

To Those Who Feel Deeply

BY LAURA LARRIVA

The buffalo carcass had been there for many moons before I found it. From the ridge it looked as if the whole divot of earth between myself and the far forested slope was holding that regal being in the basin of its body...reaching up to support its last and greatest act of generosity. The grass was stamped down in widening circles around the beached ribcage that echoed still with rank breath; curving past a hoof the size of both my fists together, to caress in gentle, pastured strokes the astounding, still-furred-and-horned head.

The air near the clearing was thick with presence as if the trees and the grasses and the little bones that were scattered all around my feet could not un-see the feast they had seen. Made richer, perhaps, or more full themselves having witnessed the stunning beauty of one that left this place in a good way.

I pulled out my flute to offer a song, and as I did so I remembered my grandmother just before she died. Her solid mountain presence...her spitfire and her blaze...and the way she had said so matter-of-factly; "I'm done. It's been great. Let me die already!" and she meant it.

When she left this earth I was in Mexico on a beach in the Yucatán. I walked into the waves with my clothes on and remember now how acutely I felt my aliveness. The cool, lapping water on my traveled ankles, the intimate contours of eventide, the steadiness of my heart even in full break...and I opened my voice and yelled out to her – to those who leave this place in a good way – a messy vow that I could never un-say. As ribboned fire streaked the darkening sky, I smiled and nodded.

She heard.

One time on a beach near San Diego I sat and watched a juvenile sea lion emerge like a wobbly Venus from the sea foam. Her deep, pooled eyes caught my gaze and held.

We exchanged histories.

As I walked back to my shoes a surfer gestured her way and told me about the warming water..that they come to this beach to die. And I looked back at her, and she at me, and I bowed my head and I let the tears come because that's all I could do. For days I felt alive in my wailing and knew it to be a parting gift.

I have not been able to un-see what I saw in these wild encounters with a part of life too often hidden away.

And I *still* wonder how I might need to live in order to leave this place in a good way...

How I might learn from the leaves in the autumn, and from the ebb of the waning moon, and from my wild body how to surrender myself more fully to the life that is mine to live with its agony and its ecstasy... how to love the world enough to give it all away... how I might set down my tired smallness to begin to die magnificently.

And that feels risky. And that feels right.

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when everytime
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you come back
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