

A Day, a Night, Another Day, Summer



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The title of Christine Schutt's second collection strikes the theme of swiftly passing time that runs through each of the stories. In "The Life of the Palm and the Breast" a woman watches her half-grown children running through the house and wonders: Whose boys are these? Whose life is this? The title story tells of a grandfather who has lived long enough to see his daughter's struggles echoed in his granddaughter and how her unhappiness leads him to unexpectedly feel the weight of his years. In "Darkest of All" a mother's relationship with her sons is wrecked by a repeated cycle of drugs and abusive relationships, the years pass and the pain-and its chosen remedy-remains the same. The narrator in "Winterreise" evokes Thoreau and strives to be heroic in the face of her longtime friend's imminent death, a harsh reminder of the time that is allotted to each of us. Schutt's indomitable, original talent is once again on full display in each of these deeply informed, intensely realized stories. Many of the narratives take place in a space as small as a house, where the doors are many and what is hidden behind these thin domestic barriers tends towards violence, abusive sex, and mental anguish. Schutt opens these doors in sudden, bold moments that also reveal how the characters are often hopeful, even optimistic. With a style that is at once sensual and spare, dreamlike and deliberate, she exposes the terrible intimacy of the rooms and corridors of our innermost lives.

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