



Sharks in the Rivers

Ada Limon

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From Ada Limón, an extraordinary collection—at once urbane and earthy—that navigates the thoroughfares and tributaries of human nature.

The speaker in *Sharks in the Rivers* finds herself multiply dislocated: from her childhood in California, from her family's roots in Mexico, from a dying parent, from her prior self. The world is always in motion—both toward and away from us—and it is also full of risk: from sharks unexpectedly lurking beneath estuarial rivers to the dangers of New York City, where, as Limón reminds us, even rats can find themselves trapped by the garbage cans they've crawled into. In such a world, how should one proceed?

Throughout these poems, Limón suggests that we must cleave to the world as it “keep[s] opening before us,” for, if we pay attention, we can be one with its complex, ephemeral, and beautiful strangeness. Loss is perpetual, and each person's mouth “is the same / mouth as everyone's, all trying to say the same thing.” For Limón, it's the saying—individual and collective—that transforms each of us into “a wound overcome by wonder,” that allows “the wind itself” to be our “own wild whisper.”

Sharks in the Rivers Details

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From Reader Review *Sharks in the Rivers* for online ebook

Phillip says

Delightful and Self deprecatingly humorous at times. Easy for me to follow and visualize.

Nadine Jones says

3.5 stars

I love Ada Limon, because of course I do, but this book didn't "speak" to me the way her two more recent books did. The long poem "Fifteen Balls of Feathers," making up the third part of this book, felt powerful. Most of the others did not reach me in the same way.

Some poems, I feel like I *almost* connect, but I'm not really sure. (Note that Goodreads doesn't properly translate the formatting, all of the indents disappear.)

Sharks in the Rivers II

If I moved to Santa Cruz, I could ride the roller coaster
all the time. And learn to surf. Except for the sharks.

I admit I am hopeless.

Sharks are fish, just fish with a rubbery cartilage
and a mind for troublemaking – stirring things up.

It's not the fish that I fear, but the jaw.
Or, it's not the jaw, it's the teeth.
It's not the teeth, but the multiple rows of teeth,
the conveyor belt of teeth growing like weeds
anchored in their shark skin.

And we think our rivers are protected,
but what of the bull shark?
Breeding in the brackish waters of a river's mouth,
seemingly solitary, seemingly up to model
fish-like behavior.

(His tempting strength, his fluid dynamics.)

Some say a shark never sleeps, so how can I?
How can I let them into my waterless room
only to stay wide awake?

They hear me, I can tell, from miles away.

(Sharks are listening right now, I'm sending out signals.)

I'm dreaming of them. I'm wrapping my arms
around their cold, gray, magnificent bodies.

We're both sleeping
with our shark eyes open.

But mostly, this is full of poems that are more symbolic than intimate, and I didn't quite get it.

World Versus Girl

The swinging sky patterns
itself after the inside of a giant quiver, shooting
stars at those who still cling
to the criminal bricks of their shaky morals.

Never knew a cloud to mock me so,
an amputated tree limb pointing darkly
at all the flaws inside my skin.

This song in my head has whiskey in it,
and a back porch full of rusted nails in mason jars.
It sounds nothing like the song in your head.
In fact, that's the chorus.

I can hear a small angel dying on its breath.
It was so at home there once, a nest
of clean teeth and an honest-to-goodness tongue.

We can be our only judge, I suppose,
but the river never runs its hands through my hair,
never says, Good luck, girl.

Or at least never says it often enough.

I'm chock-full of bad ideas tonday,
my foul mouth worthy of a good kick.

Let's storm the hospital!
Let's burn the bedsheets!

I've been walking for a long time,
and it hasn't made me smarter or faster,

but I bet I can still beat you.

Maybe not now, maybe not tomorrow,
but this stubborn monster-girl, gone all wrong
with the river's sledge, is not
giving in to your one-way-ness.

World, turn all you want to,
faster even. I've come to like the way the breeze feels
as it rips me limb from limb.

Elizabeth says

Meh, it just wasn't the type of poetry I enjoyed and I felt that many of the poems were very similar. Although I recognize the good writing, it just wasn't a style I enjoy.

Heather says

I was reading this and savoring Limón's words and it ended so suddenly I was startled. I thought there were more pages to read!! I love her work.

Martin Ott says

Good book with a few truly great poems.

Lynn Tait says

Until Goodreads I'd never heard of this poet. Was interested after reading Lisa Richter's review on another one of Limon's poetry books I'm also currently reading. Lately, I've been amazed at the poetry books I'm reading. The authenticity in poetry out there is astounding. This book and Bright Dead Things are no exception. (I am reading a couple that are pleasant enough, but nothing memorable.) Reading Ada's poems - I feel a kinship yet we are from different countries and cultures. A poet I'd love to meet. Love the alliteration, and assonance, the rhythm of the work. Her work really speaks to me.

Gina says

As usual, this is not a review. More like a set of thoughts and quotes that others can read if they feel like it.

Birds. I expected fish and sharks, but received so many beautiful uses of birds. (My inner-birder was pleased.)

"The air is unwound with bird/and you are not lost in the least,/but a deliberate deserter...

This fevered mess of world/is well-done. Lean in and nuzzle/its exceptional need to be yours."--"Ways to Ease Your Animal Mind"

&

"World, turn all you want to,/faster even. I've come to like the way the breeze feels/as it rips me limb from limb."-- "World Versus Girl"

James says

Animals, lots of sharks but others, make a lot of appearance in this book in which Limon explores her heritage and the world, exploring dangerous places and exposing herself and us to the richness and threats of the world. I came to this one after reading a couple of her later books and while this collection is strong, she has definitely grown as a poet since. Still, a strong book by a strong poet. Recommended.

anna (readingpeaches) says

i say something to god, but he's not a living thing,
so i say it to the river, i say,

*i want to walk through this doorway
but without all those ghosts on the edge,
i want them to stay here.
i want them to go on without me.*

i want them to burn in the water.

Hannah Bressler says

Another Ada Limon gem.

Twila Newey says

Ada Limon is quickly becoming one of my favorite poets. While I did not connect with this collection the

way I did with Bright Dead Things, there were several poems that left me gasping by the end.

Ashley says

Each poem breathes so well on the page as Ada Limon traces her life from her childhood in California to work as a writer in New York. No matter the location, nature is in constant flow that shows Ada's life may not be so simple but lurking through time is always strong wonder, language and imagination.

Lauren says

I've heard such stellar reviews of Limon's work, so I was expecting a bit more than what I found in *Sharks in the Rivers*. Not bad, but not arresting and profound either.

This is an early work, so I am going to trust that things will get better with time.

Dale Jr. says

Recently, I stumbled across the work of Ada Limón online. After reading her poem "Sharks in the Rivers", her book of poetry under the same title was on its way to my mailbox. It has proved itself to be the best find this year thus far and it's going to be a hard one to top.

Poem after poem is soaked with imagery and sounds of flora and fauna, rolling hills and riverbanks. Even her pieces constructed in the realm of a bustling, rushing city return to the comfort and at-home peace of California countrysides. Streets turn to rivers and her entire being takes flight, refusing to let the steel and concrete of a metropolis dam up that which flows so freely from her. She is a native soul in a contemporary world.

Her style of writing is refreshing. In tune with the natural world, but able to draw parallels between nature and a world seemingly detached from it. The joy of sex and womanhood is swallowing a live bird. Worries can be carried away by grains of sand on the shoulders of ants, unless your burdens are too heavy to bear. Her work is a trickling, peaceful spring at points and a rushing torrent of feeling and life running down pavement at others.

At no point do her words seemed forced or pretentious (like so many contemporaries today). They grow from the pages as naturally as prairie grass and take root in the readers mind. Ada's world immerses you and makes you feel both her joys and sorrows, doubts and hopes. You become attached, like she's grabbed your hand and said, "Come, I'll show you," before stepping out the door and into her world. It's honest and true writing found here.

This is the first collection of Ada's poems I've had the pleasure of reading and is her third book so far, being preceded by Lucky Wreck and This Big Fake World. Currently, she is working on a novel, which I'm sure I'll be waiting in anticipation for after reading the rest of her published work.

Originally posted on my blog manic-frustration.blogspot.com Feb. 13th, 2011

<http://manic-frustration.blogspot.com...>

Jill says

3.5 stars. A few gems, but I didn't love this as much as her other collections. This was not her first, but it felt immature as compared to the others, perhaps a bit unfocused?
