

## For Your Safety Please Hold On

**Kayla Czaga**

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*Czaga expresses her unique poetic voice in her first collection, witty, moving, and crafted seamlessly.*

Though this is her first collection, Kayla Czaga's poems have been published in *The Walrus*, *qwerty*, *The Literary Review of Canada*, and many other journals. She won *The Malahat Review's* 2012 Far Horizons Award for Poetry and *The Fiddlehead's* Ralph Gustafson Poetry Prize. The reason for such accolades quickly becomes evident in the first pages of *For Your Safety Please Hold On*. Czaga writes from her own youthful perspective about parents and extended family, with these two sections comprising almost half the book. Refreshingly, these poems are affectionate, moving, and playful. Czaga can distill images and emotions into language like a master, as when she describes her father roving around parks with a metal detector: "until it beeps / solemnly above a nickel. With a butter knife / he cuts such slender metaphors from the earth."

The poems in the rest of the book cover a variety of themes and subjects, including a lighthearted requiem for VHS cassettes and an emotional one on the life of Victoria Soto, a teacher killed during the Sandy Hook school shooting. Czaga riffs on allergies ("May Contain Traces") and public transportation ("For Your Safety Please Hold On"), but uses those subjects to strike at deeper themes.

Czaga's poetry is witty and often humorous, but more than just amusing the reader, those lines simultaneously inform us about their subject in more ways than is first evident. Czaga describes a grandmother: "the way she asked everyone how / many potatoes they wanted for dinner / and cooked exactly that number." Readers immediately receive the image and personality of a woman who has known the threat of poverty and is immune to the luxuries of waste. Czaga uses enjambment in many of her poems, and it's done well, creating a compulsion to read on, seamlessly.

*For Your Safety Please Hold On* is an impressive debut, and is particularly recommended to young poets just getting a sense of poetry's potential—it's not buried under the weight of its own poems, and it manages to be fun, dazzling, and affecting, all at once.

PETER DABBENE (Summer 2015)

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