

*FRIDA'S BOOTS*, Dana Robbins. Moon Pie Press, 16 Walton St., Westbrook, ME 04092, 2022, 51 pages, \$15 paper, [www.moonpiepress.com](http://www.moonpiepress.com).

Dana Robbins's latest book of poems, *Frida's Boots*, looks intently at the lived life, particularly that of the body and what is often overlooked. These poems sing of wonder, beauty—heartbreak, pain, yes, and gratitude too. I was transformed by the end of this deeply felt and moving collection.

Take "The Pretzel Cart," where *My / four-year-old body is cold. / My father, who is hatless, / opens his coat and wraps it / around the two of us. / Like a small animal, I nestle / next to his heart. I am / the warmest, safest, / and*



*possibly the happiest / I will ever be.*

The father comes alive on these pages so vividly that after I finished *Frida's Boots*, I kept thinking of him. Associated with food, warmth, and the wonderful excess a child wishes for, the father leaps off the page. The tragedy of his life hits us that much more as we move through the book.

The many figures in this collection, much like the father, are complex, contradictory, and often inexplicable, but Robbins manages to shine a light on all of them. Another father poem connected to food, "Carnivore Sundays," ends this way:

*Every so often, he slices off a small piece  
of meat, toasts it  
for me on a fork held over the gas jet of  
the stove, as if we  
were two hoboes at a campfire. He  
chuckles as I snap up  
my pieces like an eager puppy.*

As with Robbins's two previous collections, *The Left Side of My Life* and *After the Parade*, I love the way she is able to create her own original, quirky, and deeply personal connection to icons and iconic imagery. Here I engage with, among others, Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, Dorothy Gale, and the Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge (formerly the Tappan Zee—how I miss its original name!). Frida Kahlo appears in the poem from which the title is taken.

*Thank you, Frida Kahlo, sole sister;  
for your sexy boot on your wooden leg;  
for your arrival heralded not by the  
sound  
of your uneven gait but by the bells  
you fastened to your boot.*

Robbins has a way of seeing the world anew, something that poetry pines for. An old woodchuck is really a former Brooklyn neighbor in "Real Estate." In "Ars Poetica," the hummingbirds are nowhere to be found, but then they appear. *I find it—and to think I almost gave up.*

I am very glad that Robbins hasn't given up. If she had, I wouldn't have her sense of humor, her wide-angle view of the world, and as in "River Rage," her strength. By the end, the last poem of the book,

*I bow down before  
the miracle of life  
this small and new,  
the cup of holy water,  
this heart beating so warmly,  
so persistently, in my hands.*

*Frida's Boots* beats too with life and determination. In many of Robbins' poems there is an appreciation for the moment at hand, the pleasure in the everyday experiences, and the heightened awareness that it is all temporary. These poems are an homage to all that is often missed in this fast-paced world. Read *Frida's Boots* slowly and savor it.

Sarah Stern