

KATHLEEN GLASGOW

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF GIRL IN PIECES

YOU'D
BE
HOME
NOW



BOOKS BY KATHLEEN GLASGOW

Girl in Pieces

How to Make Friends with the Dark

You'd Be Home Now

YOU'D
BE
HOME
NOW

KATHLEEN GLASGOW

DELACORTE PRESS

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Contents

[Cover](#)

[Books by Kathleen Glasgow](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Part One](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Part Two](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Chapter 32](#)

[Chapter 33](#)

[Chapter 34](#)

[Chapter 35](#)

[Chapter 36](#)

[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Chapter 39](#)

[Chapter 40](#)

[Chapter 41](#)

[Chapter 42](#)

[Chapter 43](#)

[Chapter 44](#)

[Chapter 45](#)

[Chapter 46](#)

[Chapter 47](#)

[*Author's Note*](#)

[*Resources*](#)

[*Acknowledgments*](#)

[*About the Author*](#)

*To all the Emmys and Joeys:
Love remains*

WE ARE FLYING IN the blue-black night, rain slashing the car. Trees become hands, become fingers, become teeth reaching out for us. I don't know if we make sounds, because my heart is in my ears, drowning me. The car is weightless and heavy at the same time as it smacks against the earth, bounces, rolls and rolls, and Luther Leonard is half in, half out of the splintered windshield in front of me, his sneakered feet dangling at strange angles.

I say my brother's name, but there isn't any answer.

My hands feel around the seat for the belt lock, but they quiver so badly they can't settle down. There is something I feel, but I can't tell what it is. Something in my body that is not right. Something out of place.

In the lopsided rearview mirror, my brother, Joey, is a useless thing in the backseat, splayed over Candy MontClair, blood in his hair.

I say her name.

The sounds that come from her are not words. They're raspy and wet, full and thin all at once.

I have to get out of this car. I have to tell someone. I have to get help. I have to leave this place of shattered glass and crunched metal and Luther Leonard's dangling feet, but I can't move. I can't get out.

Through the broken window comes a howling in Wolf Creek Woods. There's howling, and maybe it's me, and then I realize it isn't. It's the howl of sirens, and beams begin to fill our broken car with light.

ONE

Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?

—MARY OLIVER

MY SISTER, MADDIE, IS crying, her pretty face damp and frightened. One of my legs is heavier than the other and I don't understand and I want to ask her why, but I can't form words, because there's an ocean inside me, warm and sweet, and I'm bobbing along the waves, just like the ones that carried me and Joey all those years ago in San Diego, when everything was perfect or as close to it as we could get. That was a nice time, when I was twelve and Joey was thirteen, letting the waves carry us, Maddie stretched out on the beach in her purple bikini and floppy-brimmed hat. Far away from Mill Haven, we were in a different world, where no one knew who we were.

I try to ask Maddie where Joey is, but she can't understand me. She thinks I'm saying something else, because she leans forward and says, "Do you need more? Do you need me to press the button?"

And her finger presses a button on the side of the bed and the largest wave I've ever known billows over me, like the parachute game we played in the gymnasium in kindergarten, all of us laughing as the fabric gently overtook us and blocked out the world.

—

My mother's voice is trembling. "This is not normal. This is not something that happens to people like us."

My father sounds weary. He has been weary for years now. Joey makes people weary.

He says, "There is no normal, Abigail. Nothing has ever been normal. Why can't you see that? He has a problem."

My finger stretches out for the button to make the waves come again. My parents make me tired, years and years of fighting about Joey.

My mother's hand touches my head. Like a kitten, I respond, leaning into it. I can't remember the last time she touched me, stroked my hair. Everything has always been about Joey.

"There was *heroin* in his system, Abigail. How did we miss that?"

The word floats in the air before me, something eerie and frightening.

There was vomit spattered on his hoodie at the party. When we found him in the bedroom. He was woozy and floppy and strange and made no sense and I thought...

I thought he was just drunk. Stoned, maybe.

"I will fix this," she says to my father. "He'll go to rehab, he'll get better, he'll come home."

She says rehab in a clipped way, like it hurts to have the word in her mouth.

"That's not a magic wand you can wave and make it all go away, Abigail. He could have died. Emory could have died. A girl *did* die."

The ocean inside me, the one that was warm and wavy, freezes.

"What did you say?" I whisper. My voice feels thick. Can they understand me? I speak louder. "What did you just say?"

"Emory," my father says. "Oh, Emory."

My mother's eyes are wet blue pools. She curls her fingers in my hair.

"You're alive," she tells me. "I'm so grateful you're alive."

Her face is blurry from the waves carrying me. I'm struggling inside them, struggling to understand.

"But she just had a headache," I say. "Candy just had a headache. She can't be dead."

My father frowns. "You aren't making any sense, Emmy."

She had a headache. That's why she was in the car. She had a headache at the party, and she wanted a ride home and it can't be right that a person

has a headache and gets in a car and dies and everyone else lives. It can't be right.

“Joey,” I say, crying now, the tears warm and salty on my face. “I want Joey. Please, get me Joey.”

WHEN I OPEN MY eyes, he's there.

I've seen my brother cry only once before, the afternoon he and Luther Leonard decided to dive from the roof of our house into the pool. Luther made it; Joey didn't, and the sound of his sobs as he writhed on the brick patio echoed in my head for days.

But his crying is quieter now.

"I'm so sorry," he says. His voice is croaky, and he looks sick, pale and shaky. There are stitches above his left eye. His right arm is in a sling.

"I thought you were drunk," I say. "I thought you were just drunk."

Joey's dark eyes search my face.

"I messed up. I messed up so bad, Emmy."

Girls swoon over those dark eyes. Or they did. Before he became trouble.

Joey Ward used to be cool, a girl said in the bathroom at Heywood High last year. She didn't know I was in the stall. Sometimes I stayed in there longer than I needed to, just for some peace. It's hard all the time. Pretending.

Not anymore, another girl answered. *Just another druggie loser*.

I cried in the stall, because I knew Joey was more than that. Joey was the one who taught me to ride a bike, because our parents worked all the time. Joey was the one who let me read aloud to him for hours in a bedsheet fort in my father's den, long after he probably should have been ignoring me in favor of his friends, like most older siblings do. He taught me how to make scrambled eggs and let me stay with him in his attic bedroom while he drew.

Until he didn't. Until the day I knocked and he told me to go away.

He stands up, wiping his face with his good hand. His beautiful dark hair is in tangles, hanging over his eyes.

“I have to go,” he says. “Mom’s waiting.”

Rehab. It floats back to me from when Mom said it. Was that yesterday? Or this morning? It’s hard to tell. I don’t know how long I’ve been here. Things are bleeding together.

“Joey, why did you do...it?”

I wish I could get out of this bed. I wish my leg wasn’t hanging from some damn pulley in the air and that my body wasn’t heavy with the ocean of drugs inside me.

At the door to my hospital room, Joey turns back, but he doesn’t look at me. He looks at the floor.

“I love you, Emmy, but you have no idea what it’s like to be me.”

And then he’s gone.

I'M IN THE DOWNSTAIRS bedroom off the kitchen that my mother remodeled for Nana, hoping she'd come live with us, but Nana is stubborn and says she wants to stay in her own house until the day she dies.

The walls are painted pale gray. The sheets and blankets are white and crisp and perfect and I'm imagining how the sweat dripping off my forehead is going to stain the pillowcases. My mother doesn't like messes.

At my feet, my dog Fuzzy nuzzles closer to my good leg, whines softly. I rub her with my toe. Her fur is coarse; no one's been brushing her. Westies need brushing.

My bad leg is in a blue brace, propped on more white pillows. My knee is throbbing, sparks of white heat that make me breathe hard. Make me sweat.

I can hear them in the kitchen, my sister Maddie and my mother, arguing.

"Mom, she's in pain," Maddie's saying. "Just let her have a pill."

"She can have ibuprofen. She was on so much medication in the hospital. I don't want her..."

My mom's voice trails off.

"Mom," Maddie says forcefully. "She fractured her *kneecap*. And she's not *Joey*."

"That's right," my mother answers, in a suddenly hard voice that makes me shiver. "And I want it to stay that way."

MADDIE SLEEPS NEXT TO me in the gray room, her eyelids growing heavy as she clicks the television remote from one show to another: *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *My Lottery Dream Home*, *Friends*. When the remote finally slips from her fingers, I turn the television off and just listen, Fuzzy tucked next to me, soft and sleeping.

Maddie snuck me a pill after my mother went to bed, fed me crackers and juice, and I'm not sweating anymore.

I'm listening to the quiet of the house.

Some things haven't changed since I came home. My dad still gets back late from his shifts at the hospital, peeking into the room at us to say hello and ask about my knee before he eats whatever Goldie has left for him in the refrigerator before going to the den and settling down with his drink to watch his own shows. He'll fall asleep in the recliner, glasses slipping down his nose, while my mother is asleep upstairs. That's the way they've been for what seems like years now, my mother up, my father down. I thought that might change, with everything that's happened. That they'd get closer, somehow, after the accident.

I thought they might stay home with me, too, at least for the first few days, but they didn't. They went right back to work. Maybe because Maddie is here now and can take care of me. And Goldie, too, if it's one of her days with us.

Sometimes I feel like I don't exist in this house because I'm not beautiful and loud, like Maddie, or a problem, like Joey. I'm just me. The good one.

The one thing that's changed is the sound of our house.

It's quiet.

It was never quiet with Joey, especially last year, when things got bad. So much yelling and fighting with my mom about his grades. His attitude. Slammed doors. Joey burying himself deep into his hoodie when my dad would try to talk to him. I did whatever I could to make things better. Woke him up for school, even if I had to pour cold water on his face to do it. Did his homework, just enough to get his grades up, make it look like he was trying, but not enough to raise suspicion. I just wanted the noise to stop.

Next to me, Maddie rolls over, her knee knocking into mine. Little flares heat my knee, but not too much, because of the pill. I bite back a little gasp. Maybe I need another one? But I don't want to wake her up. I don't want any more fights about taking pills. I don't want noise anymore.

Because this quiet? Even though I love Joey, he's my brother, how could I not love him?—this quiet is *peaceful*.

It's finally peaceful now that my wild and troubled brother is gone.

And I feel guilty about loving this peace.