



Excerpts from *When Turtles Fly*

By Nikki Stone

*Excerpt from *When Turtles Fly*: Lindsey Vonn's Chapter*

[Part of Lindsey's story on why her passion for skiing put her in medal contention]

The wind whistled through my helmet as I slammed past another gate. My speed was nearing 75 mph and the adrenaline was pumping. I was in the middle of a crucial Olympic practice run for the marquee alpine skiing discipline, the downhill, and was flying down the course and feeling good. I'd later find out that I was leading at the halfway split. But that would be the last split they would clock.

When trouble hits at those speeds, you don't have much time to react. My eyes were locked on the jump just ahead of me when I felt my skis scribble on the icy terrain. My legs scissored apart, and before I knew it, I was flying off the jump backward. The first thing to hit was my back and pain shot through my entire body.

I know it's hard for most people to grasp the intensity of such a crash. Imagine standing on top of a car going 70-80 mph. When the driver suddenly slams on the breaks, you'd go hurtling off the front, onto the pavement. Now, skiers don't land on cement, of course, but plummeting down an icy hill with a pair of skis basically glued to your boots doesn't make for a pretty picture, either.

Despite the stabbing pain, I was still hoping for the best. But let me tell you, there isn't much optimism left when you are being helicoptered off the slopes a day before the start of your Olympic events. Lying there strapped to the backboard, in a world of pain, the only thought I had was that my career was over. My last experience on skis might very well be cartwheeling backward off an Olympic downhill jump.

*Excerpt from *When Turtles Fly*: Lester Holt's Chapter*

[Part of Lester's story on taking a risk for his dream job after being let go from a great news anchor position]

Firing or demotion. Not two choices anyone ever wants presented. But these were the two options open to me back in 1999.

I had worked my way up to the number two anchor spot of a Chicago news affiliate. Everything seemed to be going fairly well for ol' Lester Holt. I was in a very comfortable position, and life seemed easy. Or at least I thought so...until my contract ran out five years into the job. With the end of my contract, I learned that the station had no plans of keeping me as one of their main anchors. I was being offered a demotion or the door.

Life had been good as a local celebrity news anchor. Now I had no idea what I would do. Of course, the station's new position wasn't a bad offer. Sure, it meant less money and less prestige, but I had my family's security to think about. And there just weren't openings for a major network news anchor around every corner.

The answer seemed obvious—take the demotion. But there was one thing standing in the way: I just wasn't ready to give up on my dreams of finding my own personal success in the media world...

...In the end, I was swayed by what I wanted to teach my kids...and ultimately myself. I needed to risk sticking my neck out and not cling to the easy life. My boys needed to see that the humiliation and setbacks didn't matter as much as striving to find my true potential. I wanted to make a decision that I knew my sons would someday be proud of, if they weren't already. I didn't make the safe choice and I didn't make the easy choice. I made the risky choice. I made the choice of hope...

Excerpt from When Turtles Fly: Shaun White's Chapter

[Part of Shaun's story on using his family's support to help him win Olympic gold]

I know people were telling my parents that they were nuts for allowing me to pursue such a dangerous sport, particularly one that had no future and no financial incentive.

My parents never saw my childhood heart condition as a disability, and they certainly wouldn't let me consider it a setback. They recognized early on that I had to be a kid, regardless of any previous health situations. It may have been that early condition as a baby that helped the family see what was most important. They realized that life was short and precious. My family never let me take anything for granted. And that included allowing me to pursue my athletic aspirations...

...The venues were always changing, but the one constant was my family among the throngs of spectators at the bottom of the pipe.

I didn't fully understand how much my parents had done for me until I stood on that podium at the 2006 Olympic Games in Torino and saw how proud and overwhelmed they were.

We all felt the weight of the experience at the medal ceremony. I looked out and saw my parents in the front row, and it completely changed the scope of what this milestone was all about. This was far greater than me, Shaun White, winning a medal...

Excerpt from When Turtles Fly: Author Nikki Stone's Lead-in to Prince Albert's Chapter

[Nikki's introduction about the similarities of her experience and overcoming her fears.]

To this day, I get a queasy feeling at the very thought of doing fifty-foot-high triple back flips. When I was training for the Olympics, I would literally be sick to my stomach each time I reached the hill to perform my triples. I think most people have that little internal voice that tells them getting sick is a significant sign to turn around and call it a day.

I heard that voice. But another voice told me how important that gold medal was. Luckily, that second voice was just a little louder. I would make my way to the top of the inrun, sneak off to the woods, proceed to get sick, then remind myself why I was doing this, so that I could calm my nerves just enough to get myself off the jump. After I landed my jump, I would have an exhilarating rush that seemed to eclipse the memory of the fears I'd had just moments before, and I would ski away beaming.

I somehow always loved the ups and downs. I don't know if many people thrive on those incredible highs and lows, but there is one man I met at the 1994 Olympics who shares this roller-coaster ride, Prince Albert II...

Have a hard shell... **Overcome Your Adversities**

If I couldn't fail

Nikki's Perspective: I hate failing. Obviously, no one likes to fail, but one event made me see that I actually feared failing, so much that I missed key opportunities.

When I first made it onto the U.S. Ski Team, I was terrified to do any interviews. The vice president of communications for the team asked me if I would do it if I knew I wouldn't fail. It seemed like a ridiculous question—until I realized I so feared failing miserably in front of the camera that I was avoiding valuable media opportunities.

I had to adopt a new attitude, so I volunteered to do the ski team's next interview. To be honest, I don't think that first interview went much better than I expected, but I really wouldn't say I failed. And the experience opened up a whole new world for me. I never would have thought that shy girl in front of the camera would now be someone who loves to get up on stage and speak to huge audiences.

Your Tools for Success: Ask yourself, "If I knew I couldn't fail, what would I try?" After you answer this question, ask yourself why it would be so awful to fail at the task or activity. We learn much more from our failures than we learn from our accomplishments.

Remind yourself that everyone fails at numerous things in life, and it's the failures and setbacks that help us grow and improve. Go out there and attempt that thing you would try if you knew you couldn't fail. Even if you do fail, you might succeed the next time.

What things would you be willing to do if you didn't worry about failing?