



Turtle Crawled Out

III

Turtle Crawled Out

This old turtle crawled out of me
she's been waiting patiently

Gathering knowledge
changing, growing
keeping thoughts to herself

Now her voice is clear
her words appear

And the stories she tells
the stories escape
climbing out of their shells

Whisper

I must admit
the very first time I heard the singing
my heart galloped as if I had straddled a wild bucking horse

When I heard the rhythm
my pride swelled like Grandfather's smile

When I heard the shell shakers
somewhere a memory stirred as if

I knew these songs
knew this pride
knew this ancient way

Then I heard Grandmother whisper
dance

Honey Creek

I scramble beside a sharp embankment
below the waterfall
bare feet slide along cool water's edge
as my fingers seek a handhold amid the crumbling stones

In the instant
I find a solid grip
I hear the buzz
and every cell within me begins to vibrate

Have I stepped onto sacred ground?
soaked in serenity
the drone grows louder
a thousand waterfalls roar inside my head

And I realize
the millions of canyon bees that once lived along Honey Creek
are still here
living in memory within the beloved stone

Sweet Early Days

Perhaps you can see her...Grandmother tating
on her living room couch
toe tapping as the kitchen radio
rocks to a modern beat

Spider threads twine through her fingers
that move as if she's playing her piano to a jazzy new tune
delicate blue circles hold hands
multiplying into graceful rows

My land, she says
as she sets her needlework aside
just look at the time
the backs of her ankles

Disappear into the kitchen
you hear pots and pans sliding out
of the stove storage drawer
clanging together in fluent pot-speak

Listening to the click, click, click of the potato peeler
you squint as a patch of sunlight
inches across the worn wooden floor
and crawls up the side of Granddad's easy chair

She whistles along with a song
tweedlee, deedlee, dee
tweedlee, dee, dee
you close your eyes and recall just how

Eye watering brilliant
the sunlight was
in those sweet early days
of youth

Like Fallen Leaves

Crisp oak leaves
leathered auburn like the work worn hands of elders
huddle together around tree trunks and stones
mingling with decaying brothers

On their journey, their return to earth
the heavy scent of this land saturates my pores
calling old memories out
hurrying up the hill an eager wind

Circles these headstones
while I stand here among my dead
breathing in so deeply
I hear the Washita below

Welcome me home
it knows this is my place
where I, like fallen leaves
will complete the journey and return

While crisp oak leaves hurry about
stirred by restless souls
listening to shaker shells and singing
in the blue mist valley below

100 Strokes

Your spirit sits with me now
when twilight deepens
into soft, quiet shadows
sits in the comfortable places you lived
content, hardly glancing my way

Serene
as you were
she brings a great peace
I ask her
to stay as long as she wants

Iposi, Grandmother, where you have gone
do you still brush your hair 100 strokes
and buff your nails to a shine?
your spirit sits with me now
but I cannot see her face

First Dance

I danced with my people today
to the shell shakers strong rhythmic beat

A fledgling circling within the dance
as natural as breathing, it seemed to me

I heard imafosi, Grandfather, declare
that one belongs to me

Yes, I am his and he is mine
although he has gone on

I danced with my people today
I heard Grandfather singing along

Kullihoma, June 2003

Full moon rises above Mountain House
fire keeper stirs bright embers
stacks more logs up, stirs again
around the sacred circle we gather

The young and the elders
the students and the teachers
called to this place, re-united
at peace with ourselves in this world

Singing voices rise together
shell-shaker rhythm, pulsing beat
old ways are held close here
Chikasha, we are, again, one

First Call

Wake me when the crows first call
as daylight grows
and a chilling wind sniffs around outside
searching for a forgotten entry

A neglected door, a warp in the wood
wake me when morning fires burn
and I will make us a tasty drink
to shake off the night

Then we can settle by the window
work in hand
to watch the crows up in the trees
summon the unused day

Crackles and Pops

Rows of glass panels block
blowing raindrops from reaching me
I want to rise up
fling open the door

Rush out into the night to greet the storm
feel the rain on my face
smell the world with a cleaner scent
welcome the gift with thanks

Sleep holds me down in a brotherly bear hug
whispers of dreams coming my way
I catch my breath at a flash in the window
and marvel as pure power bellows across the sky

Then flinch as the mighty storm
crackles and pops
and the blood in my veins
catches fire

Night Dream

Climbed out of the night dream
slowly
memory sharp as a fine whittled point
awoke to a rowdy crow calling my name

Dreamed of her again, spirit, smoke
holding my hand in silence
she smiled then whispered
you are of the old ways

And I remembered
turtle shells
sacred fire
and seed