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Beyond the Tunnel: The Arts and Aging in America

Joan Hart

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BEYOND THE TUNNEL: THE ARTS AND AGING IN AMERICA

The Healing Power of Art

All of us make a number of journeys in our lives. This is the story of Sarah, a nursing home resident, and her journey into the realm of art and "beyond the tunnel." With the nations capital as the backdrop, Sarah and others like her reveal to us the institutional world, unknown to many of us, even feared. Yet, during one summer in the Blue Room, we discover with Sarah the healing power of art---and how it can revitalize each one of us, even in the face of illness and death.

For it is Matisse who becomes Sarah's favorite artist, "the one and only artist," leading her ultimately to the National Gallery of Art and "one of the best days of my life." Sarah spends an entire day with a friend, viewing a Matisse exhibition of cut-outs, topped by a festive lunch complete with red wine, and then returns to the nursing home, dying suddenly that night.

The visions of Vincent van Gogh, Rembrandt, Georgia O'Keeffe, and the Impressionists also fill the chapters of *Beyond the Tunnel*, touching and transforming our spirits: from Van Gogh's legendary painting of his bedroom in a "Room of One's Own," to Rembrandt's late self-portraits in "Downtown Religion" to Pierre Bonnard's magical views of the Riviera in "Is There a Rainbow Yet?" It is also the story of one person's quest to bring the riches of the art museum and its galaxy of artists to those members of our society who are often forgotten. Facing the challenges of short-sighted administrators, skeptical arts institutions, and lack of funding that threaten to obstruct her mission. Joan Hart, the author of *Beyond the Tunnel*, is the executive director of Museum One, an outreach service that brings the arts and arts awareness to the local community of Washington, D.C., to people of all ages, educational and income levels, and ethnic backgrounds. "Hart's writing is sensitive, realistic, and relevant."
-Small Press Book Review "The challenges Hart encountered when she sought the support of the established art museums of Washington, D.C., are as much a part of her story as the characters she encountered in the capital's senior centers."
-Booklist

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