

HUNTING POWER

You say you are hunting your power,
but your power is hunting you.
I'll go up to the mountain, you say.
I'll fast and live on seaweed
I'll hang myself on a meathook
under the hot sun. I'll give up sex
and wine and my sense of humor.
What are you thinking of?
For you to go hunting your power
is as smart as the mouse hunting the cat.

Go out in the garden any night,
step one inch outside the tame land
and you are near what you seek.
Open the window of your soul
any night and your guide may come in.
The issue is whether you'll run away
when you see what it is. To make sure
you succeed, tether yourself like a goat
at the edge of the tiger wood that breathes
right beside your bed. He'll come.

—August 16, 2009

CHINABERRY GLEAM

Gentle soul, the Spirit caught you up as a raptor
beating wings, and tore your flesh
and drew you through the night worlds
and hurled you into deeps where no sun shines
and the moon is a blind pulse, a drum unheard,
so you would learn to shine in your own light
so you would steer by your inner sun
so you could unwrite the Book of Fate
so that, remembering, you move as a dancer among your kind,
in the world but not of it, not different and not the same,
sharing what you have lived at your heart's core:
love, and courage, the flash of the sea-horse racing waves,
the gleam of rain on a chinaberry tree.

—*March 10, 1992*

A FLASH OF BLUE

You see a flash of blue in the air at midnight,
that blue, the blue of kingfisher's wings,
and you take flight from the seen to the unseen.
Poor strategy: the unseen is my home.
You hide from me where I live.

—*August 9, 1998*

THE FIRE IN THE WOOD

When you thought the fire was out,
flame leaps from the heart of the wood
so strong you're surprised it is safely contained
in what you supposed was a cold hearth.

There is nothing to warn you when it flares up.
Know this: tended or untended, the fire lives.
It will consume you. As fire lives in wood,
I live in you.

—*August 9, 1998*

TO THE DEER OF THE MOUNTAIN

—
Deepheart, mountain guardian
who harries the hunter
and knows what belongs to us
and what does not,
give us your speed,
your ability to read the land,
to see what is behind us and around us.

—
May we grow with the seasons
into your branching wisdom,
putting up antlers as taproots into the sky
to draw down the power of heaven,
reaching into the wounded places
to heal and make whole,
walking as living candelabra,
crowned with light,
crowning each other with light.

—*November 6, 1999*

A WAY OF CREATING

The buried city
bursts from the earth
as Van Gogh sunflowers.
The stem sustains the fruit.
This is a way of magic:
to write names of power
in the dust of the curio shop
and let them walk, ring doorbells
and instruct that old souls
inspire young ones, across time.

This is a way of begetting:
to turn in the cycle of creation,
to breathe clouds into the air,
colors into the fields,
and paint the sun into the sky.

—June 23, 2001

ROSE GATE

There's a garden among the stars
where flowers are gates to other worlds.
Try the pink rosebud that opens shyly,
plunge through its smooth and fragrant folds
into the Victorian garden where tea is laid
and sweet girls play and show a blushing priest
a bunny hole that leads to Wonderland
and a ginger cat issues opaque directions.

Take the dare of the "Drink Me" bottle
and you'll become inconceivably small
even faster than Alice, so fast you won't see
a grass blade rear into a royal palm
and ants turn into six-legged horses.

You'll grow, by diminishing, into a world
vaster than the one you knew before.
You'll swim among stars no telescope has seen,
you'll find light-ships among the galaxies,
immensity held in the iota of a speck
that eludes the electron microscope
but not the home-drawn voyager.

—*July 8, 2001*

BEAR GIVER

He walks with me like a faithful dog
though he's twice my size
and my ancestors feared and revered him so much
they never spoke his name out loud,
calling him Honey-mouth, or Sticky-paw,
or the Matchless One. Upright, he seems man
more than animal, though on cold nights
men in the wild would envy his fine warm pelt.

We are going to the animal doctor,
not the corner vet but the real thing,
because the Bear is ready to give himself again.
He passes without pain, without blood.
The animal doctor explains we must use all of him,
every organ, wasting nothing, sharing with those in need.

We unwrap the Great One as a medicine bundle.
Everything inside his skin is clean and dry,
sorted for use. The gall bladder is prized above all.
It will go to one who has earned it.
When we have used all of him, Bear is reborn,
the same Honey-mouth, in a new body.
The animal doctor says we must remember this always:

When you take from the Bear with respect, wasting nothing,
Bear always comes back, in a new pelt.

Now I walk with him in his new body
to help someone who has dreamed him,
padding softly down hospital halls.

The Master of Medicine gives himself over and over.

This is the most natural thing in the world.

There is no end to this, unless our love runs dry
and we forget what he is.

—*July 9, 2001*

SCAFFOLD TREE

From a dream photograph that might have been taken by A.L. Kroeber.

The pages of the talking book are thick
and floury to the touch. Blades of shadow
in the old black-and-white plates cut
Klamath landscapes into sourbread slices.
The tree in the photo that draws me
spreads stocky bare limbs from a headland.
Dark eagles roost, row on row.
Two women perch among them, second row
on the right. Can this be a group portrait?
The tree stands like a scaffold.

I must know more. I lean into the picture
and find it is an open window.
Leaning through, I see the tree has no roots;
strong native men hold it in place,
tensing their muscles against the wind
that wants to sweep it out across the bay.
Everything has been prepared by man's—
or woman's—intention. Birds and women
perch on cross-boughs tied together.
Early ethnographers, Teutonic ladies