

WINDOW LEDGE

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POEMS BY

Lesley Strutt



Toronto, Ontario, Canada
www.inanna.ca

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I

FINS, WINGS, FOOTPRINTS

PEBBLE

when they found my friend by the river it was late
a pebble in her pocket an earring beads black and yellow
threaded into a chevron pointing shoes
still tied brown leaves stuck to her knees
hair tangled dirt in her mouth

when they found my friend it was too late
now washed dressed in sunset or dawn
she is red sky telling us something
we don't want to know winter is on us
our eyes are snow-blind our hearts are wind-swept
the planet turned degrees away from her

sometimes I carry her pebble in my pocket
I could plant it in the garden but I don't
instead I put it in my shoe
take it out put it in my pocket take it out
I place it on my tongue
small worn as if
it travelled a long distance

DIVING

summer girl poised on the edge
of water smooth as skin

have you been in yet?
it's cold and the sky is darkening

I would hold you back but I'm sure
you have something different in mind

like the fish you cleaned this morning
hand on the knife wide palm the thumb

curved slightly pressing the flesh into memory
the lake the chances you take when you dive

SHIMMERING

for Immaculée Ilibagiza

tonight I wade into this river
don't know what I'm looking for
what I'll do if I find it I just want
to get close to something shimmering

to know it's there

I caught a Dorado at sea its rainbow hues clutched my breath
sleek firm thrusts pumped my blood
I slit its throat it dulled to grey who cares
I was living on my boat needed food for a week

who cares

in Rwanda men from one tribe slew men from the other
told themselves they needed to children slaughtered women raped
and we in the west need not interfere
but seven women in a bathroom tight like sardines escaped
one was invited to meet the general give the order have him killed

instead she forgave him

O you never saw such a calm blue sea
the strength in that fine fish belly full of roe
blood flooding my boat I wiped my knife washed my hands
in the mirror over the sink my face

tonight in the river look look

DUCKS' FEET

the distant ducks seem still as stones
in the shallows of the river

look closer they know what they're about the light
makes them appear stationary

but beneath the water their feet
work against the current

these are times to hold yourself still
appear solid as a stone

know you have wings

A GAME

Summertime her childhood hours slid by like fish
in lakes and rivers bodies cold speckled
brown and gold fish sprung and flung so high
the showers of spray burst into rainbow
slap of turgid flesh against her hand jerking
bodies cool slick the guts the slime
blood on her hands a trophy

one autumn day fishing done kids bored a game
of hide-and-seek indoors she slides into a closet
finds somebody in the dark they laugh and then
she hears the words *go fish* feels the plunge
of his tongue slap of turgid flesh
against her hand the jerk the burst of spray
Go fish! she thinks sinks her eyetooth deep hooks
that goddamn fish oh yes blood in her mouth
slick on her hands she doesn't show anyone

RACING

garden grass is galloping ahead
impatient for tulips crocus daffodils to catch up

fat bugs fling themselves against plate glass
heart's racing ready to join then

neck-snapping crash
black and white instant
barred back blood-red crown

all is still

but heart's racing racing
as if it knows

TRACKER

in the dirt
blurred edges of a print
the way the middle toe pressed
deep before the animal turned

turquoise jar low dish with feet
an artist who died recently
purple underglaze the moment he lifted the brush
red fire that baked shape
into something not born
until it was

do you see
where the lion crossed the river and disappeared
into the shade of the acacia
to hunt?

AFTER RAIN

young finches at the feeder
I go to the mock orange snip three sprigs
for the jar beside me on the porch I wait

the door behind me creaks open
pressed by the wind to utter a sound
it would otherwise not make I wait

tradescantia struggle to right themselves
after hard rain lift their purple petalled mouths
to show they can

once I smiled for the world after pain
rose and rose again after the hard
but dusk is falling

I'm groping a little the wind is shaping a sound
almost enough for my mouth

TRICK

the bird takes up all the air for this
the fish takes up all the water

the dog bounding across the park
veers off to follow a scent she knows

once I too mastered this trick
I ate a cookie – sweet salty

the moment it broke on my tongue

SPARKLE

what the fish is is not
some flash some sparkle then flesh in a pan

how a marriage of twenty years ended

suitcase full of books two pairs of bikini panties
the cat fed dog whimpering something taken something

the staircase leading down
what loss is part of her caught on a tough thin line

the fish now seared on both sides
the first mouthful on her newly freed tongue

how it tastes



Credit: Chuck Willemson

Lesley Strutt (1953–2021) was the daughter of James W. Strutt, an architect, and Audrey Lett, a writer/philosopher. Lesley's roots in the Ottawa Valley were deep. She was the descendant of William Pittman Lett, a pre-Confederation poet who was known as the Bard of Bytown before Bytown was renamed Ottawa in 1854.

Lesley completed a PhD in linguistics at McGill University and went on to teach part-time and pick up contracts as a consultant in the high-tech industry designing telephone user interfaces, in the courts as an interpreter, and eventually had a full-time career in research development administration in government and at the university, while also teaching part-time.

Lesley travelled extensively to destinations such as the Arctic (on a boat with Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson), South America, North Africa, Indonesia, Thailand, Europe and the UK. Lesley lived in England for two years, where she and her family explored the pubs and cow paths of the Chilterns extensively. In 1999, Lesley bought a small cottage by the sea in Holland where she spent many vacations gardening and writing. An avid sailor, she sailed in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the North Sea and even spent one winter in the Caribbean.

after exploring the east coast and the inland waterways of America. These travels gave Lesley a deep sense of the magic of life, its surprises and its challenges.

Lesley was a prize-winning poet, playwright, essayist and a blogger. Lesley's young adult novel *On the Edge* was published by Inanna Publications in 2019. *Window Ledge* is her first full collection of poetry. She completed another full-length collection of poems inspired by an ordinary woman who lived during the Spanish Civil War.

Visit lesleystrutt.ca to learn more about the poet and her work.