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Fugitive Pieces



Par Anne Michaels
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA beautiful new limited edition paperback of Fugitive Pieces, published as part of the Bloomsbury Modern Classics listAthos and I stood together on deck and looked across the water at the bright city. From this distance no one would guess the turmoil that had torn apart Greece The sea began to darken, and Athens, glowing in the distance, seemed to float on the horizon like a bright ship.Jakob Beer is seven years old when he is rescued from the ruins of a buried village in Nazi-occupied Poland. He is the only one of his family to have survived the invasion. Adopted by his saviour, the Greek geologist Athos, Jakob must steel himself to excavate the horrors of his own history. A novel of astounding beauty and wisdom, Fugitive Pieces is a profound meditation on the resilience of the human spirit and love's ability to restore

even the most damaged of hearts..com Anne Michaels, an accomplished poet, has already published two collections of poetry in her native Canada. She turns her hand to fiction in an impressive debut novel, *Fugitive Pieces*. This is the story of Jakob Beer, a Polish Jew, translator, and poet who, as a child, witnessed his family's slaughter at the hands of the Nazis. Beer himself was found and smuggled out of Poland by Athos Roussos, a Greek archaeologist who carried him back to Greece and kept him there in precarious safety. After the war they emigrated together to Canada. Jakob's story is told through diaries discovered by Ben, a young man whose parents are Holocaust survivors and who is a vessel for their memories just as Jakob is the bearer of his own. *Fugitive Pieces* is a book about memory and forgetting. How is it possible to love the living when our hearts are still with the dead? What is the difference between what historical fact tells us and what we remember? More than that, the novel is a meditation on the power of language to free our souls and allow us to find our own destinies.

Extrait

My sister had long outgrown the hiding place. Bella was fifteen and even I admitted she was beautiful, with heavy brows and magnificent hair like black syrup, thick and luxurious, a muscle down her back. "A work of art," our mother said, brushing it for her while Bella sat in a chair. I was still small enough to vanish behind the wallpaper in the cupboard, cramming my head sideways between choking plaster and beams, eyelashes scraping. Since those minutes inside the wall, I've imagined the dead lose every sense except hearing. The burst door. Wood ripped from hinges, cracking like ice under the shouts. Noises never heard before, torn from my father's mouth. Then silence. My mother had been sewing a button on my shirt. She kept her buttons in a chipped saucer. I heard the rim of the saucer in circles on the floor. I heard the spray of buttons, little white teeth. Blackness filled me, spread from the back of my head into my eyes as if my brain has been punctured. Spread from stomach to legs. I gulped and gulped, swallowing it whole. The wall filled with smoke. I struggled out and stared while the air caught fire. I wanted to go to my parents, to touch them. But I couldn't, unless I stepped on their blood. The soul leaves the body instantly, as if it can hardly wait to be free: my mother's face was not her own. My father was twisted with falling. Two shapes in the flesh-heap, his hands. I ran and fell, ran and fell. Then the river: so cold it felt sharp. The river was the same blackness that was inside me; only the thin membrane of my skin kept me floating. From the other bank, I watched darkness turn to purple-orange light above the town; the color of flesh transforming to spirit. They flew up. The dead passed above me, weird haloes and arcs smothering the stars. The trees bent under their weight. I'd never been alone in the night forest, the wild bare branches were frozen snakes. The ground tilted and I didn't hold on. I strained to join them, to rise with them, to peel from the ground like paper ungluing at its edges. I know why we bury our dead and mark the place with stone, with the heaviest, most permanent thing we can think of: because the dead are everywhere but the ground. I stayed where I was. Clammy with cold, stuck to the ground. I begged: If I can't rise, then let me sink, sink into the forest floor like a seal into wax. Then as if she'd pushed the hair from my forehead, as if I'd heard her voice-I knew suddenly my mother was inside me. Moving along sinews, under my skin the way she used to move through the house at night, putting things away, putting things in order. She was stopping to say goodbye and was caught, in such pain, wanting to rise, wanting to stay. It was my responsibility to release her, a sin to keep her from ascending. I tore at my clothes, my hair. She was gone. My own fast breath around my head. I ran from the sound of the river into the woods, dark as the inside of a box. I ran until the first light wrung the last grayness out of the stars, dripping dirty light between the trees. I knew what to do. I took a stick and dug. I planted myself like a turnip and hid my face with leaves. My head between the branches, bristling points like my father's beard. I was safely buried, my wet clothes cold as armor. Panting like a dog. My arms tight up against my chest, my neck stretched back, tears crawling like insects into my ears. I had no choice but to look straight up. The dawn sky was milky with new spirits. Soon I couldn't avoid the absurdity of daylight even by closing my eyes. It poked down, pinned me like the broken branches, like my father's beard. Then I felt the worst shame of my life: I was pierced with hunger. And suddenly I realized, my throat aching without sounds Bella.