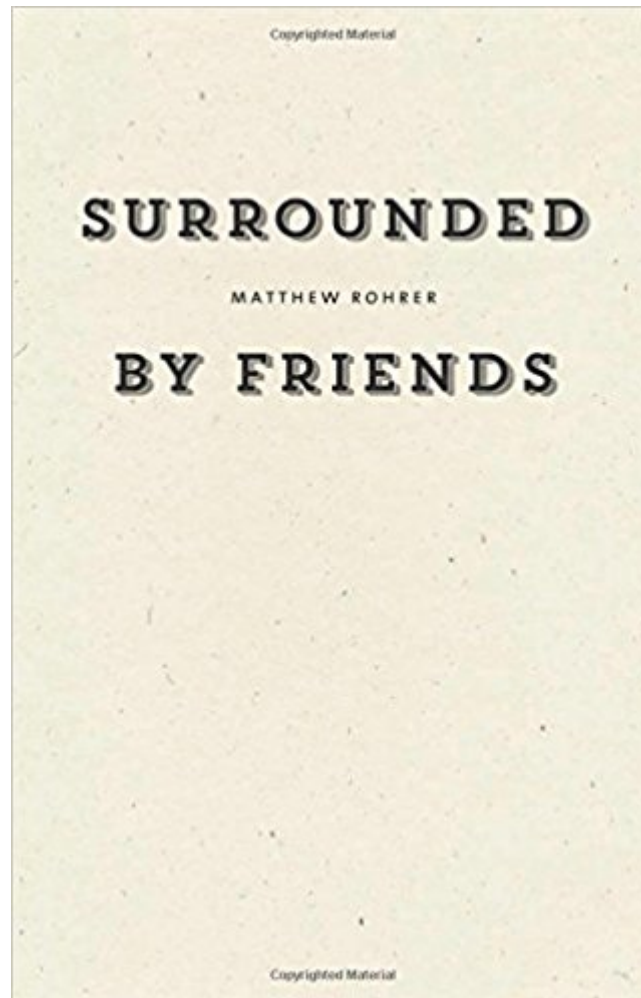


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Surrounded By Friends (Wave Books)



Synopsis

"Rohrer's frequently beautiful, brief poems are rooted in specific images that initially seem unrelated; but which ultimately form a unity as meditations on how the ordinary distractions of everyday life can be seen as the source for almost everything important in life."—Ken Tucker, *Entertainment Weekly*

The poems in Matthew Rohrer's seventh poetry collection are generated by, and embrace, friendships with the living, the dead, and the inanimate. Friends, family, and the urban peoplescope are gathered together in these poems, with more and more poetic voices joining in, and ending with poems written "in collaboration" with Kobayashi Issa, Yosa Buson, Matsuo Basho, and Hafiz.

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING LONELIER

There is absolutely nothing lonelier than the little Mars rover never shutting down, digging up rocks, so far away from Bond Street in a light rain. I wonder if he makes little beeps? If so he is lonelier still. He fires a laser into the dust. He coughs. A shiny thing in the sand turns out to be his.

Matthew Rohrer has received the Hopwood Award for poetry, a Pushcart Prize, was selected as a National Poetry Series winner by Mary Oliver, and was shortlisted for the Griffin International Poetry Prize. He is the co-author, with Joshua Beckman, of *Nice Hat. Thanks.*, and the audio CD *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*. He has appeared on NPR's *All Things Considered* and *The Next Big Thing*. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, and teaches at NYU.

Book Information

Series: Wave Books

Paperback: 112 pages

Publisher: Wave Books; First Edition edition (April 7, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1940696038

ISBN-13: 978-1940696034

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.3 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,428,940 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #100 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Family #143 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Places #634 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Love Poems

Customer Reviews

Modern poetry (or what sometimes passes for it) often leaves me dissatisfied--it can seem too easy

without rhymes, to just write down words, broken into lines so it's a poem. Too many times when I read one I get to the end and think, What was that about? Or the words are clear enough, but add up to a shrug: "Pigeons on the grass alas." Yes, thank you Gertrude. Anyone else? There are no inexplicably downtrodden pigeons in these pages. I found Mr. Rohrer's poems to be very user friendly, plain spoken, and lovingly assembled. And yes Modern--about things that are alive and happening around us today. I like the way they sound and the way they look on the page. Everything about them speaks of caring and craft. And truly, he had me on page five when he referenced a Cat Stevens song in the second poem. There is a leap in a good poem, one that takes you from where you thought you were going to somewhere else, and in that moment there is insight that startles and delights. These poems were full of such "beam me up" moments, leading to unexpected destinations--like Mars: "There is absolutely nothing lonelier/than the little Mars rover/never shutting down, digging up/rocks, so far away from Bond Street/in a light rain" The poet drops us onto the surface of a lifeless world, then whisks us home to a rainy city street in five simple lines, then back to the sad little rover as a blink of hope vanishes like a mirage: "A shiny thing in the sand turns out to be his." Robinson Crusoe seeing his own reflection in the water. Not all of these poems moved me, but they're still new, and good poems reward repeated readings. I'll be returning to these many times, for the company of old friends and the pleasure of making new ones.

Many of these poems caught me by surprise. Another reviewer said something similar. There is a haunting, sometimes mournful quality to them and yet one reads it and FEELS something...sort of elusive but stirring. Then, upon rereading, there is recognition or beauty or understanding or not understanding but liking anyway. I received this through the "Library Thing Early Reviewer" program. What a lovely gift of a book. One poem, in particular, kept urging me back. The very short "Bull Shark" made me think about awakening, growing up, looking to the future whatever that may be. Lovely! I have no idea if that was the poet's intention, but it spoke to me of a child's moving toward adulthood.

I received this product through LibraryThing as an Early Reviewer. I was pleasantly surprised by the book. Matthew Rohrer wrote the book and poems in a very relatable way. I generally feel that poetry tries too hard to be metaphoric, and that is not the case with Surrounded by Friends. I'm in love with New York City, so it was special to see his take on the city. It's such an honest look into daily life and thoughts of a (seemingly) average man. Isn't that what writing is all about?

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