



WINGS OF GLASS

GINA HOLMES

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF CROSSING OCEANS

having no one else to lean on but God.

it changes a person.

it sure changed me.

the best way not to repeat history is to know it

Praise for *Wings of Glass* and
other novels by Gina Holmes

“Gina Holmes pours her heart onto the page in *Wings of Glass*. . . . If you’ve ever suffered at the hands of someone whose idea of showing love is being abusive, you will find a kindred spirit in Penny Taylor. You’ll also find hope and a gentle but firm call to open your eyes to the truth. *Wings of Glass* is a powerful, can’t-put-down novel, so real that it reads like a memoir.”

LIZ CURTIS HIGGS, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *MINE IS THE NIGHT*

“Simply stellar. Gina Holmes’s stunning literary talent glistens like crystal in *Wings of Glass*. With subtle brilliance, she takes us into the very heart of what makes us hungry to love and be loved.”

SUSAN MEISSNER, AUTHOR OF *A SOUND AMONG THE TREES*

“Gina Holmes brings to vibrant life the heart and mind of a young woman trapped in a dangerous relationship. *Wings of Glass* is a moving novel filled with humor, grit, and grace.”

JULIE KLASSEN, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

“I was swept away by Gina Holmes’s memoir-like story of beauty rising from the ashes. An honest and realistic look at abuse is never easy in fiction, but Holmes weaves the story with grace, ease, and above all, hope.”

RACHEL HAUCK, AUTHOR OF *THE WEDDING DRESS*

“Gina Holmes is known for crafting intense literary prose and dynamically drawn characters. With *Wings of Glass*, she’s done it again, creating a painful world of domestic violence and examining the reasons victims sometimes remain loyal to their abusers.”

JULIE CANTRELL, *NEW YORK TIMES* AND *USA TODAY*
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *INTO THE FREE*

“*Wings of Glass* is a realistic tale of a big problem in our contemporary world. Gina Holmes has another winner.”

LRAIRINE SNELLING, AUTHOR OF THE WILD WEST
WIND SERIES

Dry as Rain

“Adultery, guilt, forgiveness, and, eventually, healing are examined in this well-written, compelling, faith-based novel.”

BOOKLIST

“Fans of emotionally packed domestic fiction will love it.”

LIBRARY JOURNAL

“Holmes grabs the reader with a unique storyline about infidelity and what it truly means to forgive after betrayal. By looking at the situation from a different angle, the author provides a great deal of food for thought and contemplation.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“Holmes has a talent for building tense and emotional scenes. This book probes the depths of pain and heartache in family relationships.”

CHRISTIANBOOKPREVIEWS.COM

Crossing Oceans

“[A] haunting tale that packs an emotional wallop. Keep tissues near.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Holmes’s characters are so real they pop from the pages. . . .
[A] dramatic, emotional, faith-based novel.”

BOOKLIST

“Poignant and unforgettable, this book will break your heart—and then put the pieces back together again. An uplifting and inspiring tale that reminds us to live every day as if it’s our last.”

TESS GERRITSEN, *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

“Gina Holmes has crafted a poignant, emotional story that explores family dynamics and the power of love. When the last page is turned, you’ll wish there were more. Set your tissue box close by, readers. This one will grab you hard.”

CROSSWALK.COM

“A stunning debut. . . . Rarely does a book grab me and turn my emotions upside down. *Crossing Oceans* is one that did just that.”

MINNEAPOLIS EXAMINER

“This novel is absolutely amazing. The characters are quirky, relatable, and incredibly realistic. Everything—from characters to plot twists—is original and unique, demonstrating Holmes’s refreshingly strong and distinct voice.”

CHRISTIANBOOKPREVIEWS.COM

“*Crossing Oceans* gripped me from the get-go. If you’re a reader who shuns a tearjerker, this isn’t for you. But for everyone else, you’ll cherish it. It overflows with themes such as hope, restoration, and beating the odds.”

TITLETRAKK.COM



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Wings of Glass

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Prologue

HE ALWAYS SAID if I left he would kill me, but there are far worse fates than death. Guess I hadn't really known that until I met and married Trent Taylor. I didn't mind the cuts and bruises half as much as the insults and accusations. Whoever said "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" has never been on the other end of a tongue that really knows how to cut.

I hope you never know that kind of pain, Son. More than that, I hope you never cause it. How could you? You have such a soft heart. My sweet Emmanuel.

Surely by now I've told you your name means "God with us." Because he was, Manny. He is. Even if you haven't realized it yet, you're lucky to have such a wonderful name. I used to hate mine—Penny—because that's exactly how much I felt I was worth for most of my life. But God used you to change all that.

It's important to tell you before I begin this story that it's not my intention to make you hate your father. He's a

man—fallen, like the rest of us. But I know you'll ask about him, and I decided when you were old enough, I would share with you all I know. That day hasn't come yet—you're just beginning to talk!—but I'd best write it down while it's fresh in my mind. Although some of it, I know, will never fade.

Reading this won't be easy, and please don't feel you have to if it's too much. I'm not one to believe all truths need to be spoken, but just in case you want to know, need to know, I'd rather you hear it from me as a whole story than get bits and pieces of the puzzle from others and not be able to make them fit together quite right.

Besides, your grandmother told me long ago the best way not to repeat history is to know it. I think that's probably right.

ONE



TRENT TAYLOR sauntered into my life wearing faded blue jeans, dusty work boots, and an attitude I couldn't take my eyes off.

We had a bumper crop that summer of '99, so Daddy was able to hire a farmhand to help for a change. We were all so happy to have a little money in our pockets and another set of harvesting hands, we didn't look a gift horse in his mouth. It was just like that story from the Trojan War. We all let him right in without looking first to see what was inside him.

It's surreal to think that if the rains hadn't fallen just right and the price of tobacco hadn't been up due to a blight that seemed to be hitting every farm but ours, we wouldn't have been able to afford to hire Trent. How much pain I could have been spared . . . but then I wouldn't have you, Manny. I'd go through it all a million times just to have you.

Being late August, the air outside was steam and the smell of the roast Daddy insisted Mama cook every Thursday

carried past me on what little breeze there was. As usual, our cat, Seymour, kept busy chasing the chickens around the yard. He loved to terrorize those poor birds. I yelled at him like I always did, but he never paid me—or anyone besides Daddy—any mind.

Until that afternoon, I'd never seen those chickens do anything but run from mean old Seymour, but that day the smallest one turned around and pecked him right between the eyes. I still laugh when I think of that cat howling in surprise and jumping back ten feet in the air, tail first, as if God himself had snatched him, only to drop him.

After Seymour tore off and the chickens returned to scratching dirt, I bent over my laundry basket and got back to work, humming something or other through the splintered clothespins tucked between my lips.

Even though we owned a dryer, your grandpappy hardly ever let Mama or me use it. He couldn't see the sense in wasting money on electricity when the sun and wind would do the job for free. I would have offered to pay the measly expense myself, but in my father's household, women were meant to be seen working, not heard complaining.

I bent down to pin up my daddy's undershorts, doing my best not to touch anything but the outermost corner of the waistband, when I felt hot breath on the back of my ear and a rough hand cover my own. Paralyzed, I just stood there staring straight ahead at the dirt road leading from our driveway. I could feel my pulse pounding my temples as I held my breath.

Trent must have taken my lack of protest as encouragement because his other hand wrapped tight around my waist and he yanked me back against him. He whispered in my ear with a voice somehow both rough as sandpaper and smooth as whipped cream, "This better be the last time I ever see my woman touching another man's underwear."

I could barely breathe. At seventeen, I'd never been touched by a man except to have my tail whipped for disobeying. I'd never even held a boy's hand, and here was a man, a grown man, staking claim to me. Just then, the screen door squealed open and your grandpappy's heavy footsteps pounded across the porch.

When Trent stepped back, I finally got the courage to turn around and look him in the eye. He'd been around for a couple of weeks by then and I'd seen him dozens of times, but until that moment, I hadn't noticed the crinkles around his eyes that made him look like he was always squinting against the sun, or the small scar cutting into the fullness of his bottom lip. His longish hair was a shade darker than my dirty blonde, and there was something about the way his nose flared just so that brought to mind a fighter plane. People might have said a lot of things about your father back then, but no one could suggest he wasn't beautiful.

"What are you doing over there?" My father stood on the porch, leaning his hip against the column and holding a glass of water that was sweating as much as he was.

I yanked up my laundry basket, still half full, intending

to bound inside, but didn't make it a step before I felt that rough hand of Trent's wrap tight around my wrist again.

"Just taking a break," he said to my father, though he never took his eyes off me. He stared right through me, wearing a smirk. I would get to know that Cheshire grin real well in the years that followed. It was the look he wore when he knew he had won, or was about to. I wonder just what it was he had seen that gave me away.

"You best get on back to work." Daddy's voice was loud as thunder, and it shook me.

Trent's grin only widened. "Now, don't be that way to your future son-in-law." His eyes wandered over the front of me like he was eyeing a ham steak he was getting ready to cut into.

Those roving eyes of his sent unfamiliar jolts through me.

Daddy slammed down his glass on the porch ledge. "Are you listening, boy? I ain't going to tell you again."

Trent put his hands up like he was under arrest. "Take it easy, man. I'm just talking to her."

My heart felt like a butterfly caught in a mason jar. No one spoke to my father that way.

What an idiot I was to think Trent's bravado was because he was so taken with me. In my mind I was the princess, Daddy was the dragon, and Trent, of course, was the knight who'd come to rescue me from the tower.

With my father's eyes on us, Trent whispered I was the prettiest thing he ever laid eyes on. I twisted my mouth like he was crazy, but inside, I was done for. I'd never had a man tell me I was pretty.

I took the bait. With one pathetic cast of his line, I was snagged, swallowing his words happily as that hook dug deep into my flesh.

When Daddy's face took on a shade of sunburn and he started down the stairs, Trent pretended to tip the hat he wasn't wearing and leaned over to whisper that he would be waiting for me at the well at midnight and his woman had best be there. *Woman*, I repeated in my mind, liking the sound of it. He reeled me in that night, and before week's end I'd agreed to elope.

At Trent's direction, I left a note for my parents telling them they shouldn't come looking for me.

Despite my fears, though—and eventually, my hopes—my parents never did come knocking to reclaim me. No one did.

A Note from the Author

IF YOU know someone who is or has been in an abusive relationship but have never experienced it for yourself, you may wonder why someone would put up with it. The answer is often a mixture of fear, shame, love, and embarrassment—or not even realizing that abuse *isn't* normal.

It is so difficult to watch family members and friends go through degrees of what Penny suffered in this novel. Many of the tactics Trent used are typical of abusers, and Penny's justifications and faulty thinking are typical of an abuse victim. She lies to cover up her husband's bad behavior, gets defensive when her friends confront her with the truth, and believes him time and again when he says things will be different next time. Like many victims of abuse, Penny wanted to believe that her husband would change because she loved him. In their own way, I believe abusers often want to change. But wanting to change and changing are two different things.

The hardest lesson I've ever had to learn is that it isn't my job to change anyone but myself. Once I really began

to understand that, everything else started to fall into place. I began educating myself about boundaries, codependency, and what a healthy relationship is supposed to look like. We have a tendency to think only abusers need help, but victims of abuse need help just as much.

If you or someone you care about faces a situation similar to the one depicted in this novel, please consider some of the following resources for more information about how to get help.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

TTY 1-800-787-3224

www.thehotline.org

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No, to Take Control of Your Life—Henry Cloud & John Townsend

Boundaries define who we are and who we are not. They impact all areas of our lives: *Physical boundaries* help us determine who may touch us and under what circumstances. *Mental boundaries* give us the freedom to have our own thoughts and opinions. *Emotional boundaries* help us deal with our own emotions and disengage from the harmful, manipulative emotions of others. *Spiritual boundaries* help us distinguish God's will from our own and give us renewed awe for our Creator. Having clear boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Questions addressed in this book include the following:

- Aren't boundaries selfish?
- Can I set limits and still be a loving person?
- Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries?
- What are legitimate boundaries?
- What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?

The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond—**Patricia Evans**

In this bestselling classic, you'll learn how to recognize verbal abuse, respond to abusers safely and appropriately, and most important, lead a happier, healthier life. Drawing from hundreds of real situations suffered by real people, Evans offers strategies, sample scripts, and action plans designed to help you deal with the abuse—and the abuser.

Safe People: How to Find Relationships That Are Good for You and Avoid Those That Aren't—**Henry Cloud & John Townsend**

Many people invest themselves in people who shipwreck their lives in return. If you're one who has chosen the wrong people to get involved with or makes the same mistakes about relationships over and over again, then this book offers you a remedy. *Safe People* gives you solid guidance that will help you

- Correct things within yourself that jeopardize your relational security
- Learn the twenty traits of “unsafe” people

- Recognize what makes people trustworthy
- Avoid unhealthy relationships
- Form positive relationships

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself—**Melody Beattie**

Recovery has begun for millions of individuals with this straightforward guide. Through personal examples and exercises, the author shows how controlling others forces you to lose sight of your own needs and happiness.