



Excerpts from a Natural History

Holly Painter

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When the British natural philosophers of the 17th century founded modern natural history, they proposed finding a poet to compile a poetic account of everything that existed in nature, very broadly defined. Four hundred years later, the work is ongoing, made modern and rigorous with rules and style-guides, managers and research-poets.

This collection follows a year's worth of submissions by one such researcher-poet, but the poems are only half the story. The rest lies in the revisions and comments--of both a professional and personal nature--between the poet and the editor back at corporate offices.

As the relationship unravels, natural history becomes a tool of the heartbroken and obsessed.

"To describe the world in its entirety: 'the structures, operations, functions, situations, and relationships of every occurrence of every object' is the poet's true mission... Painter's poems are punctuated by the commentary of a highly analytic logician. The unremitting voice of reason is given voice, like an alien attempting a study of human emotion in the margins. This book is actually two books. You should read it with you and yourself." - Paul Legault, author of The Madeleine Poems

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