

Love Is Not Pie: Variations on a Monogamish Theme

Katherine Lazaruk

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The poems of Love is Not a Pie, crafted through moments of reflection and of intense emotion, serve as a reminder to the depth and breadth of love.

A relationship rises and falls in stolen moments in Katherine Lazaruk's emotional, autobiographical poetry collection *Love is Not Pie*.

About an extramarital relationship that resulted in an expanded understanding of oneself and one's capacity to love, this poetry collection follows a story structure, making it more akin to a novel or memoir in verse. There is a beginning, a middle, and an end; the entries track the roller coaster of implicit want and explicit need. In the beginning, there is possibility: "My husband is a patient man" sets up the dynamics of the marriage, a team of a solid man and a sensual woman with mutual respect. "He was my road not taken" introduces the second partner. It is filled with wistful longing and a dash of sexual tension, tracing the will-they-won't-they history of the pair.

In the book's middle, there is negotiation. "Facebook Messenger made it easy" details the flow of conversation between the two, rediscovering each other and circling closer to the consummation of "The exquisite pleasure." There is also frustration. "Affairs" is a hard piece about the confines of monogamy, the desire to explore outside of it but not without it, and the dawning realization that someone is, and always will be, lying. In the end, there is finality and a commitment. "The first time I tried," "The second time," and "The third time" are all about the different ways Lazaruk tried to end the relationship and set boundaries. Yet she always found her way back—until that last time, when complete understanding set in that her "and" would not, or could not, give her what she craved: honesty.

The poems elevate literary devices to an art form. Line breaks build tension, emphasis, and breaths. They take the speed of words that run together and use them as internal thoughts and not containable emotions; they use parentheticals as asides, drawing out the words between the words. Alliteration creates a cadence that makes the poems leap from the page, best exemplified in "I used to think":

*We women,
wise and wizened,
wild, wondrous, wily,
strong, straight, standing,
still against the wind
storm straining our belief,
beloved,
blind faith in the face of
the end endings ended and
endless.*

The book also exhibits a quality of restraint in what can not be restrained. "I used to think" is a heartbreaking poem

about the potential of becoming a widow, and realizing that it would “hurt like hell,” because she is truly, madly, deeply in wild, consuming, steadfast love with her husband. On the other end, erotic poems like “You are beautiful. That is all” and “White clad, crisp” tread the line just this side of explicit. They paint tantalizing images of intimate moments without being vulgar or disrespectful.

The poems of *Love is Not a Pie*, crafted through moments of reflection and of intense emotion, serve as a reminder of the depth and breadth of love, and of what love could be when embraced with passion and honesty.

Love is Not Pie is an unflinching examination of love and self-in-love beyond the parameters of monogamy.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (February 8, 2022)

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