



The Death of Fred Astaire: And Other Essays from a Life Outside the Lines

Leslie Lawrence

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As a child of the sixties, Leslie Lawrence knew she didn't want to duplicate her parents' lives, yet she never imagined she'd stray so far outside the lines of their and her own expectations. "The Death of Fred Astaire" opens with the story, both wrenching and funny, of how Lawrence says her goodbyes to the iconic images she's held since her youth; she then proceeds to bear a child and raise him with her lesbian partner. Some essays in this debut collection reflect on legacies Lawrence inherited from her Jewish family and culture. In others, she searches gamely for a rich, authentic life: a voice, a vocation, a community, even a god she can call her own.

Always a seeker, an adventurer resisting fear, Lawrence, a city girl, creates a summer home in the back woods of the Live Free or Die state. She attempts the flying trapeze and takes part in a cross-dressing workshop. Traveling alone to Morocco, she assists a veterinarian tending to an ailing donkey. Teaching in a vocational high school in Boston, she questions her methods and assumptions about race and class. With rare honesty, she confronts the complexities of motherhood, of caring for her ill partner, and of widowhood. In *Wonderlust*, the collection's most ambitious piece, she explores the role of beauty and creativity in our spiritual lives, revealing how lifelong learning in dance, music, and the visual arts can make us all more alive even as we age.

Ranging widely in length, subject, and style, these personal essays place Lawrence among today's most vital writers of creative nonfiction. Her warmth and wisdom, her distinctive blend of humor and pathos, her reverence for what sustains us: food and family, community and beauty—all make this a book you'll want to share with those you love."

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