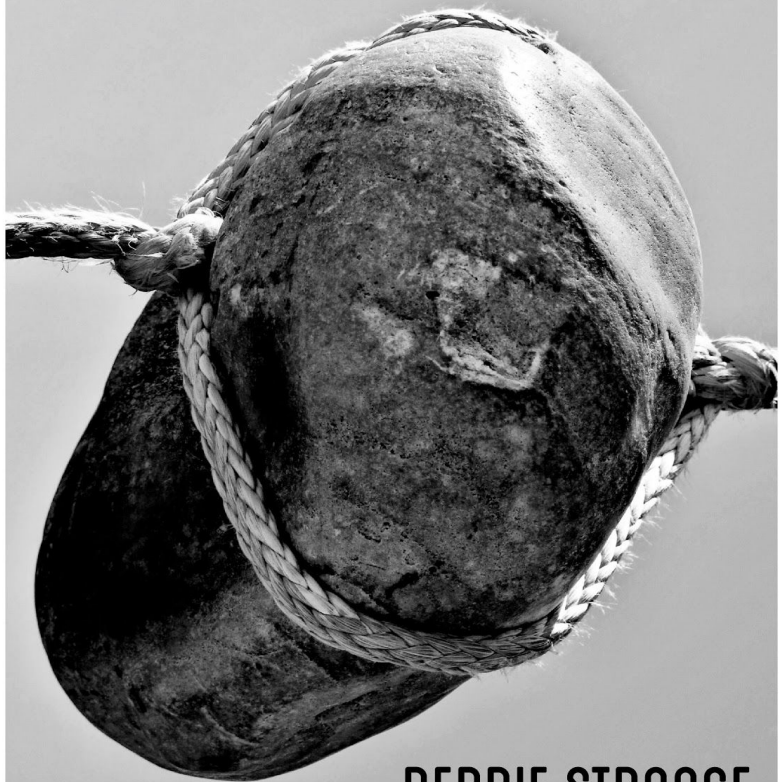


MOUTH FULL OF STONES



DEBBIE STRANGE

Mouth Full of Stones

Debbie Strange

Title IX Press

Mouth Full of Stones

Cover and interior photos: Debbie Strange

First Published in 2020 by Title IX Press
North Carolina, USA

Copyright © 2020 by Debbie Strange

All rights reserved. This book, or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

*with love and many thanks to Lori Minor
for her indomitable spirit and generous heart*



loon chicks
on mother's back
the weight of it all

dry lightning
her mattress scarred
with cigarette burns

worry stone a black hole at the centre

charity
how hard it is
to ask

hungry for life
our bellies still
remember

day moon
(dis)appearing
sister's thin face

dank
bathroom
a
silverfish
swims
between
my
toes



a cloud atlas
the fluid definition
of gender

family dinner
my grandchild asks
if I'm a man

social
constructs
evergreens
bowed
down
with
snow

pay equity
she swims against
the current

hot (fl)ashes the combustibility of womxn's rights



ultrasound butterflies instead of a baby

cows and calves
bawling at weaning time
my breasts ache

sunflower
I turned around
and you were grown

feather the nest
empty

first snowfall
the sweet nothings
that never melted
on your tongue

angry words
the gossip of gulls
d r i f t i n g

passing train how quickly we forget our promises

visiting rights
some silences are louder
than others



shoe laces
tangled between spans
wisps of fog

street kids
shadows fold
into the night

loneliness
the holes we fill
with something else

star-nosed mole
we search for light
in dark places

rehab
finally
a
lapse
in
the
rain



attic trunk
our hands are stained
with old secrets

inner demons
some days she remembers
to forget

climate

change

she

shrinks

away

from

her

uncle

tumbleweeds
we must not speak
of this

reconciliation
tundra swans against
the wind



tent city
salamanders scurry
in all directions

homeless vet
a red leaf flutters
above the grate

frost warning
a refugee loses
his fingers

neon lights
a cardboard roof
sags with snow

thrift shop
the ins and outs
of fashion

eco-tourism
the gap widens between
rich and poor



window fog
I write your name
on the moon

hospice visit
a baby bird opens
its mouth

snowed in
the rounded shoulders
of my mother

veined hands
the abandoned eggs
of scribble-larks

pillage

jackpines
the arthritic shape
of wind

meteor showers
the time it takes to lose
a memory

sunset the narrow space between here and gone



redacted
the women they might
have become

sakura
my mouth full of stones
at the news

datelines the ones he crossed without permission

horseshoe canyon
your name comes back
to haunt me

cyberbullying
the buzz of a high voltage arc

the stalker go(ogling) every woman he meets



oil slick the way we colour our world

plastic soup
our children inherit
the recipe

melting sea ice
those who do not believe
those who do

permafrost
a polar bear's paws
sink deeper

muted sun
wildfires rage
across the border

tsunami
my friend tells me
not to lose faith



beamed up
headlights point skyward
after the crash

fa(u)lter

intensive care
the last cuneiform
of snow geese

MRI don't really want to know

frost-filigreed
the seasons pass slower
without you

pentaquarks the five stages of grief



Acknowledgements

I offer my thanks to the editors of the following publications in which present or earlier versions of these poems first appeared:

Akitsu Quarterly, Australian Haiku Society, Bleached Butterfly, Blithe Spirit, Bones, Bottle Rockets, Brass Bell, Cattails, Chrysanthemum, Creatrix, Ephemeræ, Failed Haiku, #FemkuMag, Frogpond, Frozen Butterfly, Gnarled Oak, Haiku Canada Review, Halibut, Hedgerow Poems, Human/Kind Journal, Kokako, Modern Haiku, Moongarlic, Otata, Peonies Haiku Anthology, Presence, Prune Juice, Scryptic, Seashores, Seven Hills Literary Review, Sonic Boom, Stardust Haiku, The Haiku Foundation, The Heron's Nest, Under the Bashō, Wild Plum, World Haiku Association, and the World Haiku Review.

Special Credits

“cows and calves” — Zatsuei Haiku of Merit, World Haiku Review, 2015

“hospice visit” — Selected Work, Yamadera Bashō Haiku Contest, 2018

“hot (fl)ashes” — Honourable Mention, Marlene Mountain Memorial Haiku Contest, 2019

“star-nosed mole” — Shortlist, Best-of-Issue, Presence #63, 2019

“sunflower” — Selected Work, World Haiku Association 129th Haiga Contest, 2015

“tumbleweeds” — 3rd Place, Penumbra Haiku Competition, 2017

About the Author

Debbie Strange makes poems, music, photographs, and art in Winnipeg, the heart of Canada. She has a deep reverence for nature, and feels most centred when exploring the wilds with her husband in their 1978 VW campervan. Debbie's creative passions help her to manage chronic illness, connecting her more closely to the world and to herself.

She is a member of the Manitoba Writers' Guild, as well as several tanka and haiku organizations. Her work has received awards, and has been translated, anthologized, and published internationally. Debbie was honoured to be the featured poet in the Tanka Society of America's journal, Ribbons (2019), the British journal, Presence (2017), the Mann Library's Daily Haiku column (2016), Hedgerow Poems (2015), and the United Haiku and Tanka Society's journal, Cattails (2014). A showcase of artworks incorporating her award-winning haiku and tanka may be viewed in

the Haiku Foundation Haiga Galleries. A publication archive, reviews of her books, and hundreds of images may be accessed at debbiemstrange.blogspot.com



In Mouth Full of Stones, Debbie Strange, a multi-award winning short-form poet, explores the hard truths about life in our current world. She tackles a wide range of topics from poverty to addiction, aging to grief, gender issues to abuse, and climate change to natural catastrophes. Debbie masterfully probes these subjects, spinning gut-wrenching poems with multiple layers of meaning. From one page to the next, readers will find themselves confronting their own vulnerabilities, scars, and dark secrets.

-Christine L. Villa, author of *The Bluebird's Cry*, and editor of *Velvet Dusk Publishing*, *Frameless Sky*, and *Ribbons*