



Nightwork: Stories

Christine Schutt

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In this, her first collection of stories, Christine Schutt gives exquisite and provocative form to feelings and memories. *Nightwork* is a masterful dreamwork, revealing our lives with the startling clarity we long for.

A young woman remembers, after a forbidden embrace, the exact quality of her father's skin, "pitted and stubbled under all that color." A girl recalls the strange kingdom that was her grandfather's estate, a place she came to inhabit only through betrayal.

Romantic linkings are often unexpected: mother-son, father-daughter, mother-lover-daughter. In "What Have You Been Doing?" a mother teaches her son how to kiss. In "Dead Men," a woman finds herself unable to be touched by her new lover without experiencing intensely erotic recollections of the lover who is gone.

The stories are sensually detailed and sometimes shocking. Hands, feet, breasts . . . bodies are known, as they are known, mostly in bed. "Before the dead man, she had slept by herself with her hands to herself like a poultice."

Here is an Everywoman, voiced from familiar enclosures: a house in the country, an apartment in town. The muted landscapes, too, are an Everyplace made of "wind and slashes of high blue sky in the heads of furious trees."

Schutt's fearlessness, her passionate honesty, is the source for the language of these splendid stories—night worlds, which may disturb our composure but enable us to dream while awake.

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