



Rick Bass, *For a Little While*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2016. 480 pp. Hardcover \$28.00. Epub \$14.99.

In his most recent collection *For a Little While*, Rick Bass, a master of the short story, takes us to the intersection of loss and beauty, and in this duality, he delivers descriptions that take us from the natural to the supernatural with grace. The luxurious prose pushes us to sift through the layers of nature's sound, taste, and texture while being cast into a sense of complete and total awe. And somehow, in the midst, Bass's stories weave relationships and experiences with the wildness of every landscape he paints – from Sissy's bed in "The Canoeists" to the jubilee of stunned fish in "Titan."

As for the new stories in this collection, Bass builds worlds of dark places in tiny Western towns, "strange seams of disintegrating roughness on the perimeters." In these places, harsh-swept and filled with lions, poorly loved girls, and deep forests, "there cannot be light without the darkness there to define it." In "Elk," we find Bass hijacking our senses once again, pushing us to imagine the smell of the blood, to hear the scraping of the knife on fibrous flesh. We can hear the elk's antlers dragging through the snow "with their long tips and tines furrowing the snow behind, [looking] as if he were in a yoke and plowing the snow," and we can feel hypothermia take over the body, however slowly.

Reading the collection is a full-bodied experience, and we are thrown from lavish landscape into freezing lake and back again. In "How She Remembers It," Bass takes us into the mind of a daughter without sentimentalizing the moment. Again, we can smell the grass after a spring hailstorm as we are pushed into the flux of the relationship between fathers and daughters, one that so perfectly captures what is so important in our lives – our relationships and experiences. Bass reminds us "that even forgetting might be all right, eventually, after long enough time, if the first-burning is hot enough."

Amy Pajewski
Paul Smith's College