



# Fierce Day

*Rose Styron*

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## **Fierce Day** Rose Styron

In this remarkable new collection, her first in over a decade, Rose Styron confronts the death of her husband?step by step?in jewel-like poems. Seldom has a poet been so attuned to the ways in which, under the pressure of grief, time both opens and shuts?letting us into its minutes, shutting us out of its years. The instant, clock time, the half-hour, the day, the anniversary, sacred time, secular time, calendar time?all are opened up by love, loss, and most especially seasonal shifts that allow one glimpses of what an “afterlife” might be, or a way back into this life with a quickened sense of what joy might lie beyond grief. Winter deepens, early Spring asks the resistant heart to open, late Spring beckons asking the soul to relearn trust. By the time Summer arrives, this dazzling poet of summer has learned how to survive loss, how to see again, how to trust ever-treacherous, inevitably treacherous, time, as if it were one’s natural lover. It is a wise and gorgeous journey. *Fierce Day* is a lyric record of loss, and of the heart wrenching struggle to continue living in the shadow of grief, but not to move beyond grief so much as to make of grief an inescapable condition of love and continuing attachment. The love that electrifies every page of this beautiful collection is not only for another person but for the mutable world itself, whose glories are part and parcel of its evanescence. Don’t let the simplicity and directness of these poems fool you?as the title indicates, this book disquiets as much as it consoles: its vision of time and mortality, memory and the belated recognition of value, is inextricably bound up with the land and seascape of Martha’s Vineyard, which Styron evokes with both a naturalist’s eye and an elegist’s heart. This is a fabulous book and ought to be cherished by anyone who’s ever loved a person or a place. ? Alan Shapiro How to continue after the finalities of loss? *Fierce day*, answers Rose Styron, as, in flashes of memory, she transfigures the ineffable beauties of landscape, sky and sea, recasting mourning as resilience, a commitment to the life force which surges through these radiant lyrics. ? Honor Moore Rose Styron’s early work as a translator of Russian poetry has come to her aid in the bleak years of mourning her husband. Each word is like a fruit plucked from a high branch and carried down a ladder as if it was something that could break, bend, bruise, as if it belonged to someone else. Formality and tenderness are handed over in this way to us, her readers. ? Fanny Howe Rose Styron, who has long been known all over the world as a vigilant champion of human rights, will now also be known as the poet of *Fierce Day*, a work of uncommon lyric solitude, of intimacies distilled in poetic time in the region of death’s aftermath, a poetry of deep saudade and brave illumination. To the call of Eugenio Montale’s mysterious love poems, these are an answer from mid-sea in the new century, to bless us dark and far on our/many winds’ way. What a gift Styron has given us. ? Carolyn Forché Styron’s poems show us how loss can be accepted with dignity, even inventiveness, as well as a sanity that arises from the prayerful observation of one’s natural surroundings?all the while investing these elegies with balance and authority by adding to them unexpected droplets of irony. ? Billy Collins

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