

The Seasons

Bruce Meyer

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The Seasons, with careful descriptions of natural details, ably reminds us that enchantment can be found in ordinary hours.

Bruce Meyer, poet laureate of the city of Barrie, Ontario, gathers one hundred sonnets for his wife in his latest collection. *The Seasons* charts the course of a marriage with delicate reverence, drawing from Canadian landscapes, musings on time, the spiritual, literature, domestic moments, and the beloved. Meyer's praise of the commonplace, "the house an ark containing the world," evokes the hushed miracle of a lasting relationship.

The book uses seasons to frame memories, beginning with winter. Here, the speaker encounters "seraphim breaths," quiet days, and a lover's "breath / forming spheres where spirits danced." In one instance, snow becomes "a blanket wrapping us in our love." In another, snow is "bright enough before its melting" to fill the scene with "angelic splendour." Meyer's romantic, airy language is brimming with sentiment, yet fits the snowbound mood. Tender gestures are tempered with hints at mortality that deepen the work. The impression of a swirling, fleeting world is perhaps most crystallized in the lines "I long to be a shadow in the crowd / that brushes gently against your shadow."

If the poems recount familiar material—including the joy in gazing at a lover, allusions to Eurydice and Orpheus, expressions of longing, and the idea of time being precious—they also display a careful eye for natural details. At times, comparisons stretch too far; in lines such as "Passion is a stray ember that rose / from the burning shore across the lake / and attached itself to the loveless dark / that cowered over itself and sank itself, / reflectionless, in the still water below," the initial image is lost.

More successful poems take a firmer, less elaborate path toward unexpected realizations. Standouts include "Holly," which features lovers walking through snow, and ends with an abrupt, bold turn that connects a personal moment to the wider world: "the blood of uncertain history is on our hands." Another effective poem, "Building Blocks," presents a series of aphoristic lines that reveal simple, thought-provoking views.

Not all of the sonnets transcend. Read as fragments in the story of a partnership, however, they reveal whimsies alongside sober reflections. The speaker's message that "to be is to live and to live is to love" is not uttered in naïveté but stems from a lifetime spent in gratitude. *The Seasons* ably reminds us that enchantment can be found in ordinary hours and that mutual dedication creates its own reward.

KAREN RIGBY (September 24, 2014)

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