



Elk Love: A Montana Memoir

Lynne Spriggs O'Connor

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Lynne Spriggs O'Connor's memoir *Elk Love* pays homage to the challenging, beautiful land that brought her deep, enduring love.

A scholar and museum curator fascinated by Native American art, city-bred O'Connor had visions of Montana as her healing place. Upon moving to rugged Great Falls, though, she faced rough initiations into her new life. Flipping her car on a deserted gravel road, she was left at the mercy of strangers. One of them, Harrison, was a handsome rancher thirteen years her senior, still reeling from the death of his wife five years before.

Because Harrison and O'Connor were wounded souls, they at first kept their distance through verbal thrusts and parries. But sharing the rigors and challenges of ranching bound them not just to the land, but to each other. Eager to learn, O'Connor was initiated into the bloody rites of autumn (the book's descriptions of what it takes to put meat on the table are graphic). Not long after, though sensing an almost mystical connection with the Indigenous people who understood the play of life and death, she gave up hunting.

The prose is gorgeous and detailed, including when it comes to landscape, creatures, and the quirky folks who embraced O'Connor's presence among them. It revels in the elegance of great blue herons and the power of bald eagles; in silver fish leaping to snap caddisflies only to be carried aloft themselves, still wiggling, by swift birds; and in the comforting devotion of domestic animals. In such features, in new love, and in sharing the grief and pride of the Native American artists whose works she exhibited, O'Connor found her healing place.

Elk Love is a memoir about Montana ranching life and finding healing, love, and home through shared challenges and joys with another.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2024)

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