



★ All the Gay Saints

Kayleb Rae Candrilli

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Whiting Award winner Kayleb Rae Candrilli's poetry collection *All the Gay Saints* addresses queer love, trans bodies, and the wholeness and holiness of queer lives.

Shot through with a pure, unadulterated core of love, the collection views the world as it is, binding together its frayed and raveled cares with anger and fire, gentleness and water, and names and bodies like solar flares:

*nothing is holy
like self-construction.*

*Our fathers built staircases & we are bringing sledgehammers to our bodies so gently
only we can hear this pleasure.*

Eye-grabbing titles like "When I Transition Will I Lose My Taste for the Storm?" and "My Mother Believes in My Marriage and This Shows Me Her Heart," evoke entire worlds, and the poems deliver on that fulsome sense of story.

The poems have an accelerated velocity at their entries and exits, heightening the book's concern with beginnings and endings and with how the relationship between them can be fuel for living. In "Funeral for a Girl Who Grew Up in the Woods (Or, At the Root)," the speaker dresses for their own funeral and asks, "What is it to visit your own grave? To die and be more alive than ever?" Their answer: "I want to tell me I miss me. I want to tell me, / I'm never coming back."

All the Gay Saints stalks the idea of discernment as a necessary and nebulous trait. Like the collection's frequent images of water, discernment is a compulsion at the root of these poems, something that carves the world to its shape and is often traceable only through what it's left behind. As Candrilli notes, "Origin is cumulus. Origin is Hudson River murky." What Candrilli's poems leave behind is a moving testament to the intricate worlds queer people make when they discern themselves.

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