

Gross -
morning
breath



As soon as
she dies,
I get her
money!!

Rhapsody



ODE TO A PILLOW

I see my pillow in the clouds,
The puffs soft on my cheek.
Goose down feathers float dreams
so sweet.
I taste your mandarin orange meringue
with my mouth,
when in sorrow I sleep.
I feel the sweet dipped chocolate lover of night,
when pressing
my head in you.
Your marshmallow goo
helps me to melt into silence. I
hold you my sugar plum
on Christmas Eve.
In winter, I know white
and cool you wait for me.

by Virginia Tondreau

Jean dreamed...

She floated lazily over the tree tops. Below her, Mill Creek sang its raucous tune as it made its bouncing, bubbling way to the restless Columbia River. Wide as a lake and full of stories the deep Columbia undulated to the Pacific Ocean. Jean wafted down and let herself become one with the chilling, snow-fed water. Vitality replaced her unconnected sense of lethargy as her essence blended with the rippling rush to the sea.

Over smoothly rounded stones, and many colored pebbles they rushed. Past sun dappled eddies where crawdads and water skippers made their homes. Past sun browned children nosily seeking legendary Indian treasure caves. Past the tree studded cemetery where her family members had rested for over a hundred years. Past her Grandmother's house. She tumbled in exuberation until, in a spasm of froth, her essence was cast into, and became one with, the Columbia River.

The fruitful Columbia, with myriad forms of life and nutrients washed down from the mountains. From the huge, prehistoric sturgeon lurking in the depths, to the tiny fingerling salmon, the Columbia nurtured all.

Jean joined the fingerlings as they flicked in and out of rapids and still places. Urgent as men following a gold rush, the young fish recklessly dashed downriver to fulfill the promise of adventure that their five year stay in the Pacific Ocean would bring.

For days Jean exulted in the river's song as it harmonized with the low throbbing vibration of the earth. One cool moonlit night, while swishing quietly along the edge of the river, she became aware of a crackling fire and quietly strumming guitar accompanied by a deep human voice. She hadn't realized until then how she had missed humankind, and let herself wash closer to the sounds.

The voice was not using words, or even humming, but was making a sound more like the wolf and coyote songs, so full of appreciation for nature, trilled along her way. It was a feral, cautious sound, yet open to friendliness. She liked the vibrations this cast into the fabric of life and stayed to enjoy.

The ode to nature ebbed away, and the man came to the edge of the river, squatting to wash his skillet and draw a bucket of water. Intrigued and lonely, Jean let herself be scooped into the bucket and returned to the fire's edge. Drawing on the fire under, the air above, and the earth below, she released herself from the water.

The man, being of the woods, did not question the appearance of a skinny young girl by his fire. He handed her an itchy wool blanket as, now she was in the flesh again, she was standing naked and shivering in the cool river breeze. As her human form began to warm and her eyes adjusted to seeing in the flickering fire light, she recognized the tall thin man, with deep brown eyes and long delicate nose, as her much loved Uncle Chet in her earth life.

But this was another life, another world. He did not recognize her, although his gentleness was as apparent as in the other time. Still not using his voice, he offered her a hot sourdough biscuit from the Dutch oven slung over the fire. She had been absorbing nutrients from the river, and the flaky morsel felt oddly delicious as it melted on her tongue. She quickly ate it and, as she licked her fingers, he prepared her another with wild honey from an old fruit jar. They sat in comfortable silence, the steam from Chet's coffee joining with the dancing camp fire smoke.

The interest and humor sparkling from Chet's copper penny brown eyes warmed Jean as much as the food, fire, and blanket. Finally, sensing she was warm and comfortable he said, Little Water Spirit, welcome to my camp, will you stay awhile? I have been in the high country the long winter, mining, and would like some company. With Jean's enthusiastic nod of agreement he rose and gathered springy fir boughs to make another sleeping place by the fire.

By the time he was done Jean's human form, overwhelmed by days in the turbulent river, had tumbled over into a comfortable, snug sleep. Chet, smiling to himself, and remembering his own lost sons, gently picked her up and laid her in the cozy little bed-nest on the other side of the fire.

Sunlight tickled Jean's eyelids, not opening her eyes, she stretched lazily, slowly becoming aware of the smells around her. The dusty smell of canvas heating in the morning sun, the warm cat smell of wool blankets, the nutrient rich mushroom smell of fresh made earth, and the just washed smell of trees still dripping from their dewy morning baths. Mixed in were bacon, coffee, and white smoke smells, in the air and in the equipment about her, from previous fires and mornings.

She then became aware of the sounds; the wake up call of the birds, the soft rustling of the trees as they whispered amongst themselves, the low murmur of the Columbia. And the busy, cheerful, sounds of morning camp! Chet's tuneless whistle, the snap of blankets as he shook pine needles from them, the rambunctious little fire popping, as the perking coffee threw drops at it, and the wind chime sound of the old mirror and straight edge razor tapping against the tree limb where they hung. Opening her eyes with a contented smile...

Jean awoke.

by Esther Esson



Fescue Rhythms

Colonies of mountain-green salt grass huddle on sands beneath Tillamook Head.

Under the ocean's barrage,

the grasses raise their whispers,
voices soft as sand through fingers.

In time to the wind's beat, grass roots holding fast,
all the clusters hum the same song.

Within each bunch, every separate blade moves as one;
fibrous swords flex and dip,
dance the communal rhythm.

Brown-tipped spears stretch skyward,
others stoop to sweep the strand;
panicle'd euru spikelets sway, their lithe dance
lifting feathery heads above the crowd.

Near the bottom of a clump, almost unseen,
a single blade moves alone, spinning with abandon.

©By Helen McNaughton



Don't ask ...

