

Slow Dance: A Story of Stroke Love and Disability

Bonnie Sherr Klein

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Slow Dance: A Story of Stroke, Love, and Disability chronicles the year of Bonnie Sherr Klein's two strokes caused from a low brain-stem lesion, her ensuing surgery, rehabilitation and recovery. The book reflects Klein's documentary style with a cacophony of voices. This visual journal intersperses memories of her husband and children—whose relationship to each other changes in profound and moving ways—as well as the reflections of family members, friends, doctors and health care workers. Through these voices we see her desperate dance through misdiagnosis, advances and setbacks, and the frightening period when she is “locked in”—paralyzed, unable to speak and improperly medicated. She questions her identity as a filmmaker and feminist, and in one low moment comments, “After the ecstasy of survival, what exactly have I survived for?” The answer is to patiently enjoy everyday tasks and working an activist for the disabled.

Klein's honesty includes journal entries comparing herself to others as she struggles with her natural hopes of making a full recovery. She follows these with “Interludes” where she comments on her own prejudices and misconceptions and counters them with new insight. Cropping up in the midst of her care and rehabilitation are revelations about health care, patient rights and treatment of the disabled.

The inclusion of medical chart notes at the beginning of the story are easy to stumble over, but the medical information is accessible and perhaps the notes show the confusion the patient must feel—even for Klein, whose husband is a doctor in the Montreal hospital where she receives much of her treatment.

The honesty of the reflection by her teen-age daughter, who up until the stroke was locked in daily battle with her father, is remarkable. The relationship between father and daughter as aids to each other keeps the reader, as well as the narrator, afloat.

Klein collaborated on the book with Persimmon Blackbridge. Klein's documentary films include *Not a Love Story: A Film About Pornography*. She has also produced an award winning radio series for CBC, *Bonnie and Gladys*. (September / October 1998)

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