

Ambrosia

by Maggie Lawson

Night's chill had yet to hand over his canvas to morning's warmth as I left the city limits to begin my pilgrimage, as I did every morning, before dawn. I parked my car on the asphalted roadside preferring to walk the final two miles to the abandoned homestead. At some point the smooth even surface of the road surrenders to stones and dirt and this transformation was the reason I parked my car a ways back. I wasn't bothered by the stones' potential to scuff and mark the new paintwork nor did I care if the dirt covered the glistening red color. I walked the transforming road because I wanted to feel as though I was leaving. I wanted to know I wasn't 'there' anymore but rather had ventured forward into a new and untainted world. This awkward stony road was the beginning of my rite of passage, separating me from my life, my job, and everything else that laden my spirit. With each ungainly step I distanced myself from the reason I was here and my spirit rejoiced for it.

As the sun welcomed me on my journey I saw the aged timber of the homesteads fence; its pale railings split and gaping, ravaged by time and weather. Turning up the driveway always felt so good. The curvature of the fencing resembled wide open arms, embracing me like a lost child, come home. Without fail I would find myself overcome with exculpation, every sin, every stain on my soul, forgiven.

The house that had once laid claim to this land was long destroyed by unknown means. All that remained were the crumbling foundations, slowly being shrouded by the wild daisies and wolf grass that had breached it.

The homestead still sported an orchard and as I made my way toward it the sweet fruity aroma of over ripe apples filled the

morning air. The rusty iron gate squealed and whined as I forced my way through and leaving it to its protestations I navigated my way through the rambling orchard crushing rotting fruit under foot. I had to duck and dive amongst reaching branches that begged me to stay and play but, I had some where to be and declined their invitations.

All at once the fussing stopped and stretched out before me was an expanse of carpeted meadow. Dew still clings to long slender blades of grass whilst buttercups and clover rejoice in the sun's first kiss. Slipping off my shoes I trace a path through humble angels as they bathe my feet, each dew drop washing away the last traces of an already forgotten life. I savour this part of my journey, taking in the pure morning air that fills my lungs. The sun warms my face and meadow cools my feet reminding me of what it is to be alive. I hear the busy insects negotiating with the meadow for its bounty as the birds chirp good mornings to one and all.

I am surrounded by life, infused with its essence, drowning in its possibilities. Excitement builds as I close in on my destination, I feel it call to me, drawing me into its folds. My cleansing complete I approach the thicket moving directly to a small darkened fold. On my knees I force my way through, the rich aroma of the earth and leaf mold filling my nostrils as leaves crush in my hands. It takes but a moment to breach the thicket and cross the threshold of my Eden. In rapturous joy I delight in my home coming, taking position atop a flattened rock bathed in the sun's radiance. The cheeky stream giggles as I lean to dip my fingers in her coolness watching her twirl and distort the reflections of nearby trees. A large gangly dragonfly teases the stream with his game of 'catch me if you can'.

It is here that I come every morning, this oasis for my soul providing the liminality I seek. It is only now that I can allow myself to smile, freed of my guilt and unburdened of shame for the life I had washed from my feet.

Unimpinged by life's derision I can release my spirit to feast on this ambrosia; fragrant nurturance that sustains and renews my weary heart. Sometimes I sit for an hour or two, other times I spend all day lost in my liminal state and yet I know that this is only part of the process with my return to the city required for my rite of passage to be complete. Replenished and revived I begin the final leg of my pilgrimage knowing that very soon the Sun will hide her face, ashamed to illuminate my sin, leaving to moon to bear witness to my dishonorable life.

