

folio series

POEMS

folio series

Creative works by Sherrie Lee
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NINE AT 35

SHERRIE LEE

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Sherrie Lee

First written in 2012

Published in 2020 as an eBook

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contents

01 BOOKSHELF

02 HE AND SHE

03 JACOB'S LULLABY

04 CLASS TIME

05 SOLOMON'S DANCE

06 MARGARITA

07 CHASING RUTH

08 SEVENTEEN

09 GROUSE MOUNTAIN,

VANCOUVER, SPRING 1998



01

BOOKSHELF

I saw the books of my youth
Pressed side by side
On a forgotten shelf
I picked up Auden
I bought him for one poem

I picked up another
The Nobel Prize in Literature, 1996
It said on the cover
The pages dotted yellow
But words still as sharp as they were before

Some of these poems I'm sure
Must have stirred up emotions 15 years ago
But now I can't name the feeling
That sits beside me

My child might spy a treasure
Yellowed through another generation
Awakened by some words in form
Making a memory of that moment

02

HE AND SHE

How different is he from she
And she from he

When he speaks of dynasties and heroes
She is saddened by the song she overheard
When he says he has dreams of fortune making
She recalls some unrequited love

When he devours each word on the page
She catches the reflection of the crystal ring
When he declares there are few things worth noticing
She thinks of each friend who made her smile

So he and she and she and he
Different as they are
Are welded by the purpose
Of their joint existence

Without he
She remains defeated by dreams
Without she
He circles empty promises

So she and he and he and she
Intertwined for life

JACOB'S LULLABY

At midnight when I soundly slept
A sudden piercing cry rang shrill
My son, of all four years, he wept
With such anguish, with such great will

He climbed into my bed and lay
Eyes shut with tears streaming down
His arms and legs in disarray
And I, helpless with neither smile nor frown

I picked him up and called his name
But he broke free and returned to pain
He cried in unlove, insult and shame
He cried again and again

The minutes went by, some or more
The sobbing had longer pauses in between
I picked him up, this time, no roar
His head on my shoulder, now more keen

I told him a story, his favourite one
His eyes were listening, his tears dried up
And when the story was good and done
He was rolled up like a sleeping pup

This is my son, of all four years
Sweetly, soundly, gently lay
By my side, all his fears
Of day and night, now kept at bay

04

CLASS TIME

Walking into apathy
Sprawled across the desk
Lips limp, numb, unsure
Sometimes loose with obscene talk

Looking for souls in eyes
Gazing into dead space
Rudderless bodies bound for a destination
Hazy, silent, still

Standing invincible, defeated by
Graceless, thoughtless, careless
Yawns, doodles, chatter, banter
That make you Fool among fools

A moment, a snatch, a wink
Of mutual affection
Quickly tossed about
Discarded at will

There is no sweet reward
For this endurance test
Leave love at their feet
And offence at the door

05

SOLOMON'S DANCE

He saw that blackish patch near his feet
He squealed and danced in delight
His hands flapped as he ran in small circles
As if he knew he couldn't touch nor pick it up

Unfettered, unconcerned, unaware
I saw innocence unrehearsed
Intense yet fragile
Full yet light

The dance around his shadow is his
But I keep this memory safe
So I can also dance this dance myself
Awkward, clumsy but set free

06

MARGARITA

Lime tart
Salty rim
Sip it
Drink it
Let it hit

Something sweet
Bitter hint
Delight
Take flight
Kiss the night

Tortillas
Guacamole
Keep them coming
Senses going
To and froing

Tip the jug
Fill the glass
Another spin
Out of skin
Falling in

07

CHASING RUTH

Long legs carry her
To all corners
Under covers
Over fences
Quicker than my hands and legs
Can decide what to do

The grin and chuckle
That disregard
Tired reminders
Lame authority
Triumphant with each step
Bolder with one more

Hate the action
Love the child
But she is incomplete
Without her leaps
Laughter and
Cries for love

"You cannot catch me!"
She chants
Waiting to be caught
Protesting defeat
Escaping my clutches
Running once more

08

SEVENTEEN

When I was
That age of wonder
Anticipating answers
To solve my contradictions

When my eyes teared
In frustration
Hurt by the wind of contempt
Bloodshot with angst

When I leaned
Against someone
Yielding to the pulse
Clutching at the veins

When I stood
Alone, without, unwatched
Swallowed by an abyss
Suspended in deep water

I was seventeen

09

**GROUSE MOUNTAIN, VANCOUVER,
SPRING 1998**

I, dressed inappropriately
For a mountain climb
Unskilled and unknowing
Ready for a thrill

You, smiling, beckoning
Extended your hand
Patient with my clumsy steps
Keeping pace with me

I, realising too late
I was not made for this
Ill-fitted, body and soul
With no choice but to look up

You, behind me
Beside me, never ahead
Calling my name
Believing I will make the next step

I, soaked in snow
Almost giving up
Inching forward
In dread, in hope

I reached the peak
In disbelief
You cheered, I shivered
But deeply changed

I will climb again
With you, maybe not
With others, ahead and behind
Each step in memory of this climb

