

College: Mystery

by Jenna Yotter
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Now this year I went to my very first college boys' basketball game and did not find the same thing. There was no family; I found it to be very serious and "every man for himself" attitudes. If one of their guys was on the ground, most of the team stood around and waited, and maybe a high five was given when the player got up. I have seen two ICC games and both were very similar, a group of guys trying to survive and win.

This reminds me of our day to day lives, not just in playing basketball. Today our family is almost a memory. The life we used to live is no more and we need to make a new one. We have the same tools and abilities as before just a different atmosphere. Just like from high school basketball to college. The game stayed the same; they just have to play with new players and practice in a new gym. And in comparison we live in a new house and surround ourselves with different people. This makes us change. We don't know how to react to the person standing next to us. We don't even know their middle name.

I really only got the high school experience for a semester, when I started going to the basketball games to watch number #53. This introduced me to a completely different life compared to being homeschooled for eight years. But spending a couple days during the week and a weekend here and there watching a family play ball, and sitting next to

some amazing people was something I will remember for the rest of my life. It had meaning and made people happy. I haven't seen that yet in college, which makes me wonder if it will ever come.

It seems unfair that once I got used it, we graduated and we all were thrown into adulthood where people don't seem to care. Something as fun and honest as a game can be so serious and make people so angry. Watching people grow and change in front of me isn't always enjoyable, but I bet some people could say the same for me. I am not the same person who sat at games only watching number #53, but then again #53 isn't the same either.

I feel that as we age our days pick up speed. Every day goes by quicker than the one before. We spend less time on the simple things. Our lives get more and more difficult, and some things that used to make us happy only frustrate us. But as I have said in nearly all of my other columns, this is part of life. And even though sometimes we want to punch a wall or slam a door out of mere frustration, I have to believe that someday I will see why we all have to be put through this. Why people have to change, and why something that used to make us so happy no longer does. Life is a mystery that has yet to be solved.

The Poetry Pocket

Me and My M-60 Machinegun

Three months into my tour in that war torn Vietnam land My squad leader looks to me and says "Ski, I'm making you my new M-60 machine gunner man."

Six hundred rounds a minute it would fire Spewing death, destruction and devastation Upon those who would raise its ire.

I learned to fire from the prone, shoulder and my hip Firing bursts of three to six, a potent killer, always on target

Through the jungle, villages and enemy my bullets would rip.

Many an enemy soldier my M-60 and I caused to die Just aiming, pulling the trigger and doing my job. Now, many a night I wake to my own screams, rivers of tears do I cry.

The enemy dead and wounded lay covered in blood, always the same They try to take me down and silence me and my death spewing gun

For in their misery it is me and my M-60 that they blame.

After killing so many of those who would have us Troopers all die A toast to me at our first reunion as "the best damn gunner they ever saw."

Little do my comrades know that the ghosts of the dead return to haunt me many a night.

Will freedom from all of this ever come? The raging battles, the smell of the dead, the cry of the wounded, the terrible sight of it all, Perhaps then, only when my life is over and done.

-Brian Kielpinski, Cohasset (1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam, 1967 - 1968)

Book review:

"My Heart is a Mountain"

By Nathan Bergstedt
Grand Rapids Herald-Review

Catherine Holm's "My Heart is a Mountain" is a series of short stories by the author that are tied together by the theme of how people are connected to their surroundings and an inherent spirituality that pervades our instincts. Living in Cook, Minn., for the last 15 years, she uses her experiences with rural living to influence her writing, creating characters who define themselves first and foremost by the land.

Each of the stories in the book to some degree are tinged with magical realism; a post-modernist approach to fiction that keeps the stories grounded in a reality we recognize, but that takes advantage of our existential desires and presents them in a form that seems plausible, though obviously physically impossible. The book itself defines Holm's writing as 'surreal,' though that term doesn't necessarily encapsulate the essence of the entire book, though certain stories included can definitely be categorized as such.

Elderly men who can disappear from life's worries to a cabin in the woods that is the quintessential 'man's haven,' a woman who has to purchase heart armor so she doesn't break down from life's emotions, and a Native American who after death still finds himself existing both in the world of his ancestors as well as the 'white' world that tried to lure him in all his life are a few of the themes of her stories. The allegories presented via this mysticism touches on very real issues of everyday life, both for individuals as well as societally.

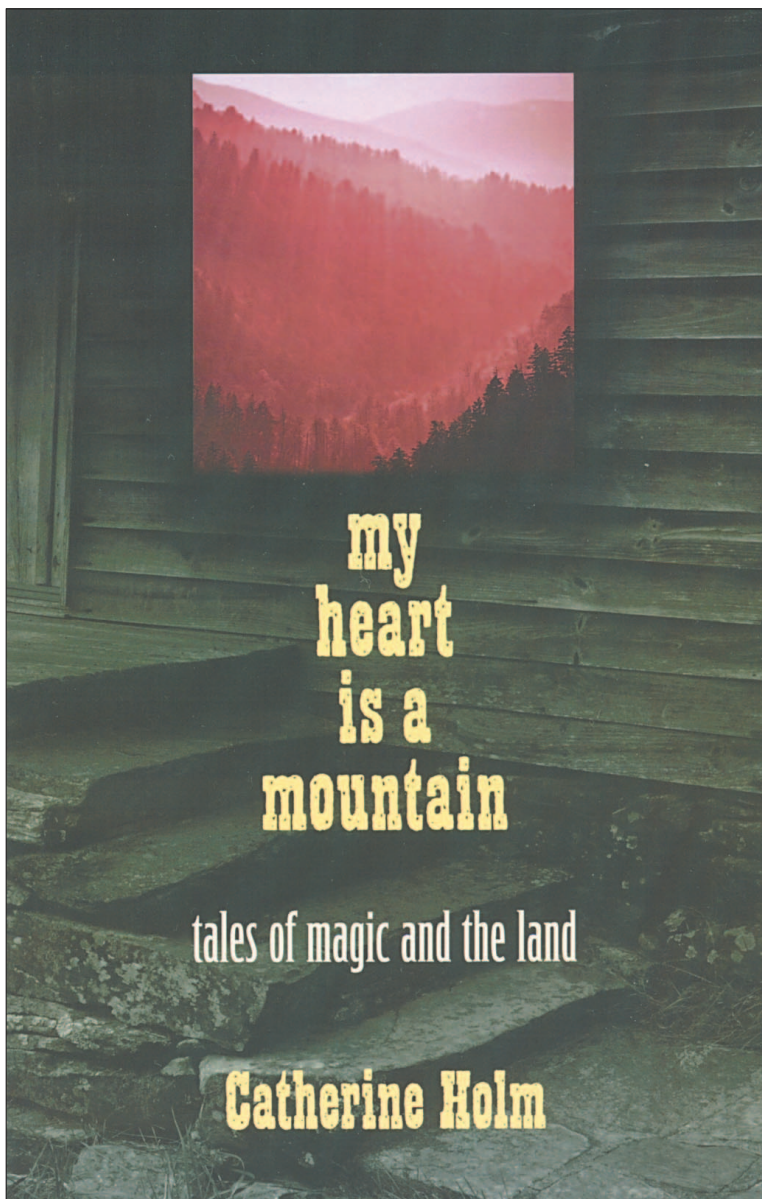
The drama in the stories on the whole is very balanced,

though at times it dips to melodrama, which for the purposes of each story could be said is done for better or for worse. Poetry of prose that extends into the superfluous happens occasionally, though usually not to a distracting point. For a reader turned off by such descriptions, don't worry about it. As a book of short stories, if you don't like one, you can move on to the next.

The greatest strength in each of the stories is Holm's ability to peer into the deepest reaches of the minds of her characters and to so eloquently divulge the secrets of their being, even more so than the characters themselves would have the courage to admit to themselves. The individuals in each of the stories are easily recognizable, even if you've never met someone quite like them. Their desires, motivations, and fears are presented in a way that is accessible if you care to know them. Holm's writing style beautifully combines these characters with where they live and where they've been, which is paramount to their unique personalities. The end result are characters the reader can relate to, not because the person resembles a friend or a neighbor, but because they exude what it means to be human.

On the whole, it's a terrific collection of stories by a gifted writer. Each description of person or place speaks volumes of history, and the pleasure, grief, bliss, and fear from the characters can almost be tasted. Life and death, relationships, love and hate, missed opportunities, and leaps of faith are a few of the literary undercurrents one can dip their minds into by reading "My Heart is a Mountain."

"My Heart is a Mountain," is published by Holy Cow! Press in Duluth, Minn. It can be purchased online at www.catherineholm.com or at bookstores as of November.



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The Herald Review is accepting poetry submissions for the Poetry Pocket in the Scene & Screen section. Poems can be of any form or genre, but length should be limited to 500 words (or roughly 14 column inches).

This will be an ongoing feature of the newspaper, provided you, the reading and writing community, continue to submit your poems. In doing so, you enrich the readership of the Herald Review by providing them with unique insights and intuitive forms of language.

Submissions can be sent to Art & Education Editor Nathan Bergstedt at nbergstedt@grandrapidsheraldreview.net. Paste the poem to the body of the email, along with your name and city of residence. Content should be suitable to a wide audience (i.e. would you let your mother or your child read it?).

Happy writing, and then let the Itasca area know your art better.

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