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Poetry by Leszek Chudziński Three Sisters; Indian Restaurant

Leszek Chudziński

LESZEK CHUDZINSKI has published poetry in Poland (in Polish), Japan (Kobe Haiku, Japanese translation from the English) and in the United States (both in Polish and English). His poems have appeared in *The Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Polish News*, and *Strumien*. He is a librarian for the Seattle Public Library and a writer and presenter for Radio Wisla, a Polish-language internet radio in Seattle.

Three Sisters

We are three sisters: Grażina, Jūratė, and Marytė

We come from the golden fields of Lithuania,
From the country of ancient forests and blue lakes,
From the old cities rich in history and church towers,
Where the prayers of our ancestors live forever.

We come from the country ravaged by war,
From the DP camps, from Europe that lay in ruin;
We are three little girls that fortune had smiled upon
And brought across the ocean to a distant land.

We are the children from Ostrander and from the Tillsonburg
Tobacco farm where days are long and hands are covered with tar,
Where landlords and sharecroppers split their hope in half,
Where the winds carry sweat and bitter smoke away.

We come from the rolling fields of Ontario, rich in rye and wheat;
We are the children of the harvest moon and long nights,
We are the larks and sparrows of the vast plains
Singing the song, gathering the grains of sand and corn.

We come from the little town of Delhi, where our school still stands,
Where Mother died in 1963, so young and beautiful she was,
And where Father joined her later, so the family heirloom
Would become whole, and holy for us all, wherever we are.

Grażina followed her heart to New York, for love chooses
No place nor time; there, she gave birth to four boys and lived
A happy family life, with her husband at the helm. Then she went
To college and fulfilled her life's desire and became a librarian.

Marytė, always a librarian at heart, like her older sister, fell in love,
And married her beloved; they bore a girl and a boy. She went to Vancouver,

A distant city guarded by the mountains and sea, and called it her own.
Finally, destiny took her to Seattle where she found work and peace.

Jūratė, the middle sister, was blessed with gifts and talents:
She played tennis like a pro, downhill skiing was her passion,
Speed a fascination, and traveling an avocation. Ancient Helvetica,
With her high mountains and long slopes was her second home.

As her fate would have it, Jūratė became a successful social worker;
She'd take on the world and with her magic wand help those in need.
Indeed, she was praised by all; and when she worked as a guidance counselor
In high school, kids valued her advice and loved her for her /heart.
When last July we came to Toronto, the Meeting Place, to see Jūratė
Who hadn't been well lately, we found her full of joy and vigor.
It was as if she was again going on a trip to a distant place...
As if she was going back to Delhi to join our Mother and Father.

We come from the golden fields of Lithuania,
We come from DP camps and wastelands of Europe,
We come from Ontario, New York, Vancouver, Seattle;
We know why we've come this far, so one day, we'll be One again.

October 9, 2008

The three sisters the poet has in mind are the Lithuanian writer Žemaitė's great-granddaughters.

Indian Restaurant

I think of my dad
At noon when his
Shadow is short like
Mine as we go for
A walk on the waterfront
Or stroll along the Av
Between fortieth and fiftieth

He hasn't changed much
Since the last time I've
Seen him; the same piercing
Blue eyes, gray hair
Forced smile; he seems
Less disapproving, worrisome
That's how I imagine
Him as we walk arm in
Arm back and forth

He doesn't say: back in
My time things were different,
Meaning: better; he just
Sighs: can you live off
Poetry in America?
Nobody can, I assure him,
But then it doesn't matter
Anymore for the world's
Coming to an end
You're right on that, he
Nods as we walk past
An antique store, and
I don't give a damn anymore...

I turn around, his
Shadow's gone,
I enter the Indian restaurant

