



Acid and Tender

Jen Rouse

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Finalist for the Charlotte Mew Prize

Acid and Tender is rich with music, vivid detail and the tensions suggested in the title. The poems that explore Frida Kahlo's life and art mirror her surreal imagery and passion, a worthy homage. Jen Rouse gets to the heart of both poetry and painting when she writes, *I paint/ the flowers so they/ will not die.*

—**Ellen Bass, Judge of the Charlotte Mew Prize**

Jen Rouse's poems are the dark and delightful imaginings of a born fairytale maker. Into the woods we go, there to find a girl with a hummingbird head, a resurrected Frida, a pair of small ruthless kings, a phoenix in a coffee shop, blow darts, knives, wings of Jurassic proportion. All is fabulous, all is makebelieve. Or not. Reader: read carefully. These poems walk the blood edge of real.

—**Maureen Seaton, Author of *Fibonacci Batman: New & Selected Poems***

Jen Rouse's *Acid and Tender* embraces the tragic myth of Frida Kahlo—though not through the artist's biography. Instead, this poet approaches the iconography of Kahlo's paintings as if crafting intercessory prayers to the feminist icon. The poetry then shifts from art historical references to a personal journey that indulges the memories of being a mother, daughter, and granddaughter confronted by mythic figures. Such abstract memories, in turn, leave her readers incessantly craving more of that sweet nectar sought by the hummingbird that weaves its way through Rouse's collection.

—**Christina Morris Penn-Goetsch, Professor of Art History, Cornell College**

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