*Strange Children*, by Dan Brady reviewed by Taylor Croft

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Dan Brady’s *Strange Children* is an entrancing poetry collection that centers on the struggles of family and facing grief. This collection follows a husband and wife in their struggles to have children. Using poetry elements of formatting on the page along with repetition, Brady gives impactful phrases that immerse the reader into the collection. Brady is also an author of two chapbooks, *Cabin Fever / Fossil Record* and *Leroy Sequences.* He is currently a poetry editor of *Barrelhouse.*

From the start, the poetry shows a darker side in the making of a family. With the wife having a stroke and being told due to the aneurysm risks of pregnancy, the couple is highly advised to not have children. To show this devastation, Brady uses repetition of a certain stanza throughout the first poem, “touch thumb to forefinger, / thumb to middle finger, / thumb to ring finger, / thumb to little finger” (9). This is a common exercise stroke victims use to regain motor skills in their hands. Using this as the grounding stanza for the poem gives impact to the point where readers find out the wife had a stroke, and the husband has been watching her do this exercise from the beginning of the poem. The husband watching his wife after this trauma illustrates the theme of grief and the struggles in building a family. Repetition is used vastly in the collection in instances where Brady wants to slow the reader down to understand why that particular line is important. On page 41, readers find a list poem, a format in which the lines of the poem start with the same phrase, such as in the collection, “This *blank* will never…” emphasizing the realization that one can only be expected to do what they are able in the situation given. This refers to the Bradys’ collection because the husband is taking a note of where he and his wife are in life. They can’t expect to have children from their own bodies anymore, so they must move on and find other means to complete their family. In the last section of the poem, Brady writes the struggles they have in adoption, including the fear of never receiving the permission for a child, and how the child will live with nonbiological parents. The grief of not being and to have kids has turned into a slightly happier time when the couple is now looking for a child to complete their family.

Avid readers of poetry, particularly ones who aren’t afraid to read a twisting and saddening tale would like this collection. Readers like this will enjoy the fine line that resides in this story, a line of overcoming and succumbing grief.