

## Seeding the New Year

*A poetic relay for the New Year 2009, Laura and Dale Pendell*

It began hailing when they were still on the trail and his thoughts began to feel like beads on a string. There were hints of resonance and blue rhymes and even anticipation between what was and what could follow, but he wanted them to be like birds, like brown and yellow leaves falling freely from his hair and beard. The water returned. He tried to speak but his voice was the sound of frogs.

the owl hoots across the canyon  
the frog croaks from the rocks  
wind summons leaves into piles  
and they are caressed by pine needles  
bundling together  
a secret entrance  
to the place of drams  
formed by Venus, Mercury,  
Jupiter and Neptune,  
sailing the sky  
passing that slender crescent  
that is the night's mistress  
the weeks go by  
and how she dances  
in and out of cloud wisps  
shining a clear white light  
over everything

As the ice advanced the people held dances. Mussels poked forth fleshy feet and the sun shrank to a smaller size. When limpets began attaching themselves to her ankles she didn't notice. Cities grew on the plains – blankets of sparkling lights flooding and ebbing as centuries passed. The Wise met in council and speculated on topology:

magma beneath volcanoes,  
blood in veins,  
malachite littering the seashore.

Perhaps the Creator had dreamt of color before rousing and turning to breathe the whirlwind into space.

she pulled the garden in  
to herself the way  
she gathered dried leaves  
sifting and blowing  
in the late months  
the sun low  
hiding behind the oak

rather than floating above  
as it does when the days  
are long and the nights warm  
this was the cold time  
still she turned toward the sun  
edging the horizon and shining  
through the air where her own breath  
could be seen when she looked  
a small river of energy going back  
to the sky  
to the sun  
it would be time to plant  
new seeds soon enough

There were coats and shirts and other articles of clothing draped over the sofa and all the chairs were covered with stacks of books. It could have been a place where no one was expected to visit and where no one did, but visitors appeared. Children's voices echoed down the dark hallway and moss of the fireplace sprouted tiny pods on slender filaments. Dreams wandered through the kitchen, brewed chocolate, and left messages taped to the cupboard. Voluptas, he thought, or voluntas, a vulval crevice in the imagination from which small winged insects hatched from papery shells and hovered in the air like wisps of smoke forming patterns and pictures. Starlings. A kind of semaphore. An alphabet of cranes that whispered his name. Somewhere there were ships with oars and square sails.

the dance begins  
a ceremonial sash passed  
crafted of beads, shells,  
starshine and the ineffable  
hand to hand

most hold it  
some fold it  
all honor it  
speaking to it  
through it

stories to share  
words that heal  
and what cannot  
yet be said  
it hold in safety

until some other time  
when the tribe reconvenes  
the moon singing silver

or the fire blazing  
so brilliantly that

all the dark corners  
are illuminated  
and the space  
always safe  
is safer still

Storms shook the house and the water rose. Their bed slid into the canyon with the mud and they bundled in fish dreams to stay warm. Tadpole life. Woodpeckers at suet. Ice in the mornings. Winter sun where the cat lounged. They chewed on wedges of dry oak and the long bolts in the timbers held. A routine developed. Mountains and a long hall filled with cushions. Sometimes they made soup. There was an astrolabe on the drafting table with thread stretching from pins in long arcs to where the sun lived and they made a calendar from great stones, an abacus from pebbles, and tracked the days with knots.

as time wound round & round  
marked by those things  
they named & held dear  
they left the trail  
followed the path  
that the birds take  
listening for undulations  
the crane song overhead  
one foot another foot  
feeling the heat of the earth  
the road unknown  
they did not turn back  
or around but somehow  
found themselves  
back at the beginning  
there was still work to be done

It was a good time. It rained enough and between the storms the sun shone and there was fresh grass and the deer's belly swelled. The nights were long and they like that and they roasted strange beans in a heavy skillet and hung them on the wall for the birds that came in the morning.

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