

BEACH
GLASS

and

OLD
BONES

Tabatha Wood

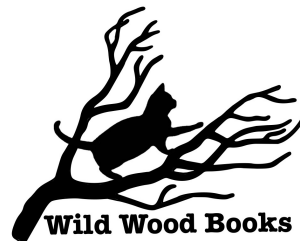
Beach Glass & Old Bones

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Wild Wood Books

New Zealand



These thoughts are the children of those who came before them.

*Words that set out alone on a journey
and found a safe home in my heart.*

In memory of L.

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On Writing

Mental health forms a large part of my inspiration. I write about it, draw and paint about it, and talk openly about it. On days when I am emotionally exhausted and demotivated, I might only manage a few lines of writing — short shower-thoughts or in-the-car ideas. On heavy, black days I write of the darkness; spitting out harsh, sharp, bitter thoughts, born from a place of emotional hurt. Sometimes, when I can feel things changing, I focus on the good and the positive and being grateful. I can manipulate my emotions in this way; turning the metaphorical wheel and steering away from any negativity for a while.

Writing *for* mental health is not the same as writing *about* mental health. Granted, it can be, and sometimes exploring the darker or more complex side of your emotions is an important and useful strategy in establishing a positive mental space, but I think it is simpler than that. Writing, for the pure enjoyment of writing, brings focus. Pouring a part of yourself into something you create is both liberating and invigorating. It allows you to take time to explore your thoughts and emotions in the way you need to. It gives you connections and opens new doors.

I write to make myself feel better. I always have. That doesn't mean that I write because something is wrong, rather that things are more likely to become wrong if I don't write. I write to bring focus to myself and my experiences, to put things into proper perspective, so that I can acknowledge and assess the impact those experiences have had on me.

I write because sometimes it is easier to put my thoughts on paper than to verbalise them, especially if those words are difficult to say. Writing every day helps me challenge my anxieties, release tension and frustration in my mind and body, and brings order to my daily routine.

I write because often the stories I really want to read have not yet been written, and the characters in my head are so real to me that writing them into existence can feel like a powerful exorcism. I write because sometimes it is the only talent I have which I feel quietly confident in, and yet despite that confidence the demon of Imposter Syndrome quite frequently raises it's critical, scornful head. So I write to vanquish that demon.

I write because I believe my words can influence people. Not in a “save the world” kind of way, but in a way that means the reader can take an idea away with them, that they may find a spark of inspiration or reflection, perhaps even go on to write something new themselves.

I write mostly because it brings me joy. Joy in the crafting of a narrative, of weaving the words into complex threads that entwine themselves around their readers, bringing joy to them in turn.

~ Tabatha Wood, Wellington 2020



‘Guardian’

Skin

Without my realising, without my doing,

I have changed shape.

Reformed.

My old suits, once well-fitted. Sleek.

Now drape too large

As silken flags becalmed on windless days.

And now, with comforts wrapped around
cold shoulders —

a broad blanket picked threadbare —

I hoard emotions like grey pocket lint,

Weaving memories of my past lives

in the lining of new skin.

Gone

It's not fear nor grief that will stop you dead

In your tracks as you face the new day;

But the realisation that the one person
who could help you get through this —

is the one person who's not here.

Longing

Hope drowns in the arms of heavy grief,
Laid down to rest, but not in peace.
The ones that could. The ones who can,
Both eyes sewn shut. Their choice.

Now our leaders play with matches
As the whole world burns.

Youth

When I was small I lived with the Gods
Of Pride and Invincibility,
And wrapped in their strength and belonging
It did not matter that they rarely noticed me.

And I grew to the size of a hundred wishes,
each dream balanced on a knife-edge of desire,
Where the passage of time left me wondering, wondering
Where my journey's end might lead.

While my wants revolved around fresh paths — release! —
the old Gods battled with weapons of silence:
Blows pinned between a slew of harsh words
Straddled on the side of a smashed plate.

Now Pride is knowing where I belong,
Invincibility my armoured trust.
And I am not noticed for what I've become
But for everything I am.

Desire

I want to, so keenly,
So strongly, so passionately, so much.
But I can't, I won't, I shouldn't.
It scares me. It exhausts me.
I don't have the time.
Please stop asking me.

But I want to.

Protest

We are taught to respond

To the rallying cry,

To the call to action —

The demand.

As a myriad voices tell us, again,

Again!

That to make a difference we must

Always:

Do more,

Be stronger,

Give out our all.

But sometimes doing less is doing

Better,

While we wait for the voices to pass.

Yearning

When you live only in your dreams
Your life is never truly yours to love.

Time

Each passing day is measured,
Not by time, but cups of tea.
An endless ritual, boiled and brewed,
A comfort stirred and settled.
Some days: fresh and piping hot,
Most, misplaced. Left cold.
And day by day, in every drink,
we pour our hopes, and swill the dregs,
Stewed memories of warm welcomes.
Our hours ticked off by empty mugs,
Babes cradled in both hands.
Our days confirmed by ghost-ringed stamps.
Damp marks on every table.

Departed

A feathered whisper, a spirit flown.
Released and now untethered.
With hurt unbound, snapped bones
Relax — from frailty follows freedom.
Now find belonging in what waits,
For life is fragile.

Fleeting...

Snake-coiled with harsh impermanence.
A cold-handed thief of dreams.
And this awakens, heralds all,
A blessed wish; elation!
Born in trust, for
Broken wings still beat like steadfast hearts.

Journey

It's easy to lose your place sometimes,
Without a bookmark
or a friend to hold the line.
Too easy to forget that where you are — right now —
Might not be where you need to be.
And to Hell with destination,
the real journey's in the doing;
In the walking.
In the tasting.
In the learning from mistakes.
And the understanding that
your good china serves you better,
Not packed away and kept pristine,
hauled out for Sunday best,
But filled with own-brand Earl Grey tea
on a wet Wednesday afternoon.

Bitterness

And I have to admit that when you laughed
and said “Oh my! What a fabulous joke!”
I smiled and laughed along. Instead
of protesting.
Correcting.
Asserting myself.
For to make you understand
that it was not humour, but raw honesty I’d shared,
that you had merely swept away with one deft curl of lip and hand,
Would take too much strength for me to muster.

Defiance

My acts of defiance do not match those
That you may see on our world's stage or screens.
They do not make grand gestures,
Or speak of hidden horrors in the dark.
They eschew the names of man-made heroes —
Celebrities of media politics. Narratives of blind faith.
They speak gently,
Softly. With integrity.
They do not sing of bloodshed, nor of heavy hands
That hold even heavier weapons.
But they are the bright arrows in my steadfast quiver
that fly straight and true — sincerely —
From my heart to yours.
My acts of defiance ask you to love, to express
Rebellion through acts of kindness.
And be brave.

Shift

Far past the clouds I watched the sun die.
Red-hued. Aflame.
Not caused by some great planetary shift,
Nor caught in the crossfire of an Old Gods' war.
It hangs as an afterthought,
an unexpected consequence,
Wrought by the indifference of the wilfully blind.

Repair

Would I were able,
To ease
The desperate, hollow loneliness
Of being left behind,
I would wrap my heart around
This broken world,
And love the pain away.

Escape

We raised our sail on even oceans

Removed our anchor when called to motion

We held the sun in a cradled palm

The winds cried “No!”

The seas stayed calm.

Seams

As one ends, one comes anew —
A twisted strand of hope shines through
To weave the dreams of slumbers past,
In tapestries of moments cast
Aside, now gone but fond recalled
In lovers' kisses, caught in the thrall
Of tenderness. Of broken hearts made whole
By blankets worked to soothe the soul.
Each stitch considered, old memories sewn,
We pierce and pull, through tracks unknown,
Run onwards to the edges, then
We bind our threads and cast again.



'Messenger'

About the Author

Tabatha Wood lives in Wellington, New Zealand. A former English teacher and school library manager, they now teach from home and write in their spare time.

Born in Whitby, North Yorkshire, Tabatha has always had a passion for writing tales of the strange and gothic, coupled with a deep love for the land and the sea. They strongly encourage the use of writing and creativity for positive mental health, and they manage an online group for women to support them achieve their creative goals. Tabatha also runs workshops through the Wellington-based writing group, *Well Written*, which aims to encourage and empower all members.

Their most recent collaborative project is *Memento Vitae: Memories of Life* — an exploration through pictures and prose of how we attach memories to physical items.

You can find more of Tabatha's writing at their website tabathawood.com and information about their other published works via wildwoodbooks.nz