



Spirit Seizures

Melissa Pritchard

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In these stories by Melissa Pritchard, the past brushes up against the present, the voices of both the sane and the obsessed are heard, and the spirits speaking unbidden through the mouths of some spurn others who desire them most.

Some of the men and women in *Spirit Seizures* dwell contentedly on the surface of life, even making a science or an art of what they see around them. But many of the characters in these stories see—sometimes calmly, sometimes with agitation—beneath life's surface, beyond sun's light. The title story tells of a psychic woman, pregnant with her second child, who welcomes over her farmer husband's objections the visits of an older couple desiring a séance with the spirit of their dead daughter. Spirits are also summoned in "Rocking on Water, Floating in Glass," when a woman consults the shade of Sarah Bernhardt to help her decide whether to leave her refuge in a dark antique shop and reenter the world of the living.

The husband in "Ramon; Souvenirs" recalls his wife's obsession with pueblo culture and her ambitious courtship of the impotent Indian elder who she hopes will initiate her into native spiritual mysteries. But the greatest desire of La Bête, a spectacularly obese model painted by the French impressionists, is to herself become a perfect object, viewed and adored for her form, not her crude essence. Mrs. Grant in "With Wings Cross Water" is painfully isolated from the surface of her family's life by her fears of terminal illness, of what lies beneath her skin. And Mrs. Gump, the reverend's housekeeper, prays and cleans the house furiously, hoping to obliterate all traces of the worldly beauty that distracts her employer and her artist son from the hereafter.

Written with humor but often poignant when they reveal the veins of longing that run through men and women, the stories in *Spirit Seizures* follow the elusive currents that link us to the eternal, the fluid boundaries that wash between love and mourning.

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