

Home By Now / Meg Kearney

PRESS RELEASE: Four Way Books announces the publication of *Home by Now*, the second poetry collection by Meg Kearney, whose debut *An Unkindness of Ravens* was described as “amazing” by *Foreword* and “a true find” by *Bloomsbury Review*. Publicity measures include a multi-city national reading tour, conference & festival appearances, and radio appearances. For more information, please e-mail publicity@fourwaybooks.com.

“A brilliant, hard-won second book that will remind you why we go to poetry in the first place; not to be soothed, but to learn. These are smart, tough, sure lyrics. I love the sound of this book, the music she so slyly installed in these poems. I read and marvel.”

—Cornelius Eady

“Toughness and vulnerability rub against each other in these poems, and sparks fly.”

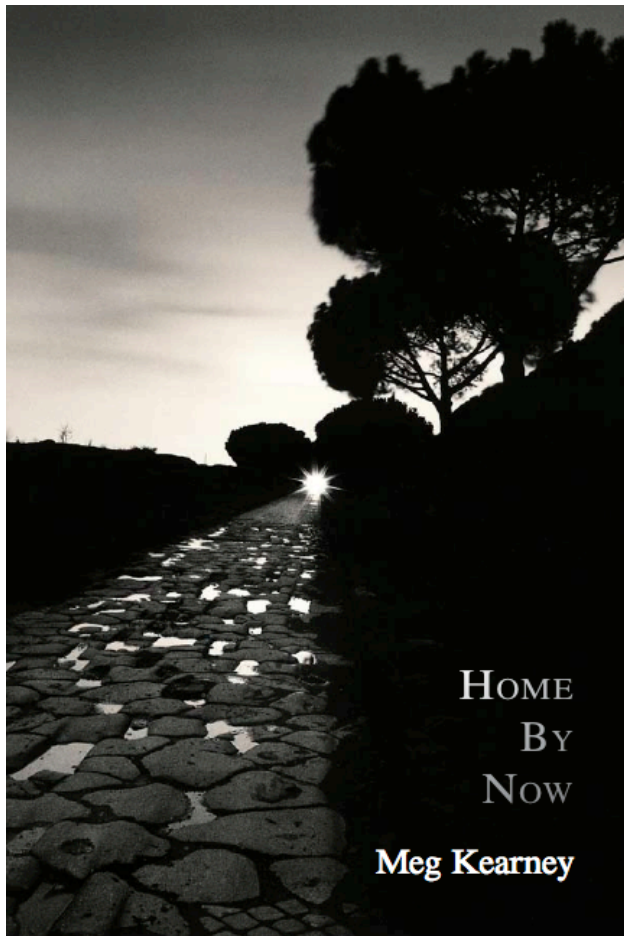
—Linda Pastan

THE SPEAKERS OF *HOME BY NOW*, Meg Kearney’s gritty second collection of poems, travel the shadows and edges of modern life, “seducing” would-be parents at the orphanage, waiting for news from surgeons performing a heart bypass, tending bar and their own alcoholism in the tinged days of Code Orange. “Who needs TV drama? This / is life in the volcano. This is as cold as it gets,” asks one speaker, remembering first blow-jobs and two-day benders in high school. With one foot in the rural and another in the urban, this collection settles in neither: “I don’t romanticize / country life, am no longer the kind / of poet to put words in the beaks / of birds,” Kearney writes, describing a hawk flown against a window in terms that “don’t // speak of suicide flights / into buildings.” Her sudden linebreaks generate suspense and impetus, carving gripping poems you can’t look away from for an instant, no matter how distressing or inevitable their ending offers to be.

The characters we hear from and watch are searching for homes—in bars and cities, in the country, elsewhere; the tough wisdom they learn through abandonments is that home, once found, can dissolve without warning. In the “The Prodigal Father” the speaker “can’t go back, can’t gas up the old Ford / Fairlane”; another character, reflecting on his Scottish roots, ponders how “love, like hunger, // is a covetous ache for a feast just / out of reach.” None of these speakers emerge unscathed from abandonment, the way their world has collapsed about them: the amputee looking outside on September 12, 2001, “insists / her legs are still / down there // She feels them / burning.” Self-destruction jostles with the loss of loved ones and the unraveling of dreams: “She knew herself well enough to say / no to a place that shared a parking lot / with a bar. She knew, scribbling the deposit / check.” These unflinching poems remind us we are telling stories about our past, present, and future, and that we often end up living those fictions.

Nodding to William Matthews’ sense of nature poetry as applicable to the concrete of the city—“(from the Latin, *concret-us*, past / participle of *con-crecere*, ‘to grow together’). / We’re too much together”—and the rich sounds of Eavan Boland and Medbh McGuckian, among others, Meg Kearney writes a lyrical poetry that is at once direct and richly sedimented. This is a striking new book of hard-edged and hard-learned poems told in voices that are intimate, right by your ear in unsettling and rewarding ways.

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Living in the Volcano

All I want is a falafel, a macramé purse,
and First Piccolo in the marching band.

Hey, my sunless tan puts an orange slant
on everything I say. I mean I want to *be*

first, and hippie free...but my tongue
is a branding iron shaped in an “X”

(I kiss your eyes and you’re dead), First
Trombone turns left at the 40, and

the rest of us wave bye-bye, too grumpy
to follow. We say, let’s practice more, earn

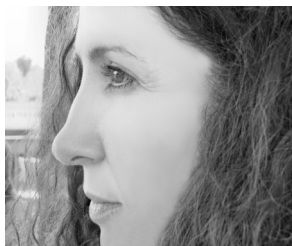
this pride of prima donnas a scholarship
to Party University. We say, let’s melt

down the horns, buy us some brewskies
and vitamin M. We need to forget, for a two-

-day bender, how much we can’t stand
ourselves. But this is high school. And now

Mother, our First Fan, has skipped town
with the bakesale money and Finnegan,

our only tuba. Who needs TV drama? This
is life in the volcano. This is as cold as it gets.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meg Kearney is the author of the poetry collection *An Unkindness of Ravens* and *The Secret of Me*, a novel in verse for teens. Her picture book, *Trouper the Three-Legged Dog*, is forthcoming from Scholastic. Her poetry has been featured on Poetry Daily and Garrison Keillor’s “A Writer’s Almanac,” and in such publications as *Poetry*, *Agni*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Gettysburg Review* as well as numerous anthologies. The Director of the Solstice Low-Residency M.F.A. in Creative Writing at Pine Manor

College and the Solstice Summer Writers Conference, Meg was Associate Director of the National Book Foundation for 11 years. She also taught poetry at the New School. A repeat fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Meg has also received fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the *New York Times*. She is a past president of the Hudson Valley Writers Association of upstate New York. Meg was born in Manhattan and currently resides in New Hampshire. For more information, visit www.megkearney.com.