

THE HOUNDS OF LOVE

MARK ALLEN GRAY, Gray Technologies Press, Bel Air, Maryland, paperback, (75p)
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"The Hounds of Love" is a compilation of fifty-eight of Mark Allen Gray's expertly sculpted free verse poems that explore the many facets of love. Written over a span of twenty-seven years, these poems candidly portray the diverse emotions ignited by love and intimately felt by the poet. Gray states that in case the readers have experienced any of these feelings, they will understand that love "is free and it is loose and it is dogged by all of us, relentlessly. Like a pack of hounds on a hunt, it is a game, with one prize, and one loser."

The beginning of every section in this volume is graphically represented by a ring or more, each comprising three circles to symbolize birth, life, and death. The first section contains one ring to portray love discovered, the second and third sections add a ring at each stage to depict love experienced, and love lost, respectively. In the final section, the three rings overlap like Venn diagrams to form the shape of a heart, illustrating that love is an endless cycle of discovery, experience, and loss.

The dramatis personae for Gray's story include the poet, his love and his friend. His journey begins with birth, triggering the myriad ways of discovering various forms of love throughout life: platonic, romantic, sexual, and spiritual. The poem "Where is the Love" reveals "That we can find love / Wherever we find humanity." In this sequence of events, experience comes after discovery: "A smile /A touch... /A connection /A hug...". For, "The world is truly amazing to experience," but there are moments preceding a storm when "I fear / For My Self / For My Love / For My friend." Experience is subsequently followed by the trauma of loss: "Love turned to tragedy...Praying for our recovery." The cycle ends with strong determination to overcome loss: "And in my loss, I have won / And in my resolve, I will heal."

The reader can truly feel all the emotions depicted in this poignant collection of succinctly and lucidly written poems, from the wondrous joys of discovering love and romance to the pain of loss, along with the associated despondency, anger, and heartbreak.

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