



The Road to Emmaus: Poems

Spencer Reece

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Longlisted for the National Book Award

A moving, subtle sequence of narrative poems, from a sharp new poetic voice

Two strangers walk toward Emmaus. Christ has just been crucified, and they are heartbroken?until a third man joins them on the road and comforts them. Once they reach Emmaus and break bread, the pair realizes they have been walking with Christ himself. But in the moment they recognize him, he disappears. Spencer Reece draws on this tender story in his mesmerizing collection?one that fearlessly confronts love and its loss, despair and its consolation, and faith in all of its various guises.

Reece's central figure in *The Road to Emmaus* is a middle-aged man who becomes a priest in the Episcopal Church; these poems follow him to New York City, to Honduras, to a hospital where he works as a chaplain, to a prison, to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. With language of simple, lyrical beauty that gradually accrues weight and momentum, Reece spins compelling dramas out of small moments: the speaker, living among a group of orphans, wondering "Was it true, what they said, that a priest is a house lit up?"; two men finding each other at a Coming Out Group; a man trying to become visible after a life that had depended on not being seen.

A yearning for connection, an ache of loneliness, and the instant of love disappearing before our eyes haunt this long-awaited second collection from Spencer Reece.

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