



Borealis

Jeff Humphries

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Voyageurs travel to find the palace of Kubilai Khan in the Quetico-Superior border country. The menacing teeth of a northern pike remind us of the potential violence hidden in seemingly innocent lakes. A moose-"lumbering satyr"-expresses the bestial nature of life in the woods.

This is the North Country as spoken through the voice of Jeff Humphries, who discovers unexpected riches in the wilderness looming around his cabin. As interpreted by renowned illustrator Betsy Bowen, the subjects of the poems come to inhabit the pages of this volume; her spare and beautifully composed woodcuts reveal surprising facets of Humphries' words.

These poems trace the layers of invisible meaning embedded in the northern lands-the inevitable passage from shallow to deep, civilized to wild-the new forms of wisdom to be gained in such an encounter. It is a book for and about all those who, failing to find what they came for, instead find a benediction and are never the same.

Written near Sigurd Olson's Listening Point on Burntside Lake in northern Minnesota, these poems portray a land haunted by animal spirits, long known to Ojibwe and Cree. In words and pictures Humphries and Bowen reveal the secrets and hidden lives of the creatures of the North Woods-loons, ruffed grouse, bears, wolves, trees, lakes, even stones-exploring the mysterious common ground between their languages and ours.

Jeff Humphries is the author of several books, including *A Bestiary* (1995), a collection of poems. His fiction has been published in the *Best American Short Stories* series, and he is the recipient of an American Academy of Poets award. Humphries is professor of French, English, and comparative literature at Louisiana State University, and spends summers at a family cabin near Ely, Minnesota.

Betsy Bowen operates her fine art print shop in Grand Marais, Minnesota, and is the author and illustrator of *Gathering: A Northwoods Counting Book* (1995, 1999); *Antler, Bear, Canoe: A Northwoods Alphabet Year* (1991, 2002); and *Tracks in the Wild* (1993, 1998).

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