

Pen and Ink on Paper

by Brenda Bishop Blakey

Begin with soot and ash of burnt bones,
add molten tar, mix in clay and salt.
Steep, stir by night fire, then cool and age.
Portion into tiny vessels and plug with cork.
Then wait. Think the thoughts over and over.
Forget all except the most divine.

Journey to the place of great birds and ask for grace.
They will shed feathers, blessing your quest.
Find the perfect quill, the one shaped just so.
Don't fret; you'll know it when you see it.
Whittle the point so fine, so minuscule.
Leave no room for the devil to dance there.

Pulverize tree bark and lace with sinew of cotton.
Add water and a little chalk to thicken,
bleach the pulp, then comb and stretch.
Strain out unwanted particles and debris,
pat and press, then wait for moisture to wick.
Ponder the gifts of nature, of the spirit.

The fullness of the nib, black liquid collects there,
lingering before it releases onto thirsty cotton papyrus,
its crevices tunnel the substrate awaiting edification.
The process, slow and metered like music,
allows ideas to flow, dots on a line in space on time.
Heart feeling, mark making, ancient answers for new questions.

