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Flirt (Mary Burritt Christiansen Poetry Series)



Synopsis

In this stunning first collection of poems, Noah Blaustein's narrators face the complexities that shape a life: adolescence, fatherhood, our responsibility for the lives of others, the exhilaration of romantic love, and memory. These anxious, frequently witty poems flirt with physical danger, with grief and happiness, and with mortality as a means to transcend the mundane in our day-to-day lives. As the parent narrator says at the end of "Rave On": "This / life of mine I now know / is no longer mine to take away." While the narrator believes that there's no person who doesn't benefit from some pain, this evocative collection proves that life is both pain and comfort, and ends on a prayer of hope for the speaker's children: "This is a prayer / for my children asleep in their bunk beds. . . . / May they never acquire / death's thin cello wire, / what connects my cortex to my toes, what plays / memory's midnight wrong song. . . . / There is beautiful music / out there. There is beautiful music."

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS Noah Blaustein is editor of the anthology *Motion: American Sports Poems*. His poems have been published in a variety of journals including *Barrow Street*, *The Harvard Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Orion*, and *Pleiades*.

ACCLAIM "The speaker of these poems wanders through the current moment as well as the memories of the past, the ruin and beauty of both, and ultimately arrives at knowing that while 'this world loves comfort' there's no person who fails to 'benefit from some pain.' Intimate, cerebral, and honest, this collection invites us to consider the uncertainties life holds, and what fearlessness has to teach us about living." -- John ChÃvez, author of *City of Slow Dissolve*

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Customer Reviews

An evocation of coastal California, a rumination on desire, loss, misadventure, and maturation. A companionable voice and a great read.

Contained within these pages are ebb and flows of a life: kids, wife, doctor visits, suburban mud slides. Here this life refines with the subtle ease of the morning surf or a declined flirt, but doesn't become a mere reduction. There is a scrutiny in this life that undermines the gentle living and reinstates itself as the new soul of this country. In pieces such as Field of Diamonds in the Sky and Flirt the mundane is used to examine the inner texture of the speaker: "I've stopped off for the smoothie special, Jamaican Me Crazy, the taste of dusk. No matter what's been broken, I've always been amused when the E.R. says quantify your pain, one to ten. What to do with the striations of feeling I can't enumerate... There are layers; there are tannins in this book that reveal their flavors in a slow, dry release. These poems are as emotionally mystifying as they are colloquially casual. Take the last lines of There's No Reason to Be Weird for example, where the speaker concludes a contemplation of ego-dystonic and ego-syntonic thoughts with simple language to dark and haunting effect: "But I'm taking the day off from shrinks. For this I will have to apologize. The blackhooded Phoebe waits on the golden bamboo to execute bees. A large dirt hole is a grave unless it is filled with water, then it is a pond. Today I might even finish digging. Tomorrow, I might even have a pond." A recommended read!

A collection of poetry that contains the line "We need to aspirate your testicle" probably should not be taken too seriously--except by connoisseurs who like the things that they like.

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