

Clear Skinned

A LOVE STORY

**Edited by
Judine Bishop Slaughter**

RAH Distributors
PO Box 83
Mt Rainer, MD 20712-0083

That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
and tell of all thy wondrous works. Psalms 26:7

Table of Contents

I. Joan's Story

II. The Letters

COURTSHIP

INTIMACY

CONFLICT

DETERIORATION

THE END

III. 14 Years Later

IV. EXPRESS YOURSELF

V. Appendix

Joan's Story

Everything has its beauty, but not everyone sees it.

Confucius

In the sixth grade, I stopped glancing in the mirror while I washed my hands. I stopped combing my hair in front of the bathroom mirror, or any household mirror. I accustomed myself to simple hairstyles without a lot of maintenance. I pretended as if I was blind and had to perform this chore. While brushing my teeth, I would step out of the bathroom until my mouth could no longer hold the toothpaste foam. I always undressed with my back to the mirror—always. And, I never washed my face. Washing my face would require looking in the mirror to make sure the soap suds had disappeared. If I had taken the time to look in the mirror and check for suds, I might have seen blemishes or simply wondered about my special look. Not only did I stop looking in the bathroom mirror, I avoided all mirrors.

A mirror is a polished or smooth object that gives a true representation, or in which a true image may be visualized. Because mirrors are made of a reflective material, they are very symbolic. In the physical realm, mirrors reflect an outer image, but in the spiritual realm, mirrors reflect the soul. A clear mirror does not tell lies; every beauty mark or flaw is visible.

You see, I did not want to accept my parents separation. My brother and I were thrown from a middle class status to a below-the-poverty-line rank in society. I did not want to accept the abuse from my aunt's boyfriend. Everyone in the family respected and admired him. Surely he would not secretly do something morally incorrect. And,

I did not want to accept the death of my own spirit. I always kept a smiling facade. This avoided any conversations about things which hurt me physically or mentally.

So, since I did not look in mirrors, I became invisible or clear skinned to my own self. Although I could consciously see the skin on the rest of my body, I unconsciously learned to overlook the obvious. I pretended to have no skin color.

Then one day, I met a young man who apparently could see me as someone other than a clear skinned or invisible person. He was a junior at Columbia Union College during my Freshman year. After six months of watching me, he wrote me a short note. It was very sweet, telling me how he liked my looks, and as time progressed, he would compliment me on my hair style, my clothes and my perfume fragrance. I did not respond, because I was supposed be invisible, and he could not really mean to say these nice things to me. He was trying to break my shell, but I had a great determination that no one – absolutely no one, would break my silence.

Ignoring him did not make him go away. After the first ten or so letters, he asked me to write back to him. I don't remember what I wrote, but I'm sure it was very superficial. This did not deter his curiosity to crack my code. He could feel my pain without my saying a word.

Over the course of the next six months, I gradually allowed him to visit my world. At first it was not easy. I constantly thought he would walk away and leave me at any moments notice. I could not trust his words of love and admiration. I had not experienced love since...