



# Outside

*Barry Lopez*

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The six stories in *Outside* show Barry Lopez's majestic talent as a fiction writer. Lopez writes in spare prose, but his narratives resonate with an uncanny power. With a reverence for our exterior and interior landscapes, these stories offer profound insight into the relationships between humans and animals, creativity and beauty, and ultimately, life and death.

In "Desert Notes," the narrator says, "All my life I have wanted to trick blood from a rock." The story proceeds to instruct the visitor on how to experience the desert but continues like no ordinary field guide. At stake here is what is at the furthest edge of our grasp. "You will think you have hold of the idea when you have only the hold of its clothing." Rattlesnakes, the shell of a beetle, a few twigs, silence--out of these spare elements Lopez conjures a realm that shimmers with an elusive but palpable presence.

"The Search for the Heron" and "Within Birds' Hearing" present encounters with animals that are imbued with spiritual--and often inexplicable--exchanges. In solitary, almost visionary episodes, the narrators pass into permeable realms of nature, recalling a time when humans and animals spoke the same language.

Lopez's gift is to imagine a reality where humans can be so embedded in the natural world that the boundaries between inner and outer fall away.

Again and again, whether describing a Navajo rug possessing the essence of its maker, or a boy who can change places with his half-coyote dog (named Leaves), or a teacher whose presence brings into question the meaning of friendship, Lopez portrays elemental and sacred places. His prose transcends its simplicity to enter spaces of wonder and mystery.

As James Perrin Warren says in his compelling introduction, "Lopez's narrators bear witness to extraordinary patterns and purposes . . . The storyteller is vital to the community and to a healthy landscape, but the vital relationship is also reciprocal. . . . We participate, along with Lopez, in the long history of storytelling. We become part of the atmosphere in which wisdom shows itself."

Barry Moser's eleven otherworldly, densely layered engravings accompany the text. Each provides a meditative experience that parallels Lopez's complex sense of our relationship to nature. An afterword by Lopez closes this dramatically original collaboration.

*Outside* brings together Barry Lopez, best known for his National Book Award-winning *Arctic Dreams*; Barry Moser, the publisher of Pennyroyal Press, whose reputation as a book artist, printmaker, designer, and artist is legendary; and the widely published James Perrin Warren, a professor of English at Washington and Lee University, to offer an abundance of riches for readers and lovers of fine books.

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