



Naming A Stranger

John Hazard

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These poems are plain-spoken, sure, straight forward, but they are also loaded: like a gun is loaded, loaded like Keats recommending that poets “load every rift with ore,” like the cannon that’s loaded with a human cannonball! A splendid collection.

—Thomas Lux, author of *Child Made of Sand: Poems, God Particles, and The Cradle Place*

The people in John Hazard’s *Naming a Stranger* are blown away by the wind; they work in diners and post offices; they stack boxes that tilt and fall. The speaker of these poems knows that “one can’t stay in a field forever,” that when he contemplates a woman at a class reunion, he “wouldn’t be the reporter she would choose.” He is a summer witness to his “wife’s new hair, short, downy, a baby’s hair, no wig, no scarf in the tilt of this day.” In this beautiful debut collection Hazard offers a world in which both the familiar and the unknown are delicately examined and named.

—Faith Shearin, author of *Moving the Piano and Telling the Bees*

Like James Wright and Theodore Roethke before him, John Hazard understands the Ohio River Valley and the Midwest. His collection of poems, *Naming a Stranger*, invites us beyond the region and into the lives of those who call it home. Hazard takes the task of appellation seriously, intuiting our quirks, particularly those that we’re reluctant to share: “stuck in our own dark psyches,” potential “soul-mates in our silences.”

By dignifying the stranger, he chips away at our estrangement. We no longer need resort to *Hey Kid*, *Sweetheart* and *What’s-his-name*. With Hazard’s fine poems, we are no longer alone.

—Glen Armstrong, author of *Set List*, editor of *Cruel Garters*

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