



Walking the Wrack Line: On Tidal Shifts and What Remains

Barbara Hurd

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Barbara Hurd continues to give nature writing a human dimension in this final volume of her trilogy that began with *Stirring the Mud* and *Entering the Stone*. With prose both eloquent and wise, she examines what washes ashore, from the angel wing shells to broken oars. Even a merman appears in this brilliant collection that throws light on the mysterious and the overlooked.

Writing from beaches as far-flung as Morocco, St. Croix, or Alaska, and as familiar as California and Cape Cod, she helps us see beauty in the gruesome feeding process of the moon snail. She holds up an encrusted, still-sealed message bottle to make tangible the emotional divide between mother and daughter. She considers a chunk of sea glass and the possibilities of transformation.

The book began on a beach, Hurd says, "with the realization that a lot of what I care about survives in spite of--perhaps because of--having been broken or lost for a while in backward drift. Picking up egg cases, stones, shells, I kept turning them over--in my hands and in my mind."

Each chapter starts with close attention to an object--a shell fragment of a pelican egg, or perhaps a jellyfish--but then widens into larger concerns: the persistence of habits, desire, disappointments, the lie of the perfectly preserved, the pleasures of aversions, transformations, and a phenomenon from physics known as the strange attractor.

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