

FOUR SONGS

I. WOLF SONG

LIFE EBBING FROM DEEP WOUNDS
THE GREY WOLF
ALREADY IN MOONLIGHT SHROUD
SINGS HER LAST SONG:
*- COME, SISTERS WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE
HELP ME REACH THE PLACE
WHERE YOU ARE.*

A MILLION GREY SPIRITS REPLY
IN WELCOMING SONG ...

WE HUMANS HEAR
AND THINK IT IS THE WIND.

II. DOG SONG

I STAND BENEATH YOUR MIDNIGHT WINDOW
AND WATCH FOR THREATENING RABBITS
OR SKUNKS, OR (HEAVEN FORBID) CATS
AND IF I SPOT ONE, I SING THE DOG SONG
THAT ALL ANIMALS RECOGNIZE:
*- AWAY, INTRUDER, LEAVE MY PEOPLE IN PEACE
OR FACE THE KEENNESS OF MY FANGS.*

IT IS THE ANCIENT PROUD SONG OF MY RACE
THAT YOU HEAR ONLY AS NOISE
THAT MAKES YOU THREATEN ME, YOUR LOVING PROTECTOR,
IN VAGUE AND SLEEPY PHRASES.

AS ALWAYS, I FORGIVE.

III. OSPREY SONG

I SOAR ON SALT WIND ABOVE THE TREES
CALLING TO MY CHILDREN:
SOON, SOON I RETURN WITH FOOD.

LESSER BIRDS HEAR AND PRESUME TO HARRASS ME
AS I FLY NESTWARDS WITH NOURISHMENT.

FOUR SONGS

I INTEND NO HARM TO THEM
BUT THEY INSIST ON FILLING
THEIR TINY SILLY LIVES
WITH MEANINGLESS HEROISMS
SWOOPS AND PECKINGS AND SCREECHES
I IGNORE THEM, AND BEAR MY SILVER TROPHY
TO MY CHILDREN, FUTURE RULERS
OF THE BRIGHT SHORE SKIES.

IV. POSSUM SONG

I KNOW THAT I AM NOT INTELLIGENT
NOT CUNNING, NOT SPEEDY,
NOR (EXCEPT IN THE OPINION OF CERTAIN PREDATORS)
PARTICULARLY TASTY.
I COULD BE CUTE AND CUDDLY IF I CARED TO BE
BUT MY HUGE RATTY TAIL WOULD HAVE TO GO.

I REMEMBER ONCE WHEN I WAS LITTLE:
NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL WHERE WE LIVED
A PAIR OF HUMANS WATCHING THE MOON
THE MAN SITTING ON A WALL, AND THE WOMAN
STRETCHED OUT WITH HER HEAD ON HIS LAP
GAZING AT THE EMERGING STARS.
THERE WAS SO MUCH LOVE IN THAT PLACE
THAT EVEN I FELT IT, AND THOUGHT
- *THIS IS SOMETHING I SHOULD INVESTIGATE!*
EVEN DARING TO HOPE A LITTLE
THAT I WOULD UNDERSTAND.

BUT AS I EMERGED FROM UNDER A BUSH
ALL INNOCENT AND READY TO SHARE THEIR TWILIGHT LOVE
THEY CAUGHT SIGHT OF ME, AND, AS USUAL,
THOUGHT I WAS A RAT;
LEAPED UP AND RAN YELLING
AS FAR AND AS FAST AS THEY COULD MANAGE ...

WHAT I HAD COME THERE TO LEARN
WAS THERE NO LONGER.
A CLOUD COVERED THE MOON, AND TEARS
CAME TO MY LITTLE ORANGE EYES
AS THE SOUNDS OF THE YELLING AND CURSING
(AS, HAVING DWELT CLOSE TO HUMANS THESE MANY YEARS,
I NOW KNOW IT TO BE)

FOUR SONGS

RECEDED INTO THE DISTANCE.

**AS LITTLE AS I KNEW OF THE SUBJECT
IT DID NOT SOUND AS IF ANY LOVE COULD HAVE SURVIVED
MY INNOCENT APPEARANCE ON THE SCENE.**

**I'M SORRY - ALTHOUGH THERE'S NOT MUCH
I CAN EVER DO ABOUT IT -
THAT I LOOKED SO MUCH LIKE A RAT TO THEM.**

**(I KNOW THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN CHARMED BY A RACCOON
ALL RINGS AND MASK AND TINY WASHING PAWS.)**

- AUGUST 2003