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29

a novel by **Mary Sojourner**

"[A] gloriously told desert tale of wildness and community, unexpected bonds and deep legacies, trauma and healing." —**BOOKLIST (starred review)**



Former L.A. executive Nell Walker finds herself on a bus bound for Twentynine Palms, California as the emptiness of her jampacked life threatens to ruin her. There, she meets small-town car mechanic Monkey Burnett, with whom she has nothing in common—except, she comes to realize, an impossible longing for each other, their constantly questioning and volatile minds, and a bone-deep love for a tiny hard-scrabble desert town.

When corporate greed and short-sightedness threaten the fragile Mojave Desert around their homes in Twentynine Palms with devastating solar and wind power farms, Nell and Monkey join together with their Chemehuevi and Anglo neighbors to protect an ancient, sacred trail and the birds and wildlife that live along it.

29 is a blade-sharp novel of the searing heart of forbidden desire—and a love letter to a place that far too many dismiss with "There's nothing out there." Readers are taken on a mind-expanding journey of self-forgiveness and hard-won humility, and witness a heartfelt struggle to defend the places and people Nell discovers, finally, are her home.

ISBN: 978-1-937226-35-0 | August 2014 | \$15.95 | Trade Paper | 292 pp

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Praise for 29

"Sojourner seduces readers with shimmering visions of the West...At the same time, she forces us to face the weary but undeniable truth that we're butchering the place...Her palpable sorrow about the land permeates the novel, but it's relieved by a sense of humor and plenty of wisecracking dialogue." —**HIGH COUNTRY NEWS**

"Sojourner's book crackles and bristles with all of the right tones. The author lived in Twentynine Palms and in the surrounding area, witnessing directly the work of tribes to stop the spread of solar-power installations and the invisibility that many native peoples endure. Her book sings with authenticity." —**THE UTAH REVIEW**

"Sojourner's writing is evocative, descriptive and lyrical...29 is a tantalizing read." —**THE DURANGO HERALD**

"Like the leafy sea dragon that moves gracefully in and out of these pages, 29 by Mary Sojourner is equal parts real and ethereal and wholly entrancing." —**FLAGSTAFF LIVE**

"[Sojourner] writes herself onto the page and bares all. Her characters personify past lovers and old friends, but ever apparent is the character of place." —**ARIZONA DAILY SUN**

"Ever-ascending Sojourner cooks up wrenching sorrow and hilarious banter, environmental and moral conundrums, magnetizing characters, and a place of transcendent beauty in this intoxicating, provocative, and gloriously told desert tale of wildness and community, unexpected bonds and deep legacies, trauma and healing." —**DONNA SEAMAN, BOOKLIST (starred review)**

"This standout ecological novel from Arizona author Sojourner features picturesque prose, a vivid western setting, and sharply drawn characters." —**PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (starred review)**

"Notable characters carry Sojourner's powerful story of our connection to the earth. A profoundly affecting novel." —**LIBRARY JOURNAL**

"In Nell Walker, Mary Sojourner has created a character who discovers—in her own desperate way—the simple beauty in the interconnectedness of the natural world and the complexities we heap upon it. Written with passion and humor, 29 takes the reader on a journey of hope, humanity, and love." —**JANA RICHMAN**, author of *The Last Cowgirl* and *The Ordinary Truth*

"29 is at the intersection of a local road to Nowhere and an interstate to Everywhere. Certainly Mary's prose and storytelling is crystalline and lovely, a kind of geode broth, filled with light and piquancy." —**DAVID KRANES**, author of *The Legend's Daughter* and *The National Tree*

"Sojourner's desert eyes not only see but transform what others dismiss and ignore. 29 holds the ragged weeping desert open, then kisses closed her wounds. A love letter to what we frequently deem unloveable, 29 is a wide-armed triumph of hope." —**LARAIN HERRING**, author of *Ghost Swamp Blues* and *Writing Begins with the Breath*

"This is a story that will stay with the readers and, perhaps, bring them home to their own place, and the importance of fighting for what you love." —**SUSAN LANG**, author of *Small Rocks Rising*, *Juniper Blue*, and *Moon Lily*

"The language is sharp as a butcher's blade, the dialogue rings true and hard, and the story cuts deeply into its reader." —**H. LEE BARNES**, author of *Cold Deck*, *The Lucky*, and *Car Tag*

About Mary Sojourner

Mary Sojourner is the author of two novels, *Sisters of the Dream* and *Going Through Ghosts*; the short story collection, *Delicate*; an essay collection, *Bonelight: Ruin and Grace in the New Southwest*; and memoirs, *Solace: Rituals of Loss and Desire* and *She Bets Her Life*. She is an intermittent NPR commentator and the author of many essays, columns, and op-eds for *High Country News*, *Writers on the Range*, and other publications. A graduate of the University of Rochester, Sojourner teaches writing in private circles, one-on-one, at colleges and universities, writing conferences, and book festivals. She believes in both the limitations and possibilities of healing through writing—the most powerful tool she has found for doing what is necessary to mend. She lives in Flagstaff, Arizona.



A few questions for Mary

What current events or social ideas does your book touch upon?

29 focuses, more than touches upon, the potential destruction of the Mojave Desert by solar and wind farms; the impact on the lower socio-economic classes of the widening gap between the mega wealthy and the rest of us; responsibility within human relationships; the relative invisibility of the Native peoples to the dominant culture; and most of all, the idea that our earth contains us and lives within us, hence when we disregard the earth, we disregard our species.

How does landscape shape your characters or stories?

All my fiction emerges from “place.” Intersections of light, weather, rock, and water grab me by the collar and say, “You will write us.” My storyline, my characters, my resolutions (and non-resolutions) spring directly from my connection with the earth—and my service to the ground under my feet.

How has landscape shaped you?

I grew up in a little farm town on the edge of Lake Ontario, in a home often shattered by my mother’s severe bi-polar disorder. I found two shelters: reading and going outdoors. When I was around twelve, most of the rolling hills, creeks, and meadow were destroyed by the development of suburbs to house Kodak and Xerox workers. The beauty and the pain will live in my heart forever.

What events or people inspired you to write your book?

The battles of the Chemehuevi tribe and others in stopping a huge solar power installation that will destroy one of their sacred sites is the secondary inspiration. The tertiary inspiration was my connection with a man who was going into trances and receiving information utterly foreign to his good old boy personality. I lived in Twentynine Palms and a few miles northwest on Luna Mesa in the Mojave, so the strongest inspiration came from walking the desert every day for a year, watching twelve full moon rises, and meeting my neighbors who were some of the kindest people I’ve ever met.

Visit Mary Sojourner’s website: www.breakthroughwriting.net

More conversations with Mary

KNAU’s Southwest Book Review: ow.ly/HgXHL

Nevada Public Radio: ow.ly/HgXOF

Reno Public Radio: ow.ly/HgXUm

Readings and Events

Sunday, September 14

with Friends of Flagstaff's Future
Firecreek Coffee Company
Flagstaff, AZ

Friday, September 26 @ 7 PM

Antigone Books
Tucson, AZ

Tuesday, September 30 @ 7 PM

The King's English Bookshop
with Braden Hepner, Jay Treiber, and Stephen Trimble
Salt Lake City, UT

Wednesday, October 15 @ 6:30 PM

Workshop & Reading
College of Southern Nevada
Henderson, NV

Friday, October 17 @ 6 PM

Nevada Humanities Salon
Sundance Books and Music
Reno, NV

Saturday, October 18

Writing Workshop
Sundance Books and Music
Reno, NV

Friday, October 24

Changing Hands Bookstore
with Jay Treiber
Tempe, AZ

Saturday, October 25

Writing Workshop
Changing Hands Bookstore
Tempe, AZ

Saturday, November 8

Peregrine Book Co.
Prescott, AZ

Friday, November 14

Maria's Bookshop
with the Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Durango, CO

February 2015, date TBA

Desert Nights, Rising Stars Conference
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ

About Torrey House Press

Love of the Land



Torrey House is an independent book publisher of fiction and nonfiction about the environment, people, cultures, and resource management issues relating to America's wild places. Torrey House Press endeavors to increase appreciation for the importance of natural landscape through the power of pen and story. Through the *2% to the West* program, Torrey House Press donates two percent of sales to not-for-profit environmental organizations and funds a scholarship for up-and-coming writers at colleges throughout the West.



www.torreyhouse.com