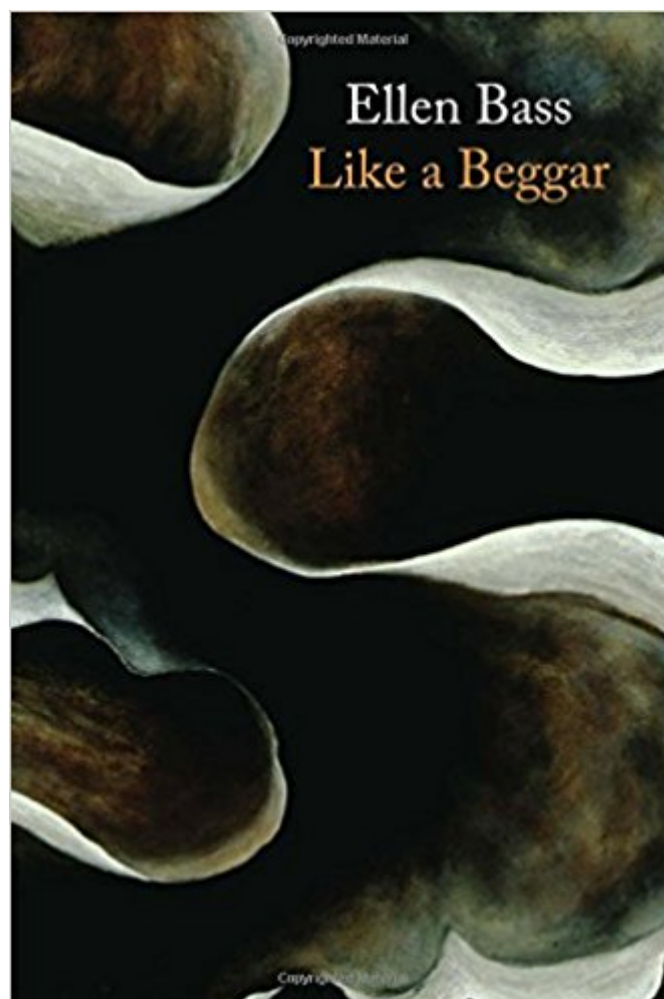


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Like A Beggar



Synopsis

Paterson Poetry Prize Finalist, 2015
Featured on NPR's The Writer's Almanac
Ellen Bass's new poetry collection, *Like a Beggar*, pulses with sex, humor and compassion. The New York Times; Bass tries to convey everyday wonder on contemporary experiences of sex, work, aging, and war. Those who turn to poetry to become confidants for another's stories and secrets will not be disappointed. Publishers Weekly; In her fifth book of poetry, Bass addresses everything from Saturn's rings and Newton's law of gravitation to wasps and Pablo Neruda. Her words are nostalgic, vivid, and visceral. Bass arrives at the truth of human carnality rooted in the extraordinary need and promise of the individual. Bass shows us that we are as radiant as we are ephemeral, that in transience glistens resilient history and the remarkable fluidity of connection. By the collection's end, following her musings on suicide and generosity, desire and repetition, it becomes lucidly clear that Bass is not only a poet but also a philosopher and a storyteller. Booklist
Ellen Bass brings a deft touch as she continues her ongoing interrogations of crucial moral issues of our times, while simultaneously delighting in endearing human absurdities. From the start of *Like a Beggar*, Bass asks her readers to relax, even though "bad things are going to happen," because the "bad" gets mined for all manner of goodness. From "Another Story":
After dinner, we're drinking scotch at the kitchen table. Janet and I just watched a NOVA special and we're explaining to her mother the age and size of the universe; the hundred billion stars in the hundred billion galaxies. Dotty lives at Dominican Oaks, making her way down the long hall. How about the sun? she asks, a little farm shit in the endlessness. I gather up a cantaloupe, a lime, a cherry, and start revolving this salad around the chicken carcass. This is the best scotch I ever tasted, Dotty says, even though we gave her the Maker's Mark while we're drinking Glendronach...
Ellen Bass's poetry includes *Like a Beggar* (Copper Canyon Press, 2014), *The Human Line* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007), which was named a Notable Book by the San Francisco Chronicle, and *Mules of Love* (BOA, 2002), which won the Lambda Literary Award. She co-edited (with Florence Howe) the groundbreaking *No More Masks! An Anthology of Poems by Women* (Doubleday, 1973). Her work has frequently been published in *The New Yorker*, *American Poetry Review*, *The New Republic*, *The Sun* and many other journals. She is co-author of several non-fiction books, including *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (HarperCollins, 1988, 2008) which has sold over a million copies and been translated into twelve languages. She is part of the core faculty of the MFA writing program at Pacific University.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you have given up on contemporary American poetry as something you too often simply can't connect with, please consider taking up this non-alienated, non-perplexing, life-accepting-and-enhancing book of poems from Ellen Bass. I have a friend who easily tires of things she's experienced "too many times" and actually uses expressions such as "the dread Mozart" and "the dread Beethoven." I wonder how she would respond to Bass's "Ode to Repetition," which I will happily type out here as stronger recommendation for the book than anything I might say: ODE TO REPETITION I like to take the same walkdown the wide expanse of Woodrow to the ocean, and most days I turn left toward the lighthouse. The sea is always different. Some days dreamy, waves hardly waves, just a broad undulation in no hurry to arrive. Other days the surf's drunk, crashing into the cliffs like a car wreck. And when I get home I like the same dishes stacked in the same cupboards and the unstacked and then stacked again. And the rhododendron, spring after spring, blossoming its pink ceremony. I could dwell in the kingdom of Coltrane, those rivers of breath through his horn, as he forms each phrase of "Lush Life" over and over until I die. Once I was afraid of this, opening the curtains every morning only to close them again each night. You could despair in the fixed town of your own life. But when I wake up to pee, I'm grateful the toilet's in its usual place, the sink with its gift of water. I look out at the street, the halos of lampposts in the fog or the moon rinsing the parked cars.

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