**Reverence for The Queen Underfoot**

Carrie Sword

 Light that left the star Kepler-11 two thousand years ago arrives now to the curve of the nighttime Earth and to the surface of my eyes. Flashes of Morse code from the aboriginal abyss pulse brighter and dimmer across this entire sky. Eons of time flicker. The diamond watch of the Creator tells the hour like a book of revelation. These lights hold their places for ages and then explode in galactic climax sending star seeds to fledge the future.

 Now on Earth, dawn opens a December day. Stars that run around like children tumble from the sky in play. Tiny crystal stars, innocent as fawn spots. They dance their way down and clothe the newborn day in snowy, crystalline starlight.

 My gaze moves downward to my feet in adoration at the ground. The folds of what has become a winter dress lay everywhere in light and shadow, prisms gleaming, millions of sparks on millions of crystals. A gown fit for the queen of this realm created moments ago. As I slowly wander on foot, glints of silver, aqua and magenta flash and disappear in kaleidoscope sequence. My steamy breath mingles with her radiance. Her cold breeze meets my warm blush. Her outrageous extravagance quells my need for her majesty. My muddy boots mottle her masterpiece. We commune this way for a while. A meandering trail of boot prints line up behind me.

 Always with her and within her I live in her holy body. The stuff cells are made of that came from stars. She gives me a gift of place. A place for action, decisions, becoming. This is her body which is given in relationship to me; to have and to hold, to honor, love and cherish; and when death comes to me she’ll hold my body and make it her own, as it always was.

 But for today, her golden hair swirls down warming my shoulders, kissing my face. Her dress melts into a mess. It dissolves into a big drink for the underground. I feel the grace, not of being alive, but of living in the midst of the exquisite.

 The sun, moon, planets, and stars. Our bodies, blood, minerals, atoms. Our friends – the animals, trees, plants, soil. She gives this gift of place.

 In the universe farther under my feet, multitudes of creatures make soil. Terrestrials as foreign to me as extra-terrestrials. They make and remake earth from 100 million things that have lived and died since the first stone was born. African dung beetles navigate their soil-making by patterns in moonlight, or on moonless nights by star-shine from the Milky Way.

 The Earth is old. The minerals in my blood from the minerals in green plants that ate the minerals in the soil that received the fragments from rocks that were alive so long they could have been walked on by dinosaurs—these are the minerals I’m talking about. In my short life I walk with these fragments in my veins telling me everything told by stones. I strive to become able to listen.

 The Earth makes holy water. If I sit on the trunk of a downed tree in her water filtration system, I hear small splashes from fish in the shallows. Fallen leaves at the swamp-bottom darken and dissolve into silt. The ugly are welcome here. The dead rise to life. Lily roots drink silt and send it into luminous flowers. On the far edges of this marsh, rejuvenated water reaches into an adjacent forest, weaving ribbons to its far boundaries and beyond.

 Another boundary less obvious is the doorway to a cavernous forest of my interior world where old-growth trees stand waiting for centuries in my soul. In this inner world, a live tree is a young shaman and a dead tree is an old one. There’s a doorway on my heart; so, when I walk in the marshes and woods, the outer world wilderness comes right up to the threshold of the inner world doorway, and that door is open.

 Sitting on a log in the earthly peat, I listen. Her marsh-music sanctifies my mind. Then I walk in the forest beyond the bog amidst joyful squeals, bugle calls and bird banter. Around me, I see only trees and a flash of wing. The air quiets. The wind hushes. Then deep creaking of woodpecker hammering, and a pause. All at once, solitary otherworldly woodpecker laughter reverberates from live tree to dead tree to live tree through the swamp, the woods, and across the threshold of the open doorway into the corners of my inner forest. At that moment the boundary disappears between us, and we are one echoing, cacophonous song.

 The realm where we live is an old holy woman. So old her language translates to silence and birdsongs. She gazes with one saffron eye by day and a slowly winking luminous eye by night. All the lessons in the Book of Life happen on her watch—the almighty queen of transformation. Exploding supernovas birth universes; dung beetles craft the metropolitan underworld. I walk and dream in the in-between.