

★ **A Hard Place to Leave: Stories from a Restless Life**

Marcia DeSanctis

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The luminous essays of journalist Marcia DeSanctis's *A Hard Place to Leave* juxtapose the restless search for elsewhere with longing for home.

The entries begin in a dank Moscow hotel room in 1983, and end with DeSanctis on a blazing West Texas trail in 2020. The disparate sites bookend her global travels well. DeSanctis recalls summiting a Rwandan volcano in the rainy season—and in tennis shoes; being stunned by Lapland's Northern Lights; falling in love with Paris multiple times; and encountering spies, heads of state, all manner of wildlife, and the ghosts of her own past. Her individual essays also encompass topics like the immensity of the cosmos and tender personal encounters, as with a street dog in Africa whose longing found instant resonance in DeSanctis's seeking heart.

Examining her need to engage in the restless, repetitive travel loop of “leave, return, stay, repeat,” DeSanctis recognizes it as a way to reduce ruminations on loss and mortality. As a mother, she knows how “nature charges ahead even when the heart is reluctant”; every milestone makes her less necessary in her children's lives. And, while loving her sculptor husband and their rural New England home, she knows that a house “does not hold memories sweetly,” but compels backward looks during the steady approach of old age. Not wanting her life to be about that, she travels—most often solo for solitude and freedom, often to enough places that her coffee is all that reminds her that she's the same person everywhere that she wakes up.

A Hard Place to Leave gathers memories from a restless, adventure-filled search for an elusive elsewhere.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2022)

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