
Journeying

By Joan Loomis

Winter had begun in Cornwall, Vermont.
The days were short and cold.
The unfriendly air was sharp and penetrating.
Apple trees in the orchard left dark and barren shadows
Against the deep crusty snow.

Walking through the fields was a chore,
Forcing each heavy footstep in and out
Of the depths of icy white.

The nights were long and quiet,
But the brilliance of the moon and crystal-like stars
Splintered through the blackness of the sky.

Occasionally, the show of Northern Lights
Pulsed throbbing patterns of color
Across the dark backdrop of night
As if a gift had been given by some benevolent force,
Taking pity on those that would endure the long
Vermont winters.

Mornings started with coffee and a cigarette.
She sighed as she looked out the large windows
With lacy patterns of ice that framed the scenery
On the other side of the cold glass.

Her days were not heavily structured.
Interludes with friends, part-time work
And the daily tasks of winter life
That could not be ignored kept her occupied.

The season created confinement.
The nights did not.
Surrendering the day
Her sleep brought more than rest.
It delivered the dreams.

Sleep came early and so the journey began.

She was aware of leaving the house.
The dark shape of the rooftop wasn't far below.
Effortlessly gliding over the empty treetops
The wide grey wings of the female owl
Took her across the familiar landscape.

A new reality was quietly being introduced
Slowly becoming more familiar.
Steadily creating a bond that would reach
Past the night and influence the day.

She continued to leave the house
And the others sleeping in it.
The nocturnal flights were hers.
The grey owl, still, with quiet presence
Would fly further and further.
Familiar boundaries were left behind.
The direction always went west.
The slow descent over darkened mountain tops,
The peaceful clarity of new visions
Awakened a deep consciousness in her.

The past was now becoming a new beginning.
She was pleased and content with the dreams
For a while, she shared them
With the man beside her.

And so the days continued...

Morning coffee and cigarettes
More dinners with friends
More full moon parties
More dreams.

She was awake, she was asleep
She was listening
The realization was clear.
Now the journey would be different
It would surely lead west.

She left the house once again
This time through the front door
On foot, with a backpack.

She had vaguely planned a route
To the south and then west.
The map was helpful but intuition
Was to be her guide.

The endless stretches of road filled the days.
Sleep felt nomadic
Camping along the desolate roads.
Hitchhiking.

The grey owl did not visit
But was not forgotten.

Far ahead mountaintops began to interrupt
The desert landscape.
She felt something familiar
An internal knowledge, a quiet excitement.
She had flown over these mountains
As one with the grey owl.

The lure was undeniable.
Finally, she stopped and walked to the foothills.
She knew she couldn't stay long
But the need to be here was strong.
Just to absorb this new place,
This old place, was compelling.
Time to go.
There were other paths to follow.

She felt tired and uncomfortable,
But thinking about the dreams
Gave her energy to continue
To Santa Barbara.

The grey owl was beautiful
She was waiting
Silently calling.

The cave was small,
Hidden on a rocky ledge.
She stayed there, fearful at first
With the unfamiliar lizards and other wildlife
That she made herself company to.

Eventually she slept,
A wary sleep
And the grey owl
Returned to her dreams.

She no longer felt
Like a stranger in the new terrain.
After dark she would quietly soar
Leaving the cave,
Exploring the wooded mountains.

Her days were filled with reliving
The evening flights.
Each day was for a purpose
Although simple and uncluttered in events.

Freeing her mind
Opening her heart
She was closing in on the
Journey to the past.

One morning started as the rest.
Walking on and on
She eventually came to the grassy clearing.

The ancient oak tree took center stage.
It knew of her reverence for Earth.
After appreciating its great presence
She looked across the narrow canyon
To the west.

She was no longer in the sunny opening
She was with the image
Of the young woman from another time
Dressed in deerskin and beads
Standing in the distant foothills.
They were sharing the same spirit
Found in an inexplicable moment in time.
The grey owl's journey had ended.

She wondered how so much
Could be felt with such depth
In such a short amount of time.

She accepted the gift
That could not be questioned
Or fully understood.

She stayed there for a while
Remembering the first dream,
Reliving the following ones
Reflecting on her time
Here in the mountains
With a grateful heart.

Joan Loomis was born 50 years ago in Concord, Massachusetts. As a child, she enjoyed writing poetry and drawing. Alternative interests have influenced her lifestyle and offered a few adventures, good friends and family, and most thankfully, a beautiful daughter, Corinna. She enjoys traveling, writing, gardening, baking, and long walks on the beach. Joan strongly believes in sending affirmations and prayers to those people who have been a positive influence in her life. You may contact Joan at loomisjoan@yahoo.com.