



No Acute Distress (Crab Orchard)

Jennifer Richter

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Jennifer Richter's penetrating second collection of poems, *No Acute Distress*, introduces us to the unspoken struggles and unanticipated epiphanies of illness and motherhood, subjects rarely explored together in contemporary poetry. The first poem of each section borrows from a classic joke form—one begins, "An intractable migraine walks into a bar"—to consider the thin line this mother walks between the tragic and comic: debilitating pain met with increasingly absurd and desperate medical treatments.

Richter seasons her work with irony from the start, titling the book's opening poem, "Pleasant, healthy-appearing adult white female in no acute distress." As the collection progresses, the speaker's growing children bring new, wider perspective to the poems; the heart of the book opens up to embrace the adolescents' increasing self-sufficiency and the body's vibrant re-emergence into health.

No Acute Distress offers readers fresh language grounded in a masterful use of form, speaking with an urgency that acknowledges chronic pain's cumulative damage to the body and spirit, and with an openness that allows for hope and the inexplicable on the path to victorious recovery.

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