



The Messenger (Iowa Poetry Prize)

Stephanie Pippin

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In thrilling poems of metamorphosis and birth, death and dissolution, Stephanie Pippin's debut collection returns us to a world unshorn of wildness. Delivering accident and hunger, love and grief, nature in these poems is beautiful and brutal, "a hellish magnificence" that both invites and denies the meanings we project onto it. Refusing the domesticated comfort of our usual myths, Pippin reminds us of our place as creatures among others in a world where "what isn't dead / is dying," and where the thrill of predatory flight commingles with the desperation of the prey.

This mesmerizing and astonishingly assured collection offers a message as harrowing as it is essential. Faced with the hard master of necessity—"angel stinking of his own / excitement"—and bare before what Mallarmé called "the horror of the forest," we are helpless, finally, to do anything to save what we love. Our sole task, these poems insist, is to look on while we can, and to love harder.



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