



Slamming Open the Door

Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno

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Of all the losses we may be asked to bear, the murder of one's child must be the most terrible. These poems evoke that keenly, seeking justice but transcending judgment as they grieve loss, celebrate love, and find healing.

Slamming Open the Door Details

Date : Published April 1st 2009 by Alice James Books

ISBN : 9781882295746

Author : Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno

Format : Paperback 80 pages

Genre : Poetry, Nonfiction, Death

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From Reader Review Slamming Open the Door for online ebook

Vanessa says

Like a lot of people, I heard about this poetry collection from hearing the author on *Fresh Air*. Pennsylvania writer and teacher Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno was inspired, maybe driven, to write it after her daughter Leidy's murder in 2003 by an ex-boyfriend (press articles tell me he is in prison for life.) They are gathered in roughly chronological order. They are also pretty devastating, but they are beautiful and surprisingly funny in places as well. Bonanno can take a simple act like observing an ant and turn it into a small tragedy, or find humor in having emergency surgery shortly after her daughter's death.

The volume is pretty slender, and her writing is sparse and clear. You can read the whole thing in the time it would take to wend your way through five Wallace Stevens' poems. The collection reminds me somewhat of Matt Rasmussen's *Black Aperture*, another fantastic poetry collection (and a National Book Award poetry finalist in 2013) about the death of a family member, although that one dealt with suicide.

Because the poet speaks better than I can, here is a fragment of the opening poem that gives the collection its title:

Death Barged In

In his Russian great coat,
slamming open the door
with an unpardonable bang,
and he has been here ever since.

He changes everything,
rearranges the furniture,
his hand hovers
by the phone;
he will answer now, he says;
he will be the answer

Nothing much else to say, except this collection is fantastic.

Judith says

The author's daughter was murdered just as she was beginning her career as a nurse. The entire very short book is a series of poems describing the death, funeral, trial, and aftermath. All the time I was reading it, I had such a confused feeling because the poetry was so beautiful, but the pain was so real, and knowing it was a true story made me feel a bit like I was exploiting this poor woman's tragedy. It is every parent's worst nightmare, and somehow, I want the poetry to exist without the death having occurred.

From "What not to Say"

. . . .And when I stand
in the receiving line
like Jackie Kennedy
without the pillbox hat,
if Jackie were fat
and had taken
enough Klonopin
to still an ox,

and you whisper,
"I think of you
every day,"
don't finish with
"because I have been going
to Weight Watchers
on Tuesdays and wonder
if you want to go too."

AM says

We all judge books by their cover, even if it's just a little part of the self. I chose *Slamming Open the Door* by Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno this way, for its bright white cover, shiny in the florescence above. The slim volume bore its title in pretty red script and below there was a singular ladybug. The ladybug was enticing. It made me pick up the book and flip through its pages, they were a sturdy 30% recycled stock, crème with black type. The majority of the poems seemed short. I gave a cursory glance at the back. There was an author's photo of a friendly looking woman and a bunch of quotes by other people. I don't read endorsements. I don't trust them. I bought the book.

The heartache contained inside these poems, now colors my thoughts about the cover -- that ladybug, is it lonely? That author's photo, is she sad even though she smiles? I read the quotes -- "the murder of her daughter." My heart is sad and I don't know if I want to go back inside those covers.

One more poem...page 30, "Homicide Detective". I close my eyes against the images and then open them to read it again. I can't bear anymore. I think I'll save the rest for another day, but the poems keep calling me back. It has been a long time since I've read a poetry book with this much pull over my feelings.

emily says

Absolutely amazing exploration of using art (in this case, poetry) to deal with loss. I've read it through now twice, and it made me cry both times. Beautiful and tragic ... I would recommend this to anyone.

Christina M Rau says

Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno show courage and hopefully found catharsis in writing *Slamming Open The Door*, which is a collection of poems about her daughter's murder. The sequence of poems follows the sequence of finding out horrible news through trials of legal and emotional matter. Unfortunately, some poems feel like repetition, an excess that might have been written from rage or sadness but was never meant for others; those poems lack the concise, clean lines and images of the others, and there are more of the latter, which makes this collection a success.

Hlry says

incredibly honest. uncomfortably so, and sometimes almost not poems. but closer than i've ever imagined being to a murder in 60 some pages.

Kim says

I picked this book off from the poetry section at the library because 1- I already had an armful of poets I knew and loved, and wanted to try something new and 2- the cover was pretty. Right? Who doesn't like a pretty cover? The contents were not pretty at all. Bonanno's writing is vivid, honest, and raw with pain. Her poems form a response to her daughter's murder, a scenario I as a mother can't begin to imagine. Bonanno pours her grief, memory, rage, and her entire heart onto the page.

I haven't cried over a book in years. This one left me a pool on the floor.

I am amazed that an event so hideous can lead to writing so beautiful. It should be a paradox. I like to think it's Bonanno's retaliation on the man who strangled her daughter, her refusal to let him take all from her, and her refusal to let him have the last word on her daughter's life, or the last word on her daughter's death.

Elizabeth Scott says

I started this collection of poems after trying--and failing--to make it through another very acclaimed one. The thing about poetry, at least for me, is that a poem can be clever or beautiful or both but unless something in gets to me, I don't feel very connected to what I'm reading. (Now that I think about, the same is true for all reading though, isn't it?)

Anyway, I started *Slamming Open the Door* feeling a bit down on poetry and WHAM!--the first two poems were like a slap in the face.

I didn't know anything about the collection going in, and it turns out the *Slamming Open the Door* is a collection of poems written about the murder of Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno's child, Leidy. It is agonizing and sad and beautiful in an utterly gut-wrenching way. I couldn't put it down once I started reading, and some of the poems are going to stay with me forever.

Kate says

You will not read another collection of poems like this one. Kathy is a fellow teacher and a dear friend. She has painstakingly and lovingly captured the impressions left by the loss of her daughter. Herein lies inevitably tears, unexpected laughter, true reverence for Light, and truth beyond truth.

Tara says

Slamming Open the Door is a collection of poems written in the aftermath of the murder of the author's daughter. I found these poems powerful and moving. Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno puts into words all of the feelings she has surrounding the heartache of losing a child. I was moved by this collection. I would recommend this book to anyone.

Nina says

Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno pulls the scabs off her wounds in this collection of poems that weaves together the narrative of her daughter, Leidy's murder. I've discovered lately that I am drawn to and enjoying poetry books where all of the poems relate to a central theme/topic/issue.

The reader learns of the panicked race to Leidy's apartment when the family can't reach her by phone, shares not only the horror of the autopsy report but the joy of Leidy's nursing school graduation party, and endures the trial.

Stark, a wail of anguish, these poems reveal an intimate portrait of a mother's grief. Her writing is intense and raw. Most of the poems have short, terse lines which powerfully convey the despair and rage the family felt.

I usually read poetry books slowly, a few poems at a time, then put the book aside to think and digest what I've read, but I could not stop reading this book. I've read it repeatedly, compulsively, and the power of these poems grows exponentially.

Lorrie says

Raw, honest, painful, beautiful, pivotal....

Lisa says

After reading the first few poems in this book, I knew I would have to read them all before I would be able to set it down again. This is an amazingly, heartbreakingly honest glimpse into the pain of a mother grieving for

her murdered daughter.

I didn't really know what to expect when I picked up this book. The titles and the few lines that I read as I flipped through it caught my attention and drew me into an unforgettable experience. The author truly grabbed my heart as I lost myself in the raw emotion of her prose. Slamming Open the Door did just as the title suggests.

I was totally swept away by this book. I highly recommend it, even if you are not that interested in poetry. This was more than simply a book of poems. Slamming Open the Door is about pain, heartbreak, and loss, in short, this is a small volume of humanity.

alana Semuels says

Thanks to Emily for the recommendation. Listen to this first, or second:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/st...>

This is a slim book of poetry written by a mother trying to grapple with the loss of her daughter. It tells a story, and for poetry, it's very accessible. It's even a little bit of true crime poetry, as her daughter was murdered. My favorite, I think, is Red Saturn. A fragment of it: "You may have seen/my big, fat tragic face/ zooming by,/ or at a stop light once./Someone should stop me/i cry, therefore I am/unable to see,/ therefore,/ I turn on the windshield wipers."

Larry says

I seldom read collections of poetry, but the author's interview with Terry Gross on NPR's "Fresh Air" was so compelling that I just HAD to read this. It is powerful, devastating, suspenseful, and ultimately rewarding.

One of the writers of a blurb on the back cover says it best: "How does one say I love this book, which I wish never had to be written? Only one way: I love this book. I wish it did not have to be written."

I think I need to discover more poetry, where every word counts, and every image seems to be blindingly clear.
