

Equinox Musings  
*September 21, 2022*

It's autumn equinox time here in the Piedmont. That time when day and night meet in the middle and linger for a moment in equanimity and equilibrium. A pause. A breath, before the descent. Sitting with my feet in the Eno River watching and listening I finally realized why we so often call this season fall. Everything is falling. The temperature drops, the leaves dance their way back to the earth, monarch butterflies make their yearly journey down to Mexico, and the ripe persimmons plop on the ground for the lucky few of us who find them. And I am falling in love all over again with the season of nesting and release. For many, fall time marks a shift from the bustling abundance and activity and ripeness of summer to a new rhythm of cozying up, hunkering down, and letting go. Even the Carolina Wren know what's up with their call of "tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle!" as they flit around their nests. There is often bittersweetness in the shift. The late sunrise this year brings a quickening of the fall we're feeling in the post daylight savings era. Sad to leave sweet summer languidness and stretching days, though the crisp breeze of autumn offers a welcome reprieve. Yet, it also brings the bone deep knowing of the depths and darkness to come. So here we sit at a threshold. One foot in the season of light, the other slips into the underworld. What's stirring in you these days as the winds begin to spin tales in the trees and our hearts? What will you take with you from summer's abundance to sustain you through the darker months just around the bend? How will you prepare for the inevitable journey inward that comes as we mammals return to our dens and caverns and nests? One way I am tending to the shift in season is by reacquainting myself with meaningful tendrils of community, the ones like Bluestem, who can hold space for the complexity of being in between and the transformation that germinates within the womb of transition. Though the dark half of the year urges introspection as well as personal harvest and mourning, we need companions along the way to hold the torch when we need to see and our hand when the light goes out. Underworld journeys are not meant to be taken alone. Myth, legend, and story tell us that. Unlike the so called "Hero's journey" that implores us to win out and overcome obstacles through sheer force, wit, or merit as a way of proving one's worth and valor, the underworld journeys of many indigenous folklore are built upon collective narratives of surviving trials only through the help of others. Like the tide heeds the moon, we too ebb and flow with each other through life's many spirals.

So before the exhale of the year, we might pause to breathe in the richness of what's here now. The rise before the fall. Learning all the while that letting go is not about losing what we love, but letting fall what is ripe and ready to give fertility to the earth of our own lives. Like the compost heap, the nutrients and nourishment come only after the decomposition, the breakdown, and decay. Even the caterpillar melts completely into a fetid goop inside the chrysalis before it reforms into the new body of the butterfly. So holding these seemingly opposing truths, of embracing fullness and letting go, we breathe, knowing in our heart of hearts that though things may feel like they are falling apart, we are at once also loving ourselves back together.

So you might take a walk in the woods, along a creek, or just in your backyard and notice the signs of nesting or falling in our more-than-human kin, taking heed from the seasonal forces at play and gathering in your basket that which will nourish while letting wither and recycle what has reached completion. As time tendrils on, I can't wait to see what is in store after we walk across this threshold into the sacred wild of what's next, but until then you can find me at the Heron's rest, near the river, and savoring the sweetness of summer's final rays.

