



The Beforelife

Franz Wright

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In this stunning collection, Franz Wright chronicles the journey back from a place of isolation and wordlessness. After a period when it seemed certain he would never write poetry again, he speaks with bracing clarity about the twilight world that lies between madness and sanity, addiction and recovery. Wright negotiates the precarious transition from illness to health in a state of skeptical rapture, discovering along the way the exhilaration of love--both divine and human--and finding that even the most battered consciousness can be good company.

Whether he is writing about his regret for the abortion of a child, describing the mechanics of slander ("I can just hear them on the telephone and keening all their kissy little knives"), or composing an ironic ode to himself ("To a Blossoming Nut Case"), Wright's poems are exquisitely precise. Charles Simic has characterized him as a poetic miniaturist, whose "secret ambition is to write an epic on the inside of a matchbook cover." Time and again, Wright turns on a dime in a few brief lines, exposing the dark comedy and poignancy of his heightened perception.

Here is one of the poems from the collection:

Description of Her Eyes

Two teaspoonfuls,
and my mind goes
everyone can kiss my ass now--

then it's changed,
I change my mind.

Eyes so sad, and infinitely kind.

From the Hardcover edition.

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