

LEAP THIRTY

Poems

DIANE LOWELL WILDER

JUNE ROAD PRESS
BERWYN, PENNSYLVANIA

Copyright © 2021 Diane Lowell Wilder

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted without prior permission from the publisher, except as quotations for the purposes of critical review.

Cover art: Wilder Francone

Author photo: Lane Wilder

Editing and design: Sara June Arnold

ISBN 978-1-7356783-3-7 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-7356783-4-4 (ebook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021937490

Published by June Road Press, LLC

P.O. Box 260, Berwyn, Pennsylvania 19312

juneroadpress.com

First paperback edition 2021

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

1.	1	Vertigo
	3	Diorama
	5	Landlocked, 1971
	7	Lifeguards
	9	Dancing Queen
	11	Glorious Leap Thirty
2.	15	Ex-
	17	Moves
	19	Room 214
	21	Embodied
	23	Takeout
	25	Salad Nights
	27	Voyeur
3.	30	Provisions
	33	My Parents Throw a Party
	35	Old Golds and Black Walnuts
	37	Partridge
	39	Cactus
	41	Memento Mori
	43	Reproduction
4.	47	The Beet
	49	Triptych
	51	Omelette
	53	Chalk and Release
	55	Mother-Fear
5.	59	Mud Season
	60	Renovation
	62	Blink
	65	The Way Out
	67	Hopscotch

INTRODUCTION

Some poems are windows, little illuminations, strangers' houses lit at night. If we enter the right one at the right time, what might we discover or come to know—about ourselves, about the experience of others, about how to make our way in the world? Some poems are departures or arrivals, a push or pull toward a place or idea or truth. Some are brief dances, spaces for movement and expression and exploration. I think of them all as invitations: come inside, look at this, join me, head that way, let's see where this might lead.

This book is intensely personal, but it isn't autobiographical. These are, and these are not, my parents. My mother never smoked. I've ignored the fact of my brother; my sister only flits through. My strong and gorgeous daughters, by birth and marriage, have been compressed into a singular presence. These poems are built from memories as raw materials, shaped and reconstructed in such a way that, I hope, they take on forms that might be entered and embodied by others, able to summon a reader's own sense of self and history and direction.

I hope you'll find some points of entry and connection among the poems in this collection. I hope you'll join me in these leaps across time and space as I try to follow the shifting shape of selfhood and explore the boundaries of memory in the strange and surprising way that poetry uniquely enables.

LANDLOCKED, 1971

When I roared my Schwinn down this town's
empty roads, invoking rural gods,
there was a joy in me like spark plugs.
Luxury was a nickel-apiece paperback
at the fall church fundraiser

and I would pick one of the seven
records that we owned
and put it delicately on the turntable,
thinking: when I have money
I'll have music that is mine.

When the house across the street
was lit at dusk, its curtains open
in that golden hour, I could
see inside your kitchen, where
the wallpaper was poppy red
and avocado and your dishware
looked unbreakable.

There might have been a time when
I slipped into that kitchen, licked
the plates and ran my fingers
down the wallpaper, feeling
embossed outlines come alive,
playing with the light switch.

EMBODIED

I am waiting for him
while I watch other women
walk past,

some ripening—
as I was once—
easy in their flesh, taut,
taunting.

My body strains
to return to center
by limber memory

but my limp remains:
the longer leg goes numb,
the hip socket

sprouting occasional
seedlings of pain.

Today we will walk,
his hip higher
than mine,

and I will vine my arm
around the stake
of him,
tether my joints
and sway.

PROVISIONS

I. 2019

I slip my spare calories
into my mother's pocketbook,
imagine telling her:
buy yourself something nice.

Her fridge is ferociously full.
Cream cheese, bagels,
casseroles and stews,
her counters covered with
the good intentions
of family and friends.

My sister insists again:
Try the banana split
(a favorite once).
My mother freezes
over the chocolate syrup,
an impossible landscape
of ice cream beneath.
She begs off,
pushes her chair away,
the food untouched.

II. 1917

My grandmother, age ten,
thought dandelions delicious,
carried a kitchen knife
to pry each plant from hard
prairie soil. Brought them home
to sprinkle with vinegar.
Before the blossom is when
the leaves are sweetest.

III. 1975

Another dinner
when my mother
was especially upset.
Chun King Chow Mein from cans—
brittle noodles, wet celery
and water chestnuts—
scraped from our plates
into the trash.

Her pressed lips and hard eyes.
Pink dishwashing gloves and
one light on above the sink.
A yellowing bottle of Ivory soap.
She scrubs at the cans, ferociously
peeling their labels away.

IV. 2021

My mother said take it,
use it as a planter or
whatever. With a blade
I pare flakes of carbon
from the base and think
of all the cornmeal mush
my great-grandmother
cooked in this, served
with molasses and cream.
Remove the rust,
oil it inside. Test it out
on my electric stove.
Fill it, let the seasoned
iron turn the water
into air.

CHALK AND RELEASE

On our laps the children nestle
with soft chalked feet and
bright red streaks of water ice
laced across their wrists and cheeks.
They have worn the chalk to nubs,
inscribing these stone steps
with loops and lines and names
that will stay until it rains.

My daughter, age three,
once announced that
reading hurt her brain
and asked me to remove
all the books
from her bedroom.

This: Put them to bed.
Feed them, bathe them,
wonder where one
has misplaced retainers
or sneakers or teeth.
Tell them:
wipe your mouth
and please—
be more careful.
Tie their laces
into double knots
that come undone
too soon.

DIANE LOWELL WILDER, poet, mother, former competitive ice skater, lover of jazz piano and languages, grew up in Vermont. She attended Swarthmore College and has had a long career in alumni relations and institutional advancement for liberal arts colleges. She lives outside Philadelphia and is active in the city's creative writing community. This is her first published collection.

JUNE ROAD PRESS is an independent publisher based outside Philadelphia. Founded in 2020, the small press aims to produce books of lasting resonance and literary value—explorations of time and place, journeys of all kinds—that lead readers to new encounters, connections, and discoveries, particularly from first-time authors and emerging writers. Find out more at juneroadpress.com.