

The book cover features a repeating pattern of stylized, eight-petaled flowers in a dark green or black ink on a light cream background. The flowers are arranged in a grid-like fashion. A central horizontal banner with a decorative, ribbon-like border contains the title and author's name. The banner has a light-colored background and a dark border.

Small Kingdom
Sandra Beasley

SB

Small Kingdom

Who doesn't love a small kingdom?
The lion has her pride, the mole
her starnosed tunnel. My mother
grows three kinds of basil, and I
collect movie stubs in a box marked
Memories. A whelk knows only

the golden ratio of its chambers,
its figure 8 of nerve endings—
drawbridge mantle, moat ocean.
Washed up, its perfect enclosure
reeks of salt. I sort by color.
I file by coast. I know a man



by the cans and coffee cups
he leaves in his car, the thick
puppy mess of him. Who doesn't
dream of cleaning out her small
kingdom, tilting the whole stable
on its Augean edge? Who doesn't love

the disaster of her own making?
Boy, give up your slow reach
before I try to fix your life, before
I let your shell jangle to dust
in my pocket, before I burn
your operculum gate for incense.

I don't know how to keep you
without killing you a little—the way
my mother pares down the rosemary
each year to keep its flavor bright.
The way we must make all loves smaller
before they can enter our kingdom.

Author's Note:

Sandra Beasley lives in Washington, D.C. Her poems can be found in recent issues of *32 Poems*, *Blackbird*, *New Orleans Review* and *Meridian*, and has been featured on Verse Daily and in the 2005 *Best New Poets*.

Colophon:

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