

The background of the book cover features several vertical bamboo stalks on the left side, with their characteristic nodes and light-colored scars. The rest of the background is a soft-focus green field with some blurred reddish-orange leaves or flowers. The title 'Fire' is written in a large, bold, orange font with a slight shadow effect.

Fire

in My Hands

Through the Land of Colour

LESLEY ANN EDEN

Fire in My Hands

Through the Land of Colour

Lesley Ann Eden



Eloquent Books

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Dedication

*For Joan, with whom I sailed
the unknown seas without fear*

Author's Note

The journey is a true account of all that happened. Only the names of the people with whom I shared the journey have been fabricated in order to protect their identities. The strange and paranormal happened just as I have reported them; I cannot lie or embellish the truth, as this would mock the essence of my purpose: to share with you a realm beyond imagination, which is and has been my reality since I was born. Sometimes it takes a leap of trust to understand the incredible. I am not asking you to take a leap, or even a jump—just a few small steps with me into the Land of Colour, where I danced in the rain with blue feet!

Chapters

1	Yesterday's York	1
2	Chasing the Dance	6
3	Miami Mayhem.....	13
4	Cancun Connection.....	22
5	Chichen Itza	27
6	Merida: Gateway to the Mayan Ruins of Uxmal.....	34
7	Palenque: My Stumble into the Past.....	43
8	Visitation in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.....	49
9	007 Car Chase and Chicken Bus into Guatemala	57
10	The Smoking Spanish Deity and Jesus.....	64
11	Chichestenango and Salsa with Blue Feet.....	76
12	Brave Mountain Women and Their Story in the Swamp	90
13	Flores: Bending Time.....	99
14	Tikal: Dance with Danger.....	110
15	Belize: Karaoke in the Jungle.....	120
16	Caye Caulker: <i>Dum Spiro Spero</i>	139
17	Nightmare Return	157
18	Playa Del Carmen	167
19	Fire in My Hands	178
	<i>Addendum</i>	185

Yesterday's York

Cold, moist air cloyes my nostrils. I shiver. Damp clings to my hair like a limp, lank rag. A boy barks through the mist, coughing roughly, while the early morning wears a lid, sealing white vapour inside the city walls. I walk. Faces pass dreamily through the early morning fog as I glimpse the familiar carved pale stone of the imposing Minster. York, a place where shadows from the past linger and haunt the few who see. Down the years, I have glimpsed many strange entities suspended in a twilight zone, locked in a time warp of their own making, crying, unheard through the ancient bricks.

I slip by Dean's Corner, the windiest spot in the city, but today it is not; only the fog curls mysteriously, clouding the famous Rose Window. The eerie silence stirs secret images of the Lost Roman Legion who marched through the Minster crypt walls, floating in limbo searching for sanctuary. Through the impenetrably cloudy veil, they pass unnoticed with fixed, glazed eyes staring ahead under their shiny helmets.

Memories tumble from my brain. I am estranged from them. I hear my little daughter's voice from the past, "My sisters go to school with the big Minister . . ." I smile, but it is painful to remember. Black iron railings protrude near the single Roman column left standing incongruously by the Song School. Red House, my children's preparatory school, jeers with false welcome. It was friendly before my divorce, and then when I

couldn't afford it, the ladies in their fine hats stopped speaking to me. The Minster still looms beside me and, alone in the haze, I am closer to myself, nearer to the person I was somewhere in the past. Was she really "Yorkshire's Voice of Health and Fitness"? I buried her a long time ago. Strangers no longer stop me in the street with their health problems or enquiries about how to make the most of their breasts! I am anonymous as I weave my way down the Shambles, where once the blood-red cobbles smelt of freshly butchered meat, slop, sewage, and rotting vegetables.

The sun struggles to smile, cutting through the impacted cloud above the tiny medieval attic windows and resting briefly for a moment on Saint Margaret Clitheroe's shrine. Already, a few American visitors gather to hear her sad story, but the rays disappear and the mist returns, whispering softly, disguising the dawn traders' calls from the market. Early morning belongs to the vendors, the traders, the packers and unpackers, the beggars with their dogs and blankets, the elderly early risers, the school-children, and the office workers, yet the streets are surprisingly quiet, wrapped in a cotton-wool mantle. It is a time of respect before the curtain rises on the day and the morning unfolds with the shoppers, the visitors, the tourists, and the commerce wizards who infest the streets with their mobiles and technological gadgets that echo off the Roman columns past the river where the fog lurks, thickly confusing the past with the present, where my memories are locked in the bricks and the fabric of the streets. I cannot sidestep them. The medieval city walls encase my past, and part of me is trapped inside forever. There are shades of yesterday everywhere. I trace them forlornly. My children have gone. I realize that Yesterday's York was then, and now I am nearing my destination. The mist lifts, and I see that I have already walked halfway into tomorrow as the now encompasses all.

The past ten years of flying across Europe; dancing through the Mediterranean; soaking up the energy of live performances, empowered with weighty responsibility, makes the now uneasy. I pine to be back in the sunshine, twirling my way across Europe,

not pacing a pathway through the September mist to classroom warfare. Ten years' absence from mainstream teaching has left a gaping hole in my tolerance levels. The rules have changed, making it hard for the teacher to teach without solid sanctions to back up discipline problems. I am not prepared to compromise my principles for the sake of an easy life.

"Hey teacher, leave those kids alone . . ." hangs jauntily in the air, as the song from the past drifts from a nearby music store and, all in all, it's just another brick in the wall from yesterday.

I accept my situation. The sun streaks mischievously across my path as I descend the stone steps by the river, passing the famous Richard the Third Pub, waterlogged so many times that the stone flag floor remains in a state of half repair. Visitors flock to see how high the flood water rises each year and marvel at the building's resilience. I marvel at my own as I struggle to rebuild my life once again. I had given up my high-powered job to settle down in a beautiful old cottage on the outskirts of York with a man I thought I loved, but my voices whispered his deceit. I listened one sunny Sunday afternoon while standing in my kitchen. He was ostensibly playing golf, and I let the voices lead me upstairs to one of his suit-jacket pockets, where I found a reservation for two people in a hotel, for a nonsmoking room!

I knew it straight away, and so it had to be, back to the lonely pathway. I'm not complaining! I'm not bitter. I believe in the greater picture. My psychic gift has always taught me that all things are what they need to be. In my "nowness," I know and understand why it had to happen and thank him for helping me to obtain my beautiful cottage, but the mortgage struggle tethers me to the Education battleground, and an ongoing tax investigation hangs over me like a black-hooded thief, watching, waiting, poised to strike! Now the September sunshine showers the River Ouse with spangled sequins, and a profound sense of restlessness broods deep within. I pause for a moment on Ouse Bridge, feeling the need to jump off the edge of routine into the deep waters of uncertainty. I want to escape the monotony that stifles all magical connection with synchronicity. I need to fling open all possibilities of experiencing new adventures. I want to jour-

ney where I am nothing, where I know no one, and test myself out in the Universe. I need to be free to explore new territory without the pull or tug of a loved one left behind. Dull domesticity, mingled with fear of failure and a tax burden tortures me. Waking up in the middle of the night with cold panic attacks threatening my existence, my house, my home, my future with nightmare consequences of bankruptcy and, worst of all, the possibility of a prison sentence, I know I must break free.

The water sparkles, and I am reminded of the story of Jesus. I am not religious, but the tale of the “little blue fishes” affords me some comfort, especially as Jesus owed a considerable amount of tax! He knew of little blue fish that dredged gold coins and other bright objects off the sea bed carrying them in their mouths for safekeeping. Jesus used his psychic gift to direct his disciples to fish in the precise spot where they would seize enough to cover the debt. One day I will find my little blue fishes and I will be saved from the cold nightmare.

A chilly breeze sweeps over my face as I continue across the bridge and round the corner to Baile Hill. Memories here belong to my son as a teenager, meeting his friends with a bottle of wine to party at night in the moonlight. Baile Hill, a special place hidden from the public gaze, holds secrets of battles and heroic deaths, now parcelled in a neat nature reserve for the residents, sponsored by the council.

A York tour bus sails by with a handful of autumn visitors cocooned in bright woollen scarves in the open-top double-decker. They appear safe, almost snug in their certainty of tomorrow. I don't want safe routine. I crave adventure. I need to go on an expedition somewhere, somehow. Six weeks during the long summer holidays would be ideal, unseating me from my safe existence, testing my skills of survival. Every journey is a trial and tests the traveller to a greater or lesser degree, so each time you trust yourself to the will of the Universe, the greater the lesson learned, the more valuable the prize, the deeper the insight into the realm between worlds. I need to know myself further, beyond yesterday's tomorrow. As I walk on, the idea settles into my brain, becoming firmly lodged into the possibility

of the possible. Walking further on, the possible grows firmly into the probable until all that remains is “when.”

Planning and plotting, I reach the shops in Bishopthorpe Road, a place with a haunting memory of my youngest daughter, age two, running into the busy road straight in front of a motor-bike, which nearly killed her by a hair’s breadth! It was such a long time ago, but I still sigh with relief as I pass the house of tears, a place I am glad to forget. The telephone box, where my eldest daughter was trapped by two delinquent boys who sealed her inside by binding up the box with tape, is still in use, and the fish-and-chip shop, where I bought my son’s first supper treat, which ended in disaster when a massive fish bone got lodged in his throat and he had to be rushed to hospital, is still thriving. Bishopthorpe Road is where my second daughter’s little friend was run over. I lay in the middle of the road next to her, holding her still, promising her all kinds of things to calm her until the ambulance came. Four children and a head full of memories! I watched them all walk up the school drive wearing the navy uniforms. I now chase their past shadows through the corridors, teaching in their school to be close to them in nostalgia. The school gates are open and a handful of pupils stub out their cigarettes behind the bushes, dispersing guiltily as I pass. “Hey up, Miss, y’all right, Miss?” I smile. I have a new weapon. I am going to escape. I have a goal, a protective armor against the awaiting enemy in the Science block; even when they attempt to kill the fish swimming innocently in the tank and throw a new computer out of the window, I have something to cling to, knowing that yesterday and today will find a new tomorrow.

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