

FESTSCHRIFT FOR CHRISTINE M. PORTER | CLOSING

Comfort

Christine M. Porter*†



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In the gauzy tunnel, the vines multiply and flow, growing and twining into the outlines of a nearly circular house. They build the bottom floor beneath the earth, yet even this basement glows with green and pink light because the two floors above have no walls, only archways to the outdoors, and the house is fully open to the sky. The streams of vines then unwind and retreat, leaving a latticework of beams composed of quartz, jasper, and jade in their place.

This is my house. When you visit, the house is ours. This is where my love lives.

The bottom floor is loose, dry sand and soil. Three decagons of mineral matrix beams delineate the basement from the surrounding earth. Over the coming months, they crystalize outwards, thinly coating the walls of compacted earth with sparkle.

On this floor, those who are grieving come to sob, to scream, to sleep. Blood, poisons, pain, and tears flow and filter into the sandy loam beneath. Rest and rage on the soft ground floor.

Simply walk into my house from the meadow spreading at the front. This is the third and top floor. The latticework outlines of beams and arches are pinker than the others, with rose quartz and blushing jasper. The sun sparkles through, showering the lower floors with diamond lights.

Refill and heal in the middle story. There, the mineral frame is mostly jade and green jasper, with green light filtering through sunlit vegetation that thrives along the outer boundaries of my house. Float weightlessly, suspended in the open space at the heart of my house. You are buoyed by my love. By our love. By your love. By the public love that is justice. Though my love alone is enough to hold you.

*† Christine M. Porter, PhD, was Wyoming Excellence Chair and Professor of Community and Public Health at the University of Wyoming—and a mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, leader, mentor, teacher, and/or collaborator to many. She wrote this essay during her journey with stage 4 breast cancer, from which she passed on July 31, 2024. Rachael Budowle, guest associate editor, lightly edited it from its original form for inclusion in this special issue with permission from Christine's family.

Float for as long as you like. The love is infinite. When you are ready, wander back through the front archway to the meadow. Look left, and you will see my bench.

The wicker seat is just wide enough for two to sit close, and three closer. The arms curl around each side, so you can nestle into them. If you sit on my bench and call me, I will come. To sit. To consult. To listen.

The meadow rolls from my house and bench to the horizon. Most of the plants are wild, self-propagating. Some are flowers, ferns, creepers and moss that I sprouted and planted before I went. Some thrive, some die. This is not my meadow. It is the meadow's meadow. But it welcomes visitors to wander, to pick, and to gather seedlings and seeds to share. Or to plant your own. Some have stored seeds in small clay pots and vials, resting on mineral latticework beams of my house. Some take them to plant in new ground.

When I am gone, I invite you to visit the meadow to come to my house. Our house, when you visit.



An Invitation: Christine's Bench in the Meadow

Linocut print by Shannon Conk, 2024