



Black Aperture: Poems (Walt Whitman Award of the Academy of American Poets)

By Matt Rasmussen

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In his moving debut collection, Matt Rasmussen faces the tragedy of his brother's suicide, refusing to focus on the expected pathos, blurring the edge between grief and humor. In "Outgoing," the speaker erases his brother's answering machine message to save his family from "the shame of dead you / answering calls." In other poems, once-ordinary objects become dreamlike. A buried light bulb blooms downward, "a flower / of smoldering filaments." A refrigerator holds an evening landscape, "a tinfoil lake," "vegetables / dying in the crisper." Destructive and redemptive, Black Aperture opens to the complicated entanglements of mourning: damage and healing, sorrow and laughter, and torment balanced with moments of relief.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Black Aperture" addresses, with meticulous balance, a single event from multiple directions.

Autobiographical, speculative, imaginal, at times bitterly comic, often lyrically surreal, Matt Rasmussen's transformative poems look outward they are built on the observable leaf, field, hand, bird, and act. But this book's central task is the alchemizing of experience by language: the subject here is the suicide of a brother. What cannot be altered remains; yet by changing saying, seeing is also made wider, more openly porous. The liberations of tongue, word, and conception held in these poems restore the possibility-sense that's as essential to us as oxygen, when a person stands in the chambers of unacceptable loss. --Jane Hirshfield

About the Author

Matt Rasmussen's poetry has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *H_NGM_N*, and at *Poets.org*. A founding coeditor of *Birds, LLC*, a small, independent poetry press, he is a 2012 McKnight Artist Fellow and teaches at Gustavus Adolphus College.

Users Review

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Ryan Mendoza:

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