

John Mikhail Asfour

BLINDFOLD

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A moving collection of poems on the distance surrounding disability.

Blinded by a grenade in Lebanon as a teenager, poet John Asfour came to Canada armed with James Joyce's words, "For the eyes, they bring us nothing. I have a hundred worlds to create and I am only losing one of them." *Blindfold* investigates the ways in which disability influences our lives and is magnified in our minds. In a series of thematically linked poems, Asfour draws the metaphor of the blindfold across the eyes of sighted citizens who are impaired by estrangement, emotional complexity, and social pressures.

A sense of exile and belonging dominates the poems, following the journey of a blind man whose life in his new land has been hampered by prejudice and barriers to communication. Exposing the rich and surprising possibilities of a life that has undergone a frightening transformation, *Blindfold* relates feelings of loss, displacement, and disorientation experienced not only by the disabled but by everyone who finds themselves separated from the norm.

Silver Threads

He recalls
the absence of sound, the impossible silence
the disappearance of light.

He is only aware of
the movement of his
mother's hand inside
her purse, looking

for her handkerchief.
He recalls her
warning not to play
with unknown objects
the type that explode on impact. Later,

he lies in the dark remembering
how she pointed out
the silver threads of the morning light
just the day before
and he sparkles
with guilt.

John Mikhail Asfour is a translator and former professor of literature. The editor of the landmark anthology *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, he has written four previous books of poems.

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