

**Dangerous Enough**  
poems by Alison Stone  
is available for \$15.95  
from Presa Press  
P.O. Box 792  
Rockford, Michigan 49341  
presapress@aol.com

*review by Michael Todd Steffen*

**Alison Stone delivers a life of poetry in her new book *Dangerous Enough***

Poetry especially finds meaning in realizations of hardship, loss, age, disease, as our experiences tell us we are being dispossessed of the beloved world around us. Though what we find in writing poems, as the machine of our being struggles, is the miracle of the spirit and its attachment to and belonging with the world, upon the amazing grasp of memory, on the reach of words and their arrangements in language to name how we hold and keep, argue with and cherish those beings, their characters and the significant members of creation, frogs, birds, a turtle, a Republican father, that have met and stayed with us particularly and will accompany us forever.

It is this deeper, ongoing appreciation and knowledge of ourselves and of the world, which constitutes being human, this privilege and labor with life and things that Alison Stone's poems talk about and document.

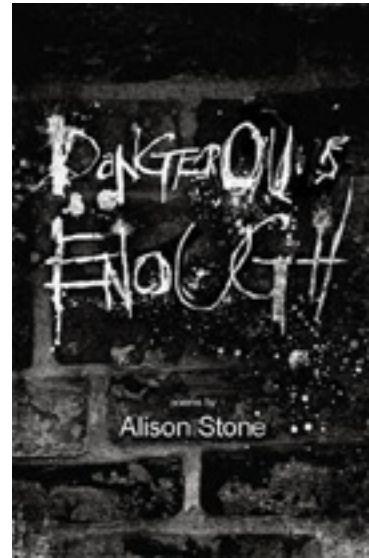
One of our shining poets Allen Grossman has noted that "Stone is not a 'literary' poet... Her text does not depend on other texts." By the evidence in the poems, Stone has had to struggle to keep her intellect and insights from offending others, potential boyfriends with fragile egos, conservative parents. As for many others, poetry creates a private space for Stone where vital, persistent thoughts that are familiarly suppressed find a place for expression. Maybe the most constraining of her tyrants is censorship itself:

*That's unacceptable, my father barks  
when I mention my toddler's  
biting. Well, she's frustrated*

*and can't... He cuts me off.  
Unacceptable. Just  
unacceptable. The drumbeat of his voice*

*pounds, biblical...*

*Unacceptable to Dad  
when I was growing up:  
noise, mess, backtalk, any type of lettuce*



## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

*besides iceberg, lateness,  
long hair on male heads  
or female armpits,*

*mentioning the doors  
my brother kicked in,  
Democrats, dog sweaters, "Women's Lib." (p. 54)*

So when we find poems titled "Stripper Rules" and "Twat Ghazal," it's Stone's motivation in the background to undo the severity of censorship that finds riot in the glaring subjects. Not just any poet can handle these materials and somehow keep them okay for readers. Not every street performer in Paris can entertain us by breathing flames.

For her plaintive cause on behalf of single mothers and their difficult lives, her unique scars and resilience, humor and toughness, Alison Stone's poems in *Dangerous Enough* engage the reader, give us plenty to reexamine about whatever forming assumptions we may have, but above all these poems light us up and jab us with sincerity that affirms for us that we are in the presence of a genuine life and talent.