

# Through a Glass Eye, Lightly

By Carolyn Kizer

In the laboratory waiting room  
containing  
one television actor with a teary face  
trying a contact lens;  
two muscular victims of industrial accidents;  
several vain women—I was one of them—  
came Deborah, four, to pick up her glass eye.

It was a long day:  
Deborah waiting for the blood vessels  
painted  
on her iris to dry.  
Her mother said that, holding Deborah  
when she was born,  
“First I inspected her, from toes to navel,  
then stopped at her head ...”  
We wondered why  
the inspection hadn’t gone the other way.  
“Looking into her eye  
was like looking into a volcano:

“Her vacant pupil  
went whirling down, down to the foundation  
of the world ...  
When she was three months old they took it out.  
She giggled when she went under  
the anaesthetic.  
Forty-five minutes later she came back  
happy! ...  
The gas wore off, she found the hole in her face  
(you know, it never bled?),  
stayed happy, even when I went to pieces.  
She’s five, in June.

“Deborah, you get right down  
from there, or I’ll have to slap!”  
Laughing, Deborah climbed into the lap  
of one vain lady, who  
had been discontented with her own beauty.  
Now she held on to Deborah, looked her steadily  
in the empty eye.

Carolyn Kizer, “Through a Glass Eye, Lightly” from *Cool, Calm, and Collected: Poems 1960-2000*.  
Copyright © 2001 by Carolyn Kizer. Reprinted with the permission of Copper Canyon Press, P. O.  
Box 271, Port Townsend, WA 98368-0271, [www.coppercanyonpress.org](http://www.coppercanyonpress.org).

Source: *Cool Calm and Collected: Poems 1960-2000* (Copper Canyon Press, 2001)



Carolyn Kizer has had a remarkably full and varied life in literature. Born in Spokane, she studied poetry with Theodore Roethke at the University of Washington, founded the literary journal Poetry Northwest, and was the first director of the Literature Program for the National Endowment of the Arts; she taught at numerous institutions, and in 1985 won the Pulitzer Prize for her volume *Yin: New Poems*. Her warm, accessible, and humorous poems offer shrewd insights into human motivations and behavior.

[See More By This Poet](#)