

# RIVER STONE

*A Collection of Poems*

KAREN HAYES



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McCaa Books  
1604 Deer Run  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

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ISBN 978-0-692-80360-8

First published in 2017 by McCaa Books,  
an imprint of McCaa Publications.

Printed in the United States of America  
Set in Minion Pro

Cover photograph by Karen Hayes.

Cover design and book layout by Waights Taylor Jr.

[www.mccaabooks.com](http://www.mccaabooks.com)

*Dedication*

*To my mother, Isabel J. Barry Hayes Stevens,  
who may not always follow through  
but Always perseveres --  
and my sister Cherry  
who always asks if I'm still writing  
Yes*

*A special Thank You to Waights Taylor, Jr.  
who, in the midst of a mundane conversation at a book event,  
astounded me by saying "I'd like to..."  
and so this book came together.  
I have no idea why.*

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## ***Preface***

**T**HIS IS THE FIRST COLLECTION OF POEMS published by a new voice and is not likely to be her last. Written in a sparse, tight style, Karen Hayes describes life and her observations in a striking and haunting way, sure to make a reader pause and reflect.

Tonight, in the infinitesimal light of the stars,  
The trees and the flowers have been strewing their cool odors.  
I walk among them, but none of them are noticing.

*Sylvia Plath*



## ***Poking***

Poking refuse  
with a stick  
seeing what comes out  
or tries to hide

I'll grab its tail  
and run with it  
screaming  
through the alley  
down the streets

Follow where it goes  
not having any idea  
what sort of trip  
it'll take me on  
or where  
we'll end up  
after the flight  
the struggle

Hoping  
there will be enough light left  
to make my way  
back home

## ***River Stone***

I hold in my hand  
a stone from your river  
Where one night  
words were flung  
into the current of time  
Where one evening  
voices mingled  
with scents from the garden  
Where there was talk of dams and summer water and trees  
Where there was talk of wine and cheese and chickens  
Where the food was simple and complex  
    like the people gathered  
    and the poetry spoken to the dark sky  
Where a duet of English and Spanish mingled  
Where conversation brought possibilities  
    and a trickle of belief  
I try to hold your words  
    like catching raindrops in fog  
I try to hold your words  
  
I hold in my hand  
a stone from my river

## ***River Percolates***

River percolates  
through my blood  
seeps into whirlpools  
eddies  
my Don Quixote heart  
resides in deep pockets along the edge  
drifts past memories  
resting on the bank  
interspersed  
like discarded rusting automobiles  
sometimes I trawl for  
thoughts  
flow past like flotsam  
I lure them out to take a better look  
gently toss them back into the river  
my home where I may not live

## **MLC**

In the death we have here  
I no longer can find you  
vanished  
no trace  
I left with no goodbye  
we both scattered  
lost you  
in time  
I search  
too vast  
the space you may occupy  
I wish we had not left it  
hanging so  
I take blame  
life so odd then  
I apologize  
I'd like to  
but never explained  
so convoluted and weird  
vanished  
we were gone  
thirty years later  
still wonder how you are

your life  
where are you  
are you well  
I look and see no trace  
even old and faint  
married now  
you might be  
perhaps out of area  
out of state

-----

I've been haunting all the café's  
you went to  
see if you might  
be inside  
one of those odd things I do  
don't I know it  
but lately you've been  
so much on my mind  
    I don't know why  
a strange thing  
yes I know  
but  
was that perhaps

one of the things  
you liked  
so  
I keep hoping  
after all of this  
time  
has gone  
I keep anticipating  
optimistic cynic that I am  
I may find you  
see if we're still  
friends  
    much as we ever were  
I stayed away  
you moved  
haven't seen you since  
our lives diverged  
not enough words  
I had no voice  
now you're nowhere to be found  
I have no choice  
no way to say hello  
no way to reconnect

about how our lives  
went  
so I keep hoping  
every now and again  
going over the same old ground  
where there's been no trace of you before  
but got to try  
just once more  
maybe you'll step out  
of the car parked next to mine  
then we'll see  
are we still friendly  
or maybe don't even remember  
I know you're out there somewhere  
thirty years have passed  
but it feels  
so recent sometimes  
memories stick in the time that they happen  
I'm still out here  
hoping we connect  
put our changed selves  
to the test  
I know we're  
somewhere

are you still waiting tables  
are you serving at a bar  
maybe doing real estate  
studied law  
moved back to Vegas  
where tips are better  
take up photography  
did your mom pass away on you  
did your sister go to jail  
has your son made you proud  
do you wish your daddy knew  
still drink Black Russians  
go out to the park  
John and his Bronco still around  
you go out to the beach

go back to school  
write a book  
work at a winery  
bet you still stand strong