

First Light of the Day

Erynne Gilpin

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I sat alone on the crested hill
Circles of my heated breath as my only companion
mihkowapanachahkos
my daughter's first lesson came in the morning sky

I am a new mother.
a fierce and wild thing.
a thousand years old.
a thousand trails to burn in light.

with each breath, I bless your light.
ayis kihewini pimatisiwin

my skin has become hard and rough.
my eyes are arrows.
I have become a Creature so fierce and unforgiving - I no longer remember my name.

I know pain and itch as I wait for the next attack.
cold wind bitng my cheeks
stinging my eyes

as the silence of snow consumed me

I felt her before I saw her
I felt her before I heard her

Her nose pressed against my back
as she breathed four long breaths
through me and within me

Grandmother Buffalo

there you are
I have been so lonely and afraid
my fists are clenched and knuckles scabbed over; molded
to the deer antlers I'd been using as weapons

I buried my aGer birth here
frozen beneath the winter grounds

“take my bones granddaughter

simmer them in tea and wasekemin
mix your prayers into the broth
and feed you babies the dreams of your future ancestors”.

“I have fear Grandmother, I can not sleep.
I will fight the world”.

Grandmother Buffalo

says
“Herds of buffalo run through you and into the veins of your daughters.
they come from running buffalo. And when they drink the broth of my bones;
They return to the great river - to the clear water
Cast up in the belly of the sturgeon.

You have never been alone, granddaughter”.

She nudged the antlers out of my hands and carefully tucked them into my pack.
She breathed her warm breath over them as they slowly opened like the first light of the day.

“You can only source your safety in the sacred.” She said.

Grandmother walked around me four =mes and then pressed her nose between my shoulder
blades. as my tears fall
they freeze on my cheeks
I welcome the pain on my skin

I welcome the ability to feel ... anything other than fear.

I feel.
I feel her breath consume me
cover and roll through me
our breath rolling into one lodge
warm, safe, held, surrounded

she imprints in my memories and claims my dreams
she feeds my children and builds a fire
She keeps me alive and holds my spine

ayis kihewini pimatisiwin
we are one in the same
dreams woven through the flowers on our skin

and dried blood on our faces

She is the Land we build worlds from and within
She has found me now
in my brokenness

Grandmother Buffalo
All four directions
All doors open
all grandfathers

Come from
And return
To

You.

Biography

Erynne Gilpin, Ph.D. is a mixed Michif (the Pás/Duck Bay, Manitoba; Member of MMF), Filipina and Celtic educator, film-maker and community-based researcher committed to Land-based wellness, leadership and place-based knowledge mobilization. Her work focuses on antioppressive pedagogues, storied learning methodologies and critical intersectionality as it applies to land-relations and community wellness. Dr. Gilpin has lived across Central, South and Northern American contexts, speaks English, French, Spanish and Portuguese and is passionate about cross-cultural knowledge mobilization. Currently, her family and research focuses locate her both in Canada and Brazil and she is dedicated Inter-National approaches to decolonial education and efforts towards authentic Indigenous education and land-based learning. Dr. Gilpin is currently Assistant Professor with the School of Communication and Culture at Royal Roads University and Director of UATÊ STORIED LEARNING; a film-based production company committed to educational film-based storytelling.
