



Scratching the Ghost: Poems

Dexter L. Booth

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Winner of the Cave Canem Poetry Prize, selected by Major Jackson

The stub of your left leg dangles
as I hold you up, my hands inserted under your arms
like a child. You are complaining about the itch,
the burn; scratch the ghost of your calf and heel.
?from "Scratching the Ghost"

Dexter L. Booth's ruminations on loss in this award-winning debut are rooted in a time past but one still palpable and persistent. Here are memories of love lost, family mourned, a father absent, ghosts of hometowns and childhood. Here too is a "Short Letter to the Twentieth Century" and, finally, a "Long Letter to the Twentieth Century," as if across this collection the poet is mustering up the force to speak back to history.

"In Dexter Booth's *Scratching the Ghost*, a cracked egg means the universe is splitting, the slap of a double-dutch rope is a broken-throated hymn, and splitting a squealing hog is akin to lovemaking. These are poems loyal to their own intrepid logic and reckless plausibility. Yet, lest the reader get too giddy in a fun house of mirrors, here, too, are the melodic laments and remarkable lyric passages of a poet who acknowledges the infinite current of melancholy that underlines his journey." ?Major Jackson

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