
You're So Far Away**

Mary E. Gettys

You leave me speechless,
 struck stupid,
 without a functional thought,
I forget my name...
Revealed by your presence
with a glance into my heart.

I can't explain myself to you,
 lacking style like Cyrano,
 missing that Barbie doll look,
But in my heart,
where it really counts,
a friend told me once that
I was as good as it gets.

Maybe some day I can face you
without a bright red face,
Or without jerking my head the
opposite way,
Maybe some day we can talk
as we once did...
 I miss you.
New Zealand, you're so far away.

Hiding the Evidence

Wendy Shockley

It's time to take up prints,
and erase the chalk outline.
Time to clear out all the thoughts,
And discard all the memories you find.

Leave no stone unturned,
leave no hair or trace.
Break all of the mirrors.
In them I see his face.

Burn the ransom letters,
Let the detectives do their part.
A crime has been attempted
he tried to steal my heart.

Untitled

Catherine Moore Ware

Take my money
Take my car
Take my moon
Take my star
Take the cake
And ice cream too
Take my pot
And take my stew
Take my bread
Take the whole loaf
Take my TV
And take the sofa
Take my books
So well read
But you'll never take the poems
Inside my head

Beth

Carla Catoe

Call me -- Beth.
Won't you tell me the answers
to this walk down life
without shoes?
I'm looking for someone
with a well in his pockets.
Spring me into your
Summer of darkness.
Give me your life.
Don't call me -- Beth.

The Perfect Skipping Stone

Abigail Wolford

Whoosh
Splish
Splish
Splish
Splish
Splish
Plunk

Dandelion

Sarah Donaldson

I stand and wait
For my sure fate
Though scared I do not flee
Slender green
With lovely leaves
The queen amongst the weeds
I glance around
And quickly frown
A little one skips over
I shake my hair
Lovely and fair
In hopes she'll pick a clover
I draw my breath
Await my death
When on her knees she falls
I feel hot air
I see her stare
And find that I am bald.

8:14 am, August 6, 1945

Mary Jones

The Japanese student on the beach tells me
“thousands more
would have died
if Americans didn’t
drop the bombs.”

The soft waves
of the East China Sea
behind us,
blue sky trapped on the surface,
hints of emerald reefs below.

I read a book by an American doctor
in Hiroshima when the bomb was dropped.
90% leveled.

Skin slipping off bones
“like cooked chicken.”
110,000 killed.

Scorched
dehydrated,
bleeding,
buried under rubble,
hospitals and rivers
overflowing
with bodies.

Five years later
230,000 more dead–
related injuries.

“Hiroshima,
then Nagasaki
brought Hirohito to his knees.”

The B-29, Enola Gay,
that dropped the bomb,

was displayed at the National Air and Space
Museum.

Life-sized cut-out of the crew,
video of pre-flight prayer,
photos of mushroom cloud from
the plane,
silver bullet striking in spotlights
“beautifully restored”
after 44,000 hours.

Atomic bomb casing
just like “Little Boy”
but no danger of radiation there,
across from the National Gallery,
steps from the capital,
blocks from the Holocaust Museum.

To Private "H"*Terry O'Malia*

"You'll be alright," the Sargent said
But he knew it was a lie
His arms were gone his chest full of lead
He knew he was going to die

He had only been with us a week
We hardly knew his name
He was awfully small and very weak
He didn't belong in this awful game

He didn't hate, he couldn't fight
It was only a matter of time
It isn't fair, it isn't right
His death will be a crime

He knew inside he couldn't kill
If forced to in a fight
So he said, "I never will,
I'd rather die for what is right"

He'd only been with us a week
When forced to take that stand
Just like he said he turned his cheek
And died there in the sand

Sorry

Shore Leave*Jason Whisnant*

you're sleepy-starry eyed tonight,
my love. in my memory,
 the recessed breath
heaves between your breasts,
groaning slow, slender rest.

passion spent,
receding
upon the grass, and
the canopied stars
burn
on the surface of your skin.
where the dew of my words
sleep soundly and now repent
two hundred days
later,
when i hear that you died
with a piece of me inside.

Soul Dance

Brianne Clemmer

Long, red hair
sways down her back.
No shame
in her nakedness.
In fact,
I think she must
enjoy flaunting
her pale,
white skin.
Or is it just
her soul
she bears?

They say she does not play
the piano
but makes love to it.
Are they entranced
by her music,
or passion?

Her truth
is outspoken; she makes many
people uncomfortable.
“Me, and a gun,
and a man
on my back,”
She cries out to be
heard,
but refuses to
beg.

Uncomfortable because they
don't want to know
what happens in
the dark
to good people; people just
like them.



Meryl Scott
Second Place



Ashlie Pence
Third Place



Roger Kollock
Honorable Mention

The Importance of Latté

Brooke Buchanan

We had agreed to meet at the tiny café on the corner overlooking the ocean one last time before the wedding. It was our favorite place. My daughter, Danielle, and I made a point ever since she went to college to meet there every week to catch up on the news.

Seeing our usual table empty, I realized that I was the first one there. I motioned for the waiter after I took my seat,

“Two double mochas, whipped cream on both please.”

Recently she had introduced me to the wonderful idea of lattes, cappuccino, espresso, and the like. She had always been able to talk me into just about anything. Like the time we went on vacation to the beach, and she convinced me that I needed to go Bungee jumping with her. Sometimes I wondered if she had a timid bone in her body.

Even though I always expected her to grow up and get married, I don't think I really thought it would happen. She brought Carl over to meet Wes and me about two months ago. I don't think I liked him even from that first moment. He didn't seem to fit my daughter's love for life. He was the kind of guy you met at the insurance office—very stiff, and serious, not at all like my charismatic Danielle. He reminded me a lot of Wes.

I had heard thunder when I came in, and it had begun to sprinkle. I wondered if she remembered her umbrella. I also wondered if she knew what she was doing with this guy. She was twenty-five, I knew I couldn't tell her what to do with her life. I had always believed in her decision-making ability. She had always proved to have a good head on her shoulders. I was having a very hard time with this one though. I knew if Carl did turn out to be like Wes, she wouldn't have the kind of life that she deserved. If her

life with Carl would be anything like mine with Wes, she would miss out on so many opportunities. He would hold her back. He would always make her choose the “risk free” route. He wouldn’t let her experience the fullness of life, the adventure of it, the passion. There would be love, but he would have a hard time expressing himself. He might one day make her rich in dollars, but never rich in loving affection.

I often wonder why I married Wes in the first place. I had just gotten out of a relationship when he first asked me out. I wasn’t at all interested in him. He was always very plain. His favorite outfit was a pair of tan pants, a white shirt, and a black tie. After two years of dating, I decided that no other person would ever be interested in me except him. Of course I had nothing to base this upon, I guess I just got used to him. He was a nice enough man. He always made sure I had a dozen red roses at the office for our anniversary and on my birthday. This was the extent of his romantic side, however. I once asked him if he would make love to me on the kitchen table. After listening to a twenty-minute lecture on how “the sex” needed to be kept in “the bedroom” where “it” belonged, I quickly learned never to ask such an improper question again.

I glanced at my watch and realized she was already five minutes late. If she had learned anything from her father, it was how to be punctual. I decided to give her another ten minutes before I would allow myself to worry.

Outside my window I could barely see twelve feet in front of me. The rain was no longer coming down in a steady trickle; it was now being poured on the earth by buckets, and lots of them. It had rained like this the day I first realized how I really felt about Wes. He was working for a small company in Texas, and I was still fighting my way through college. We hadn’t even been married a year. I had decided to pick up dinner on my way home and

almost didn't make it because of the fog and rain. I slithered into the driveway, grabbed my things, and made a run for it. No lights and no moon made it difficult for me to find the door. I fumbled with the lock for what seemed like five minutes. Finally, I worked it open, and kicked it shut. Wes had insisted we rent this crummy apartment for "just a few months" to save money for the house we had looked at ten months before. I loathed that apartment. It was so dark and dungeonous. It made me feel very trapped when I stayed inside for long periods of time.

I balanced the two paper bags on the counter beside the toaster and turned on the oven to start preheating. Wes had to have his food piping hot. He would be home in about thirty minutes—just enough time to get things ready. Needing to get rid of the soaked silk shirt and jeans that clung to my body, I made my way to the closet. I peeled the bothersome layers off and hopped into my favorite sweats.

As I walked back into the kitchen, I flipped the tiny black and white TV set on to listen to the news while warming dinner. I noticed the wedding picture sitting on the top. It was the one and only picture we had of that day. We were standing at the altar with Wes' sister Kathy who came with us to be our witness. I had wanted a big wedding, but Wes thought that would be a waste of money. For some reason, that lonely picture made the walls look more empty than they ever had. We should have taken pictures while we were dating. The truth was, we had never done anything worthy of a picture. We had never gone anywhere different. He only came to my house to pick me up and take me to the movies followed by the same restaurant. I'm not sure why this hadn't occurred to me before.

I came to the counter, unwrapped the two burgers from their foil covering, and placed them, without their buns, on an old cookie sheet my mother had given to me. Not

taking the time to grab a potholder, I hastily opened the oven door and slid the food inside. My hand touched the heated rack, sending a wave of pain through my arm, up my back, exiting through my vocal cords. Turning to the sink, I let the ice cold water run over the burn until I felt it go numb. This would ease the pain long enough for me to set the table. From the strainer beside me I pulled two place settings and headed for the table. I had almost reached my destination when I tripped over the stupid rug outside the kitchen door. I had managed to stop myself from falling and from dropping most of the dishes. A glass escaped my grip, shattering after it fell to the wooden floor. After placing the dishes on the table, I tiptoed back through the mess to retrieve my broom and dustpan. As quickly and precisely as I could, I cleaned it all up. On my way back to the table, I picked up another glass from the cabinet.

I had the table set before I smelled the meat in the oven. The panic subsided when I saw that it was all right and that, finally, I had everything under control. I was putting the food out when Wes came through the door. He had his usual tired look about him. Removing his soaked suit jacket, he hung it on the back of the recliner. He sat on the couch and pulled his shoes and socks off. He didn't say hello to me until he reached the table, where I was pouring the last drink. I asked him how his day was and if he was okay. When he finally began to talk, he didn't stop until hours later.

“This rain kept the customers away today. I haven't seen it rain like this in months. Hey babe, do you know where my birth certificate is? I need it for tomorrow. Mr. Peterson has already asked me twice about it.” He talked about how the boss had wanted him to do some impossible task, and how the bank had wanted another record in order to process our loan.

He didn't ask me why I looked tired. He just kept on talking about unimportant things, at least as far as I was concerned. Until then, I had done my best to make him feel comfortable, to make him feel loved—fixing all of the dinners, packing his lunch, cleaning his house, listening to his babble. He never once said thank you or that he loved me that night. As a matter of fact, he hardly ever said those things. I realized just how alone I really was. I saw my whole married life at a glance. I guess I had always known about my feelings for him, or rather my lack of feelings for him. I wasn't sure at the time why I allowed myself to become involved with a man that I clearly didn't love, or would ever love. As he droned on and on, I couldn't help but wonder why I hadn't heeded to my mother's warnings, or why I hadn't paid attention to my family's dislike of this character, except to say that the fear of being alone outweighed any negative feelings that I had for him. I hadn't realized at the time I married him that just being married to someone did not necessarily mean that person would accompany me through life, or share the same experiences I did. I didn't know that being married wouldn't take away my loneliness, or that it would actually make it worse. I remember thinking that I could never go back to my parents home and escape. I couldn't go back to the way things were before I met Wes. I felt too ashamed, too defeated. I had made my bed, and now I would have to lie in it for the rest of my life.

“Mom—Mom” her words startled me. I hadn't seen her come in. Danielle was staring at me as though she had never seen me before. “You look spacey, you okay?” She always did take care of me. “What'cha thinkin' about?”

Without answering her, I asked her a question. I asked her a very important question. The most important one. “Why do you want to marry Carl?”

Sunday

Starr Wright

Sunshine sauntering in between
laced curtains
Smell of ham hocks and collard greens
cooking.
Big, wide voice,
Good as a cock's crow,
announcing the new day.
Snoring, coughing,
Roaring relatives,
Peppered for a seasoned day.
Grits, eggs, bacon,
Greased belly,
Ready for Rev' Samuel

Old Woman
with the
LOUD
dress,
Speaking and Crying
about all this mess.
Shouting, dancing
music too.
Where is the rhythm in this pew?
Feet Running,
doors slamming.

Home
Greens talking
and
Ham hocks singing,
"Swing Low"
Rest

Mom and I love

Mary Jones

icy breath
whipped from the sea
tiptoeing over skin
tickling pours.
a thousand miniature fairies

d

e

s

c

e

n

d

i

n

g

out of the black tent
with grace,
landing on
blotches of brown
like a step
on a cloud.

Jeff's Coat

Carla Catoe

The winter with Jeff's coat
was colder than
a doctor's eyes at 4 a.m. in the emergency room.
I will never again
be warm
as I was beside his 5'10" peach body.

His calloused hands were feathers
chasing the air across my body,
while my hands played in his hair
like a 15 year-old in a bikini at the beach
until the sands could no longer be counted.

No more beach.
No more sun.
No more fun.
Just 3 a.m. wake-ups:
Get up.
Breathe.
Throw up.
Shoot up.
Sleep...
Sleep, my Jeff...
Don't fall...
asleep.

It's winter and I'm wearing Jeff's coat.

Love Poem*Kelly Harrison*

What are you to my sleep
but something it washes against,
the sandbar that catches the raft

and holds it
these hundred summers
till the river washes it clean?

A year without radiant rain
wood dried, cracked
in gloomy sunlight

Is it sex
or just the far
side of the bridge?

Mosquitoes scatter
in the too dry air like
startled fish

The river washes
cracked mud. I
can't look away

from its nakedness.
Call it what you want.
The clarity blinds me.

Fall's Snow

Summer Jeffcoat

Each colored flake unique—
Golden, crimson, orange, green—

f
l
o
a
t
i
n
g

to the ground from oak clouds,

B L A N K E T I N G
chilled earth,

Waiting

in
^ ^ ^ ^

piles
^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

for sweater-clad children
to dive in and create
crunchy snow angels.

New flakes

Tickling

rosy noses

Old flakes

F L Y I N G

F L Y I N G

like confetti
from mittened hands
then
 f
 a
 l
 l
 i
 n
 g
to the ground again

Sights Through the Windshield

Jeremy Kerr

I drove home this November night
 with the window down, wearing a tee-shirt
 Amazingly, though, that was nowhere near as
 COLD
 as the look you gave
 as the words you said
 to me
 as I left.
 That's okay because everywhere I look
 I see red and white
 and sometimes yellow but mostly
 Red and white.
 The lights are blinding and the
 SHADOW isn't worth a thing.
 That's okay because the blue surrounds
 the GREEN.
 Half the rope is missing and the end
 is frayed. Afraid? No, just frayed.
 As I watch the fumes rise, I feel my boots
 but they're miles away.
 The two women, are they beautiful? No.
 One has ducks; the other has a bonnet.
 Beautiful in their eyes, maybe but
 Not in those of the ducks.
 Well, Roger, you got your call and now the truck is
 HERE.
 The arrows point to the lights and
 the dumpster crumbles.
 Speed on by! Speed on by!
 Speed
 On
 By
 maybe another night.



Joy Marinelli
Second Place



Meryl Scott
Third Place



Joy Marinelli
First Place

Without Words

Sarah McIntyre

When Audrey opened the door, the house smelled strongly of scorched coffee and bacon, forgotten and burning in a frying pan on the stove. The odor of charred toast singed my nostrils. The one moment of silence bore into my skin like a single, long needle gliding slowly into my chest. The lighting was low, making it nearly impossible for a visually impaired woman like me to glimpse even the colors on the walls.

Devin's twenty-one-year-old hyacinth macaw—Beaker—rushed to the edge of his cage across the room, toenails clicking on the wrought iron. His beak clamped resoundingly around one of the bars, a perfectly harmless display of machismo since he never actually bit me. He always screamed my name first thing: “Hi, Kenna!” This time, though, the greeting was followed immediately by distressed whimpers as he dashed back to the far side of his cage: “Daddy! Daddy!” This was something new. I had no idea where he'd first heard it, even wondered if he'd ever heard it in quite those tones. I doubted it.

Audrey's hand came out of nowhere and grabbed my arm, pulling me inside. “Thank you so much for coming. I don't know what's going on. Devin left bed early this morning—I barely noticed—and when I got up to fix breakfast, I thought he was in the shower. I heard the water running, you know? But when I came up to tell him I had breakfast ready, I found him like this. The door is locked from the inside. He won't let me in.”

I stumbled through the front door. “He'll be okay,” I told her. I knew it almost as an instinct.

As Devin's girlfriend, and then as his wife, one of the first things Audrey had learned was that you never grab a person who has a visual impairment. It had been several

years since she'd made the mistake of dragging me anywhere, which told me that she was acting on impulse. "You're so calm."

Devin's house had three hooks to the right of the door, one of which was reserved for my white cane. I hurried to hang it up before Audrey pulled on me again. "Where is he?"

"Upstairs," she said, turning toward the staircase without remembering to drag me along after. I couldn't hear her footsteps—the new carpeting was too thick—but I heard her voice rapidly ascending as she jogged. "I just found him crying like this, no warning. Are you sure he'll be okay? I've never seen him like this—"

I followed, moving almost as quickly, and—still on the staircase—listened to her voice to determine where she was going. She hadn't stopped at the head of the stairs, but continued briskly along the hallway instead. I crested the stairs just before she reached the door. "He's in the costume closet?"

"That's what I'm saying. I've never seen him this way—" A tremble was beginning to show in her voice. Her nerves were shot.

"He'll be all right." This time, coming up beside the doorway, it was I who took her arm. I squeezed gently, just enough to let her know that she needn't worry so much. I needed her to go away. "Everyone goes through this."

It worked. Maybe.

"Even you?" She was surprised by the implication. The direction of her voice shifted, down toward the new carpet. It was a rich forest green even to my atrocious vision, but only in good light; now, with the lights off and the day overcast, it just looked black.

I smiled. Audrey was typical, assuming that because I've always seen this way, it brings no emotional baggage into my life. But it does. I spent a generous portion of my

childhood and teenage years grieving over the cruel things kids said and the jokes they played at my expense, the things I missed out on because of my impairment. I used to hide under my bed and sob until my mother found me.

And so, over the years, I learned the hard truth:

“Whenever you’re different, Audrey, it’s sometimes impossible to avoid feeling alienated.”

Silence again, except that Beaker—now in the corner of his cage near the top of the stairs—sobbed again. “Daddy! Daddy!”

“I wish he’d quit that,” Audrey muttered, looking toward the bird’s cage.

I wished he would quit too, though not because it annoyed me. The wail in his voice was more than a little unsettling. “He’s upset, Audrey.” The bird was always threatening to bite me—that’s where he got his name—but I loved him anyway. Even so, his affection for Devin was different, stronger. Birds are very sensitive to human emotions, and nothing distresses them more than knowing that their most beloved human is ‘not right.’

I knelt down by the head of the stairs and spoke to him in a soft voice. “It’s okay, Beaker. Daddy’s just sad today.” I was trying to sound soothing. “I’m going to see if I can—”

“Daddy! Daddy!” Beaker was not to be comforted.

I stood. “Audrey, take him out of his cage. Let him get on his perch and take him into the kitchen so he can’t see the closet. Sing to him.” It would give her something useful to do. “That might help.”

She sniffed back tears. “Thank you, Kenna.” Her hand touched my shoulder. Her voice looked back at the closet. “I feel so helpless. I can’t reach him—”

I had been dreading this day for some time now. Several times—though always in passing—he had complained to me of feeling cut off from “the sighted world.” The way he said that, it was as if ‘theirs’ was now

an entirely separate plane of existence from his own, and one that was now irretrievably beyond his reach. Even his own past, he said, felt alien and unapproachable. "He just needs to work through it."

"Daddy! Daddy!"

When I heard Audrey downstairs dutifully retrieving the bird, I walked back toward the closet and knocked. I knew why Devin was in there, why the door was locked, why he wouldn't let even his own wife in with him. All of his skating paraphernalia was in there, past and present, and it wasn't her place. It was mine. "Devin."

Four seconds later, the bolt slid back from the lock.

I twisted the knob and slipped inside. The lights were on inside, and the window outside permitted in what grey light there was. I could see here: ecru walls, the new forest green carpet, a myriad of color on both sides, something shining, a dark mass that I could barely make out, a light-colored ball huddled on the floor. Experience interpreted the colors for me: a half-dozen different costumes, two pairs of figure skates, his keepsake chest, and Devin himself collapsed in tears beside it.

I was surprised to see that. Years ago, at the age of twelve, I had insisted that he start a keepsake chest to match my own. He had balked, claiming that it was a "stupid girl thing," and only gone through with it so that I would quit nagging him about it. I always had to remind him about updating it. Inside the trunk, a dozen different costumes represented our career from the earliest years up to the present. He had protested at the age of twelve, but now he was clutching it as if to keep from drowning in his own private sea of grief. He turned his face to look up at me and stretched up his hand to have it taken.

We had always known this dance.

"Stupid blind girl!" the little boys at the rink would shout when I walked in, flashing my cane to keep from tripping over their duffel bags and piles of skate guards by

the entrance to the ice.

The girls would snicker. “Freaks can’t skate!” It would turn into a childish chant, a taunt.

I would rush off, whacking at bags with my cane, and eventually trip over one of them. That would break the watershed, and the tears would be let loose again. I would lay sobbing alone on the cold cement floor for an eternity.

Then, through my tears and my own wails I would hear Devin’s voice shout onto the ice, furious and indignant: “She’s better than any of you jerks! Just you wait and see! When she’s at the Olympics, you’ll be the ones crying ‘cause you couldn’t cut it!”

I would reach out, and he would take my hand. He would sit down beside me and hold my hand in silence. Even when his peers wouldn’t be caught dead touching their girl-partners off the ice, he would hold my hand until I finally pulled it away to wipe off my tears and get up. Only then would he get up and make sure my knees weren’t scraped before taking me onto the ice.

The dance hadn’t changed any, some fifteen years later. I took his hand and folded myself beside him. He sobbed, now, and I waited.

A scrap of paper, wadded tightly in his fist, brushed against my leg. I knew what it was: an article from yesterday’s San Francisco Examiner, a glowing review of our first performance since Devin’s illness. That four-minute skate had been a huge victory for both of us, but particularly for him. Very few people had realized how badly his confidence needed the ice. All we had heard, from the day he left the hospital seven months ago, was that two visually impaired people couldn’t continue professional figure skating. It was impossible, they had said, and maybe even dangerous.

They changed their minds two nights ago, and the paper now crushed in Devin’s hand was the proof. We skated in front of our hometown crowd as “special guests”

at the San Francisco stop of a national tour. It was even worthy of the Examiner's top sports story the next morning. Devin had called to read me the article, and I had told him to clip the article and put it with his mementos in the keepsake chest. While he reveled in the fact that the naysayers had been silenced, one line had made him think: "They can now pick up where they left off."

Fifteen minutes passed.

Even in the kitchen, the bird was still sobbing—Daddy! Daddy!—and it was really beginning to upset me. Beaker had been a part of Devin's family almost as long as I had. His father had bought the bird as a Christmas present for the family just a few months after Devin and I started skating together. He may have been intended for the entire family, but it was Devin that Beaker chose for his soul mate. When we were kids, Devin went to the trouble of training the bird to step onto my hand without biting me; now, the bird was almost as much a part of MacNeil-and-Sutherland as the two of us. Beaker traveled everywhere with us, and was almost happier on the road than he was at home.

What the Examiner said was true. After seven months of intense retraining, we had finally proven that we were still worthy of our place in the sport. Our career would resume, a hectic schedule of touring and competing that took us away from home nearly nine months out of the year. But that was a mixed blessing for Devin. No longer would his attention be occupied with the business of relearning the sport. He would have time to think, and to realize that, while his career might be the same, his life would not.

Thirty minutes.

Both Devin and the bird were still sobbing, and I was having a hard time not breaking down myself.

Like Beaker, I hated to see Devin suffer.

Devin had always been protective of me. I hated being fussed over, and he saw to it that no one fussed. The day we met, he learned how to guide me—by letting me hold onto his elbow and walk a step behind—and he showed our coach how to do the same before we left the rink that morning. He carefully ensured that I was never left out of things, describing what I couldn't see or insisting that people find a way to include me directly in their activities. No one got away with teasing me, even if his slams were childish and ineffective, and from the first meeting he took personal offense as if his own dignity had been insulted. When we first broke onto the amateur international scene at the 1988 Winter Olympics, we found that the judges were just as skeptical as our childhood peers, and that the media was hardly kinder; again, he defended my talent and my hard work. If I had trouble learning a new piece of choreography and anyone became impatient, they were greeted instantly with Devin's wrath.

One hour, now.

Beaker's sobs ceased abruptly, and I was beginning to wonder how Audrey had managed it when I heard her car door. She was taking him for a ride, hoping to soothe him. That was probably the best thing she could have done: when he came back, his daddy would be ready to reassure him. Devin was already a little calmer, but was still a long way from finished with the grieving process.

I always followed Devin's lead because it seemed natural: back then, he was perfectly sighted, and I was not. He lived in a precise world where objects existed even if he didn't trip over them first; where steps and drop-offs were defined even if he didn't miss them and twist his ankle or scrape his knee; where people had faces which sometimes expressed things not implied by their words. When I was with him, I was a part of his world...and naturally I liked it. I held onto his elbow, and suddenly I

knew when there was a bag on the floor six feet ahead, or stairs approaching in another two dozen yards. When I skated with him, I didn't have to strain my eyes to see the boards on the side of the rink, never jumped only to find myself three feet from another skater. I was sighted, in a way.

Two hours, now.

My calves were cramped from sitting cross-legged so long, and both feet were asleep. He wasn't sobbing anymore, but he hadn't moved from the keepsake chest. I was afraid to move my feet, so I sat still.

He had every right to cry. I couldn't imagine being thrust from such a precisely-ordered world into one that made even less sense than my own. When everything was still—as now—he saw clearly, but everything was in stereo: diplopia, an acquired defect in the eye muscles. When things began to move—as the world most often does—the things disappeared entirely. “It's very rare,” the doctors said. “We don't understand much about it, except that the brain loses the ability to understand things in motion relative to the body.” And so now he was twenty-eight, learning to find objects before he tripped on them, stairs before he missed them, people before they vanished into air.

Three hours.

My feet had disappeared entirely, and pain throbbed through my legs. I needed to stand up, but—except for the steady rise and fall of his chest—he wasn't moving. I couldn't tell whether he had drifted off to sleep, and in order to check I would have had to physically touch him. I didn't dare, for fear of waking him. It didn't really matter.

Everything had been reversed, and now—even though I couldn't see well enough for myself, let alone for both of us—I was the sighted one. I accommodated him. When we walked together, we walked side by side so that I wouldn't vanish, and we both used our canes. I looked extra hard to

spot duffel bags and stairs so that neither of us would miss them. On the ice, I strained my eyes to see the boards and he trusted me. Other skaters watched to keep out of our way—one of the benefits of being Olympic gold medalists, I suppose—and gave us plenty of clearance when we jumped. Although I now used my vision, as I never really had before, I could still never do as good a job as he used to. These were my limits.

He still grieved over his new limits, and occasionally he raged at them. I couldn't blame him: I would have raged too. And I remembered the grieving.

Four hours.

Devin sat up and, although he didn't let go of my hand, he drew his arm toward his eyes to brush away the tears.

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BRIANNE CLEMMER
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