

poems

SANDRA RIDLEY



# **V**IXEN

Sandra Ridley

Book\*hug Press Toronto 2023

### FIRST EDITION © 2023 by Sandra Ridley

#### ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Vixen: poems / Sandra Ridley. Names: Ridley, Sandra, 1973- author.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20230223400 | Canadiana (ebook) 20230223419

ISBN 9781771668569 (softcover) ISBN 9781771668576 (EPUB) ISBN 9781771668583 (PDF)

Subjects: LCGFT: Poetry.

Classification: LCC PS8635.I344 V59 2023 | DDC C811/.6—dc23

The production of this book was made possible through the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Book\*hug Press also acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit and the Ontario Book Fund.



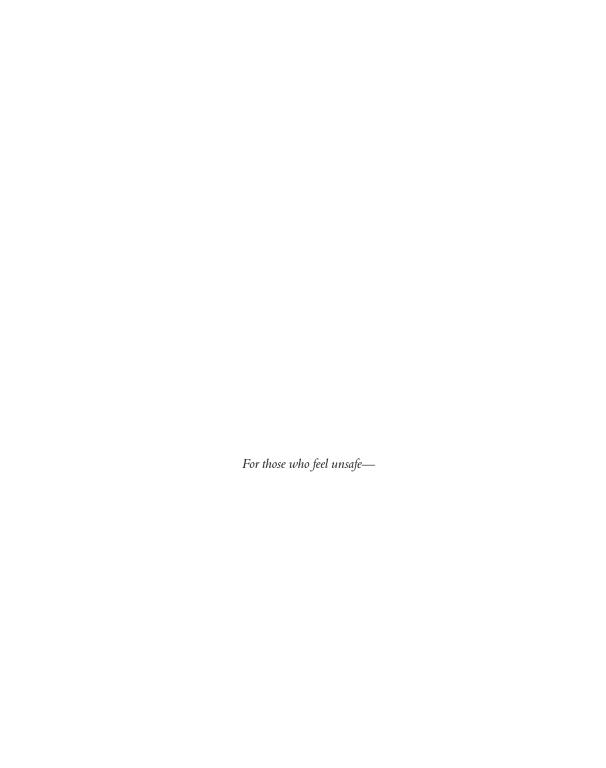
Canada Council Conseil des Arts for the Arts du Canada







Book\*hug Press acknowledges that the land on which we operate is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. We recognize the enduring presence of many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and are grateful for the opportunity to meet and work on this territory.



## HICKET

You tried to talk some sense into her. You're going to get even, lying in wait. And soon it will all be over—your honey, your nectar, your honey flower. Hush, hush.

A little honey, wild clover, and nectar.

In a land flowing with clover and honey, you went to her nectar.

What is sweeter than honey. Worms after wild honey.

Blood and clover in her fur.

A curse.

4

#### A land abundant.

What is sweeter than nectar in your mouth—honey under your tongue.

➾

She fed you honey and blossoms and balm. And you came for her.

Caught—her honey remains but your scent does not.

A fearful sight and a great sign—a streak of red and it's frightening to fall by your hand.

You desire to make us few.

➾

In the bleak, she fled from the ferocity and wrath upon her.

**\*** 

As you take your fill, fill a wellspring with blood, as you fill the land, the house fills with violence.

You take her fur, a curse, an oath.

And whosoever is of willing heart, you let them. And whosoever gathers, you let them.

Whosoever receives the mark. Whosoever comes after.

Whosoever denies.

**\*** 

A cruel drink from the well.

And where there is no spring, no water, no river, she finds no rest.

Is there shelter?

There is never.

♦

And every one who would see her would shame her.

No grace in their eyes.

**\*** 

And it sickens me, it does, and who wouldn't despair? There are some who don't despair. I do not want to know them. I know them.

I do not want to know them.

➾

A scorch to the branches, a most vehement flame of buckthorn and fir, a torching—as you stalk, eyes ablaze.

As if to terrify and it is somewhat terrifying.

Your fire will turn on you.

Before the honey flowers begin again their blossoming.

**\*** 

Clover and laurel and thistle
velvet and sumac
muskroot and sundew and baneberry
indigo and ironwood and primrose
crocus and cherrychoke
eyebright and bindweed
bedstraw and gentian and nightshade
moonseed and coltsfoot
panic grass and bloodroot and hyssop
loosestrife and boneset
goldenseal and sedge and lady fern
devil's bit and daisy and aster
violet and ivy—every leaf will wither.

You will suffer the same.

The blossoms fall as dust. And she, small as dust, for dust she is. So say you.

The blossoms of the dust will cover you. And your bones too will be dust.

Silver as dust, gold as dust—ash falls to the honey flower.

**\*** 

After the trembling takes hold.

A wicked plot to trap her paw—and your eye will have no pity. Do you want dominion and to take pleasure?

♦

I feel no pleasure in the death of her.

∢

### Wilderness— a wasteland howling wild.

Unto the ends of the earth— if an end will come for us, let it befall.

The end will come to pass.

The ends of knives, the ends of staves, the ends of traps.

Imagine that.

**\***