



Living on Fire: A Collection of Poems

Virginia Adair

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Returning to the range, structure, and lyric quality of the national bestseller *Ants on the Melon*, Virginia Hamilton Adair's new collection of poetry, *Living on Fire*, establishes more firmly than ever this writer's literary eminence. In clear, memorable poems--about love in its many variations, about music, about the American desert, about mortality, and about her own blindness--the poet speaks to her readers with a directness distinctly American, and with feeling enhanced and deepened by technical rigor. Of young love she writes, "Their arms bound them together like timbers/for a raft and they rocked a little, as if on water." Of her blindness: "Blind to abundance when I was not blind,/I breathe one rose and hold it in my mind." Of the Mojave she recalls "long purple robes trailing down the arroyos./As the sky dims into dusk."

All the poems in *Living on Fire* create their own small worlds. During a long-ago trip down the Mississippi, the author recalls, "Sometimes our waterways became narrow and dim, dark mirrors/under live-oak branches hung with Spanish moss and snakes." A new love affair brings "this nighttime madness/in the backseat of a roadster." Later, she remarks with almost as much wonder as sadness, "Sightless,/I have become a stranger to my own person." Together, these poems articulate a sensibility at once distinctive and universal. Virginia Hamilton Adair has taken the specificities of her own sometimes joyous, sometimes tragic life and transformed them into powerful celebrations and elegies whose beauty and profundity will affect everyone who reads them. Even in the midst of despair, this is a poet whose work, in its sustained passion, indeed lives on fire.

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