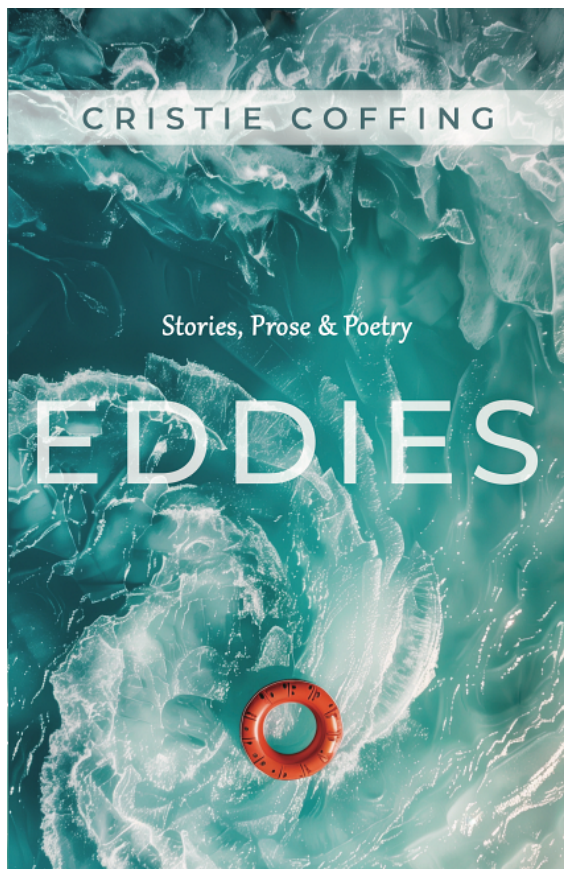




Eddies, a collection of short stories, prose and poetry, explores the forces in life that send us spiraling in unintended directions or trap us in endless motion, forces that may be perilous, yet mesmerizing.

Eddies: Stories, Prose & Poetry
By Cristie Coffing

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CRISTIE COFFING

Stories, Prose & Poetry

EDDIES



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Heat

I paint Katie's nails red, the color of blood on sand. She rolls on her back, holds her hands up to the sun. "Look at that. These nails are electric, like us." She turns her head to me and smiles. "Let's swim."

We swim in the lake; bits of algae tickling our legs. Our faces emerge again and again, fresh with drops of lake water. We climb on the dock to dry our wet bikinis, our legs stretch long, our feet pointing to the horizon. I tip my head back, let my dark hair fall between my shoulder blades. Katie piles her blonde hair on her head, loose strands fall across her face.

We play frisbee in our bare feet, our tracks in the grass giving testimony to our youth as our bodies soak in the fresh smell of soil and stray leaves. We flirt with the boys we like and taunt the boys we don't like. We bask in the gazes of men staring from picnic tables, as their wives gesture and talk beside them. Men glancing over their shoulders as they walk to the lake's edge. Men turning their heads in our direction as they push their toddlers on swings at the playground. We drink with Jonathan—cheap beer poured into empty pop cans—and smoke one cigarette shared between the three of us. Our laughter rises above the motorboats and floats to the treetops, to the cloudless sky.

"The summer of eternity," Katie says. She holds up her hand. We touch palms, our fingers entwine. Jonathan snorts, tilting his head back. Our heels press into the soft earth, our bodies absorbing the heat and falling whispers. We stay until the sun grazes the top of the lake.

We pile in the pickup. Jonathan's driving; Marlin rides up front. We sit in the truck's bed with Samantha and Dustin. The wind whips our hair about our faces. We laugh as our bodies toss about, searching for handholds as the truck makes abrupt turns. Jonathan and Marlin have the radio up loud. Songs drift out the open windows. I hear their voices singing along.

My mom's cooking pot roast when I get home, the oven contributing to the hot July kitchen. "You've been at the lake?" she asks over her shoulder.

"Yeah. Why?"

She doesn't answer. She's returned to the pot roast, pushing a thermometer into its sizzle.

The television drones in the living room with the evening news. I grab the remote and scan the channels, falling back on the couch and putting my dirty feet on the coffee table. The telephone rings.

"It's you," mom says.

I pick up the phone beside the couch. "You see the news?" Katie asks.

"Not really. Why?"

Her voice drops. "Turn it to Channel 5. Now."

"Why?"

"He took her today. From the lake. The lake. Shit. We were there. We were right there."

“Took who?”

“A girl,” she says. “A girl like us.” I wrap the phone cord around my wrist. “Abducted. By a guy. A normal looking guy. Older, you know, but normal looking. I mean, what the hell? She helped him put something in his car, and he...he took her, and now...well, she’s missing...” She pauses. “That could have been us. We can’t go to the lake anymore.”

“Did we see her?” I ask. “I mean...what did she look like?”

“Shit. She looked like you. Turn it on.”

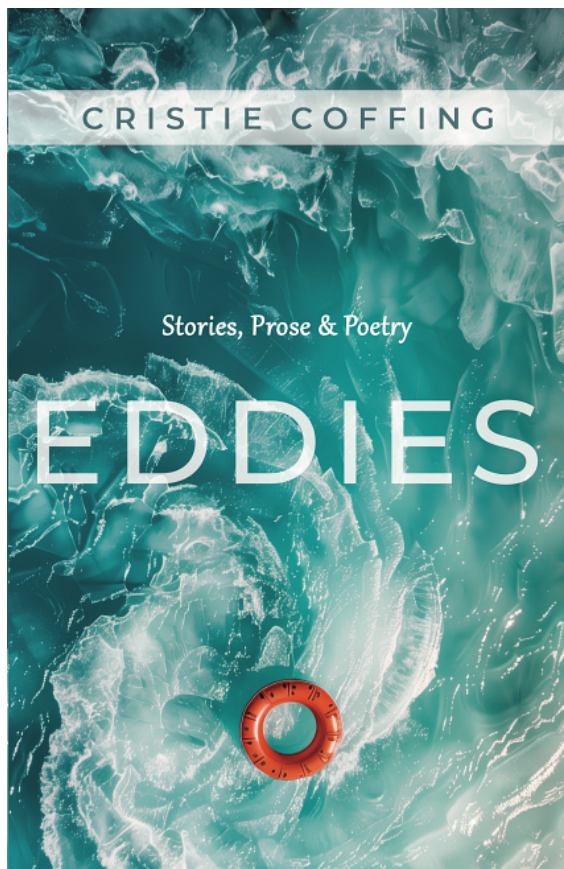
I turn to Channel 5. The word *Abduction* rolls across the screen.

“I see it. I think this is it,” I say.

A female face fills the screen. She’s young with dark eyes, her long brunette hair parted in the middle. She looks like me. I look like her. I stand and cross to the television, stretching the phone cord. I touch the screen, put my hand against the picture of the girl, feeling the chill of the glass, my feet on the orange shag carpet, sand between my toes, my skin smelling of lake water and tanning oil. The heat falls away. I picture Katie’s blood red fingernails wrapped about the phone.

“Are you there?” she asks.

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