

# Sinister Wisdom

A Multicultural Lesbian Literary & Art Journal

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**Third Sapphic Classic Announced:  
*What Can I Ask: New and Selected Poems* by Elana Dykewomon  
To Be Published April 2015**

*Sinister Wisdom* is pleased to announce its third **Sapphic Classic**, *What Can I Ask: New and Selected Poems* by Elana Dykewomon.

Dykewomon's impressive body of poetry, written over the past forty years, is currently out of print and not available to readers. *What Can I Ask: New and Selected Poems* by Elana Dykewomon will redress this oversight and help bring her important work to a new audience.

*What Can I Ask: New and Selected Poems* includes poems from Dykewomon's three collections, *They Will Know Me By My Teeth* (Megaera Press, 1976), *Fragments from Lesbos* (Diaspora Distribution, 1981), and *Nothing Will Be As Sweet as the Taste* (Onlywomen Press, 1995). In addition to restoring these poems to print, a generous selection of Dykewomon's newest poetry rounds out the edition. Dykewomon's recent work demonstrates her on-going commitment to thinking and writing about peace, social justice, sexism, and homophobia. *What Can I Ask* also includes an introduction by award-winning writer Jewelle Gomez, an essay by Serbian activist Lepa Mladjenović, and an afterword by poet and scholar Julie R. Enszer.

In her new introduction to this volume, writer and activist Jewelle Gomez notes: "[Dykewomon's poetry] stands as evidence of dynamic political and poetic activism as well as her deep personal commitment to literary craft."

Julie R. Enszer, Editor and Publisher of *Sinister Wisdom*, says: "Lesbian work is too easily forgotten, erased, rendered obsolete. *Sinister Wisdom's* **Sapphic Classics** series brings important collections of lesbian poetry back into print, making them available to reach new readers. Books by lesbian poets sometimes need time to find their readers—and for their readers to find them. **Sapphic Classics** return them to the world for new discovery and conscious re-engagement."

*What Can I Ask: New and Selected Poems* will be published on April 15, 2015, simultaneously as *Sinister Wisdom* 96 and a trade paperback book.

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**Elana Dykewomon** is a Jewish lesbian-feminist activist, award-winning author, editor, and professor. Her first novel, *Riverfinger Woman* (published in 1974), was chosen for *The Publishing Triangle's* list of *100 best lesbian and gay novels*. Dykewomon is also the author of *They Will Know Me by My Teeth: stories and poems of lesbian struggle, celebration, and survival* (1976), *Fragments from Lesbos* (1981), *Nothing Will Be As Sweet As The Taste: Selected Poems 1974-1994* (1995), *Beyond the Pale* (1998, winner of the Lambda Literary Award for Best Lesbian Novel), *Moon Creek Road* (2003), and *Risk* (2009). She was a regular contributor to *Bridges*, a magazine of writing by Jewish women, and the lesbian periodical *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*. Dykewomon's essays have been included in *InVersions: Writing by Dykes, Queers & Lesbians* (Betsy Warland and Valerie Speidel, editors, 1991), and *Fat Studies Reader* (Esther D. Rothblum and Sondra Solovay, editors, 2009). Most recently, Dykewomon was awarded the 2009 James Duggins Outstanding Mid-Career Novelist's Prize. Dykewomon currently lives in Oakland, California. Elana Dykewomon was the editor of *Sinister Wisdom* from 1987 to 1994.

***Sinister Wisdom*** is a multicultural lesbian literary & art journal that publishes four issues each year. Publishing since 1976, *Sinister Wisdom* works to create a multicultural, multi-class lesbian space. *Sinister Wisdom* seeks to open, consider and advance the exploration of community issues. *Sinister Wisdom* recognizes the power of language to reflect our diverse experiences and to enhance our ability to develop critical judgment, as lesbians evaluating our community and our world. Julie R. Enszer is the editor and publisher of *Sinister Wisdom*. For more information: [www.sinisterwisdom.org](http://www.sinisterwisdom.org)

*Sinister Wisdom* is available to the trade through Small Press Distribution.

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## Sample Poem

**Elana Dykewomon**

### **What Can I Ask**

It tends to go so wrong  
never a woman as strong  
as I want them  
as brave  
– and the brave ones frighten me  
What can we ask from each other?

Anytime  
ask me a favor  
give the favor of this dance  
give me the favor of your hand  
give me the favor of your faith

What can we ask

Clean up after yourself and don't cost me any money  
it's hard enough to take care of me  
and feed the dog

And I don't like to be called honey  
and ask me out to dinner sometime  
and let me trace the smile at the corner of your mouth  
let me take photographs of your naked body  
and let us rub our bodies together  
hold me when I start crying  
whisper into my ear that we  
will live to see the revolution  
stay with me and never say you want to leave  
and give me back the poems I've written for two years

And give me the favor of your faith

What can we ask from each other

Be strong enough to be an army  
never hand over your power  
never go someplace I'm not invited  
never act without a reason  
think of all the implications

remember to be a comparative shopper  
we don't have enough money for guns  
we don't have enough money for printing presses  
no cash for parks, for children  
don't go to the movies  
give us your money  
don't publish with macmillan  
give us your money

What can we ask from each other

Think about the women who have always had less  
try not to hate the women with more, reason with them  
let us progress to the places reason can take us  
it may be useless but

Any woman must answer

If we ask enough from her  
if we don't go away

Will you come with me asking

Will you know what to say  
will you listen to me beside you  
will you tell me stories in the morning  
will you bring me a glass of orange juice  
will you cherish my body for its weakness and will  
for its own shape  
for the voice that speaks from it  
will you leave me alone now  
will you come when I call you  
will you hold me to your breast, to the nipple  
when I come at five in the morning weeping

What can I ask you

Will you change it with me so that no one comes  
at five in the morning weeping  
unless they want to  
unless weeping tickles them

The weeping has ceased tickling me