

“She’s the word actress and her Poetry is the film!”

The Word Actress and Poetry

When Black and White Turns Gray

After reading this book, we understand exactly why Author Mary Eastham is known as '*The Word Actress*'! She has a way with words that leaves your senses overwhelmed, as she skillfully plays various different roles that not only relay her *own* intimate thoughts and feelings about the world, people, relationships, and family; but also those of others.

She is a talented creator of realistic interpretations, exemplary of a poet with experience, creativity, and quality, all in one. Her dazzling spirit provides a unique experience with every poem and reveals the emotions and thoughts of a particular individual. One of the best parts about reading her work is that it allows you to enter the scene through the means of imagination, stimulated by picturesque imagery and precise detail.

One of our most favorite poems from this collection is entitled, '*Hopscotch*'. It feels like we temporarily slip away into someone else's memory bank, able to visualize the anonymous girl depicted as playing hopscotch outside the window of Katrina's father's residence. The introductory statement tells us that "*Katrina needed to meet her daddy*", and hints to us that her 3rd divorce may be to blame. There is an obscurity and darkness in this poem that reveals just enough background for you to understand that there is a definite void present between Katrina and her estranged father.

And the lack of love, or even emotion for that matter, is displayed in her father's only two most basic questions; "*Do you smoke?*", and "*What are you doing?*". Maybe Katrina's father's incompassion stirred her the wrong way, because the poem says; "*Katrina moved toward the bed, pressing her thumb hard against her father's Adam's apple .The scratchy gurgling sound her father made didn't scare her.*". Did Katrina take her father's life? This is only one example of the *ardent* suspense knitted together with her "*mini-poem*" short stories. She is an extraordinary '*poet-teller*' of *real* people and *real* life, grounding her poetry into the soil of poetry's roots - the basis of humanity, the core of *humanness*. This fact, ironed into Mary's perceptive poetry plays upon elusive borders of black and white, but ironically, combines these two tones of poetry, ultimately forming introspective shades of gray.

Her poem entitled, *"Forgive...Move On...Remember"*, a wise sentimental epic, when reading, feels like you are unlocking a precious and sacred time capsule extracted from the essence of the narrator's heart. Each word is tinged with a bit of nostalgia and colored in tangible transparent emotion. The underlying moral and theme of this poem is inspired by the atrocious 09/11 terrorists attacks, in remembrance of the character's wife, Betty. *"This is not the only place we are passing through...Love the world still"*, Betty says. And this one simple, yet significant phrase, imbues an undying love with utmost reverence for the woman *'once staring over his shoulder in the mirror'*. Verbally beautiful and peacefully blue.

The twinkle and spark of being young, carefree, and zany is re-lived in this wistful poem entitled, *'Undress Me'*, written in the form of a memory. This poem rekindles the days when she'd *'cut her jeans into shorts'* and *'rub the juice from a bottle of maraschino cherries onto her lips'*, the narrator tells us. The words describe the intimate thoughts derived from the mind of a sixteen year old girl, transitioning from the *"girl-silly"* damsel that only fantasizes about *'what men do to women'*, into the young girl that dares to turn those fantasies into reality. She escapes the boundaries of her window seal into the night, into the arms of callow infatuation, full of curiosity. It is a poem that professes a lot in only a few words, accentuating the blossoming of a desirous, budding wild flower.

Author Mary Eastham has a striking way of zapping a touch of dazzle and a bit of glamour into a practical and realistic world. She fuses exotic metaphorical arrangements into her poetic ensembles and entices the reader by describing a scene with strong visual words, for instance, *'Liquid pearls'*, symbolic for rain. She also uses this creative technique to describe *feeling* as well, saying, *'We are like crayons melting in the sun'*, characterizing adjectives, in this case, emotions such as, *'crazy'*, *'hot'*, *'irritable'*.

One of the books most prominent examples of this is, *'Imagining the Colors of a Taos Sunset in the Rain'*, where practically every verse is a piece of beautiful art! The illustrious illustrations depicted in this poem are simply tantalizing to the mind, like; *"I am a peach about to ripen"*; *"Misty petunias tempting as finger food"*; *"Hills of amaranth..."*; *"Myth and mystery hang in the air like works of art..."*; *"Early evening light gathers magic..."*, each metaphor like a *'word picture'* that provide a cinematic effect beyond entertainment purposes. She adores and appreciates the beauty in words, and it shows.

The cryptic poem, *'Clouds'* is purely riveting. The first line is one of the most important; *"It wasn't until today I wished him dead..."*, as it signifies to the reader that the poem is in reference to a male in which the narrator resents to the point of *death!* And with reading in between the imaginary lines, the entrenched resentment has grown from the spoil of her own blood, her father, who she would once *'always bring lollipops on their afternoons together'*.

But in the sixth grade, something happens; an afternoon of sky cloud-gazing suddenly shadows the existence of innocence and purity in this disconcerting verbal impression, purloining the intrinsic sentiments that naturally exist between the reminisces of father and daughter. And though the poem makes mention of clouds, candy, kisses, and dreams, the voice behind the curtain screams this isn't a

scene from a “fairytale”. This poem impacts you, and leaves you wondering, asking questions to hopefully find answers to cure the intuitive heartbeat thudding inside of your chest! It is such an influential and powerful sensation, and is overly thought provoking!

The collection includes poems from different lens and perspectives, like the featured, '*Terrorism*'; a poem that recounts the eternal imprint of a disheartening visualization of death from '*the eyes of a little boy*'. When reading this, you almost want to believe we live in a perfect world where death and human remains don't imprison the minds' of children, but unfortunately, it is real. Too real, piercing to the spirit.

Poems such as, '*Is there ever such a thing as a tiny betrayal?*', are compelling, sensual, and mysterious, proposing a possible illicit affair, as the woman says, "*I'll ruin you if I stay,*", and in response, the nameless '*beautiful man with the easy smile* says, "*Stay*". There is something I'll in the man's decision...Our brains scramble to decipher through the ominous signs, placing ourselves in the same position as the characters, and you can't help but to suspect that something about the situation simply isn't right.

The setting takes place at a hotel which suggests '*secrecy*', perhaps, for reasons our mind can only fathom to imagine. Is the woman soliciting herself to a lusting man who is blinded by her "*bare legs dangling from a persimmon and gold chaise*" and "*platinum silk high heels*"? Or is the man really the one risking not only his life, by just one simple word ('*stay*'), but also his yearning heart? This, alike *Clouds* and select other poems from the collection feel like "*behind the scenes*" glimpses at '*instinctive*' or forbidden human behaviours that are normally considered, arcane. It is one of the featured attributes noticeable throughout her poetry in which we find most attractive!

Pain, pleasure, adversity, death, love, family, friends, nature, and history are all elemental subjects in this book that help elucidate and describe the power and effect of human emotions and how our emotions shape our lives and influence our decisions. The profound diversity in the use of characters is just amazing! Just by reading one book, you feel like you have been to so many different places, from Malibu to boarding houses, reading of the beauty that can be ingested from '*The Soul of a Red Rock*', exploring the context of conflict and character in poems such as, '*What He Did at the End of his Life*' and '*Stripping for Blind Men*'. It is a journey that you don't wish to end so soon.

Mary's book, '*The Shadow of a Dog I Can Never Forget*', is written like a beautiful drama, at times, transitioning from memories with origins from the author's roots, to depictions of portrayals bound by the emotion of others. We enjoyed how fearless, empathetic, and bold she is, confronting past imperfections, while gracefully remaining slightly elusive as she shares some unforgettable and raw realities. This *elusive* effect gives her poetry an intriguing appeal, like with most great and interesting suspense-based situations, you cannot help but to want to know more! Examining arrangement, this book is superb that includes a preview of her prolific story, '*Delicato*', and also provides doodle pages in the back for the reader's own personal use and creativity, which any reader or writer can use! We believe it is an ingenious idea that Mary includes a '*Questions and Answer*' section about herself, as

we are able to learn about her and the production of the book, and after reading it, will say that she is not only *gifted*, but very intellectual and wise!

Mary proves to be the '*Word Actress*' as said by many, and her poems are like the films she personally writes, directs, and occasionally even stars in! We can watch Mary's poetry film's over and over again, drawn to the author's candid voice and captivating presentation. Her words give birth to undeniable impressions conceived in her brilliant mind and are grown from her heart. There is no doubt that her poetry is the truth, and her words are alive! For every single poem is like an encapsulated experience that embodies the soul of the *individual* who actually lived and *felt* the words. Author Mary Eastham takes our breath away and definitely holds true to her renown reputation! This book is excellent on any occasion, has a combination of different moods, and is wittingly articulate.

The Realistic Poetry reading and review group is happy to rate this book 5 Stars! We hope you have a chance to read this magnificent compilation for yourself! You will be happy that you did.

"Her words speak loud and clear with confidence that energizes your soul." -RPI