

What the Geese Bring

Aunt Effie, up in Selawik, was just seven when the Spanish flu took her mother and three siblings. She was sent out to the camps to live with her grandmother, learn the ways of the elders and become steeped in their language and stories. Back then, late winter into spring was the lean time, she told us, with the dry meat gone and the sled dogs hungry. They ate just what the snares set back in the alders would give them, waiting, hungry, until the first crooked lines of geese would arrive. “Then no more cooking skinny rabbits,” she said.

The old ways are now gone. But the geese still come. The source of their remarkable compass is not understood, but they find their way through what remains of winter to whisper the end of one thing and the start of another--an invitation to the gulls; the promise of salmon; a reason for the tundra ponds to begin an edge of dark water; a call to the willow catkins in thickets along the slough; a reminder that in the crowded corners of the boat shed there are nets to be mended; and a reminder of those who waited for them, hungry, and cooking skinny rabbits.

Morning View from the White Wicker Rocker

Unmade bed not taunting as unmade beds are wont to do
but emanating echoes of the spooned night,
cobalt and silver velvet heaped carelessly, dripping to the floor.
Coffee cup, favorite Chinese blue, rests
on the stacked books of Rilke, Rumi and Basho.

The dresser you created fills the space just so, its glossy oak
garnished with one perfect stargazer lily
whose sweet perfume sways like a belly dancer
across tangled bedding and strewn satin pillows
to reach me in this sun-drenched corner.

You wander in to admire the new white closet doors,
speculate why one set seems smaller than the other.
We share smiles, two cats rich with sun and satisfaction.

This house is your poetry, your grace,
and I, by virtue of loving you and being loved,
can hear the lines as surely as they were created,
sill by sill, cabinet by cabinet.

I am cradled by the nearly complete verse,
by the rhythm of the wood grains
smoothed, curved, coaxed
by your hands crafting
this sacred space.

As You Compete Eighth Grade

I've read a tower of books about autism,
kept a journal of notes from seminars,
stockpiled glossy curriculum binders
only to meet your divergent mind,
like a neon sign announcing *detour*.

Three homeschool years have lived
between us. Percentages and probability,
ancient history and cell biology,
your wolf ears headband bent over
drawings of imagined beasts.

I would need all those months
to gain liberation
from the demon of expectations,
and snares that entangled me
on your distracted days.

You taught me, granddaughter,
how to interpret
the length of a pause,
intensity in your eyes,
shallowness of my own breath,
the language of our linked spirits.

Necessities

inspired by Layli Long Soldier

As we

create destroy

ourselves our world each other

we encounter we resist we accept we encompass

the pleasure the terror the beauty the heartache the magic

of loving of loving of loving of loving

and unearth and reveal and discover

the question the answer

together.