

Cold Spin

By Kaja Weeks

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My sister is fifteen, I am eight.

We're on the ice wearing white leather skates.

She—lanky, scowling, a brown ponytail

swaying as she moves.

I, round and overblown in a rabbit-fur hat
that's too small for my head,

a mustard and white checkered coat
with extra felt lining that squeezes

my belly and chest.

My sister's slender body

glides away effortlessly

toward the far end of the pond.

My skates are tight, cramp my feet

and I let my ankles turn out to

relieve the pressure.

I can hear my father's voice

shouting directions from the dirt and snow
near the Chevrolet where my mother stands,

veiled with white mist over her face
while he gesticulates, calls the orders:

Let the hounds out, exercise,
train them, discipline them.

*I can't wait to move, and push off,
one, two, three, glide;*

*one, two, three, four, five, six,
glide long and breathe beautiful cold*

bittersweet smells of wintry meadow.

My breath seeds vapor

that swirls front and past my face

and I can no longer hear

a blessed thing behind me.

I skate near my sister, but we don't talk.

Pale reeds and cattails shiver

in waves, murmur in the berm

between frozen pond and half-melted river.

If I were swimming I'd be on my back,

floating, ears submerged, eyes closed,

then peering from a watery window

at the sky straight above.

When I shove off hard

white flecks shave upward

before I loop my feet around smoothly,

turn and turn, turn—

I'm spinning like a skater.

Back in the car my sister and I

are silent and face opposite windows.

My cheeks are wind-burned,

a drum bellows in my ears,

cold toes ache through numbness,

body radiates heat.

Our father drives and dictates

the mechanics of skating.



Kaja Weeks, a poet and essayist who is the child of World War II refugees, often writes narratives that highlight identity and inter-generational themes. She has been published in The Sugar House Review, Ars Medica: Journal of Medicine, The Arts and Humanities, The Potomac Review (Pushcart Prize nominee) and elsewhere. Kaja is a graduate of New Directions, a multi-year writing program of The Baltimore-Washington Center for Psychoanalysis. Her writing can also be found at <https://lyricovertones.com> (<https://lyricovertones.com/>)