

# FROSTBITTEN

MARK WALTON

*Epic Rites Press proudly announces the release of Frostbitten, the first full-length collection of poetry by Mark Walton. The book features forty-one poems by Walton and images by Elizabeth A. Soroka, wrapped together inside a dynamite exterior by Pablo Vison.*

*Frostbitten holds a special place in the ERP catalogue as the first publication released by Epic Rites Press. The original chapbook contained twenty-three poems – these poems, together with eighteen new ones, are reprinted in the new volume.*

*As Walton explains: “The book is divided into two sections, “Frostbitten” and “What The Heart Needs to Heal.” The first section is intensely personal; intimate to the point of claustrophobia perhaps. It is characterised by damage, loss, and a sense of yearning. The second section is more expansive and celebratory. Taken together I hope the book helps us to acknowledge and own the hard truths about ourselves rather than dismiss or denigrate or glamorise them.”*

*When asked how he would describe Frostbitten, Walton responded: “Frostbitten is about loss and redemption. It charts the collapse of a relationship, the loss of innocence, illusions and health and the long stumbling journey of recovery. It’s about learning to live with the consequences of our actions, looking truth full in the face and finding strength in our ability to adapt and survive. Most of all it’s about the search for love – and whether we recognise it when we find it.”*

*Asked about the underlying energy of Frostbitten and what he hopes readers will take away from the*



*book, Walton remarked: “I started writing these poems in order to communicate honestly all the things that I found it hard to talk about. To speak honestly about love, loneliness, yearning, sex and disease. It seemed to me that despite all the supposed openness and frankness of the gay scene there was little truth-telling going on. The poems seek to dissect and shine a light on the difficult, ambivalent detail of modern gay life. They are not seeking to celebrate or judge, simply to hold them up to full view stripped of artifice and pretence. I hope that these poems speak to our vulnerabilities and our strength. I would like the reader to come away bloodied but fortified in some way; more able to face their own truths.”*

*Epic Rites Press*

*New Book Release*

# **FROSTBITTEN**

**MARK WALTON**



**“MARK WALTON DOES NOT MERELY WRITE WITH BLOOD, HE WIELDS HIS PEN LIKE A SCALPEL – MARBLING AWAY FAT AND DEAD TISSUE WITH ECONOMY AND PRECISION. *FROSTBITTEN* IS NOT MERELY A COLLECTION OF POETRY, IT’S THE LITERARY EQUIVALENT OF OPEN HEART SURGERY.”**

**– WOLFGANG CARSTENS**

**“*FROSTBITTEN* IS A BLUEPRINT FOR THE BROKEN SPIRIT... A HOMAGE TO THE DEDICATION FOR NEW WARMTH, NEW LOVE, NEW SKIN. IT IS A TESTAMENT TO THE POET’S BELIEF IN HIMSELF.”**

**– FRANKIE METRO**

**“I FOUND *FROSTBITTEN* LUCID, HARROWING AND COMPELLING. IT’S A COGENT AND PASSIONATE FIRST COLLECTION SHOT THROUGH WITH HARD-WON SELF-KNOWLEDGE.”**

**– PAUL MAGRS**

**“THE POEMS IN *FROSTBITTEN* RADIATE WITH AN URGENCY THAT FORCES THE READER’S EYE INTO DEVOURING PAGE AFTER PAGE.”**

**– ANDREW TAYLOR**

# **FROSTBITTEN**

**MARK WALTON**

## *Notme*

*In these tearing moments  
I think of you and notme.  
The train carriage rocks and rolls  
like your tin tub when we make love,  
and behind me,  
in the hard white light,  
a young black girl  
sobs softly into her mobile phone;*

*'Please, please, please'.*

*You said the problem is  
not who I am, but who I am not.  
And on reflection  
in your unflinching mirror  
I know this to be the truth.  
For the things that I am not  
are not the me I am with you.*

*But which is true for me my love,  
and which my love is true for you?  
Which of us do you see?  
Is it me, or notme?*

*I gaze at the train window  
and wonder who it is  
staring back at me  
in its double edged reflection.  
Caught in the unflinching glare  
of the carriage lights,  
as behind me  
the young girl rocks softly,*

*and outside*

*London glows and fumes my love.  
And I must cross its cold and dirty heart tonight  
if I'm to be with you my love.*

*And is this safe or not safe,  
this journey we've embarked upon?*

*The city streets are stripped of  
their morning suited sheen  
by the hard truth of a winter's night.  
The tyres of my bike will find  
each crack and imperfection,  
like your hands on my  
bare flesh in the thin tin shelter  
of our bow-stowed beds.*

*And when at last I reach you love,  
and I look into your eyes,  
who will be reflected there my love?*

*In these breathless moments  
I think of you and notme.  
The train carriage  
groans and rasps  
like my cold steel bull  
on wet stone walls.*

*And behind me,  
in the hard white light  
a young black girl  
sobs softly into her mobile phone;*

*'Please, please, please,  
this is such a long journey'.*

*– from Frostbitten*

*Epic Rites Press*

*New Book Release*

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MARK WALTON

**“MARK’S ATTENTION TO  
DETAIL IS  
EXTRAORDINARY. IT’S  
OBVIOUS HE’S A TRUE  
POET WHO “SAT CAT-LIKE  
FOR HOURS” JABBING  
THE KEYS, THE BLOOD IN  
THE TEN WANDS OF HIS  
HANDS THROBBING,  
LONGING AND FAR, FAR  
FROM FROSTBITTEN.”**

**– ROB PLATH**

**“WALTON’S POEMS FIZZLE  
WITH ENERGY AND  
CAPTURE THE MODERN  
GAY EXPERIENCE IN ALL  
ITS MANY GUISES.”**

**– PAUL BURSTON**

**“THE FORM IS  
BREATH-taking, THE  
WORDS WOUND RICHLY  
ROUND EACH OTHER LIKE  
BODIES, GAY OR  
OTHERWISE.”**

**– DAVID MCLEAN**



*Image by Elizabeth A. Soroka*

*Frostbitten*

*Mark Walton*

*106 pages*

*\$17.50 + shipping*

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