



Peshtigo



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200 Luther rd. Suite 226
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Chapters

1. *The bonding*
2. *Heavenly host*
3. *Among friends*
4. *Discomfiture*
5. *The Box elder*
6. *Honey in the water*
7. *All champion*
8. *Woodlands rogue lanterns and runes*
9. *The lake of orphans*
10. *The period may delay, for the faithful*
11. *New Beginnings*
12. *Forays and summations*

I dedicate this book to it's earthy inspirations, it is my hope this story, will encourage a greater interest, in it's delicate and diverse beauty, and prompt our human hearts to greater care, of nature, it's creatures, and ultimately ourselves.

Peshtigo

This tale was born in a peculiar trek of imagination, an oddment wondering at the curiosities of creatures. In this particular voracity, the curio is a rabbit, I will name Peshtigo. As a poet whose fascinations tend toward nature, greenswards of grass or the occasional Paper birch, my inner child once felt needed striping, this day I found myself watching cottontails, one in particular. A ray of sunlight was stippling through cedars, highlighting the coat of one nibbler among the blades, a genesis thought arose, perhaps in some whimsy of passion, do animals muse over their environs natural beauty, as humans pleasure habitat, do poets and seers sort among them?

I answered this premonition of pondering myself, yes I thought, it's story time!

Introduction

Peshtigo rested, his body straight and comfortable on the pine floors, his eyes focused on the beautiful, intricate Silver leaf stopper, topping a slim, elongated green bottle. It was a gentile ornament, forcing its limits on the interior liquid contents. On the shelf beside it was a similar bottle with a simple cork. They are both excellent he thought, but that was Peshtigo, he found grace in all things, still for the longest time he had found none in himself. His thinking began to drift beyond the optical delights to the function of stoppers, their intention being to keep out impurities such as dust from the contents and to contain storage of honorable goods, nothing in nothing out. In that idea Peshtigo began to feel only remorse. Humanity with all its skyward tilt restrains triumph, instead training in societies tools, to live within its assigned stoppers. Still set on excavated writings prominently hung across modern doors, the archaeology of tradition had long out lived fact.

Conforming one to another as an insurance of inclusion or a protection from acts of excellence, that intimidate those who fear they are lessors, competitors in exercises unimportant. Warriors fighting for freedoms, that are not truly free. Real battle, authentic liberty is personal, intimate, individual and self winged. It's full reign, founded in separate, unchained, precocious personalities fully enthusiastic. That had been the primary lesson on the long years of road for Peshtigo. As he began to recall he slept... Anna he thought.

Chapter One

The Bonding

A substantial lilac light covered the Kettle Moraine, as if the earth somehow had failed its previous commitment to cadmium yellow evenings. Blue Atlas Cedars and Schilling's spurge quaked in the lariat of rounding breeze. Broken chaff crackled beneath the lite, disruptive foot of a Robin, in search of supper, its tabor altered by the distortion of distance. An occasional acorn could be heard striking the branches, as they interfered with its descent. The pharynx of sounds gentled Peshtigo as he lay in his cage near the bedroom window, the pleasant noise from the groves calming him with it's lullaby.

Peshtigo was an intuitive rabbit, keenly aware of the natural world, with a heart alert to it's delights. His radiant coat of auburn, contained hues more saturated in pigment than most rabbits, with golden tip ends that literally gleamed in the sunlight.

He was simply magnificent among cottontails, muscular and well proportioned, with a full, gracious oval face. Just as his markings belied the prospector's oar, there was indeed something rare and ethereal about him.

Peshtigo was from a tribe of rabbits called the Quije, among them the name meant, the perfume of flowers breath. The Quije were poets by disposition, infused with an adoration for the natural world. In revelry they moved beyond the limitations of normal rabbits, in zealous passions of praise for the created and the creator. Their particular form of worship involved eloquent types of movement, the intertwining and rotation of their ears and precise foot tapings, that provided the impression of a slow, mystical form of dance. Only rabbits of a certain size and bearing could join in the rituals and only those of the Quije, sometime referred to as the kinder's by more general creatures, and without a great deal of warm effusion.

They were the practitioners of the Lepus, a constellation associated with the Moon rabbit, lying just south of the celestial equator.

Alpha Lepus is Latin for hare, and is occasionally an ampersand for the hare chase by Orion, or Orion's hunting dogs. There are a considerable number of stars, both single and double stars, in the constellation Lepus, the brightest being Alpha Leporis, a white supergiant. There is Beta Leporis, also known in Arabic as Nihal, which means the quenching of thirst. There are a quotient of variable stars, such as Mira, also referred to as Hind's crimson star, all within the night of rabbits abundant celestial quiver. Importantly, the heart had to have the capacity to comprehend beauty fully and with reverence. Peshtigo, having lost his family had not yet learned from them, his true vocation, and had no idea to what he had been born.

Anna was a pensive girl of fifteen whose intellectual capacity allowed for the impression that she was older than her years. She had alert, Azul blue eyes and a flush pink complexion with angular features, that were at once strong and delicate. She possessed a youthful trim body that moved with agility and grace.

She had captured Peshtigo shortly after his birth, determined to rescue him after discovering that a predator had already killed several of his clutch. Though it had taken a good deal of effort to accomplish, she had succeeded in cornering the rabbit in a hollow notch of a decaying Hawthorn tree. Much of the trees bark had long vanished, exposing a pale gray wood rife with minute holes, and etched with thin curling lines and intersecting furrows, carved over time by various boring insects.

Her parents had agreed that she could keep Peshtigo until he was grown. Eventually they developed the rhythm of certain habits. After supper Anna would open his cage and Peshtigo would venture out. They lay together on the floral carpet that covered the hardwood floor of her bedroom, she would offer carrots and cabbage leaves and read him stories. The young rabbit listened intently to the punctuations and cadences of her voice, his discerning ears moving slightly with the stops and pauses, and though he understood none of it, he did comprehend her kindness.

He had an inkling that this mixing bowl of sound had meaning, because every time Anna offered his favorite treat, she would use the word carrot, and such was the reasoning with his name as well. As she entertained them both, he would roll over on his side and let his ears rest on her hand. Then when it was time for bed, Anna would ring a small bell and Peshtigo would retreat to his cage, as she had trained him to do. Peshtigo could sense Anna's love, which he defined as the girl's lips touching the space just above his eyes and between his ears. Though his own means of conveying affection was limited, he believed Annalise understood, that his caressing her hand with his ears meant love. Neither of them knew the sacred significance his ears belied among his creed.

Anna, her mother and father, Elizabeth and Daniel Stahl, had moved to the Kettle Moraine only months after catching Peshtigo, from the small Wisconsin town of the same name. Peshtigo had been essentially a quiet hamlet in the north woodlands of upper Wisconsin. A good bit of forests had been cleared for farmland, but it was still a wealth of sampling for the eyes.

October 8th 1871, was an historical night. Most have heard the account of Mrs. O'Leary's cow, tipping the lantern that would burn the town of Chicago, but this would be a night of fires across the Midwest. The Peshtigo fire would become the deadliest fire in American history, killing between 1500 and 2500 people. It consumed over 1,500,000 acres. Other fires burned that same night, the Holland Michigan fire, the Port Huron fire and the Great fire in Manistee, Michigan. One has to wonder the how and why of such terrible Providence.

The town of Peshtigo took its name from the Peshtigo River. The origin of its name is uncertain. The Ojibue tribe of American Indians is a possible source, taken from a similar word meaning river of the wild goose. The Menominee had a word as well, Pesh-tiko, inscribed to mean passing through Marsh. Perhaps it originated from one or the other, or both.

The summer was dry and hot, loggers had been clearing the forests for farmland for several months, leaving slash fires and peat bogs burning.

As evening approached, gale force winds whipped at the cinders quickly developing into a firestorm that drove an enormous wall of flame straight through the hamlet of Peshtigo. With temperatures as high as 2000° and generating winds and fire whirls of 110 mph, the men of the bucket brigade knew quickly, how futile their efforts were and could only run to their homes in hopes of saving their families. This was not a normal fire, actually it was a firestorm so intense that trees ahead of the actual fire would burst into flames, it jumped along the stands like an insidious game of leapfrog, igniting everything with it's horrific heat. The rye fields exploded like fireworks, sparks jetting through the air in the forcible breath of this virulent, living entity. Even those who ran for the river died in the apocalypse of heat, that either caused the shallows near the riverbank to boil, or those in deeper water to freeze to death. Anna thought her cottontail shared the legacy of this community, having lost his entire family to the sorrows that seem often, to haunt living things, and therefore gave the orphaned rabbit his moniker.

As it was Anna's mother had been insisting for weeks that Peshtigo was old enough to be returned to the wilds. Elizabeth, an accomplished painter, working with dry watercolor pencil, the detail and accuracy of her images were both elaborate and beautiful. Each subject, be it leaf or feather, recorded every nuance with clear, brilliant hues devoid of cloudiness or dimming. She crafted quilts, as well, in Guignet's green, amethyst and scarlet iodine, using luminous tones, in intricate patterns. These were sold in nearby shops for a good price, and they sold quickly due to the quality of workmanship and their unique attributes.

She also gardened and was the supplier of the chives, cabbages and beet greens that provided the little rabbit with its bounty of edible pleasures. Annalise was fascinated with her mother, holding to her a bit of worship, as she spent many hours teaching Anna composition and drawing techniques, the various ways of using pencils, and what color evoked in terms of depth on canvas and emotions, and Anna was becoming quite skilled.

It was early Saturday morning when Anna's mother entered the kitchen and told Anna, I want you to take Peshtigo to the meadow today and let him go, it's best for him Anna, ok? The joy in Anna's face dissolved with the thought. No she said, I can't, not today, can't I keep him another week at least, please! Anna we've talked about this again and again, he needs to be outdoors in the weather to give him time to acclimate and time to grow his winter coat. I know you love the rabbit, but its unkind to keep him caged all the time, he's a wild creature, he needs to be free and with his own kind, you want him to be happy don't you? But he can't take care of himself, he was little when I caught him, he doesn't know about the woods or dogs, he could die! Listen Anna, God provided every animal with natural instincts, he knows how to eat grass and where to hide, and there are lots of other rabbits in the meadow, you've seen them your self. Animals also learn by emulating their own, the other rabbits will accept him. I love Peshtigo too, I would never tell you to do anything I thought would harm him, you need to trust me, now take him out to the meadow, as soon as you finish breakfast.

But mom Peshtigo is happy here, I know he is, if he had a choice I know he would choose to stay with me. No is what I mean Anna, now enough talk about this, I have made up my mind, you will take him and no more arguing the point! Do you need me to help you, Anna said no I, I can do it, and I'll go myself.

So it was that spring morning she took the cage containing Peshtigo to the meadow near her home, though her sadness felt like a tumultuous eddy inside her that wanted release in tears, she held them back. Anna took Peshtigo to her sitting rock, where she often watched the shapes of clouds throw their shadows over the squares of tartan fields along the hillsides. In the evening the patchwork of various greens would turn to purples, as the light receded. Oat grass and Adam's needle glistened with lines of dew, and in the brush, tiny pale sprouts of Black Cohosh grew beside the bulging root of a Ruby Oak, that had broken through the soil.

Anna loved this place intensely she thought, as she opened the cage and Peshtigo came to lie near her feet.

She opened the paper bag she had brought and placed some carrots and radish leaves beside him. She began to read to him, but because she needed to cry so badly her throat tightened and the pain forced her to stop. She picked Peshtigo up supporting his back end and held him against her chest, there was something in the feel of her; something in her touch that was mournful and he could sense this. His back foot pressed against her ribs and he felt her heart beating rapidly. Still he could not help taking in the world of scent around him, the humming sound of the bees and the nearby squabbling of a pair of common sparrows. Annalise kissed him on that spot between his ears, lingering there and whispering devotions and then set him gently in the grass.

Though he nibbled at the radishes and could feel her hand run along his back, he was more interested in the mixture of fragrances that surrounded him, damp earth, Goat's rue and fresh clover, and with the experience, odd memories of his infancy returned to him. He remembered the contentment he once had felt nuzzling his mother's soft stomach and the tiny pushing feet of his siblings, there was a freedom in those memories.

He had begun to move away from Anna without thinking, she watched quietly and finally began to weep as their bond was breaking, it seemed to her, along with her heart. Anna could hear her mother calling and rose quickly, hurrying to Peshtigo, she bent down low and kissed him, don't forget me Peshtigo, I will see you in the morning, please be here and then she ran for home.

Suddenly Peshtigo noticed her absence and his ears collapsed along the middle of his back, he was afraid. In a rush he ran to the sitting stone but she was gone, he ran to the edge of the field and back and forth along its ridge line, still she was not there! He returned to the rock and lay beside it feeling the enormity of the world around him, its potential beauty, and its danger. In a peculiar way he felt nothing, he did not belong to anything, to anyone now, and he was alone in the vastness. Even the small crease of soil where he closed himself in, did not comfort him, his body tense and uneasy, he waited as night came.

It was getting cold as Peshtigo nestled down in a cluster of Sunflowers nearby, but he could not rest, his

longing for the girl forced him from his shelter, from the long stalks and wide flowers whose moon shadows waved over the soil beneath him. He moved toward the edge of the field cautious of every sound, crouching often. The strange noises frightened him; they had nothing in common with the repetitive, calming sound of her voice. Nothing emulated the chime of the bell that drew him to his cage most of the nights of his life, or the warm blanket where he had slept. There was a shrill shriek and the cast of enormous wings, as a hawk suddenly flew overhead, then the sound of something scrambling in the bushes, not far from him, Peshtigo froze with terror. He did not move, he would not move for well over an hour, and then did so with trepidation. At the edge of the meadow was a large open lawn, a giant curling phantom seemed to move in front of him, the shape made no sense to him, he could not look high enough to see the drifting flag on its pole, that produced the illusion before him, so he waited and waited for it to leave. He was uncertain he should cross this vast open space, with so few places to shelter. It was then that he noticed the sun catcher twirling in the

breeze, he knew it well, and he had watched it spin many hours from his cage that rested near the window. Anna had to be there he thought, as his hope and excitement overcame his fear.

The window was long and narrow and extended from almost the top of the house, to just off the ground. If he made it safely across the yard, he imaged he might thump his hind foot against the glass. He eyed the spans for anything that would shield him and noticed a pile of firewood along the side of the house, he juttled, running as fast as his fear could summons, until he reached the pile, shoving his body deep into the recesses of the logs. There was an Almond Cherry tree about twenty feet away, encircled by rings of railroad vine. Peshtigo sprang forward in a series of swift, long leaps until he reached the cover of the tree and shrubs. Just one more length of ground and he would be at her window. He was about to sprint, but stopped as something moved several feet to his left.

He watched as the creature moved closer to his hiding

place. He did not know what the animal was, if it would harm him, if it were faster than he and panic took over, with no thought on his part, his foot slapped the ground and the startled animal looked at him briefly. It had a pointed face and showed its sharp teeth but turned and scurried away. There was a white line of fur down the center of its back and a terrible odor billowed in the air behind it. There was just no more fortitude for Peshtigo; he was weak with fright and impatient to distance himself from the stench rising around him. He jumped and bounded toward the window and just as he reached it he turned in the air, slapping his foot against the glass and coming to rest in the flowerbed that ran along the front of the house. All remained quiet, again he jumped and struck, but nothing happened. A hopelessness came over him, he had determined to try one more time when a light came on inside. Anna looked out confused and sleepy and then closed the curtains. Again Peshtigo leaped striking the pane with his foot, making a loud bang, and again Anna looked out but this time she caught sight of him! She opened the window, pushing the screen out of its mooring and lifted him gleefully.

She touched the white mark on his forehead, and spoke his name over and over with definitive pleasure.

How had this tiny waif found her; how did he know where to look, she could not believe he was with her? She had never heard of a rabbit with such aptitude or skill before. She placed him in bed beside her, knowing she had all the proof she needed that he wanted to be with her, she would tell her mother in the morning and they would be together forever! Peshtigo rustled against the sheets and wrest closer to her feeling the greatest joy he had known, he let his ears fall over her hands. They had won in the battle of affection and the rewards were gentle, secure, a holy place of warmth and peace, there will be no cage for Peshtigo tonight Anna thought, as she fell asleep along side her soft companion.

When Annalise's father came in to wake her that morning, he found Peshtigo asleep beside her on the bed, he was furious! What is he doing here he asked, your mother told you to take him to the woods and let him go,

you assured her you had, I will not tolerate deception Annalise. I did take him, he woke me up hitting the window with his feet last night, he wanted in, and he wants to stay with me. That's nonsense Anna and you know it, a dog can bark, a cat scratch to come in, but rabbits don't have that kind of intelligence, and even if they did, how could Peshtigo know where to find you? He came to my window, he did, look outside the screen is still lying in the flowerbed, where it fell when I pushed it. He opened the curtains and saw the screen crushing his favorite primrose bush, and this enraged him even further. He grabbed Peshtigo by the neck and held him out in front of her; I want him out of here now, shaking Peshtigo and half throwing him onto the bed.

Peshtigo leaped to the floor and scrambled under the bed, sensing he was the cause of the confusion. He wished he had not come to her and a great suffering entered his being. You went out that window last night didn't you, and went into the woods without permission and brought him back, do you have any idea how dangerous that is?

You are not to go to those woods again for a month young lady, and if I catch you lying again to your mother and I, you will not be allowed to have any more pets as long as you are under this roof.

She dressed and once again placed Peshtigo in the cage and took him to the grove. This time Peshtigo knew he could not come back to her as he had the night before, that he could not stay with her and he shuddered inside. Anna could feel him shiver in her arms and wept, it was a comfort to him to know her heart was as broken as his own. As he had felt with her many times before, a strong impetus came over him to speak, he needed to express his love to her, comfort her, he had so much inside him, but was powerless to communicate.

She could not bare the idea of leaving him for a month; she knew she would never see him again if she could not come in all that time. She held him so tightly that he wiggled some in her arms to loosen her grip, then stretched his hind feet and nuzzled her cheek, and for a moment his tongue brushed her damp face, savoring the

strange taste of saltiness. She lifted him up to her eyes and looked at him, a smile flushing her face, there is more inside you than a rabbit can hold she said, I know it, Peshtigo, I do.

She could not muster any interest in breakfast, she felt herself recoiling, pensive as she sat beside her father at the dining room table. Why did she harbor such guilt, she had done nothing? She held such animosity towards him, not because he was wrong, but for the manner in which he had handled Peshtigo. It had become a habit to feel uncomfortable in her father's presence; she knew his temper well. The distance between them had grown with the passage of time, she was mistrustful and relieved when he finally left for work. It seemed that all Anna could do in his presence is dream of having her own place, with plenty of animals, Peshtigo, a flower garden, but mostly just a refuge of peace.

Daniel used his middle name, his first name was Bjorn, which few could pronounce, but his friends called

him Orn, a nickname generated by his ornery disposition and was a bit of an inside joke. Still he was an educated man, a geologist who had concentrated his interests on the study of the Moraine. He traveled frequently mapping the area, examining the landmass for glacial effects. He was an educator and lecturer along those lines, and had written many books on the subject. He was a very good provider and his family had all the advantages. He had attended college on the G.I. Bill, and had seen combat in World War II. A man of logic and order he could not comprehend the human absurdities he had encountered, nor fit it's madness in any box of explanation, his frustration with his fellowman left him irritable and quick tempered. As a writer he could put together an insult with the same skill and adeptness he was known for through his text. Regardless of the reason, it was Anna and her mother, who suffered most frequently, both believing they were the true source of his discontentment.

I told the truth about Peshtigo, Anna looked up

from the table towards her mother. I hate father for the way he treats you, the way he handled Peshtigo, I don't think he is a nice man. Anna, your talking about your father, he works very hard to give us a good life, he's honest and direct, he wants you to grow up with ideals. Then why is he mean, I'm telling you he is wrong. Peshtigo will probably die if I can't help him adjust to the wilds. I feel sorry for you, that you can't see how smart he is, there is more to him than you think. Your father thinks you snuck out last night. I did not, why don't you come and see, I will show you his footprints in the dirt and smudges on the glass, you have to believe me! All right then, but truthfully I don't see how a rabbit could do such a thing.

The evidence was clear, impressions of Peshtigo's paw prints littered the moist flowerbed and muddy streaks were present on the panes. Look, just look, I told you, I showed father..., I see them Anna. Then you have to let me help him, you can't just let him die.

Anna's mother agreed; I know how your father can be,

I will talk to him and try to convince him, but he is stubborn. You can visit Peshtigo and take him food after your father leaves for work, before you go to school, and then in the evening when you come home for an hour, you can't be late Anna, or there will be no end to this with him. Unless he changes his mind you will have to stay away on weekends, I will see what I can do, ok, and you can't let him know about this, I don't like his anger either, you must promise to do as I say, I will she vowed and she meant it.

The first night alone was difficult for Peshtigo, he had only managed to fall asleep just before dawn, he never saw the girl when she came that morning, but did manage to find the treasure trove of vegetables she had left for him. He had ventured to go again to her window, if just to be near, but as he embarked toward the Almond Cherry tree in her front yard, an owl swept down from its branches and seized him, fortunately he twisted free of clawing the bird, then hurled himself across the lawn to the shelter of the long grass, that grew high just the other

side of the fence posts, that bordered the property. He remained buried in the deep-set enclave of bracken and nettles daring not to move again until daylight. The next morning when Anna brought his pellets and saw the cut in his hind leg she was not certain he would survive. If he is sleeping in the grove of Sunflowers where she found him she thought, then I must build a fortress for him there.

That afternoon, as soon as she quickly eclipsed the exit of the bus, she left her books indoors. She went to the shed and found a shovel, a bucket, and a long piece of old weathered tarp, and then she ran to meet Peshtigo. She began collecting flat heavy rocks, which were in abundance along the creek bank, working quickly to build him a shelter. This task took her all of four days. She arranged the first row of stones in a rectangle approximately a yard long and two-foot wide, and then laid another row directly beside the first. She filled her bucket with mud dug from the waters edge and used it like a mortar to secure the rock and anchor the second layer on top of the base.

She wanted to make sure no dog could rummage or collapse the structure and dig him out.

She worked until the hut walls were over a foot thick and about two feet high. She left two small entrances, one in front and one in back for him to venture in and out. She selected a pair of wide, linear slabs to place above each entry to permit the additional rise of stones. Then she found large, sturdy branches and placed them across the structure to form a roof. She laid the bottom row of limbs in one direction and the second row opposite to give it strength then covered the entire enclosure with the tarp, weighing the end with small boulders to hold out the rain and wind.

It took a good bit of effort to work Peshtigo's blanket through the opening, along with water and pellets. She wished she had thought to put them in before she laid the roof. She had also brought the bell with her and tied it to a over hanging branch beneath the cover at the door, in hope that if she rang it when she visited,

Peshtigo would come from the fields, and that he might understand this was his home now. Peshtigo had spent the house building hours, hopping over her feet and shaking the greens she supplied, trying in vain to muster her attention, but now she paused and cradled him, reading to him for a while.

I have to leave, sleep in your fortress, you will be safe there and I will see you first thing in the morning, I promise. She kissed him and rang the bell; his ears sprang forward at the familiar sound. She picked him up and placed him at the opening chiming the bell, and to her amazement he hopped inside resting on his soft quilt, she smiled, always amazed by the little fella.

Peshtigo was tired from the night before and slept peacefully. That restfulness ended as the rain and thunder began and jostled him from his dreams. He nosed outside, curious as to the commotion, and quickly retreated into his sanctuary, dry and warm. He began to realize that this after all, had been Anna's purpose and that she had not ignored him as she built his home, but was thinking of him for the entire duration.

He used his feet to adjust his blanket and curled into its warmth, reminding him of the similar comforts once afforded him, in the creases of his mother's belly. He liked this house of his, and lay content inside, full of gentle thoughts and soon was dreaming in all the hues of flowers he adored.

The dawn began as an even sheath of gray, glum with the monotone influences of the shapeless cloud cover. Peshtigo sat at his doorstep watching tiny, miniature brooks between the drapery of leaves, taking notice of the way that the rain water increased dramatically, the intensity of color in each living object it encompassed, and thought it a vital and precious lacquer.

More and more Peshtigo hoped to speak, his mind fattened with inspiration, images and the feelings they conveyed, engorging his heart that beat with them, more than blood. Worship kept its cravings inside him, like that of backlit poets who pen in ether. He did not know about the Quije, or their penchant for the perfect listening word, he was rabbit that could not voice or write, desperate to communicate the common beauty that surrounded him.

He listened to the alto clamor of the water with its splattering carols, he thought of the fowl with their embellished flutes, and woodwind melodies. Even the wind had larynx in any obstruction it choose, to sound its alarm at will. It spoke at times through the Quaking Aspens, or brackens that rattled like bark encased buttons, through an organic pace, it could orchestrate the battalions of leaves strapped in tress, to each tree of it's mirth. The breeze could shave a song, plucked from the waving of an unsettled sign post, whose bolts where not properly fastened, or weather vane yawing in its circle, the echoes were mistrals erratic, more guttural voices, brass or tin devised.

Why Peshtigo wondered, had he been given no voice at all, the question accused his heart, as heaven hosts might see it. He waited for the answer, he waited for Anna to come, yearning for the orange roots, for the glad affection her presence brought, he let his thankfulness settle in the selfless interior of speechless bars, consumed in meadow raptures, that lifted up and displayed it's proud, colorful bandoleer delights around him.

Chapter Two

Heavenly Host

If one desires a miracle walk in the field, consider the red ironbark and the flowering lignum that bands beside it, for the mighty apparitions of heaven, are common to the path mallow and in beech.

It was a rainy Saturday, Anna's mother had failed to convince her father of any other truth than the one he perceived, Peshtigo remained alone. Intermittently the storm would stop and he would venture out to eat a few dandelions. He'd return to his fortress when the drizzle began again, inside the soft, safe seal surrounding him. For two days he had not seen her and he wondered if that was all, if she had forgotten him. He was lonely, solitude was not in the character of rabbits, it's silence was unsettling.

Eventually the rains ended and the sun shone clearly

through the washed horizon. A myriad of insects had begun to stir; blue, and double winged dragonflies, kited between the water pimpernel. A pale olive Monarch butterfly caterpillar, with butter yellow and black strips, was spinning its milky green chrysalis. Tiny specks of onyx and gold dots appeared drawn like a woven string, forming an embroidered line, just beneath the stair step cap of it's delicate cocoon. It's hours of laborious diligence kept Peshtigo transfixed, as it molded it's tiny cavern. Peshtigo wondered where and how these colors were contained inside the worm, which he used to fashion his house?

I don't have any thread on spools inside he thought, or vibrant yarns to spin; he believed the elegant worm a gentleman of great magic. Peshtigo was also convinced that each hue possessed it own scent. The blue of the sky had a clean smell like the effervescence of tumbling water; and brown smelled like potatoes newly plucked from the ground. The morsels of fruit that were a brandied confection for rabbits, black raspberries, and the

occasional fallen plum, produced a cacophony of perfume, an atomizer sampling the active nose. The sachets of lavender in Anna's room gave his theory power, purple's are the best he thought, if I could build a needlework house from some millenary within me, I would pierce my needle through, with a variety in a of orchid hues.

Peshtigo knew of tapestries having watched Elizabeth stitch, and having cambered down once in her basket full of yarn and piecing, the worm and the human sew he thought, but I do not and such absence of talent bothered him substantially.

The rustling of undergrowth startled Peshtigo, ending his daydreams in abrupt abbreviation, rousing in him an immediate burst of tension. He studied his surroundings intently, perhaps it was Anna, still the sound seemed to light for her step. Waiting he listened, when he heard nothing further he began to relax, it was then that two field rabbits popped out of the billowing grass almost in front of him. These particular rabbits

had noticed him coming in and out of his hut and could not help but wonder, what kind of rabbit lived in such a place.

Lepus communicate with a variety of subtle changes implied through their eyes, ears and varying rigidity of muscle tone. Peshtigo understood this language from his time with his family. He knew they meant him no harm and allowed them to approach, as he too was curious. Gradually they touched noses, quivering to identify each other's scent. Although Peshtigo admired them at once, they were far less certain of him. He carried the scent of man as did his peculiar nest. These rabbits were larger and worldlier, with brisk eyes that made note of every nuance of environment. One of wild rabbits lowered his head slightly and shuttered, it was cue, they gazed at Peshtigo pleasantly and then returned to the woods.

Peshtigo felt a quenching disappointment, returning to his little dorm, sad and confused. A desperate array of emotions gathered inside him, like a bellows inhaling sour air, expanding and then gasping for release, in directions noncommittal.

He did not know the world he was born into, he kept only distant references to his mother and siblings and for the wilds around him. He was misplaced it seemed, everything that should be natural for him was foreign, he realized the other rabbits had discovered this about him. They did not believe in him because in their eyes he was lost.

He raised his fore paw to his mouth and began to wash his face. I am like them how can they think else wise, I am gentle yet they did not trust me? He had no way of knowing the rabbit's disdain for man. Anna had not come for two days, the two rabbits rejected him, he lay down bewildered in the familiar creases of his blanket and fell into a perplexed sleep. In his dreams he could taste Anna's tears, he knew now they were a form of grief because he felt them, but like the voice others had, he did not, and like the woven house of the worm, he had no tears either; he wondered what all he lacked, all the gifts of expression he did not possess. Even now in his stupor he sensed the tears filling him full, still he had no means of release.

It was perhaps one o'clock in the morning, the stars had risen to their preset places, when a tapping on his ears awoke Peshtigo. A power emanated in front of his eyes, so forceful he remained motionless, transfixed by the minute being which fanned him. An intense light radiated from it, in hundreds of individual, geometric snowflake patterns, each bursting as they fell to the ground, scattering rings of shining particles. The creature had the body of a tiny bird, its wings thin like clusters of tulip pedals, curving with hollows that seemed to swirl gently at their base, emitting emotion and song. On its head were a series of long tufts, and a pair of soft eyes large for its size. Thread like feathers with oval tips, each in brilliant shades, glistened like a rainbow, but in pastel hues. From its lengthy tail plumes, a fragile trail of shimmering dust dropped like infinitesimal sparks to the ground, gathering on the earth as a tapestry of golden lace, that gathered almost magnetically into intricate weavings of leaves and fronds. The being spoke and these words Peshtigo understood.

I am Tao, this is my name. In my name, I is for each soul, the a is the first and beginning priority, singularity in individual path, seeking it's completion. O is for your heart that exceeds your body, your body cannot contain your whole path, your soul is like a giant eagle placed in an inadequate egg, this is the future set for your completion, Peshtigo. I am sent, not because you are lost in various worlds; I come because you are lost to your penchant.

God found delight in the praise of the Quije, in past times, you were sent to be a poet of Hares. Tao then showed Peshtigo mentally the meaning and rituals of the Quije and what intentions their metered dance meant. You were sent to the Quije, as a gift from Devine love, to your tribe, rich in praise, who are lost, they ignore the earth's vast gardens. It is for this reason that you burst inside to speak, and you will speak Peshtigo, it is to come, you will be changed a season and returned in time.

Speak worth, announce beauty, purpose love! I will hold you in this time, you will no longer be a rabbit, yet the Zuije, will hear your words and understand their meaning. Anna, in love, kept you from death, you will guard her and join in her heart Peshtigo. Wait then on the seed to fall and on the spike of the torn to shudder; in that time, you will be changed. Tao began to rise on a copper increment, that appeared inch by inch as Tao ascended, evaporating as she drew up, past the wire like shaft. It was night again and silent. Peshtigo had awakened thoroughly, and was certain this apparition must have been a dream, but if only a wish of sleep, why did he feel such hope?

The morning began with noise, a loud, bantering group of blackbirds screeched in the trees above Peshtigo's hut. Soon after a pair of voices laughing and talking approached getting very close to him, he felt sure one of the voices was Anna's, but he still prepared to run, minimizing and constricting his body into a compact force prepared for haste. Annalise had brought her mother to see the rock fort she had built for Peshtigo.

She rang the bell but Peshtigo remained cautious, eventually coming out at her call to leap gladly at her side, both with pleasure and to release his grip on himself. She hadn't forgotten him after all and to be with her brought such a rest of peace. Her mother looked over the construction and thought it very well made. Mom, do you think we can buy some hay this winter, to place inside to keep him warm? I think so Anna, I think so.

I imagine even your father would be impressed with the work and care you put into building this house for him, I can't even budge one of the rocks. You still have a number of days left in the month your father forbade you to come here, but after the month is passed, give it a couple weeks and I will bring him to see this place, maybe it will soften his heart. Do you think so mom, I hope so, I want dad to love Peshtigo like I do, and I want to love dad but he is so rough. How do you stand it mom, he is so cruel sometimes, the things he says, he's just not gentle.

Love is not reserved only for saints Anna. Listen, I

love your father because I knew him long ago when he was a kinder man. He is a good man but troubled by the horrible things he witnessed during the war, it changed him. He grew up not far from here, he was a just a farm boy, and he had pets, Hereford cows and a rooster that he played with everyday named top heavy, for all the feathers that adorned his head. He worked the corn fields and caught tad poles a creek just like the one nearby, why do you think he bought this place, to remind him of days when things made sense to him.

Your father has elements of a soldiers plight, its called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, it causes him to relive bad events he saw and its hard for him to live normally, its like a wound Anna inside the mind, the soul that can't heal. He does love you and he loves me also, but he is haunted. Just try to love him as someone whose thinking is distorted, sometimes twisting peoples motivations because he has seen too much of the bad that can be in them. OK, I will work on doing better, but I'm the one he should be taking care of, not me taking care of him.

Anna it may not seem fair, but you can learn so much by caring for someone, getting outside your self to see another. What if your father had cancer or something and was sick and dying, you would help him and care for him, but he is sick in his own way, try to see that. I will, I promise Anna said as she picked up her rabbit and held him close. *You stay here a little while longer with Peshtigo, then you come in for dinner and don't be late. Elizabeth stopped and stroked Peshtigo's back and then ran her hand through Anna's hair, you be good she said smiling, see you in a bit as she walked across the meadow back towards the house.*

The days expired with that long month and finally Anna could visit Peshtigo openly and spend more time with the little fellow, although he was growing and she could feel the increase in his strength when she handled him. Peshtigo was not always home now when Anna came, she waited faithfully with the jangle of the bell and most times he came to her quickly, but now and then he didn't appear at all. His bravery had grown considerably

after his odd night visitor had spoken hope into him. He ventured to the creek and further, and there were times he never heard the bell or Anna's voice calling.

He was about the business of tasting everything the forests and meadows might offer. Among his favorites were the fresh white and pale pink globes of clover and of course raspberries, he liked the red berries better than the black ones, and there was one tiny patch of blueberries very well groomed by the local fowl, that he adored beyond anything else he had savored. He admired the chaffing, curled bark that crisscrossed herringbone in nets of fragrant limbs.

On this morning he was stretching to reach a ripe blueberry, he had just opened his mouth to pluck it free when he felt a terrible sting on the tip of his tongue. He rose into the air terrified and began to run in circles, stopping, thumping his back legs, and twisting in paths while his heart beat rapidly with fear. It would not stop burning, he paused and began licking his fur trying to dislodge the picker wedged deep, he spent almost thirty minutes preening before he finally felt the thing gone.

He didn't feel well however and began to make his way back to his nesting place. As he paced along he kept his tiny appendage moving over his lips trying to sooth the ache. Finally he reached safety and lay inside, all but panting with the soreness and now the swelling that made him choke, he was grateful for the water always present and drank to sooth the inflamed wound and open his throat.

He wanted Anna, how much he wished for her, he was alarmed now, his tongue had become far too large and he began to think he would suffocate or die from lack of food. Anna did not come; it was to late in the evening for her now. He thought of her window again but he knew he didn't have the strength. As the night stretched out he became weak and feverish, the bee had spent well its toxins and Peshtigo could no longer bear to open his mouth or to drink. He waxed into a stupor and longed for help, doubting he would survive until morning when Anna would bring all the gifts from the garden.

I will never speak words he thought, Tao was only my sleep, I conjured this host out of my own need, I will

never talk. I cannot weep and I am dying. There were no more thoughts left to Peshtigo by the time Anna found him. He had not come to the bell, but she heard the odd sighing sound of his breath inside his house, so she lay on the ground ferreting around through the novice entrance until she felt his fur and that he did not respond, and quickly pulled him out. She saw his mouth was partly open and realized his tongue was engorged and bundled him in her sweater running for home.

Mom she said as she opened the door, mom something has happened to Peshtigo. Elizabeth dried her hand on the dishtowel and joined her daughter looking at the ailing rabbit. Anna, get in the car we need to take him to the vet right now. It did not take five minutes to reach Dr. Bardger's office, but it was only eight forty five in the morning, and he did not open until nine A.M. Elizabeth opened his mouth and saw the wound, he's been bitten by a bee I suspect Anna, his mouth is swollen. Mom where is he, Dr. Bardger, he has to hurry Peshtigo could die! Finally he pulled up to the clinic and the two ran to him before he even exited his truck.

They showed him the rabbit and he assured them, calm down, I can give him a shot to stop the swelling and fluids, hopefully we've gotten to him in time. Anna could not watch, she just sat in a chair in the waiting room crying for Peshtigo, her mother trying to comfort her, and off and on checking with the doctor. Anna did not go to school; her mother knew it was too much for her. The hours creep by and finally the doctor came out and told them the fever had left, the swelling had decreased some and Peshtigo was awake.

Anna bolted from her chair to her little man kissing him on the white spot of his forehead; Peshtigo rubbed his cheek along her fingers then lay back with his ears over her hand. Anna kept him in the cage in her room for several days, and he slept near her in bed each night, both thankful for the other. A week later she returned Peshtigo to his fort, telling him all the while how she worries and frets for him. Please be safe, Peshtigo, please stay safe, she left his hut with a prayer, God love well my little rabbit, watch over him and keep him from harm, love him with your love and with mine!

That night was difficult for him, he was sure he did not belong in the wilds and could not survive them. It had begun to get cooler now at night and he dug deep into the soft cloth of his blanket. Tao awoke him dripping flurries of light; do you despair in fear Nepthalia? Who is Nepthalia? This is your name now, it is the christening given one among creatures wise in word. Who gave me this name Peshtigo asked, God has given it to you. I do not talk, I cannot cry out, I am without tears, and cannot weave colors from inside my mouth like the worm of the butterfly can. I almost died because my tongue was swollen, it was so large I couldn't drink or eat, am I not blessed with wise words. You told me I would speak and my tongue was pierced instead, it was frozen and immobile, why?

Tao rose up slightly and expanded, the sound coming from the core impressions of its wings changed with warning, words are powerful, everything made was made by word, you breath by words. But words can be dangerous Peshtigo, some words should never be spoken, do you understand, your injury was to your tongue and

it was dynamic; it was bidden that before you speak you should learn not to speak, before you fold your tongue to announce, a caution of its power should be set. What words are these then that I am not to say Tao, how will I know the difference? You will not speak words unrestrained, nothing unkind is to be spoken into another; you are not to judge or persecute any creature with your voice, do you comprehend? I think so; I will strive to do what you ask.

Anger Peshtigo is an emotion that subdues all other emotion. In anger there is all vacancy and all occupancy, for anger quenches empathy, tenderness, and love, it suffices all else, but it is empty because it removes all else. In a sprig of sweet spice, talk of love Nephtalia, this is the lesson of the bee sting; do not make words as poison, recite only medicinal words that heal. When the seed falls and the thorn quakes you will become new, listen because the branch and briar shiver even now and Tao ascended her inch of metallic touch, appearing with grasp, and vanishing at her release.

Chapter Three

Among friends!

It is not just for a friend to trust, but to trust again.

Fireflies flickered, interspersed between the limbs of the Chokeberry and Red Chestnut trees, pausing to land on the purple fountain grass. Dots and dashes signaling on the delicate tufts, illuminated by the blinking lanterns contained in the abdomens of such bodies. When Peshtigo had first discovered fireflies he spent an entire night gyrating in fascination, for creatures he now paired in tandem kingship with caterpillars. I am without light he thought, Anna can fill rooms with light and these infinitesimal sorts can conjure moons from their bellies, I lack still another craft of serene grace, and he began to brood over his own dullness.

Fall was beginning; he had never witnessed the alteration of leaf and foliage before. Each morning when

he came through the door of his fort, bright color increased infusing the branches in all directions. On first sight he had mistaken the brisk drapery of orange tones for fire, which he seemed to know inherently, in the distant snapping of phantoms, but also by his basking by the fireplace with his friend. Soon he recognized the same shape of leaves he had seen all summer. Red shades cloaked the Norway Maples, honey colors through the foliage of the purple birch. The reed grass began to turn brown and bend awkwardly towards the soil, as did the sunflowers shielding his dwelling and corn shafts in distant fields.

Where did the leaves hide this palette he wondered, they have another skin and change clothes like Anna. I am always the same one thing, every day I am what I was the day before, is nothing hidden in me at all. Peshtigo simply could not contain the degree of inspiration dropped inside him, as beauty seemed only to daily increase. I don't know that even words, if I might speak them, could honor this painting wood and the gaslight wonders of it's tiny inhabitants.

I will break open he thought, it is grievous to contain the praise of these sanctuaries. He walked the rail of the fence, a patch of garden at the border of Anna's yard.

Annual mallow and almond geraniums were still bedecked with blossoms, he thought about their buds and how inside them, they contained magnificent floral celebrations and how set in the interior chambers of each bloom, were seeds that contained celebrities, so lovely and scented. In every thing that exists there is a phenomenal gift, and I am full with this knowledge, but I am hollow without delicate surprise.

Just then the gems began to glide in the air before his eyes, Tao had been hiding as an alias, behind a cameo of geraniums. Tao Peshtigo asked, why do all things have two lives and contain luxuries that unveil themselves, changing and altering appearance at will and I do not have such fluctuations, I am a boring, hollow creature am I not? Tao was displeased, Naphtalia you despise my promise!

Where is the gift of your long ears, that you fail to hear my assertion? You are an animal with rapid eyes, possessing the craft of numerous tricks and wiles, yet you devalue yourself! You fascinate beauty in everything, you give yourself to every external, can you not recognize how finely you are made? Is it praise or envy that douses your soul Napthalia, should I be weary of the mannerisms that bend in your heart? You see the wonders in all parts of nature, you adore them but covet their sheen of mercy. Ask yourself, what is that you possess, that they do not, tell me for I am discouraged.

Peshtigo drew himself in and thought but could not see his own value; he only gazed at Tao sullen. There are also brandished forces in this world Napthalia, foxes and hounds that lust for the skin and blood of gentle entities. You have feared the owl; tell me did you admire to find any gift in him? I did not, Peshtigo said. Wit and skill are your gifts, the speed and the maneuvers you possess, perplex enemies. The advantage in the length of your ears

to hear the faintest of sounds, the rapid sorties of eyes that assess, are these not gifts? Beyond this is love, the alliterations and theatrics of beauty can not equal love, this is the most generous gift, to love, to be loved, you must also love yourself.

Tao questioned Naphthalia, are you loved? Yes the girl loves me and I her. Let that then be the habitation of your gift. Not all gifts perform glittering transformations, what shines is love, not the gentle solvent hoaxes of nature. The ornament of leaves, the gift of the worm, they tell the tale of alteration. All beings have ambiguity! They reach to obtain the high berry and fail in sore bitter tongues. These spectacular natural providences, alter what is common, it is but earthly light asking that all may find their hidden glory, but only love can lead to the magic path you are seeking. If you wish to enter the portal of uncommon beauty, you must bring love to those around you, by sharing or by kindness, this is what it is to expound. Will you then be the wise... answer? Yes, I will strive at the works of love Tao. I ask faith Naphthalia, do you believe my promise? Tao I am sorry I did not believe your hope, I believe you.

Tao fell in haste to the ground and turned before Peshtigo's eyes into what he thought was an apparition of a decaying pear, the center broken open, with the unpalatable odor of the brown tinged pulp. The ants seized upon the fruit and began to feast. There was a chorus that accompanied this frenzy chanting, the smallest are feed and beauty is born, it's song repeated, and Peshtigo slowly began to understand the sacrifice love can require.

Anna had made a new friend of the boy that lived on the adjacent farm, his name was Bray Muller, and she spent a good deal of time with him now. She had in no way forgotten Peshtigo, but she seemed somewhat less lonely for him. She did not bring Bray to meet Peshtigo, fearing that if she revealed him, the word would get around and the boys at school might hurt him. Peshtigo had seem them together all the same, down near the creek, laughing as Bray slipped on the wet stones trying to nab a fish with his hands. Anna had seen Peshtigo but turned from him and led Bray back towards the fence, that cordoned off his father's farm. Peshtigo had no way of knowing that she feared for him, or that not all

people could be trusted, he only felt a loss of confidence that Anna's heart remained for him.

I should make friends with other rabbits he thought, it is time to me to be where I belong. There was a hint of injured anger in him at Anna, for pretending she had not seen him, for being indifferent to him and walking away. That night Peshtigo ventured out of his house determined to ferret out other rabbits to befriend. He was wary of night, and had the habit of sleeping in cages of one kind or another, when the lights faded and skies performed their trick of stars.

Somewhere he knew this was wrong, that his was meant for the night, when he might conceal himself in its shroud. He strolled the edges of tall sweeping rye grass and the borders along the rivulet but found no rabbits. He had watched a great number of rabbits eating seedlings, plucking them from the straight rows of vegetables planted on the more distant swaths of land. So he retraced Anna's path, until he found the long lines of tender growth.

He consumed alfalfa and chives and the tops of young carrots and then decided to lay down where he was and quietly wait.

There was a commotion several furrows away that prompted him to sit up and then crouch, what was it? This group of animals was closing in on him and he was terrified. If they come nearer I will bolt he thought and find the creek and the safety of the long grass. He saw motion beside him and was seized with fright sprinting for the fence and in one leap caught a post with his hind leg and tumbled to the ground, all at once a sound was emanating from him, a sharp tormented cry and it worried and calmed him. I can talk he thought, I can plead, this was a wonderful notion and he thought perhaps the creature beside him was Tao come to fulfill the promise.

Soon many rabbits surrounded him, merry and playful, they prodded his fur and pushed his belly to rouse him, eventually he sat up.

I am Calla, the lead rabbit offered, what is your name. Why I am Peshtigo from the far meadow. Just then a thorn pinched his flank and the wind rose up stirring the branches of the surrounding trees as acorns fell nearby. He saw a mix of dust suddenly brighten, translucent cinders weaving a soft arc towards the earth, Tao had brought him his promise. He began to dance in the patterns of the Quije that were enlightened before him, forgetting for a moment the fellow rabbits that stood watching. Each rabbit slowly began to place their front paws beneath their chest, for they recognized the praise choreographed in the segments of the Quije, and humbled before Peshtigo. Peshtigo stopped, no don't bow to me, I am rejoicing in a promise fulfilled. Give honor only to Tao, then first praise to the foremost host above her! You have spoken words to me, and I too can speak, I've been so full for much time. All this passed between them without the use of mouth or tongue, images and thoughts flowing crystalline between them.

Calla had received his name because he was bold enough to pass through the white gate that entered the

barn, Calla did not countenance fear and the other rabbits admired his courage. Tin spear was a rabbit with a great deal of silver to his coat and he tended to stretch his body into an angle that seemed to bring him all to points. His ear front, his paw and face flexed outward forming what looked like arrows made of fragile metal.

There once had been an echoing in the nearby waters, Wesi, a young doe had fallen into this very creek, Calla had heard her echoes floating in the current, and had saved her. She was given the nickname, Echoing water. He was very much, leader, savior among his clan. There was a doe named Banksia, who's mother bore Calla, she had wide, damp, rich eyes and a suffice of soft balance to her movements, that was most regal, attracting suitors that desired her and bid for her favor endlessly, she was quit aloof. Peshtigo admired her also and his eyes moved towards her often, my mother is Quije, a matriarch, you should meet her Peshtigo, and at once he felt bashful.

The next morning Anna did not find Peshtigo when she rang for him, she paced the fields calling his name, and grew more and more upset as the morning turned to afternoon and he did not come. Peshtigo spent the next several days with his new friends learning all he could garner from them. At evening dinner he began eating his fill of lettuce until Tin spear warned him to stop. Lettuce isn't good for the digestion, you will be sorry you ate this, don't eat anymore. Soon after Peshtigo's stomach began to swell and cramp and he bowels loosened bringing him much distress. It is a myth that lettuce is good for rabbits, while it wonderful to eat, it is bad for the innards. He learned about different snakes, which ones are dangerous and others that are harmless. Peshtigo conferred his encounter with the bee. Calla told him, the time to pick berries is in the late evening when the wasps and bees returned to their hives, information he was glad to know, he had not eaten of his favorite berries since being stung, frightened to make another attempt.

He met Banksia's mother Zaait on the third evening since his arrival. Immediately she bent to him, Nathphalia dance she said, we are your tribe.

The others of the Quije folded before him, Tao's promise has come they chanted, and called on him to dance. He began to move his front paws in unison touching the ground in a pattern, four corners of a square, he raised up on his hunches limber and in fleet movements spun in a circle, then returned his forefeet to the east and marked the dirt. He slowly moved toward Zaait and Mon, who was the strong buck of the group, as each began laying their ears cross wise forming a pattern X. They would lower their ears to their backs and raise them again, each time taking alternate sides. They looked like the patterns of Tao's geometric suns, but they did not shine. They leapt by turns, and in pairs, each Quije slowing joining the group, until all were in tandems of doubled dancers. Peshtigo brought his ears down along side his cheeks almost to his chin, arching his head upward until the tips of his ears were almost level with the horizon.

Peshtigo leapt in a spire, and as he found ground he began to speak with great joy... By Lord that grant the Chestnut trees, hallelujah! Root that anchors the Burr, wind that offers the Indian paint brush a fertile home, we

*gather in your providence. Vase of earth, marsh of sky,
hear the vine of praise we overlap. Peshtigo emptied all
that burst in him, and a sheen was present in the
relieving.*

*Tao came at the end of the dance, and spoke to the
spirit of each Zuije a message, but to Napthalia she
brought to mind Anna, and said, there is a girl who
loves you, she grieves you, go to your charge. Peshtigo
left singing all the fine and pleasant words he could
muster and went back to sleep in his home, waiting for
morning and for Anna, his feelings so intense, he could
barely contain them. That morning Anna brought with
her a whole hand full of blueberries she had picked from
the bee vine the day before, while hunting Peshtigo. She
cried when he came to her call, leaping almost into her
arms, they spent that entire Saturday down near the
creek. Anna named the creek, ribbon's shadow and had
brought a lunch with her and a blanket for a solitary
picnic, just her and Peshtigo. He was surprised that he
could not speak to Anna, nor understand her words.
Tao had opened language to him among the rabbits, but*

he was not fully changed, he wondered if his speech was meant only for his tribe, and it troubled him, because he felt such an insurmountable pressure to speak to her.

Anna read to him drawing her finger along the printed lines, and for the first time Peshtigo realized that words had a second gift, print preserved in shapes, bound in bails of paper. He spent that afternoon listening and watching the trail of black print above her touch. He thought she should dance, and with the thought he leapt to his feet twirling in the air again and again. Anna thought perhaps something had bitten him and that he was in distress, and every time she moved closer to inspect his body for any wound, he danced, ever slowly moving away. Finally she understood his playfulness and began to mimic his motions, he danced for her and she followed, gleeful and rapt with each other's company, they chased and bounded for almost an hour and finally Peshtigo returned to the throw and settled down. It was a blessed day, another in a week of bountiful days, and delight lived along the fields and in ribbon's shadow, a springtime of soul, in the midst of autumn.

One morning Peshtigo exited his rock enclosure to find the world before him had changed yet again, snow had fallen in the night and everything in his sight was covered in a pristine frock of white. He was enamored until he juttred out and found it bitter cold to the touch. It took effort on his part to venture out in it, and that was only when his friends called. Anna took him inside on extremely cold, inclement days, and he glad for this. Anna had trained him to a litter box and he was no longer caged, but did remain in her room. She would work on drawings, drinking hot chocolate, while Peshtigo watched, occasionally nudging her hand for attention.

One day after he was returned to his hut, after being with her for several days. Calla and Tin spear called on him. Where have you been they asked, and he told them he had been staying with the girl in her house? Calla backed away feeling his bravery challenged, man is our enemy, we are prey to them, you cannot be here still alive, if your words are true. Peshtigo told them the story of his family and his capture and how he had lived with the

girl much of his life. How she had built him this house for shelter and feed him berries, he told them of his love for her and her tenderness saving his life.

Leaving, neither Tin spear or Calla believed Peshtigo, they decided they would watch him and wait to see if such a girl arrived. If she took him they would follow to see where the two of them went. There was a good deal of commotion about this among the tribe of rabbits, who feared all things human and therefore began to doubt Peshtigo. The facts played out before them, one very cold day in February, when the girl came and lifted Peshtigo placing him inside her jacket. They followed them through the meadow to the property line of her house, and watched as she took Peshtigo inside. There was a meeting that evening between the Quije, and the decision was made to observe the doings at this house. In turn and in pairs various rabbits would go to the house, creeping silently along the course of it's walls.

One evening Anna opened her curtains and began watching the snowfall, Peshtigo had joined her, when all the sudden she noticed a pair of wild rabbits watching

just beyond the garden brick. Look rabbits Peshtigo, he recognized echoing water and the other as Mon from the Zuije, he knew then they had not believed his story and he knew why they had followed him. This lack of trust concerned him, and he wondered if he had fallen into bad standing with the tribe.

It would be weeks before he was put out again and he made of point of going to his friends to show himself alive. Zaaït began the talk... it is said that you love beyond your tribe and that breaks the enclave of loyalty, is this so Naphthalia? No, I am loyal to the Zuije, she is my heart, I'm here because she saved me. Did you not hear the command of Tao, that I love this girl, who loves me? I am here safe, speak to Tao, if you do not believe me. I will said Zaaït, I will, and if it is as you say we will accept it. Are there more men that you love? I have known other men, a doctor who healed me when I was bit by a bee, and my tongue swelled to the point of death. I am friendly with the girl's mother, and uncertain of her father, who would not harm me but does not offer affection to me, I do not love any other

however. If you are to lead this tribe we must be certain of your heart, does it offend you that we question your proclivities towards this girl. It does because I would not betray you, but I feel betrayed. Zaaït answered, I will bring this up with Tao when she comes, but in the mean time you will need to accept our questions, man is higher than the fox in battled legions, I will call for you if Tao brings peace to our collective, but this is disturbing and it has perplexed the hearts of our tribe.

Peshtigo sat in his hut that night openly offended, had he not danced for them. Zaaït knew his name already by the word of Tao, does Zaaït question Tao to mislead the tribe? He thought of his doubts before Tao, and shed his pride. As he galvanized in the bitterness of his thoughts Tao appeared, trailing her emblazoned tapestries. You are offended by the tribes doubts about you Napthalia? Yes, I am hurt, they have put me out pending your approval. Did you not also question my promise to you, and was I not then, angry with you. Yes. Was I not patient with you, I endured your insult? Do the same. There is trouble coming Napthalia,

distress, you are foretold of it. What is the trouble Peshtigo asked, will the tribe hurt me? No, I will speak to Zaait soon, it is not the tribe. There is trouble coming and despair you will find your path. Am I to die then Tao, you will not die, but you will be changed, when the thick, white water is offered in it's vessel, you will drink, and you will walk a long journey of restoration and healing, this is the mission of the gift I bring, to heal the girl.

You will go by reconnaissance and through danger to join in recovery? Will Anna die, that will be answered by the outcome of your heart and no other, you will not travel alone entirely, but the path will narrow, allowing only one, alone you will tremble! There was no calm in Peshtigo this time, as Tao departed. What is coming he wondered, words uneasy inside him, for weeks he waited in anxious anticipation, but all remained just as it was.

As spring began, Peshtigo was slowly relaxing, the warmth and regeneration provided that hope to all living things.

Zacit at last sent word that he was to join them for evening dance, so he came to the camp of his friends near dusk. Zacit again bent to him, Tao has chided me for doubting you, except my failure. I will offer no more questions about you, you are to lead this tribe on your terms. Naphtalia spoke... I have no terms beyond that given, the path is love. This tribe must follow in the sacrifices of love, and to consider the circle of others beyond our selves, even as we remember to cherish self. The tribe danced to their mentor, to their friend and the companion of earth who cared for them. They braided poems to the winter and to its passing, the seasons and the oval of the earth that provided for them, in its cycle.

Tao tells me you can't stay with us daily, Zacit stated, and that trouble will come, I want you to know, at the turn of such passage, we are to help if required. Peshtigo was grateful as he returned home that he had found a family, but could only live in reservation, worried about the tale to come. Tao he said, though she was not with him, why can't you stop this harbinger, certainly hallowed love can prevent what ever sorrow is to come,

*please forbid this thing to take place, I pray for Anna,
that you build a hedge around her, a great fort like this
one, always keeping her in your protection. Love...Tao,
maker as you are, and in oneness, this love that is my
own.*

Chapter Four

Discomfiture

*Today the red star of darkness, tomorrow the sol of light
touch, morning!*

Anna's father was unaware of her friendship with Bray, and she had no knowledge of his abiding distain for Mr. Muller, Bray's father. From the time they had bought their home in the Kettle Moraine, David had been in dispute with Gregory Muller over the adjoining property lines, and this had been a sour admonition between them. Although Mr. Muller was aware that Anna and Bray were friends he had no animosity for the girl, more like a certain pity in truth, wondering what her home life must be given her very disagreeable and unpalatable father. He said nothing of this to Bray and left them to enjoy their fun. Bray was teaching Anna about farming, and the machines they used to aid in turning the soil and for harvest. Bray's dad had left a small square area in the middle of the cornfield unplanted,

to give Bray a kind of natural club house for his entertainment. He and Anna spent a lot time there talking and bending a few cornhusks into bracelets.

Unfortunately "Orn" had gone to see Peshtigo's fort at Elizabeth's insistence, admonished to show some interest in his daughter. He had seen Anna from this hill-crest near the sitting stone, frolicking about with Bray. It was his temper again showing its self in the long strides and heavy, determined gait that sped down that hill towards Anna. Mr. Muller had his back turned stooped, shelling a pea or two to determine a good time for likely harvesting. Anna, get over here now, I don't want you anywhere around Mr. Muller and his family. Anna was immobile with embarrassment.

Did you hear me I said get over here now, I mean it, this man is trying to steal our land, I won't have you playing with a thief or a thief's son! Does your mother know about this little arrangement of yours? Mr. Muller rose up and turned livid with the man handling, brusque attitude he had plied toward his own daughter, not to mention having been called a crook.

He walked right up to the edge of the fence that separated their land; he said nothing until he was inches from Bjorn's face. What kind of father are you who can speak to a young girl like that? What kind of man are you? This fence Mr. Stahl was laid in 1871 and agreed upon by the first owners of these lands and the county. I was not even born when the property line between our two tracks was determined. You are the most uncivil person I have ever encountered. I will not have you stand it front of my son and call me a robber based solely on your sorry disposition. I pity your daughter, who has to risk humiliation apparently any time she is in your company. Orin traversed the fence with an arm and a jump and was on top of Mr. Muller in seconds beating him about his head and chest. Bray and Anna both piled on shoving and yelling at her father to stop. Bray go call the police, Greg managed to cry out between blows, now, go, and call the police! Mr. Muller was bleeding from his nose and mouth when Anna took hold of her father's hair and began pulling, trying to force him to stop. He turned on her so abruptly and savagely striking her with his full force across her face, that she fell at once and lay motionless on the ground.

You just want pity, Anna, get up and with that intonation he kicked her side. Mr. Muller rolled over trying to shield the girl with his body. Bjorn was gone, he was in some other place, shouting and striking them both with his boot. This went on for several minutes until Bjorn finally collapsed in a ball on the ground crying, with his head down on his arms. Bray had brought the police to the section of field, then ran back to escort the paramedics when they arrived. Immediately the police grabbed Mr. Stahl by the collar spinning him around, and hand cuffed him to the fence then began attending Anna and Mr. Muller. Orn became violent kicking the fence trying to free himself and talking incoherently. All three were transported to the nearest hospital, Mr. Stahl in police custody.

None of the injuries were life threatening, both Mr. Muller and Anna suffered concussions and Anna a broken rib. When Elizabeth came to hospital, after staying with Anna for several hours, she made her way to Mr. Muller's room apologizing for her husband. She

explained to him about her husband's problems from his stay in the Army, and how he cannot tell what enemy he is fighting when the rage takes over. Greg looked at her and said simply, you need to divorce him for your daughter's sake, regardless of the reason for his problems. I am not saying this for lack of pity, I was in battle too, I can understand the disorder, but he could hurt you both, he already has hurt your daughter in ways she will never heal from, you should divorce that man! Mr. Muller did not press charges for Anna's sake, but would not allow her come by any more. Bjorn was legally restrained and kept under psychiatrist care for ninety days and then finally released, seemingly in his right mind. Elizabeth did not file for divorce, and he and Anna never spoke but a word or two in passing. During her convalescence Elizabeth had brought Peshtigo in to keep her daughter company, it seemed to Anna, he was her only real friend, and her need for him only deepen. Prior to her father's home coming, while she healed, Anna spent her time drawing and reading to Peshtigo. Peshtigo had no idea about any of this, but because of

their empathy of one another and his familiarity with her disposition and routine, he knew she was ill and wondered if this was the trouble Tao had foretold.

Within a couple of weeks things returned to normal.

Peshtigo returned to his fortress and visited with his friends in the Zuije. Late one night after the dance, some of the rabbits began relaying to Peshtigo the fight they had seen, and how the girl was hurt. Do you think this is the trouble Naphtalia, Tao said would come? It was Zaait who interrupted, this is not the trouble, it is the beginning, and it is the foundation laid for the ill that is nearer yet. There are two angles of light, Tao showed me this, the girl lies beneath two angles of light, it is for you to find this light during the flags of those days or you will not see the girl again, Peshtigo. You will drink the water prepared beneath the angles, and everything that is solid will shift, then is evil without license, when love has proved it's diligence, only then can we rejoice in it's remedy.

The troubles had caused spring to pass quickly, the

summer more sullen than usual, peace had broken and anticipation rested through the surrendering of red and orange foliage, that seemed to still with warning upon the ground. Tao trellised down her string, that joined the constellations of stars, a fragile truce was in the lament, her wings seemed singing. Peshtigo had remained in his hut choosing to stay proximate to Anna. He had heard almost nothing of this apparition called music, and remained transformed, his ears swaying slightly and soft as the willows to the carol. Life fell silent, and for a length not a word announced.

Tao drew very near to Peshtigo, touch me Naphtali, join and anchor my strength. With that Peshtigo grazed his right ear across the spread of Tao's wings, Tao's sum consisted of eight ornaments, gathering surreptitious flights. I see visions in your Melodie's Tao, like a Meadow lark with it's head bowed, as a sprig in sad limbs of winter. I hear the salt I taste in Anna's tears! Tears were born in Tao's eyes, color in some passage between iron and silver.

They shuddered in mid-air pausing, and while wet, they emanated fire and spark, falling briefly, then hovering, claps of imagery were revealed in the second hand of light. Gentle insights of beauty married to contrary measures of sight full suffering. As they ambled from surface in the hearth ground of soil that was Peshtigo's surety, the floor warmed with a solace of heat, then burst like the fireworks of Catherine's wheel in the air.

Premonitions are coming Naphtali, prepare! Value life and turn only towards it! I am in residence with you always, remember this, in the midst of your heart, surround my name, offer it to trouble! Anna will be taken far away from you, but you must find her Naphtali, I will provide you signs to follow, but you must remain calm and observing, you are the one passion that can save Anna. I have spoken to two of the Quije, Calla and Zaaït will join you on the journey. It will be difficult, still there will be joy, for you will find your dream fully transcribed. I will need provide objects of understanding, so you might soon learn to speak and too become as Anna is, but you will be able to communicate with the Quije. Progress will a difficult distance for your

friends, your patience will search such additions, as slowly as a winter's breath you will linger, they will sustain you, as you will be walking between two worlds. Stay at the pace of Galla and Zaaït, doing so, you will find Anna at the proper hour. At times there is a war for love that must be settled! Those with high goals will seek it, true love is a trust and a shelter often hard to obtain.

Peshtigo had questions. Tao, you have great powers, you travel the edge of garments, you yourself unravel by a string. I have witnessed your shed of beauty, transposing loss over the fascination and summary of your wings, to carcass fruit for the fire ants, can't you alter Anna's fate, and why is this terror determined? Tao emanated taking pause. I am merely a host of heaven, my task is among the Caribou, I conceal in the shoreline mists, to guard the Herron, I meal before the insects, who must will their lives, to various birds of wing, I bring symmetry to forests, and hold the shadow were summer deer cool beneath the sun. People are not my providence, their warrants are beyond my realm.

Humanity is a populist that bends the eager branch closer to earthen floors, among their tragedies is the separation of independence, though they fain to favor love, they rarely seek oneness, this is the self, undoing, and all such surface in a lose of peace. I'm am an apparition of teachings, but of a kind, we are many in variable, and all subsist, exchanging our parcels of education. The blueberry and the wasp lecture Naphtali, learn.

Tao withdrew her nape and feathers, relaxing by Peshtigo, she began to muse. Everything is independent, and everything is joined, no two are the same. As different as you are from the Black kite or Kestrel, your are equally non equivalent to Calla and the breeds. Peshtigo was amusing himself at the smallness of Tao's form, she appeared very bird like with her clever wings closed. She reminded him of the yellow finches he admired, but often lost track of in light yellow leaves of autumn. He'd been around Tao for some time now, and thought about the instance were he had compared his common russet with preferences for their golden treasures, and he considered the fact, that he still did.

Tao knew this and preened a chuckle, it's good Naphtali to glory others, it's the conclusion of negating yourself that is crucial in your comparison of the equation. The earth is not the sun, yet it does not blossom without it. The many processes of that orb of great fire, are meaningless if earth were not. How vast are the numbers of the unique, how splendid the compliment of creation. Independence is glory that must be transcribed by asking if our gift joins others or divides. Wise stewards will resource their ingenuities to equip the pleasure of others. I talk with in others ways to difference, my words are arranged for Quije as poets, but the crows prefer a courser dialog.

Peshtigo was beginning to relax and drift off for a nap when Tao gave way. I knew you mother and your litter mates, she asked about you yesterday. I instructed her to give her life to the wolf! Peshtigo was immediately alert and overcome, to tell the truth he was angry. He stood up with an unusually large presence over Tao. He trumpeted, how can you be a friend and ask this robbery of my mother? I have trusted you and you bend me!

You're mother had choice, she bargained with the wolf for your life. Peshtigo felt again those tears he could not cry! Why he asked, why!

It was hunting season, the man king had killed many wolves and much prey, the gray wolf was dying. When he came upon your mother she might have run, but she could not bear to hear her young dying. A bargain was made in the long rye, which I negotiated offering her conditions, she possessed the means to out run him. Your three siblings were barely a mouth full, and the glens were full of hares and their young, other warrens would be taken Naphtali. A pack was made that the famished wolf would spare the runt of the litter, you once were the lesser. She periled through the watch of her dying clutch, so tiny in measure, they were gawn quickly, she did want them to hear her cries, for she intended to make a warning hale for warrens nearby. Sacrifice was beside her, her voicing was a triumphant volition, the wolf found no others that season. Most die without threat, but often life is given away for others, you can die for nothing Naphtali or die as a provision.

Their are medallions worn in the heavens, that do not belong to men! I oversee the world I know, I was born a few fields over. At the root of your story are the footprints of man, joyful powers that kill life for sport or boast, not for need or hunger. The grasslands die in many regions Naphtali, the earth travails, mankind suctions environments for the meagerness of greed. It has set about breaking the dinner plates of vast arrays of intertwined species, with substances that poison land and water. In particular they despise insects, the very food that feasts the quail, and feeds their kind, because they consider nothing beyond their selfishness. They do not believe in the whole of summation, that the ruling love of heavens found pleasing. Still they do not recognize the order, for the bugs feed the birds, the grain, a cacophony of sparrows, mankind are buck and cattle, they will rush blind to their end, starving last in presumptions copious, behaviors greatly beyond their needs, they will time become most needy.

Chapter Five

The Box Elders began clipping light, a compass begins the morning.

Winter came to Liffen hill, snow had forced the cattle indoors as it grazed deeply, it's chilled appetites over the fescue and Chioggia beets. Come fall's last pardon at November's gate, the strips of Chioggia are brilliant red and cream, candy canes offered to the season.

The day began with peculiar January thunder, Peshtigo bolted from sleep faster than his eyes could open. Such pall was new to Peshtigo, a tone and temperament that caused his spirit hard alarm, he felt unsettled! Shortly he heard the familiar, calming pace of Annalise, bringing him the beautiful charities of stored greens. Peshtigo gripped to run quickly towards her, his fear ever full of jutting springs.

They had just finished the soft affections of morning

devotions, as sweetest pleasures that sheltered their hearts full beat. A shriek cut through the peace, a grave call from Echoing river. Anna in the terrors of her ripping questions, fled still holding Peshtigo, hoping to navigate the puzzle that fed the eerie cries.

A large hound had broken through the ice at the deepest point, each frozen artifice it positioned, crumbled beneath it's frantic struggle. Anna placed Peshtigo on a land bank of stones and began walking over river rocks towards to dog. She reached and found it's neck several times, but it's writhing panic broke her grasp. The weight of this dog was likely some mid range of her own, heavier still in liters of water.

Anna had her grip this time and a considerable portion of it's hair, but just as she managed to gather the animal to her breast, it pushed fiercely from her chest, the icy rock she stood on, slick as her foothold gave way. Anna's head struck a boulder and water, ice and snow were blood red. As Peshtigo leapt bounding towards

Anna, he fell through her and beneath her lay a young man. The winds rose in sunders of fury and cracking voiced beyond the over laden oak, icicles crossing their fervent lanterns of morning, fell just feet from Anna. The acorn fruit jettisoned in every sway of projection. The hound reaching the range of branches found it's shore, Peshtigo rose from the water, Anna in his arms. Tao he thought, Tao, has given my fashion for such purpose, but delight was not near him! Tao please help me, the hour is, I must get Anna home, I'm naked!

Peshtigo was aware that people conceal their bodies, he had never seen the skin beneath their clothing, he knew he could not bring Anna to her door in such condition. Tao I need clothes, instantly he remembered the shirt and overalls that hung in the shed at the edge of Anna's house, and he began sprinting for it. He placed Anna on the hardback chair near the wooden wall and began dressing quickly! The bottoms frustrated him, time was urgent, and the links of the overall straps confused him. Tao come, I require you now! What are the words I need to speak? Tao!

Tao came in human visage, and in the maxims of paradise, all languages are known. Peshtigo come here, Tao was standing behind, her hand behind Anna's head, a kiss to her forehead. She buckled the metal hooks to the buttons of blue cotton vest, Peshtigo put on the rubber boots! Remember and say these words...this girl fell in the river, she slipped on the ice trying to help a dog, she hit her head on the rocks. Do you know where she belongs, help her! Repeat it and I will give you understanding and knowledge. At that she reached for a bucket, filling it at the basin and threw the water over Peshtigo twice, you must appear wet, if you saved her from the river! A rabbit knows such cunning. Go Peshtigo, then meet me by your hut.

Peshtigo ran to door, hammering a hand in panic, Elizabeth answered and began screaming, Dan come here. Peshtigo spoke the words Tao was given, within the frame of a minute, Anna was lying in the lap of her mother, in the back of an automobile, as it raced from view!

Peshtigo jumped the fence and forced his stride to

Tao, breathless he began to cry. Tao had remained in her current image, and held Peshtigo to her. He cried first of sorrow and part of grief, he wept for his tears, he sealed them for a time in his fears! What must I do to save Anna, Tao I need and wish more than words for my friend. It was then he realized he was speaking, he kissed Tao's shoulder, where her wings might have been, a wreath ring of sparking roses shivered in spheres around his chest. Tao lifted Peshtigo's chin and kissed his lips, here is your completion Naphtali, my kiss gives you words, triplets and stanzas sanction through the textures between us! Press love from hierarchies, build and liberate your various kingdoms, today become your dreams!

A stillness widen in the quiet, beautiful and speechless was the tower. You will need a human name, I will name you as your mother, Brent I think, Brent Ferrell Tappen. It is your title among people, not for Quije, and not between you and I. In her hand appeared a golden gift, a pen with capping rubies, at either end, and a small slip of faint orchid paper, on which she wrote his name. Tao placed both in his top pocket, follow the lines of writing until you script them as

formally as I have. There will be evenings on your journey, where I will teach you to read and write, praise will rise over your sleep! The pen is from your mother Naphtali, the ink is from the rivers of her heart, it cannot end and will not dry, she asked me to give it to you with these words...you are the pride of my sacrifice, my abacus of love upon the earth. Peshtigo was delighted and wept overwhelmed. Offer her this moment of loving reconciliation and provide her my gratitude!

Peshtigo noticed only her eyes, he knew now that thyme and Cedars, frictions in the pipe of leaves she had dropped, were but embers that origami through love. Sit closer to my ribs, as I mention your quest of travail. Find the courage you need in Calla, he is rarely afraid. my choice has changed, Tin Spear will be required by the flock. Actions maneuver events and outcomes Naphtali, Zaaït will go with you, she houses to the moon and the night, she follows the byways of the stars, she is wise, your path hopes in wisdom, both are graceful to their penchants.

Troubles begin at the lake, it is a lake of monikers, it is called the lake of Artemus, the marshland of hand and fingers, lake of appendages, and if the carriages of wind should choose to buffet, it becomes the lake of octaves, the lake of orphans. It plucks the harp, passing over fennel herbs of song, hymns the nor'easters seeks from sorrel. If a large bass should spring from the waters to slap its fins upon your toes, I and the Elms may wonder if your seeing is slate bound, focus and rake the foregrounds for signals.

Tao you've denied a providence among men, yet I sit with you as a woman, we pause sharing our humanity, how can this be? You are a bridge Naphtali, the Quije have drifted for want of a guide, you were meant for that mission, this is what I advised your mother, at the time of that mournful plan. Anna interfered, as I said, actions maneuver events, there is a tension between sky and ground. Kindness must be flexible, roads have turns, those born from this crust of sod have powerful wills, often creatures who are not amendable, they are of dense rock and soft water. Peshtigo asked, then how shall I lead the Quije in this form. This gift of transition is temporary, the times impermanent, you will have the

hours adequate, to fill up your joys and favor your hopes.

Though you will desire such, you are not to marry Anna, and Naphtali it is extremely difficult to be human! They are given keenest keys to a universe of knowledge, but so often remain ignorant of the quotients they possess. Peoples are the back and forth, of past and future, often convinced or confused that was... is, and the future preconditioned, anchored by fates of joy or sorrow, depending on individual experience. They often arbitrary in violence and tacit among ghosts! I think you will find the complications far more daunting than we entities of simpler life. So often they aspire and expire elsewhere, rather than remaining clear in the present. Anna will marry another and you will wish to rejoin your clan.

I'm going to mine, I family pleased among the warblers, I humble happily in flight! It is safe for you to sleep in the shed for a time, but you must leave on third morning. Leave before the sun consumes it's summations aboard the eyes, I will join you among the Quije. Chose anything in the shed you think might help you on the

journey. The door to the house was left unlocked in the rush, go in and gather a parcel of food and a canteen of water. If you remember, Anna has a jar where she places paper and coins, you will need that as well. Peshtigo troubled and asked Tao, these things do not belong to me, how is it right to take these things from Anna and her family? Tao brimmed and gleamed, a rabbit with honor, a beast with understanding. In this instance there is no other option, what you are taking is meant for Anna's revival and dearest Naphtali, you will need a coat!

Chapter Six

Honey in the water, syrup in the well!

Peshtigo stood still, his shadow lay over his tiny hut, he smiled as he remembered pestering Anna by the foot, as she toiled for his safety. It felt a thorn to him, as the bee she'd remedied, courage entered Peshtigo and a benediction of determination bound through him. He left with a dip and a bell ring, for Anna's home. Inside he selected food from the cold store where Elizabeth keep the greens, he took bread, for he had wondered over it in times when Anna forbade him from eating, he emptied the jar of cookies for equal reason. There were three coats on hooks by the front entry, he took the frock of Daniel, only because it fit. In Anna's room he collected the coin and paper, placed in his pocket, but he took a favorite book, Anna so often read beside him.

He went to the shed to remain his trio of days, he

slept on top a table made of planks of tulip wood, and in daylight fetched through the items shelved there. In the far corner was a hand cranked cement mixer, with an old blue emblem on a base of gray paint, what is this he thought, and often what is that, none of it seemed native, it worked on him for an instance, people require much, his troubling was that he was one of them and he felt less than free in such inklings.

He came upon a wooden box with scrolls of flower carved sides, back and front, his recollections brought forward his first mirage of Anna, lifting him from inside his felled trunk. He thought the engravings beautiful, and of a quality that exceeded the insect and the worm! He lifted it with pleasure and searched its contents for viable purposes that might aid his travels. The shed was full of sharp things that cut, in the box Peshtigo found a pocket knife of wood and steel, with a clean blade that sprang open. There was also a small silver orb, the casing creased with lines and curves, what is the meaning he wondered, other than it's shape? He pressed his finger to the button and the ring opened, he'd seen it's image

before, in the book he'd placed in his pocket. He shifted through the pages and found it's crest, the writing below mentioned, "Don't forget to compass the day" , Peshtigo was delighted, and placed knife and compass in his pocket, sure the later was a signal, on his course to Anna.

The triune of days found their end, and Peshtigo left to join his warren. He considered his legs, at moments feeling a certain grief, for his missing intimacy with the grass, and the perfume, that is soil. He began thinking of containers in reference to his freshman configuration. The mallow in it's hem of garlands, graven hollows imaging Anna's box. The brace of round stones where he nestled in a Rabbit's lost night. Ovals and rivulets where water caps it's variegations, contained by shore. The fresh green and precious metallic, that ore inside the caterpillar's kiss, and the jubilee of casings that fascinate dearest Tao. He felt a strange pull, that was weeping for the case that shielded Anna, broken and awry. He longed to see and hoped deeply for his providence family, for his house had now found it's tears!

Peshtigo arrived to find Tao already present with the tribe, offering a speech of impressions, to the long eared hares in attendance. It is a form of language familiar to most species, a solely visible form of communication, a delightful expression of images, at once easy to determine and understand.

Tao was perched upon a stone, whose shape seemed very improbable. It implied to present a depiction similar to an eggplant, upside down and leaning in it's stem, yet bellowing at the top, which would be it's bottom. Tao was there lofting human impetus, but in diminutive portion. A kind of pixie in faint tints of chartreuse and frail pink, colors which comfort cottontails in musing favorite flowers and fruits.

Good morning Brent, I see you are up early, before the night opens wide, it's revealing cloak to morning! This day Tao, I am my tears. Her minutia become sullen, was it as you'd hoped? No, I had always thought of tears as a rain that celebrates each being it's thirst, a joyful and exuberant letting of delight, but these siphoned after me, to deeply drain my spirit, I carry the

weight of my friend.

I was discussing with Zait and Calla, what must trammel the lake of orphans, each wisdom of its capers and tines. Peshtigo knew she meant the body of water, that could not manage it's names. Tao, what is it about this wetland, that it is forever troubling over its purpose? Water be water, why does it masquerade in such a host of names?

Sit down beside me Brent, you have a quantity of titles yourself. Life has many christenings, yet variety is a unit of one. It's a march for frogs, during the harvest of cranberries, as they leap this groundling sun, across it's bog of affectations. Tao sampled hieroglyphs, to the minds eye of each attending creature. The lake underneath the ravens sight, looks like an ancient glyph of sol, a round center with seven curving rays, that wash between the sod. Some who examine it in summer, find light in these leaders, they ideal, to the fire's host of midday. Others in the winter world, find but limbo, bleak and haunting, sorrowful as a foundling child, grief as a newborn, whose hair has already grayed.

*There is an man that wizens wheeze beneath the snow,
cares can be heard humming! Bjorn, Ann's father, comes
from a north land of fjords, he thought the man a hagfish
in it's fury of nets. One given in the melancholy breed of
the Irish, found in it, the forcing breath of beautiful
Uilleann pipes. It is cursive drawn from winter's
knapsack, and carries Gladstone bag, it's May songs.
never ponder tempos Naphtali, the lake has it's culture
songs. Each severance is different, in the summer it houses
seven joys, in winter it becomes an ensemble, in margins
of gryphons. You will be traveling the latter!*

*At this a number of rabbits, presented an opportune
to back pedal, to white flag their concealments in thatches
of rye. Zaaït was not perplexed, and Calla did not flex to
humility. Tao in the mean time was constructing some
form of nest, plaiting kernels of fescue, she had beside her:
I will plant a Mangrove tree, it will coal to shine the art
of moons, glean your foot to target, through the night
without direction!*

Peshtigo spoke up, Tao, you implicate difficulty,

impasse and travail on this journey, what are we facing? The incendiaries of the charcoal moons, the flinching embers in guiding guise of the Mangrove, will the sparking be beside us, through every part of this course? Tao motioned for the three to gather beside her, dismissing the clan to normal occupations of morning habit.

It is a war in which you are the participants, but not in humanities sense of that structure. Battlefields and battlements that Trojan among men, begin in greed and end in bloodshed. Men have often labeled woman as hysterical, it is their means of demeaning feminine interests and passions. From the beginning men have been taught to disengage emotions, as a means of strength and courage, but feelings can be devastating, it is a bravery kept by women! They attempt to mark such attributes as weakness, yet it is fear and jealousy that assume that comparison. No land on earth consummates hysteria and the hysterical proximation, predominant in males, more than conflicts that mitigate the violence and carnage. History has witnessed this

testimony to the power, a dominance men seek in such relationships. Nurture, love, gentleness, ardor, romance, and the beautiful emanations where the base of women reside, men propaganda as feminine failings.

Of their own deeds, they surmise to back pat domination over others, but this, by fact, is a theft of independent beings, to places they deem or fashion beneath their foot. Inordinate praise is the position given, to a carnage that is seeking possession...of land, wealth, opportune or substance. They bring glory, pride, and honor to death, beyond the skulls of innocence, medals cling to their chests, bitter decorations over hearts. The invaders come, the heroes march, in distortions of biology, the rigid and rigorous, are imprisoned in preoccupations with flesh and meaning. Good men are called to defend aggressions, and by death or sorrow, the fleets of light, faith and the youth of mercies lost. Rise woman, demand an end to this, allow no more this consumption of your children, for kingdoms built upon their bones! Be no more, that monotone of history, no longer scribe through, as a gender, granted mere

monotony! As long as men only, ask and answer all questions, their failings of the ages, will continue to peer over the future! History is an inscription that traditions modern thought, early, meager, infantile ideals premising, the ignorance of bronze pillars, and altered decks of blueschist or marble, impeachments of unleavened tilts. The sovereignty that oversees this globe, does so in the dark, navigating in half populous, both in thinking and invention.

The texts of their religions, voice only the words of men and there they rob! Woman genesis life, no other! The anatomy of men is given to them, by the first and principal body of women, the genetic dot and dash language fully, only in the gnomes of the lass.

I am not speaking of such barbarism of appetites, your struggles are found in complexities of seasonal temperaments, battalions rock face and imposing. Habitations which archer, Mistral, the virulent winds of February, water that sutures, so none may drink. You will Calvary with self, conflict be your tent! Rabbit

*and man will wolf between each other, I ask and sample,
you must find love!*

*Tao had finished her basketry, a two sided affair of
identical pouches, and a brace of vines that went upward,
around and straight down to mid chest. She handed this
to Peshtigo proclaiming, you will require this apparatus.
Fit this over your neck, there will be times you must
carry Zaaït and Calla, she looked at both and said,
when fitted here be still! Zaaït continued to edible from
the forage undergrowth, Calla took on a worried crease
of forehead.*

*Today is your birthday Naphtali, I have presents for
your acreage! They are items you failed to harvest from
the Anna's box, with your eyes that marvel beauty, I
was surprised you missed this. Tao placed an ornate,
silver vesta in Brent's hand, the edging folded with
etching leaves, a pair of facing doves, carrying equal ides
in their talons, and a heart beneath. It's very old, open
it, inside was a cluster of matches... take one out my
friend, strike it across the grid on the bottom. Brent did*

as she asked, and the head burst into fire, but Peshtigo was present, in awe of it's magic. Tao chuckled and piped, old silver, fresh matches, I see both these notions abide in you!

What's it's for Tao? You will need this for warmth, gather dry brush, twigs and wood, ignite the scrabble first, the flames will burn in turn, the twigs and timber on top. Like Anna, find stones to circle and contain the flames before you light it, they will hold it's hearth heat. Brent thanked Tao, placing her gift in his pocket. Not yet Naphtali, you missed these as well, so she settled the offerings with a woolen hat, scarf and a pair of deerskin gloves. They were unusual, because both the left and right, had a lovely snap pocket sewn in, just between the knuckles and the wrist, an envelope for small pieces, trinkets and passages.

Tao tip-toed about her musings. The lands where soft skies are refined, inhabitants call these kingdoms the windlass of fluctuating serendipity. It's wisdom is freely ample to import, every thought of species is imparted, one

*to another, the mind of Oryx, mixes with the pedigrees of
of dragonflies. The roots of the baobab, cypher the
coneflowers and the dogbane, and so the hedgerow
tenders back. The apples of Ein Shemer, Jonathan and
Twenty ounce, caravan to exchange each nuance of
particular hue, sharing with those variegations of
humanity. The jackal and lizard priest the carols of
morning doves. This is why we have the liberty to
borrow and alter each other, if need be, to bring the world
to one ideal, separations will one day, tie their ends!*

Chapter Seven

All champion, for life is a struggle of organic pace.

Tao became silent, the serene patron fell sullen. You will have only twelve mornings to accommodate this journey, the bravado of those rations will be steep! What you do not accomplish on Monday, will be made up Tuesday, for need will be felt by rush. The lake of orphans harrows in it's loss, don't remain confused by it, time is constructed here, through it losses tempo. Mark the landscape, just as the sun rises, fellow each new rise.

The loyal war is, be it brisk or stumble, always with self, keep the halberd of kindness, read first the diaries of each enemy, explore them, and vagrant distant observations of inner views, for the lake of Artemus asks only questions, it can not itself answer. Answer you must these teachings, or every formal hope will succumb! I have laced the lands of guile and guise, with soft impressions of my footprints. Begin at the candling hour,

*I will not be with you, it is up to you to find my path.
Zaait and Calla will rest in the gulch of grasses, on the
twelfth day Naphtali, you must find Anna on your own.
There is an iron wall with an alloy plaque, the burr oaks
serve as blinders, you must find the pair that have fallen
and enter that gap of fencing. When you see Anna, I
will be the image beside you!*

*Tao then rose in fashion, this time in silver work, on
winged slivers, patient to perimeters of white roses and
black thorns, and from a stamen center, the appellate of
light, bannered the visitations of every brand of flower,
thoughtful hope may garden. From there and
furthermore, came the ornamental cope, diffusing embers
of butterflies, flares of Swans and Cockerels, a concourse
of birds in glittering flight! Tao's headdress of round,
slow gyrations, began singing the echoes of a distant
gramophone, raise wealth, Naphtali, coffer plenty! High
be the water, sky be the falls!*

*Peshtigo was fearful of this transaction with fate and
countryside, leaving familiar home and in new temple.*

Despite the warm clothing he felt cold and decided to sleep beside his hutch, and retrieve the blanket Anna had given him. How will Anna know me, how can she believe my apparition, I am become the magic of gold, black and pensive green, from caterpillars who ground low, I function now as one with wings. He found a fascination of glory in pairings he considered, the fireflies and the matches of red haired flames and white bonnets. He eventually fell into sleep, with it's outer regions and lands of peculiar dreams. These visions grail differently between rabbit and man, humanity was far more troubling!

Augmentation's preach in numbers, Salamanders who reach the peach bark with a color different from weed. The woodlands change clothes, spring and autumn, but the why is for reason, the bareback, naked winter. Water being the ultimate chameleon, it gave chase to the incarcerations of Tao. Peshtigo had once thought the cascades in all their variables, the most potent and powerful of migratory hosts, until he understood their submission to climates. Showers when warm, hail on

edges of April and October, ice in streams of late fall, winter making celebratory ornaments, measured for the season, when home varies the intricate geometry of abiding hearts.

Peshtigo was pleased by seeds, and amused by pulp. His delights bounced considerably over the minuscule portion of mustard seeds, and he had developed an aptitude for carving walnut and pecan caravans with his teeth. Anna however, made boxes of acorns, placing his grassy food pellets inside, for him to scavenge. She gently removed the crowns, and cut the tops of the nuggets, carefully cleaning away the nut inside. She then affixed a cork sphere to the crowns, measuring the vessel doors for proper gauge, waxing each to sheen, her thoughts he dreamed, were full of lovely trinkets. How well he become full in idle hours, weaving beads of dripping red and black raspberries, purple bushing of eager plums, in reckonings most Tao-ish.

Tonight his dreamscapes entered menacing overtures of illusive animals, grappling in strange howls. His beloved hut, a eerie cave of birds, which nautilus upside

*down, shrieking of an anatomy, inhabited by echoes.
Every concordance of soil, was made rigid rock,
amendment's issuing, fictional attitudes most unfriendly.
The moon was not still, it juddered onerously, tension in
the night sky, premonitions where the stars mitigated
wildly, some summons of warning! The chill was
gossamer, it leaked between his skin and coat! Run
Peshtigo, to your past, flee forward, the stray foot of
man, enormity gathers, throne's to hand!*

*Peshtigo woke early, he rang his tiny bell over the
hut Anna had built, and whispered, I will bring you
home to me. He left to join Zaaït and Calla, keeping his
eyes on the horizon so he might track the sun. He
thought of the human name Tao had given him, he felt at
odds with it, Anna had named him better, he thought,
and began walking faster, joyful with the anticipation of
seeing her again!*

*Zaaït and Calla were ready at the fence, morning
imagination fresh for adventure, and so the first steps
began. Z and C ran ahead, Peshtigo chased after them
afraid of losing track of their whereabouts, but he
inevitably found them foraging or resting flat to the*

ground, and began to relax. They left the sight of Liffen hill, crossing farmland and pasture, they were following a distant crag of rock that had pierced the crease of the mornings new sun. By evening the rock had transitioned, becoming an imposing tower, and a wall of cliffs narrowed the horizon before them.

Calla yielded the somewhat fearful question readily, where will be our meal, Zaaït and I can't jump this! Peshtigo captured this beautiful, ethereal morass of ever anxious thought, time to ride in your buckets he said, to that Calla tapped an independent foot. A north-west wind began folding the various grama, yellow-eyed grass and sorghum, canes of woolly beard began toppling, wild drafts set on origami. They found shelter in the cornice of a leeward hill, settling in behind a brake of rosewoods. Peshtigo was ready to build a fire!

He gathered rock at the tumbled toes, at the base of the hill, leaves, grass, twigs, and forsaken limbs covered now in mosses of pale green raffia. The fire began it's

magic with long spirals of smoke, Z and C were not enchanted as it seemed the smoke was intent on trailing their noses. The wind was a gyration, regardless of their position, it would beckon upon them, leaving Peshtigo fireside, most pleasantly struck by his fascinations.

At some point, the tinder was consumed and the smoke tempered, Zaait and Calla drew in their apprehensions, and though still somewhat wary, they eventually settled in beneath Peshtigo's long coat. Sleep was short but efficient, waking as fire waned and the North winds measured it's boisterous rustles through the trees. They took breakfast, silently idling in procrastination, as they awaited the sun. It rose again behind it's granite pillar. As they reached the cliffs within an hour, the troubles began. They had been walking flat lands, that lead them to a lower ledge of stone, that was cut through by a wide river. Peshtigo perceived what his hare friends did not, the river was endless and the rock invincible. He had begun to reason with a rather muscular exercise of fear. He was at heart a ground creature, but looking down he felt a tethering sense of

height. A mirage of sensations, short precipices of time, which mirrored a buffering forward, he was certain he was falling.

Tao he thought, this isn't possible for me, and immediately remembered Tao's assertion that she would not be with him through this journey. Calla and Zaaït had noses to the dry grasses, looking for anything to nibble, that held even the smallest content of edible green. Peshtigo thought they were tormented, hiding from same the horrors that consumed him, his thoughts were loud in their language, and they bolted with the terror he announced. We will fall, there is no way down, why has Tao brought us here, there is nothing we can do!

His horror was raising a mistrust of her, what if her kindness was the illusion, and her identity was evil, leading each of them to death? He wondered why he trusted her apparitions. Immediately he was angry with himself for being hypnotized by every creature or magic anomaly, and every gullible imagination, he had ever worshipped. His human body became a sorcerer of

powerful torment, Tao has beguiled my form! He mourned for his plainly vessel, the smaller, simpler means that was his birth. I was rabbit born, I wished myself away, I cursed myself in idols of fascination and every form of envy, Tao has disparaged me by my own volition.

Calla was unmoved by Peshtigo's vigilant remunerations, Zaaït was dismayed, and threw the idea of a fermenting pear at his feet. You are to lead us, and your chewing the sap of putrid fruit with the ants!

Peshtigo turned on Zaaït, how is it that you are aware of that exhibition, Tao gave to me, are you part of my illusions as well? Zaaït scoffed an ear at him, most of us have witnessed that lesson, it's long been one of Tao's favorites, your not the only being given to jealous summations. Stop speaking apprehensions, and find the answer, Tao promised a sign!

Peshtigo dropped down, legs folded in the grass and began to cry. The cloudburst he wrangled with

overwhelmed him, he folded his posture inward and lay on his side, the avenues that journeyed his tears, made him small, he shrunk to minutiae, against the span's of his sorrow. He cushioned the comfort of the nest where he was born, the kissing of his mother, remembering each sibling nestle in the abide of hopeful peace. He began quivering at this loss, the smallest push of Shepard's feet, that once tapped against his chest, and the tightly interwoven tuck of noses, beneath ears and chins of sleep. A lonely wall of barring impasse, between the moment of once joyful belonging, and the monumental sounds in a field of small horror; his heart memories of many, and the silks of love, he now breast in solitude. The long wish for means to express his cluster of vacancies, had placed in him finally, the magic of rivers, alas he had found his waterways.

Calla understand somehow, Peshtigo's wilderness of suffering, he pressed his body close and whispered just below the collar of his jacket, remember Anna! The motion of grief silenced the forlorn billows of Peshtigo's

chest. Find courage Peshtigo, we are losing time, make brave your soulmate, we must find Anna.

Peshtigo held Calla and sat up, Calla allowed this only briefly, let's go to the cliffs, and ignore the distances, seek the answer. The light of morning was increasing, the bright, golden hues, worked summonings of bravery, as Peshtigo inquired the lengths of stone. Zaaït lifted her scans by the heels of her hind feet, she saw something! Calla, Peshtigo come here, I see the way! Look at the ledges of rock, a staircase of outcrops, each crowned with with a small pebbles their polish glows in the light! Yes Zaaït, it's like Tao's strands, Peshtigo reached to the sun and circled twice a joyful spin, and bent down to kiss Zaaït.

They made their way through the rushes and the brakes, a pebble beckoned the first step. Peshtigo focused only on the stone, thinking of trail of gold stitches that had gathered him through the hours, I look at nothing else but this house of the butterflies. It's time for you to enter the

baskets, he placed them on the ground, climb in, Zaaït jumped and pressed bottom, Calla required a push of encouragement. I'll be brave if you will, lay here like my jacket, tiny waves of apprehensions could be seen just below Calla's skin.

Peshtigo sat down and centered himself, kicking the brilliant rock away so he would not step on it and loose footing, thinking of Tao's vanishing string as she lowered and ascended. Tao forgive me he spoke within, then anchored his grip, holding couplets of hard protrusions, leaning into the granite face, assaying his next footfall.

All progressed nicely until the descent was perhaps, ten feet from the ground, Calla's patience, all the same, was trembling with apprehensions, he had quite enough of this dependency, he didn't warrant his future to straw buckets, or his being to other hands. He began circling inside his cradle, Zaaït was juggling with Calla's turmoil, and Peshtigo was off balance for his next stone passage. He missed brushing aside Tao's bearing rock, his boot landing on the tutelage, as the side of the heel

weighted in, the highlighted pebble slipped and fell to creek bank, Peshtigo and his burden went with it!

Calla catapulted from his trolley with a jettisoned leap of at least ten or fifteen feet, and ran so fiercely, he created a fox wind behind him. Zaaït tumbled several times, ending her tumult in repose, sat upright with integrity and preened her foot. After her brief curtsy to inspection, she wandered over to Peshtigo, he was moaning in English, but Zaaït understood the murmurs anyway, and began licking his ear to preen away his obvious injuries.

Peshtigo shrieked in Calla's direction, ignored for the first triplets, come back! Finally Calla gave heed, but conceded by the tone, he was in scorn for his breeches! He returned much slower, than he left! Peshtigo did not bother to cajole his animus. Look at me, my hands scraped to the bottom like mowed weeds, and I've sprained, or who knows, broken my ankle. A fine course you've blemished with your dereliction. I want you to enter that basket with your free heart and leave the same way, repeat this until it settles in you, that I am as

hopelessly dependent on you, as you are on me and that weaving of Tao's. Calla had approached Peshtigo with a rigid countenance, ears beside his hunches and whispers immobile, his stance was none the better after his rebuke!

Peshtigo was awry with frustration. I have to climb the other side of this gulch, with these hands, and that foot, I see no means of moving forward with this quest! Zaaait, Calla, find a niche in this cliff, where we might break breeze. Peshtigo stood up, only to sit down again, this is over, I can't reach Anna like this! He felt that hovering cloud of tears again, the kind of cloud that indicates approach, but just can't seem to dribble. Just then Peshtigo saw a line of winter wizen blackberry bushes, his eye fell on a bee with only a single wing, moving in puffs of airing, hanging from a thistle of some former season. Tao had left her leaving for this moment, and Peshtigo understood the prompt. There are scuffs in the journey, places we must free or impale. Every travel is rugged along the path, decisions of free speech we gathered from the soul. When the ears are cuffed and the

eyes full of bitter likening, we continue, if nobility exists for impermanent creatures, it is in these going's of hard sounds, of wood striking the frozen sods, that is the gala where mortals meet up with gods, in gracious portals of tenacity. Peshtigo perceived a whisper, there is no aside or around, the living will, no quittance of love, or way beyond the forward motions of responsibility, it may be anything, but not remittance. Match might with the struggle and go on.

For Peshtigo the night was a moaning, his thoughts were full of falling questions his foot brought up, frequent defeated arguments of pain, while his thoughts built but thunderstorms of hopelessness, dark voids of colorless doubt, in cloudburst rains that hovered inside him. This wood in the night fire scattered it's hiss of embers, for Peshtigo the interweaving sparks became lightening in his private sky, kindling sighs of greenwood exchanging ideation's with the billowing chest of broken-hearted Cirrus's, he slept among inhaling clouds, and carols of water snakes mentioned in the cinders. In the Sirius

latitudes where starlight predators hide, in the end the pratfalls of that chaffed from orange glow of cottonwood, brought him only the karat threads of Tao.

By morning the red ground was covered in delicate shapes of eider frost, the art nouveau of minute feathers and fronds. He thought he knew the meaning of the insect and the solitary wing, in yesterday's sentimental conversation with the blackberry bush, his journey would falter by one impounded wing. He knew instead it addressed a rebuke, he had wounded Calla with his tongue, tearing a wing from his jovial heart, joys removed in clip of flight. He had severed harmony in the heartfelt risk of his companions, Tao was not happy!

He looked at Zaaït and Calla, tiny legs on a long length of hard travel. He reached inside his rucksack and brought out a hand full of greens he carried, and stood to wake his friends with simple pleasures. He was surprised his ankle was not particularly sore, but inflexible and battered in the muscles was meaning. He sat between Calla and Zaaït, and laid his culinary gardens beside

their noses, how quickly amid their sleep, did they twitch to the fresh ideals that palate spring gardens.

Their glistening eyes opened in disbelief, confusing the offering with the idols of their dreams. Peshtigo reached forward to rub behind Calla's ears, Calla stiffened with the premise, but settled quickly when the touch carried only tenderness. He made the same offering to Zaaït, and the gully's of his wall-cloud let go. Forgive me Calla for the bruising stones I threw at you with words, and for missing your kindness Zaaït in my harriers of stress, I'm grateful you are here with me, with that Peshtigo buried his head in his jacket, but it held no shelter from the deluge, just a silver lining as the sun rose.

Peshtigo made note of the line of natural markers they must follow on the days junkets, and they headed for the river. Just upstream in the dawning light was an arch of tangled branches lodged in the stones of a stepping path, a school of golden fishes, weaving swimmers of beacon signals through the beautiful bridge of thatch. Peshtigo removed his boot and sock, and placed his foot

in the winter water, a short time later he was scaling the cliff face, leaving behind him, his false fears of night.

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Chapter 8

Woodlands, rouge lanterns and runes.

Having accomplished the climb upward, putting the perils of the spillway and crevasse behind them, they found themselves in warmer sunshine, in a vast meadow. The labors of last summer had famished all ideas of beforehand color; once of green or was of flowers, the mead was now a common tan. The vista assigned no assuagement of quiet beige in remission, no easing subtlety temperate to verdigris. Peshtigo removed his jacket, spreading it over the bedstraw of ghost-weed and Black-eyed Susan, it was time to rest. Making a pillow of his parcel after sore handled maneuvers in retrieving his blanket, he noticed a unison of collapsed, exhausted sunflowers nearby. He took Tao's basket and his knife intent on collecting a bounty of seeds. He broke open a few seeds still fresh, remembering his home and his first shelter. It was a wait for time, a delightful genuflect of late autumn, that brought the weight of heads sunder, to

heights he might manage. He removed the nine flowers brushing them off, placed them in the basket and returned to find Zaaït and Calla caviling fast foot at his pack. Rabbits or not, guilt was seen in those mischievous eyes of Black Maria. Shins and hind legs to the forefront in moving backwards. Searching sweet pink plantains for a feast are we, Peshtigo broke out in chortle. Giving each a globe of tasty forage, he shared a few seeds and the three nestled close, in the columbines of dreams.

The march distanced less certain, Peshtigo being unable to scour the horizon for landmarks. A forest was ahead, captions of sunlight making shifting notations across the crowns of the trees. Only the occasional brace of light patterned the glen, the shape of space, the timber shadow, left but a dark face on the horizon, delineating density in numerical shades of dull gray. Peshtigo thought this particular woods, or the trees therein, gave the impression of broccoli, how ever enormous the vegetable be, the stalks and the high branches of coronation, seemed symmetrically, a given.

They entered the forest cautiously, there was a homestead several hundred yards to the right, a stone fence separating the grove from groomed land. There was a spiritual accommodation inherent to this arboretum, so palpable, it was felt by sight, a hunger, perhaps only the stomach might read, a grasping hold but the hand may discern, disengage or discipline! Zaaït and Calla were aware of this, Peshtigo alert. It seemed to emit time, it was poised on the bones of the first universe, stars that had grown their moss. Polaris, who had stumbled ancient the endless nights, found the blue malachite in his possession, couldn't frame nor push more light, without stirring the skies, for wicks of dust.

Effigies found hollows in the oaks, broodmares raised high in the manes of the willows, uncertain stories whose papers had rooted to the rooks. The hour of the clocks differed, with inklings and incantations of tribes and tribesmen who walked here, both the reed shoe and fine cloth, membered the parades of cultures whose transitions ruled the summer solstice, all young for a season, yet left

little remains, for the matriarch tree. Peshtigo believed he could see this long stand of distance cultures, past by him in groups of eight, the tunic of beast, covering the hide of man. Fabric cultures died in habiliments, their identities in lines of bright dyes, Indian paint brush, in notes of marigolds. Violent warriors with lace collars, velvets beside their blood. This land has seen too much, he thought, we name here as well, this atlas.

Suddenly, there were voices approaching, and the three moved quickly into hiding. A man and women rounded the fence, a tray in hand. They placed it as an offering on the needles of the forest floor, and moved a bit further. A small bud of fire appeared at the end of a long match stick, he lite a candle at the base of a wide, elongated rouge lantern, Peshtigo was again adrift in fascinations of fireflies! The couple proceeded along the rails, making rubies of crepe paper lanterns, whose glow dressed the frocks of White Aspens. The wonderful specters of luminous dance, moving petticoats in ballrooms of the forest floor. A fresh plait of fire was made, and carried to mid point, a white dove soirée,

began its beams, in gliders of featherless traipse and swathe's trim of tail plumes.

In succession, a math of creatures were ignited in this night of lambency and wax. Even the winds found manual, to come forward from every position, whispering and joining their praises to this beautiful serendipity, and amphibians and animals feasted full of delicate, rare remedies of pleasure, from the tray made for their coming.


The wick of an otter, the scent of salmon, a paper plum, and the raccoons that banded by the platter! Calla sneezed, but no one noticed, there was a song for the singing... love was made by one, the sum of all is single, welcome every trespass, all is new before me. Let every seal be broken, love be open sky.

The nightjars, northern saw-whet owls and Chuck-wills-widow, were not without their choirs of muniment, jotting calls of minute books, that ledgered above the celebration. Clearly this practice was not uncommon, all around this edge of earth, a wide room was made for it.

Peshtigo esteemed the inventiveness, making marginal notes in his daybook of imagination.

The festivities closed and the pair who composed the gala, quietly went home. There was a peculiar half circle of stones nearby, Peshtigo's, Zaaït and Calla took refuge inside, but only after a brief inspection of the leavings laid to the ground, before the tray was taken. Peshtigo found a russet apple and yellow pear, C and Z fed on kale parsley and shallots, plump with a night like no other.

Having seen the prey birds however, Peshtigo was apprehensive about closing watch over his fellows. He decided that Calla and Zaaït must sleep inside his jacket, both had flinched at the sight, and Peshtigo remembered his fears from a long ago night! The ground was not level, providing a certain chagrin to the slumbering, hoping to accommodate Peshtigo's discontent movements, by dawn the two rabbits were ready to leave their quilted tent. Peshtigo noticed etchings carved in a few rocks, he knew by Anna's books this was some form of writing. He moved closer and pressed his fingers into

the script, in soothing over the letters it was as if each spoke its meaning, not with oration but with images that beset his thoughts. Wanderers with blistered feet , predilections of suffering, and of stomachs thin. A priestly guide of waterways, fraught only in confusion. Peshtigo knew this referenced the lake of orphans, he withdrew his hand before fear braved to capture him.


Something whitish caught his eyes, a stub of buried relic, a tiny square of ivory, depictions of six animals carved and stained on every side. One was a rabbit, he placed the lost antiquity in his pocket. The sun had made its rising, Peshtigo made reference its markers, it was time to leave this beautiful pause of enchantments, and bring his heart, yet closer to Anna.

While departing Peshtigo noticed the humble man of the cottage, carrying the tray, he stopped at the broad wall placing several bowls of berries on the soft lichened alter. Peshtigo provided one to his fellowship wanderers, observing the carriage of the bright trolly of upward sun. The fragrance of light was potent, warming the perfume

of old leaves and moist schist, earthen aria's of delicate scent. Calla asked Peshtigo in a rabbit way, how many in the caption of man practice such loving husbandry among us, and how might we differentiate? With caution I think, with observation, the heartbeats of all inclination desire to lean into love. Some fail for other courses inopportune prompts, fear, anger, might consume them by eager distractions. Some believe the earth entire is here for their consumption, they do not sanction the word us, they surmise only the I of their being. They fail to embrace the generous, bountiful beauty, love's millionth kind of singularity. For the most part we are not even food, we are a perverse adventure of power, dominance and sport. Insects that pester the comfort of occasions are poisoned Anna said, their annoyances kill the dinner plates of so many, particularly the frog, the lizard, the birds, who rummage the skies more frequent of late, in vain and in hunger. They take the land for purposes, that leave our billions small acres, they can't conceive how they are toppling their lungs in all the trees felled! Pine and sycamore, these are oxygen of the living, our

possible breath. They fail to conceive their self mutilation, or the antiquities the earth has imagined, in birth-pains, to provide us in this age, as sweet spot. Those who live apart from the sparrow, will die beside their ignorance, as they decimate, they betray God to weep alone in silence, and end his purpose.

In the carpet grass love gave for to fragrance our feet, the ebullience of birds to wing us up from burdens, the meek eyed deer where we might assure, the math of snowflakes we might geometry to learn. So many raise hand to references of man made gifts, the heaven work of livened art rejected, elegant animations consumed for lovely dead trinkets. Lord of injured spirit, sad his gifts might not please, the panting palaces of luxurious conception, ornate and functional life, betrayed to for something less. Tao told me many believe in addendums, a extra heaven, a second sky, an earth reset in perfection, but why would those who mire, torment and debilitate, the certitudes of finery on this earth, be let to plunder, and deteriorate yet another?

*We blister the hands that made for us currants and roses,
we sickle through the lords pleasure, asking for putative
purities, while we bruise the battlements of graceful
amour, chipping away this providence of clay feet!
Believing they are the crowning element, the truest, most
melodious glory, they abort nations of species, for use or
space or Davenport. The lord reflects in each creation,
dimmer by the day, they bring his fair face to extinction,
they bite his heart, they consume against his spirit! Use
care Calla, let your encounters speak, friend or foe tell
their actions, but rejoice Calla, for love begins, and love
began, the habitats of the eternal! Practice redemption,
and promenade it's good force!* 

Chapter Nine

The Lake of Orphans

So as they sojourned Peshtigo asked, Zaaít, Calla why did you agree to befriend my burden? Calla spoke up. Along time past, Tin spear and I sought you out, primarily wondering who was the stranger in our meadow? The odor of man engulfed you, we thought better of our welcoming intentions. I was the runt in my litter, always pushed aside or buried underneath, the trampling weight of my siblings. I watched you frequently on my own, I've watched Anna as well, I could sense both love and the lack of it in you! We share the echoes of abandonment either way, I wanted your interest, I hoped for your companionship. I'm very independent Peshtigo, I don't care to feel trapped, nor do I trust in the surety of others. I ran from the basket in a childhood of fears, I came because I'm your friend.

Zaait simply answered duty. I follow Tao, if she asks, I comply happily. I thought perhaps you needed me, I being a rabbit not given to tantrums, and well, considering how you and Calla behave, I though myself Tao's idea of balance. What this trek has determined, is that I require you. There was fire in the woods, the spring I was born, and much of heartfelt memories became only breeze and ash beside me, I became phlegmatic, I put out the heat of my sorrows by becoming cold. I've been most lonely for a long time, I gave myself no belonging, but Tao has chosen to widen my view, to behold what is so lovely beyond the segments of my once damaged observation. I've found joy beside you both, curiosities, questions and prayerful places of great meaning. I'm not troubled on this avenue of wilderness, I believe in this bountiful maneuvering of chicory and soil, I faith Tao, and Peshtigo I trust your hands, turning an eyelash at Calla.

They had walked for some hours past nine, and on to one o'clock, they could see the lake of Artemus before them. What Peshtigo considered first, was the

impediment generated in placing two suns of conflicting measure, that golden ring of primary height, and the orb that had slide sideways on the water. They dozed for awhile until the chill woke them, and quickened pace for the marshland. They arrived near the glooming, a wild nor'easter trilling by it's tongue. It had began to snow, and as soon as ice formed along the edges of lake, the incoming gale lifted the sharp shards, casting all discomfort at Peshtigo's face.

We must surmise shelter, I can't see beyond the snow, it feels as if my eyes are frost! Calla, Zaait, can you see anything, I can lift you up if you are too low? From the hill I saw a grove of trees, Calla mentioned, follow me! They turned east in the whiteout, the voracious wind behind them, an hour on they were in the strand of poplars and evergreens. There was a line of rope Peshtigo picked up by the lake, he tired the ends tightly, to the bases of a pair of dense fir trees, then panicked through his duffle for Anna's blanket. Calla, Zaait, stand on the edges of the blanket, don't let it blow away, I need to find some heavy rocks! The task was

sufficiently easy, and in no time the ends were folded, weighted to the grounds by stones, forming a very low, short tent.

Go inside and burrow the ground, stay beside each other; I need to find more cover for this lightweight enclave. Peshtigo began gathering considerable branches of summation, layering them over the blanket, in hope of blocking not only the wind, but to stabilize the blanket. He crawled inside barely arranging his feet within this novice shelter, closing the corners of the blanket like a door, hemming the housing shawl with a portion of white quartz. It was very small accommodation, but allowed his body heat to generate a degree of warmth. Calla and Zaaït were fully asleep, and Peshtigo took little express in following.

Daybreak was attended as usual, Peshtigo shedding slumber before the hares. An idyllic, pastoral shroud of snow canvased the windward spaces of the branches Peshtigo had placed. The mask of sun slowly moved the veil of night, where the beads of stars found some

provenance of decoration. Peshtigo strove through the snow towards the Lake of orphans, hoping to obtain a course of settlement, fixing frontage for a passage out. The dominance of the wind was readily apparent, the chill demonstrative, rings of waves froze in stance, attending to positions, Peshtigo had not imagined prior: Mushrooms and cornices, lithe and flexible swimmers, fashioned from the waters, nomads of songful scenery artisan winter contorted or conformed. This body of water, with austere folds of feminine hand, wrists where gems glistened and soft ideals of touch performed the mesmeric of romancers, and all the fern ice of maidenhair, combed but gardens across the curving statuettes of waist and shoulders. Peshtigo assembled his notations but saw no means of crossing, he returned and found his friends waiting.

Calla's demeanor was subdued, Zaaït stretched her body, and emitted an elongated sigh, both are weary Peshtigo thought. I've been to the lake, so far I can not determine a path around or across. I don't feel well today, my ankle is aggravated struggling with the snow,

I think we should take the day off and rest and perhaps attempt to determine a potential route of exit. Ears came forward so quickly, each ear on the favored side of proximity collided, they were nestled and sleeping without ruse of discontent!

Peshtigo took a bit of breakfast, before joining the slumber, only to wake later, to find a point of nuisance menacing his hip. For lack of better understanding, the talisman of scrimshaw that was prodding his bone, held no common ground of empathy. The minor stands of intricate incisions fascinated Peshtigo, the vagueness of hue provided him great pleasure. The first image appeared to be a depiction of a ferret, with either a chive or shallot plant, occupying an area, near the base of it's right foot, Peshtigo could not tell which. A tiny branch of wood, in keep of a circle, lay halo around the edible root. Though adorable, Peshtigo, placed no meaning upon it.

The second drawing depicted a marsh and just as Peshtigo had made note at the Lake of orphans, there

were two suns, the true sun and it's facsimile of reflective impression. His wondering held poses over this somewhat pertinent coincidence, he ate hardtack and cheese, while pondering, if this might be a portrait of Artemus? The third and subsequent section, contained the muse of a young man, a substance of him, the artist had failed to stabilize, by affording detail to his visage. An untied shoelace left an equal impression, that the subject was not entirely there or ready.

The fourth berth of the handmade square, framed what was apparently a rainbow trout, a fishing rod poised on ledge of an empty dory, but rather than a hook of mouth, what appeared to be a pocket watch, dangled below a winded gill. He could not estimate how a watch and a fish made a marriage?

The top and bottom scribes were both of rabbits and the lettering curls, gave each the impression, that they stood on founding hills. Certainly they had been incised with every merit of affection, love had been governed spotless, in the origin heart, of the renderers dispatching. Peshtigo

placed the die deep in his pack, his adamant admirations assuring he would not lose it.

In the cool evening the three began deliberations over the predicament of the lake, they agreed it could not be crossed directly. The rays were deepest and widest near the mothers source, amply her children had been catered. Simply following the lake would be dangerous and likely impossible, but the ends of such beams, diminished into narrow ribbons of seemingly diminutive, but entangled streams. This would be a place to cross, but would be deceptive and time consuming. Calla thought they needed higher ground to detail their surroundings, perhaps we should go back to the hill above the lake and survey a wider perspective, but Peshtigo thought he would climb a tree to espy a conveyance and proper a destination.

Zaait poorly advised the idea, Peshtigo we travel already by the abilities of your ailing foot, if your fall and incapacitate yourself, we die here! My appendage is fully well, I bandied that notion because I knew the pair of you were tired. Zaait broke out in a rabbit giggle, simply put, a rabbit's mouth turns upward, pursuant with facial

muscles, as amusements parley joy, in jitters of face. Why Zaaït said Peshtigo, I've never seen you display emotion so fervently, what is so happily enticing? Peshtigo, I've never known you to lie, much less so fluently. With the inspiration of lumbering up trees dismissed, Peshtigo said, I think we should head for the ray that aligns closest with our navigating sun, shall we journey the top of Artemus, or the bottom of it's kettle? Votes were cast, they would travel the top.

There shelter being nearest the lakes ascent, seemed a practical choice to Peshtigo, peace set upon him as he disassembled camp, removing branches to regain his precious blanket. He hadn't noticed while gathering these limbs of artifact, that disoriented night, but one branch had a knot that might be a hare in the making, so he kept it to carve by campfires upcoming. He placed his damp throw around his shoulders to dry, Calla and Zaaït were waiting in their baskets, so they set off to seek their amulets. Short of an hour Peshtigo found himself narrating concerns, his lovely parcels of pairs were watching as well. What is it about this place, Zaaït, Calla, do you sense it? They both puffed forward a

simple yes. All these tributaries meander, over, under around each other, it feels like I'm crossing always, the same inlet, still I reason that can't be the case. It's as if this land can not construct a decision, as if it is a acre that struggles with an excess of choice, it just can not define itself! I perceive that I am walking a straight course, yet my bearing markers seem to dislocate on the horizon. My impression is that theses bands of interlocking estuaries, are ultimately a series of spirals, all twisting into themselves, I am certain this body of water, has a rotation in it, it moves because it can't find itself, or perhaps it desires to be everything, what ever be, it's troubling and very disconcerting!

Peshtigo toggled a few more hours, then abruptly sat down, let's eat! He placed Zaait and Calla on the ground, but both were unstable leaving their baskets.

Peshtigo was lightheaded, all three troubled with balance! Calla spoke first his distressing, I do not like this watery oddment, I feel as if I'm floating and sinking in tandem, I would swear the waters here are sea sick, when can we hope to leave this patent of discomfort?

Calla, do you see the pillar of rock whose squares become more diminutive, in subsequent rungs to the summit. I've been watching it, at times it's quickly behind us, then in time it's again, far ahead of us... exactly Peshtigo determined. I feel as if my steps are irrelevant here, as if I am not traveling it, but it is traveling me. Zaaït said only, I'm frightened!

After troubling the lengths of day, they found they had arrived at the kettle, they had curved backward to the base of the lake! The cold weather began making assertions and the wind gathered all forces of it's insurrections. Peshtigo let go and folded to the grace of the ground, tears from his depths of artesian, spilled forward, Calla and Zaaït pounced inside his jacket, and burrowed through his shirt, fear had enveloped their sum. Panic was boisterous, omens scolded with lurid and spurious remarks. Calla had wiggled up to Peshtigo's neck, and Peshtigo heard him begging, let's turn back, please, please, this is not workable, we will lose Anna, but if we continue, I think we will all die here!

I know I have done my best, we have done our finest, let's go home! Lost they gathered in their outfit, and Peshtigo took determined strides, a fish rose angled from the water, and slapped its fins against Peshtigo's foot. Peshtigo's heightened his instincts, and hurled the fish through the air, to drop again in water. As soon as it's weight made wave, fins would cut again at Peshtigo's boot, soon Tao's words persuaded him, "if a fish jumps out and slaps your foot...beware! Fleeing by floss of tremor, was certainly not the way. He intended to remind Zaaït and Calla, but they both knew it.

Peshtigo lay down in the snow, between the cracks of clouds, was the blue night of stars, the triune hearts all laid down, Calla and Zaaït coveting, for the first ordination, Peshtigo's tears.

I am ajar, my hopes rush to flee from me, my understanding does not equip this anomalous origin. As he stood up searching land for deformations of cover, there was something hard and onerous in his shoe, his compass fell from his pocket. Dejected by the very

thought of shedding a boot in such an adverse climate, left him miffed. He scuffed his soles of thought, why the ingress of intrigues, in amongst all of Tao's mysteries, incessant performances of illusions, is there not a life at stake in quadrants beyond these games? Peshtigo's was mad at Tao for his pawn, in fact so were Zaaït and Calla, enough of tomes, let this treatise be done!

Inside his boot was a die, Peshtigo considered this impossible, had fish deposited it, was it another, had it jumped sequestered from satchel to sole? He rummaged the contents, in his fingers the die was intact, the carp had deliberated to impel it's opinion! He laid them down to shrine again his foot in leather, but all three watched as the dice began tumbling, in loops of independence, on the bargaining plaits of snow. They quieted at the stops of twin fishes, cloaks at the gills! Peshtigo's assumptions awakened to facts, it is not a watch, it's a compass!

I've made errors in allowance, mitigating a self destructive liquid, that irrigates it's frustrations in an excess of names! It has badgered with it's confusion, the

surfaces of inner ears, having taken the urgencies of personal balance, and eyes that will equivalent weigh, beyond the turmoil of it's purposeless and therefore futile transactions, it is false day made of many. I have left the order of my own compass, to be menaced and transposed by another; a lake, I wharf in the distortions of the second sun. The dice turned over with his confession, securing his observations with occupancies of movement. They turreted again to the unfinished boy, a shoelace that now exhibited to dangle, in the form of Peshtigo's unlaced ribbon! Then to the ferret he disparaged for meaning, and back again to the trout, but only on perimeters where the dory was showing! All three were tethered in discernible meaning, they had not followed their path, for meaning of a glory hole, bathing in waters fanciful. The gusts blew away a piping of snow, and there was boat and the fishing line, in the darkness without the light, Peshtigo rowed, Zaait and Calla at his feet, pausing often to strike a match, he kept his course to compass!

It was the least luminous part of night when Peshtigo made shore, snow was falling gently and part of the

*starlings of the stars. The tightest of trio, slept in
bowering ahead of the oars, they had grown most docile
in steering. When they had finished comeuppance, it was
by true sun they saw the pillar they had coveted, they had
come to the desired grove, where two buoyant hearts
would await the mission of one, so they hungered and
held the last of greens, mustering sweeter tastes of blissful
cacophonies, there they did gallant sweetly, trophies only
love can brave!*

Chapter Ten

The period may delay for the faithful, but mercies come with the Saturnid moth.

The three began their gamut through the woods, appreciative of the lessons, but extremely glad to escape the perplexities, inherent to the Lake of orphans! The namesake was fitting Peshtigo thought, for all those who orphan the meaning of clemencies for postures of attributes and caricatures, beyond internal souls of being.

Within a few hours, they began to hear the noises of the city, and sought an overgrown area, as a place without patrons. Famished and tired, Zaaït and Calla ate a few morsels and were off to sleep. This was the day however, that Peshtigo must meet Anna. He took his duffle to a near by creek, and washed in the frigid water. Collecting a generous grasp of pine needles, he brushed

his pants and shoes as best he could. He put aside his warm coat, and put on the clean shirt and sweater he'd borrowed for the occasion, over fresh undergarments. He combed through his disheveled hair, and for the first time noticed a scant but evident beard, he used his knife with care until he felt little or no stubble. He took the fountain pen, his dice and the money and left his pack beside the hares. After perhaps a half an hour, Peshtigo was walking the streets of city, looking for any notation Tao might have left. The vivacious storm he had wrestled at the Lake of orphans, had downed numerous trees, the debris had been collected into various heaps along his path. He made distinct but subtle cuts in discrete locations on foliage and objects along his path, and made of his spirit a quiet and unremarkable presence. He made note of the grocer where he intended to acquire provisions for the sorjoin back to the warren. Tao told him to ask a couple wearing only black, directions to Chaffwick hospital. He found them on a park bench, not far by distance, from a princely building on enormous grounds, impeccably maintained. Might you tell me sir, madam,

where Chaffwick hospital be, they pointed to the red stone building behind them. Peshtigo was relived that his destination was in proximity, and didn't require an excess of effort. The gate was as Tao had described, he strolled the length until the wrought iron rails turned right. Shortly he was mitigating Tao's picturesque remunerations, attempting every intricate valor, in homages of motion, trying not to tear or sully his clothes. He went straight to walk and joined in with the company numerous guests, and began scrutinizing the grounds for Anna.

He must have eyed the hapless, rolling grounds for nearly an hour, before he saw her sitting solitary near an open, white gazebo. His heart was scattering now in anticipation, he wrestled downward his need to run, to foil any act of attention. What he reconciled first, is she was a girl he did not comprehend, frail, fragile, with the arboreal body of a withered soul! Anna he queried softly, with minimal response. Anna, I am Peshtigo, I've ended an ardent and difficult journey to bring you home. She looked at him, and her spirit settled dismayed.

Tao, providence your promise, I need your amber threads of hope, to honor me. Tao did not tarry, quickly Tao flourished familiar, every artifice of Anna's once garden and infused it's essence before her eyes. Tao caught her attention, though Anna had never seen her before, she had at moments sensed her presence. Peshtigo did not die in the creek, nor did the dog catch him, when he passed through you in the stream, I made him a man to carry you, to your family. Anna this is a beginning time, not an end! Ask him, ask Peshtigo, questions whose answers only he could know! Anna's countenance suddenly roused, she looked into Peshtigo's gentle eyes, where did I find you? In a hollow root, you lifted and swathed my belly, I was a joy you ran home with.

Mention four things, I will know you by your telling. I sought and challenged to find you, that separating night, I was left in woods. I concealed myself compressing my fears beneath the sunflowers, just behind the stone hut you built for me. I searched the boundaries and saw the wind chime I'd watched so often from my cage in your bedroom. Running I leapt into the air

turning, and struck your window with my back foot. We rejoiced to be near! Your father did not impress my skills, he accused you of lying, he threw me on the bed beside you.

Anna, I was bit by a bee, suffocating on my own tongue, you and your mother saved my life, taking me to the doctor. You read to me, you fed me carrots, you kissed my forehead between my ears! Anna began to cry, she reached for Peshtigo, kissing his forehead. He whispered in her ear; I've always desired to say this Anna...I love you! He stood erect and place something in her hand, in her palm was the bell she put him to bed with. He opened a paper bag removing his blanket, and arranged it lightly around her shoulders. Keep these Anna, bring them home to me again! They wept with healing, their lost bound.

Tao watched over them, as they siphoned their tears, and when time had accomplished it's endearments, Tao said, it's time we go. Anna do what your asked, I want

you home in three weeks, will you provide me this promise? Yes, I will come home, I must come home, may the weeks pass as an hour!

Peshtigo held inside as rains deepen into the soil, Tao left a transparent message on her palm, only Tao and she could read it...Love, hope!

Tao transferred appearances to that of a young lady, to accompany him back to the grove. They spoke of the journey and Tao laughed, Peshtigo I hear you were disgruntled with me! If you weren't there, how do know? Your mother told me everything, she pervades a buoyant interest in talk. She was the fish Peshtigo, and beside you the entire time. Peshtigo passioned his apologies, Tao said don't bother, we are all vulnerable to foment from time to time. They were passing the grocer's and Tao chuckled, Peshtigo, don't you require provisions, I believe you will need me, when it comes to money.

Peshtigo gathered many of the same produce and products he'd come with, but Tao had selected a few uncommon items and tossed them on the counter, your a human now Peshtigo, imagine a broader palate. Her fare included potato chips, a few chocolate bars and a soda... you'll like this, it tickles the nose, with that she added another for herself!

The pair made their way back to Zaait and Calla, who apparently had been frightened, for they lay deep in the reeds, scant and hollowed out. They conversed and nibbled and celebrated a venture accomplished, then I said goodnight, the compatriots slept!

Chapter Eleven

New beginnings are as common as the sunrise, they endless hurry past the night.

The journey home was far easier, Peshtigo summons the dory back in the water, rowing the conundrum of the Lake of Artemus readily. He placed the boat back in it's original setting. By nightfall they were watching scarlet lanterns and enjoying the candied fruits the earth provided. They dappled in and abounded in retelling, their journey, and with dawn and fresh currants they were on their way home!

They arrived a few days on, to find what seemed to be a sad procession, their apparitions were a shock, as the others had considered them dead. Merriment made quick turnaround. So what happened, is Anna alive, did you make it? Certainly, she will be home in three weeks. Tell us then everything, what was it like, Peshtigo then

mentioned, it was full of goblins, wolves and hawks, poor Calla was bitten, but I will inform you later, of our Wolverine tales, after we have rested. Truer advances came forward later, but I won't belabor such here, for here such intrigues are already known.

It was decided that Anna's homecoming must welcome an elaborate celebration, Tao proposed this in surreptitious ovals of reason, obviously mystery was to be a quest for the event! Spears were to be carved, as Tao insisted marshmallows would be required. As the day of calends approached, Peshtigo took to sleeping near his hut, should in point, Anna arrive early.

In keeping with Tao's precise instructions Anna arrived home one evening, exactly twenty one days from Peshtigo's visit. Immediately she begged her parents to let her visit Peshtigo. Believing he was dead they were not compliant, but Anna being so desperate and the simple joy of having her home, they acquiesced. Anna saw Peshtigo sitting by the hut she long ago gave foundation, she ran and jumped for his arms, as he stood up. Anna come here, who is this man, get away from

him! David quested his insights over Peshtigo. What are you doing wearing my clothing, you're the young man who brought Anna home with injuries, did you hurt her? Elizabeth go, summons the police, this man is the thief who entered our home and stole our missing property! Just as Elizabeth rose, Tao descended, her emanations grander and ever more gregarious and intoxicating. Tao spoke with insistence, hoping to mitigate her appearance in some stride beyond their shock. Elizabeth, David please sit with us, allow me an explanation. David insisted she give admissions, as to how she knew his name.

We've known each other in other times, when both of us had different forms. Can you not remember me, simply by correlations of my essence? David answered, I do sense in your presence, some obscure recall of miscellaneous interaction. Tao opened his memory just a bit, I was the yellow bird of your youth, who you coaxed to follow your steps, by interest and affection for the birdseed you would string for me along the ground. I always considered you, a very fine soul.

*My elaborate trails of of beauty, the golden accord I
trellis to climb, hosts the honors of seeds your tossed, and
all the imagined cornucopias of flowers that might have
grown from the seed, I did not spare.*

*I believe you David said, being extremely good with
gut instincts, but what is this about? Tao being Tao, had
a natural way of convincing. I have a story written in
several envelopes, I will proffer two tonight. Tao
engaged, however, each is in rhyme with the other. First
let's start our conversation by firelight. She plunked a
single, tiny feather from her left wing, and let it fall in
tight gyrations to the bedrock of the forest floor. The
flames rose up in looms of spark flamboyant, ember laces
whose gilds seamed preposterous, heights of elegance,
emblazoned the waistline, in fictions of French brocade.
Peshtigo, make offerings to our companions of branches
and marshmallows. Forgive me David, Elizabeth, I'm
afraid I've always been overcome and impressed, by my
own citron feathers. As I remember David, your brand
of young followers, always enjoyed blacking soft candies.
Once in curiosity I pecked at a portion of those*

remains, I considered the possibility that the paste of its delights, might have soldered my beak permanently.

I am the overseer of lands you see present, it is my ward to bring love and justice here. I have virtually no interrelated actions with people, you require far stronger hosts, this is an exception, that merited much debate and coordination in heavenly realms, but I am very pleased with the results.

David's soul raised up a notch, why do call this boy Peshtigo, and how would a rabbit be a man! Tao opened the first seal, the envelope scattered and the pages unfolded from crimps of crimson. Peshtigo is rabbit from the Quije tribe of praises and poets, his mother and siblings were reduced, in a bribe with a fox. The fox was going to have his way with the lot of them. I made the suggestion that Peshtigo's mother not cry out, alerting the fields of his presence, if he would spare the runt, the proposition was accepted. It was a terrible day that forever burdens the right chambers of my heart. Anna saved Peshtigo, that dubious fox would not have

remained with his promise long.

Peshtigo lived in the failures he assumed diminished him, beside his affectionate affinities for numerous creatures and creations he preferred, feeling himself so much less than the fanciful lightening rods of insect, and golden ties of milky worms. He has this praise in him you see, but his praise pierces his own self doubts. He longed to speak with your daughter, he was too widened in thought, yet too diminished, lacking an escape of his endless compliments, in the worlds of the voiceless. The wise can extrapolate the immediate pratfalls of character; the propensities that estimate to abide kind hearts, those who would run too quickly, to recuse any creature from peril. Anna's inclination for the frightened dog was foreseen. It was discussed frequently among certain sovereigns, the impetus ultimately decided by Peshtigo's mother.

Elizabeth, David, your daughter saved this hare's last child, Peshtigo, it was in her mind to save your daughter in an equivocal of gratitude and kindness of duty, and

Peshtigo needed a voice, a hearing, Peshtigo needed Anna, and Anna needed him, do you understand?

I can't help but doubt magic, David surmised, alters, transfigurations, these do not occur in life. Though I see the logic, I can not believe the wild fantasies that extrapolate tissue and bone. A purple seal was broken, Tao pressed the papers and with a curve of motion, spread them out on a podium of apparently stiffened air. You can spread bone Bjorn, a child to man is transitioning. Bone water in the name of ice, the pan of waters that stream to clouds, in incarnations according temperature. Worm to wing, silkworms to fabric, life and death.

I have welcomed and loved you through the courses of my life, I beamed in your soul when it glistened, before your endurances wrestled the impossibilities, that are war. Why should you doubt the better forms of that unlikely, the blood of friends that splattered your face, having to taste their hearts substance, at the end of their lives. You still can not define the absurdities of that inhumane scaffold, in

the bittersweet magic that rancors at times, through the thoughts of men. It's time for you believe better, potion backward to your yesterday soul. I have gifts for you, from a free captain wishing your heart back, if you might stand and receive them. David paused at the fire, Tao was displaying his scenes and snippets of momentary wounds, his mortifying histories constructed in cinder moments of visual animations. Faces known and effigies leaving, leas and villas so grievous, the earth grew numb it's ordinance of origin. Let them burn in this crust of fire, the angry coals, that chimney through your heart. David began weeping with the fragility of a child, he lay fetal by the hearthstones, lost in his tempest of grief.

Elizabeth pleaded, let's go home, uncertain that this collapse was a means of healing. Tao placed her finger on Elizabeth lips, and issued assurances. Mother to mother there mirth the gift of love, no more than love is needed, and no more than the apparitions of love will function, if I am near. Tao sat beside David, she placed two gifts in his hands, and turned his face toward her, diamonds for onyx, be your eyes!

David sat up and troubled through the ties keeping tightly the gay wrapping papers, in the first he found an old coin. It was a liberty coin, doubled stamped, a mint error his father had given him for good luck, just before he pledged the battlefronts. He placed it in the pocket of his childhood friend, who had shared the sparklers of long ago nights, camping this forest. He had coveted the coin almost forever, David severed from its proposals of luck, as savored times perished, leaving the token of love on his friends lifeless chest. James is well, we talk often, it was he who was the principal impetus in approving this sortie, among the counsel of men. Items given as gifts, are allowed possessions in the governance of heaven, and there is a quorum of provoyors who retrieve and determine which. James sends this coin back to you with great affection, and he often hikes these woods, however translucent his appearance.

The second parcel contained a sachet of lavender, inside was the Purple Heart David had been granted for heroism, he'd thrown it in the river long ago, he was ashamed of it, he was ashamed of mankind. Tao cast her

hope through the deep oceans of his eyes, there are no endings whatsoever David, just time between reconciliations. There are beginnings only, turn to twist, consider the miracle that must happen, find out where love is hiding, reminisce the pleasantries of the well wishers, that still flourish in men, to overwhelm those who burgeon evil. Reunite with love David, keep a feather from my string, surface again among the generous.

Peshtigo tried, with full pulse of earnest, to save Anna, he could not in the form of a rabbit, he was the only form where her life might be rescued. As he jumped on her chest in a frantic and ludicrous attempt, he fell through her and become a man, at the very instance he was needed, to bring Anna to your care, but he was naked. I instructed him to go to your work shed and acquire clothing. Anna would have died believing Peshtigo dead, he and a pair of rabbits made a long journey to visit Anna, a proof of life to void the premise where she was hostage, they met three weeks ago, yours, provided provisions for their escapades. Your family has

come home to you David, come home in love, house your family!

If it's alright, I wish a private feast to celebrate Anna's life, may you trust us another hour of sentiment and exchange? They nodded, walking away surrounded by quiet, in folds where their love had begun to soften.

Chapter Twelve

Forays and summations!

So it was, the hour was spent, triune telling tales of weeds and crabgrass, that tumult and swivel the vertiginous lands persuading the Lake of orphans, where true north towers, only inside the authenticity of one's own being. They spoke of fabulous lanterns and the paper shapes of dandelions, where all creatures are cherished and bountiful are fattened, by the generous proxy of man and woman.

Anna and Peshtigo finally had means of first expression, they were swallowed whole, by the chirp of their tongues. As the dancers of Quije broke out, Peshtigo held tight, escorting Anna, soliciting grace, in the fireside ballrooms of sweet pine needles. When the final minutes collapsed the evening, Peshtigo left Anna at her door, and tapped at her window while leaving.

Spring arrived at the forest, where summer had already proceeded it, in greater joy. Peshtigo and Anna

had fondled every imagination that might bloom in the parochial roses of remaining winter, it was the taboo altered again. Settled deep in the rushes of May coriander, and tiny violets that filtered and flitted as small, common blue butterflies, that Peshtigo had determined a proper kiss and a prosperity of secret proposal. He had summoned the Quije for witness and Tao to powder his corridor of dreams. A time when love and it's passionate apprehensions, made free fall of new birth, in the social ethers of rabbits.

Peshtigo touched Anna's delicate cheek and bent for a kiss, only to find he fell through her, and lay awkward in the crocuses near her feet. Tao said in the kindness laughter, we'll have none of that, and all the Quije lifted whiskers in the chuckle, saying we see that Peshtigo is home again! Peshtigo was neither amused by his romantic humiliations, nor was Anna, but as Tao lofted upward, she left a bird dropping on Peshtigo's head, even he had to admire the outrageous summation! Soon the day was a light mirage, a poem had dropped from Peshtigo's pocket, it lay on his former shirt, he shed with his current alternative. It blew away in the gusts that

Tao's departure had instigated. Anna whispered as a pilgrim of secrets, that she would merge to marry him regardless of structures, and their talks continued less the wedding gift, for Anna could hear the voices of Quije, and Peshtigo conferenced her, the same no less. All was unity, every separate entity that thread together, balances and semblances, earth ever earnest to cleave tightly it's variegations, in kinder pursuits of one. It was felt by hornets, and through the nests of doves, and from the soil you could see the trees jut upward, once and all in exuberant reach, ever limb suddenly given several feet, and even man had finally concurred, to join the celebrations.



THE BEGINNING!

