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Red Hen Press

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I Wore This Dress Today for You, Mom

POEMS BY

Kim Dower

A rich, complex, heartbreaking, and funny anthology of poems on motherhood—being one and having one.

Kim Dower's poetry has been described by the *Los Angeles Times* as "sensual and evocative . . . seamlessly combining humor and heartache," and by *O Magazine* as "unexpected and sublime." Acclaimed for combining the accessible and profound, her poems about motherhood are some of her most moving and disarmingly candid. *I Wore This Dress Today for You, Mom* is an anthology of her poems on being a mother—childbirth to empty nest—as well as being a daughter with all the teenaged messiness, drama and conflict, to finally caring for one's mother suffering from dementia. Culled from her four collections as well as a selection of new work, these poems, heartbreaking, funny, surprising, and touching, explore the quirky, unexpected observations, and bittersweet moments mothers and daughters share. These evocative poems do not glorify mothers, but rather look under the hood of motherhood and explore the deep crevices and emotions of these impenetrable relationships: the love, despair, joy, humor and gratitude that fills our lives.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"In Chinese, the written character for "mother love" is composed of two elements—"love" and "pain." Kim Dower understands this universal concept in her bones and captures its meaning in these beautiful and powerful poems."

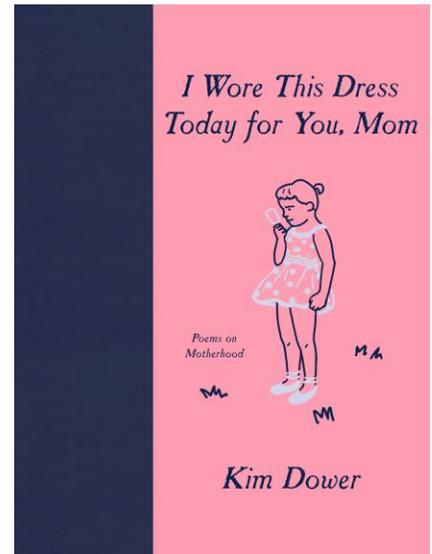
—**Lisa See**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Island of Sea Women*

"What we inherit from our mothers, what we carry forward, what we never receive, and what we choose to leave behind—Kim Dower's poetry resonates with the echo of a rich and complex mother-daughter relationship that she gently and carefully unravels, line by line. This is a stunning collection from a poet whose wisdom as a daughter and a mother shines through on every page."

—**Hope Edelman**, author of *Motherless Daughters*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kim Dower, Former City Poet Laureate of West Hollywood, has published four highly acclaimed collections of poetry, including the Gold Ippy Award winning collection *Sunbathing on Tyrone Power's Grave*. She has been nominated for four Pushcarts, is widely anthologized, and teaches writing workshops for Antioch University, the West Hollywood Library, and UCLA Writer's Extension.



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FROM I WORE THIS DRESS TODAY FOR YOU, MOM

She's never trusted happiness

Maybe it was something her mother said
one morning as the young girl dipped
her donut into a glass of whole milk
powdered sugar still on her lips her mother
tells her, don't get used to this

I wore this dress today for you, mom,

breezy floral, dancing with color
soft, silky, flows as I walk.
Easter Sunday, and you always liked

to get dressed, go for brunch, *maybe*
there's a good movie playing somewhere?
Wrong religion, we were not churchgoers,

but New Yorkers who understood the value
of a parade down Fifth Avenue, bonnets
in lavender, powder blues, pinks, hues

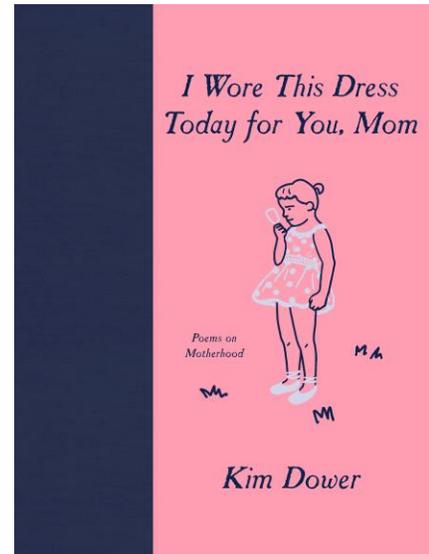
of spring, the hope it would bring.
We had no religion, but we did have
noodle kugel, grandparents, dads

who could fix fans, reach the china
on the top shelf, carve the turkey.
That time has passed. You were the last

to go, mom, and I still feel bad I never
got dressed up for you like you wanted me to.
I had things, things to do. But today in LA,

hot the way you liked it—those little birds
you loved to see flitting from tree to tree—
just saw one, a twig in its mouth, preparing

a bed for its baby—might still be an egg,
I wish you were here. I've got a closet filled
with dresses I need to show you.



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