



TITLE INFORMATION

RUCKSACKS FOR THE LEAF CAT

Dianna MacKinnon Henning

BOOK REVIEW

Henning threads a quiet but resonant collection that lingers on the fragile architecture of love and the tenuous act of survival on a wounded planet.

Through spare, contemplative verse, the poet explores the dualities that define humankind, concentrating on tenderness, rupture, and endurance. Each poem unfolds as both a snapshot and a vivid tapestry, capturing fleeting moments that expand beyond their brief frames. Though it follows no conventional plot, the collection is grounded in lived experience as it traces the resilient spirit of human beings. Readers wary of baffling poems with cryptic intent will find instead a sensibility geared toward eloquent nature scenes and quiet laments on war and love, as in "My Heart's No Casual Affair." The clarity of the language moves with ease, transforming lived experience into a sustained metaphor for creation itself. The collection is strongest in its devotion to the theme of tackling imperfection with sustained effort; the poems dismantle easy ideals of triumph and mastery, refusing neat resolution. Instead, they honor the attempt itself, as in "Where Have All the Fishermen Gone?": "Sometimes // a vision evaporates, too large to execute: / Stubborn, I piled layers upon layers of paint // over mistakes until the canvas's weight / toppled my easel." Even with "premium oils," the speaker concedes, "I couldn't define a fish's scales, / their luminosity, nor was I able to line up the planets accordingly." Through natural imagery, Henning shapes a narrative that's both intimate and expansive, resonating across the broader human landscape for all to appreciate.

A luminous meditation on imperfection, endurance, and the stubborn beauty of trying.

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