

An Angel in My Garden

Mart Grams

XlibrisUS (Jan 26, 2019)

Softcover \$23.99 (96pp)

978-1-79601-214-9

An Angel in My Garden is a heartfelt personal poetic scrapbook from a couple's time together.

Mart Grams's heartfelt collection *An Angel in My Garden* pays tribute to his late wife, Linda, reminiscing on their memories together.

Covering three decades and expressing grief over Linda's passing, the book's poems (with some diary-like prose pieces, notes, and lines from cards among them) review the couple's life in very brief: from the moment they met, to starting their family, through to Linda's death. The introduction contains Grams's memories from the time before the couple met as well, including the loss of his grandfather, which is addressed in an introductory poem.

Though there is no table of contents to make them easy to return to, the collections' poems are arranged chronologically and progress with order. Most narrate events from the 1980s. The following decades pass in large gaps, making it hard for the audience to wholly understand the couple's relationship.

The individual pieces function like snapshots from a life together, as with 1996's "Making Love with My Love":

*As the stars reach their heights,
The tears of the night lay on the green,
The sweet softness of her, as silk,
Touches my soul and makes my heart clean.*

In some poems, every line ends in periods, so that lines seem to function independently of their surrounding material. Such poems stop and start instead of flowing naturally and don't feel cohesive by their ends. Other poems are more free form.

The collection is short on surprising imagery, and metaphors and other literary techniques are infrequent. Instead, the book's language is straightforward—common, relatable, and sometimes clichéd. Pieces read more like journal entries than anything else. Contextualizing explanations are given before each entry but further diminish their surprises.

End rhymes are frequent but inconsistent. They often hinder, rather than amplify, the collection's musicality. When the rhymes are consistent, they are unsurprising—pairing "embrace" with "face" or "right" with "night." Some poems appear in Spanish, or in Spanish and English, and these changes are engaging.

The collection's design is more casual than formal. Clip art is used throughout. A bold, italicized, large-print font is used for the poem's titles, and the poems themselves are also formatted in an unusual font.

Poems are full of intimate details that make the book seem more like a personal project than one intended for public consumption. Personal photographs are included throughout, but they amplify the sense that reading the book from the outside is intrusive.

An Angel in My Garden is a passionate collection that preserves its central couple's memories with nostalgia.

EDITH WAIRIMU (April 18, 2019)

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