

Diane Frank

Ring of Fire

At the edge of the continent,
fires are everywhere.
Lightning strike at Point Arena.
Then a wide band of fire
traveling northeast on a summer wind.
Hundreds of lightning strikes
inside a ring of fire
torching the solstice night.

In the Mendocino Woodlands,
echoes of stellar jays,
a family of pheasants,
a mountain lion stalking in the meadow.
In the distance, burning mountains.
Images of the enigma
weaving themselves together
inside a larger vision.

For some reason I don't understand,
my mother decided to walk
back from the edge –
unable to leap at this time
through the ring of fire.

This is for my mother,
the older version of the three-year-old
who stood on the piano bench
and belted out radio tunes
and folk songs from the old country
when her relatives said in Yiddish,
Sing Mamale, Sing Little Mama.

Somewhere
in the middle of the continent
peonies in full bloom
now filling the still warm nights
with their sticky fragrance.

Somewhere
while the rest of us are
still dreaming,

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a meeting with her Guardian angels,
planning how long she will stay
and the next adventure on her soul's journey.

Mamale,
you'll probably burn a path of fire through the sky
on your way,
and wherever the meteorites and snow angels
take you next,
I hope it is glorious!

In the middle of the redwood forest,
I feel you singing
inside the spirit of the trees.

Iowa Omen

Three hawks fly south
as your voice trembles
across the great plains.

Fields of sleeping cows
a gentleness in the land.

Here is the omen:
Sky splashed with aurora,
blue stars, curtains of light.

The letters are gold
on red silk –
Japanese calligraphy.

If I had the right kind of ink
I'd write them
on your skin.

A View from the Moon

As we move into the darker time,
my friends are scattered around a globe
rocked by hurricanes and tsunamis.
Where does the soul find leaves
for its unexpressed longing
in a forest of bare trees?

I would like to believe that love
finds its way in the world.
My voice is breaking
as I push myself through the keyhole
to the shimmer of light
on the other side.

At the edge of the continent,
I find a necklace of broken pottery,
a spiral of conch,
a lacework of pelican prints
in the sand.

I search for Buddha
in a Chinatown market,
the single note that vibrates,
the moment of the vulnerable heart
where I wake up inside an Appalachian fiddle tune
in the minor key of the mountains.

There's a footprint in the sand of the soul,
before people deviate
from the path their soul has chosen.
In the crashing waves after midnight,
where does the soul
find the imprint of its longing?

In the sand I piece together
fragments of broken clay
with a desire to transmute
everything that is not holy
in a world that is still finding its form.

What we can't express
becomes the planetary nightmare.
The soul hydroplanes, slips off the road.
In the early morning moonlight,
a black spider
crawling over my leg
with its message.

But I wake up from the dream of a man
who hypnotized me
spinning
in a hot tub
and made my cello float.

I am the woman on the moon,
a crescent of possibilities
at the edge of the constellation
where night becomes morning,
Isis holding the *ankh* on her throne
in a robe that matches the midnight sky.
She tells me I need to start expecting
the good things to come true.

On the Earth, a depression and a hysteria –
a memory of Minoan times,
an oracle in the rock
Arctic Wilderness
River Gorge,
a clay vessel filling with light
as my vision becomes the music
becomes the man,
and climbs into bed with me.
I want in all ways
to be a blessing.

Dawn after the Art Walk

Line of a train on the north side of town
an hour before sunrise.

I open the early morning window
to snow under the street lamp.
In my bedroom, a chill in the walls,
a loneliness deeper than my bones.

Changing my shoes after the waltz,
I walk into the cold air alone.
By the door to the Landmark Hotel
at exactly the wrong moment,
I witness a marriage unraveling.
In one evening, in front of me
all of the reasons I left this place.

Dreams tumble like the paintings I saw –
tree frogs splotching a red barn
inside an arch of cottonwood branches,
a dancer climbing blue star stairs
to the Pleiades after midnight.

Five years ago, I packed up
what was most important to me
in my Toyota and drove
west across the mountains,
in the back seat,
my cello, my dance shoes, my favorite books
including the one I was writing.

Somewhere inside, beyond the snow
I knew about you
and knew you were not here.