

Jackie Mae



If...

Blurred Vision

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By,

Jackie Mae

Praise for If... Blurred Vision

“If... Blurred Vision seems to set a predictable path, but its departures and insights make it an unpredictable delight for fans of the novelette form: an exploration of life’s course from two very different perspectives.” D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To,
My husband, always my knight

And to,

**My grandchildren,
Whose enduring love have made a difference in the world**

And to,

**Jennifer, Ashley, Sharon, Blake,
Mark, Soraya, Nadia,
Rachel and Christina**

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Chapter One

“If,” could mean different things to different people. If—I were a better person. If—I were rich, thinner, or prettier. If—I were black, white, Asian, male or female, shorter or taller. If—I had been born to a different set of parents. If—I had more friends. If—I had a better job. If. That one little word can take you places or make you crazy...

Timothy S. Graves, or Timmy, as his closest friends called him, was a good man. That’s what his boss, Mr. Thompson, told his wife at last Wednesday’s after hours meeting. But, what exactly did that mean? Was he good at his job? Was he cooperative? Was he a forward thinker? Was he aggressive enough? Was he a good husband? Was he a good teacher? Was he a good learner? Was he a good listener? Was he a good citizen? Was he a good co-worker? Was he a good brother? Was he a good uncle?

There were a lot of possibilities. Did it matter what his boss thought? Did his wife think the same of him? Did his mother and father think he was their favorite? Did his brother think he was good, or was that just now that they both had grown up? What was his view back when they were children? Had he shared with his brother? Was he jealous of his brother’s accomplishments?

Timothy thought about life a lot. He pondered over these questions and many more questions from time to time. Whenever he had time that is. Occasionally, he took the train into Union Station, then a short subway ride to Farragut North, and lastly a short walk to his building. Sometimes he drove, but that proved to be a hassle. Bumper to bumper traffic, the difficulty of finding cheap parking, and, of course, with the high price of gas, he had to consider the wear and tear on his older model Toyota. At least he thought of it as older as he considered new being no more than six months old.

He liked being able to sit back and daydream while on his way to work, so he usually elected to not drive. Sometimes Mr. Thompson wanted him to work

extra hours. Whenever he knew of this possibility ahead of time, he planned accordingly.

His wife, Shirley, was his best supporter. She was his rock and the perfect companion. They had a strong bond, strong partnership. They had been married 12 years now and he knew their working relationship, for that is how he thought of their marriage, would just grow stronger as the years went by.

They were both planning to retire in 18 years. They had it all mapped out. He would take retirement at age 65, she would retire at 62. Of course, those terms were sure to change. He would probably be forced to wait until age 68 or possibly older. No matter, he would simply adjust his figures. As it stood, they would retire with plenty of money.

He had watched many of his friends have anywhere from one to three children and their future retirement, for the most part, was in serious jeopardy. Shirley had found out early into their marriage that she would be unable to have children. At first it was a tragic disappointment but the more he thought about it the more content he was to leave things as they were. They had discussed the possibility of adopting, even planned to adopt, but the years had slowly went by without moving forward with their plan—really it was mostly her plan.

Somehow too much time had gone by. Funny thing—time—it seemed to go so slowly when one was working, but flew by on the weekends. Time seemed to be able to manipulate speed anytime it deemed necessary; the passage always the same, the cruel joke only on you. Time had been kind to Timothy; he still looked handsome and trim in a rough sort of way. His jaw squared, his hair line now slightly receding, and a few strands of gray here and there. They certainly weren't as young as they used to be. Timothy had always thought that was a corny phrase, one he would never have need of. But life has a way of creeping up on you so that, one day, you wake up and the passage of time somehow seemed to have fast forwarded by you during the night. Like the shadow that lies in wait, time creeps up on you and you'll find yourself past the tipping point, how you got there a mystery.

They never discussed adopting a child anymore, content with living childless. They each had fairly new cars, which they would update every three or four years as a matter of fact, and they owned two small vacation homes, one in Marcos Island, Florida and the other in Pismo Beach, California. Shirley had enthusiastically filled each home with a fashion statement that renters loved. They had a small pool of money they used for all their high tech toys. Children would have cut their ability to live the high life.

Timothy's friend and co-worker, Jake, was married with two small children. Harry had just turned 5 and Sarah was 2. He was fairly certain that Jake's income was comparable to his own, yet his house was smaller and in a less desirable neighborhood. There were no vacation homes or new cars for that matter. No, children would have taken a considerable amount of money. Timothy was thankful kids were not in the picture.

Shirley would have insisted staying home with the children and that would have significantly decreased their income. Not only from the lost wages, but when Shirley did finally return to the workforce he wasn't so sure she would be able to pick up where she had left off; technology moved too fast these days.

They liked to spend at least 2 weeks in each vacation home during the spring and fall seasons. He successfully rented both vacation homes the rest of the year through local brokers. The fee wasn't too astronomical and it took a lot of stress off his back and that left him with more time to update and diversify his portfolio. His accountant took care of the rest. All Timothy had to do was show up and enjoy several nights of pure bliss. Retirement worries were miles away the minute he stepped foot through the door of the vacation home. At least that's what Timothy told everyone, including Shirley, but it wasn't really true.

All in all, Shirley and Timothy had it all, or so it seemed on the surface. That's the problem with facades; they seem all prettily wrapped up with a bow, organized and neat, even impressive, on the surface. A mere thin layer below the surface, veiled from prying eyes, there was trouble in paradise. Actually, Shirley didn't quite feel the same about Timothy as Timothy felt about her.