**Ceded Dreams**

Diane Raven

I go to the cabin to be quiet and to dream—often, I dream of black bear. On occasion, when I’m in the forest and down wind, I’ll catch scent; however, a sighting is rare. Nose and paw smudges on the windows; golden claw marks etched on the corners of the gray, weathered cabin logs; and teeth marks on a curiously gnawed new, cedar gate are comforting signs of their presence. In June, I’ve come across reddish-pink black bear scat filled with hundreds of thousands of tiny, pale yellow seeds that smells like strawberry jam, and in late September, I’ve seen piles of black bear scat on the forest trail that smell like apple pie.

It’s late, and the last sliver of blinding sun is behind me as I drive the woods road to the cabin. Approaching the bridge I see bulky, dark, tapered scat stretching across the road like an unraveled skein of yarn. I get out of the truck for a closer look. *Hmmm*,I thought, *wolf scat with black bear hair*. I lift the end of the glossy, black scat with a twig holding it toward the sun’s final rays where purple and blue hews shine for just a moment, then fade to black, as the sun sinks behind the tree line. A sudden coolness comes over me. Shaking it off I collect the fresh scat for later inspection. While mulling over possible scenarios, I thought, *It’s likely a hunter wounded a black bear and was unsuccessful tracking it—wolves most likely located the dead bear and ate its remains. Or, a wolf pack took down a cub.* If ravens were following this pack, witnessing the kill, they’d bide their time until the wolves left, so tomorrow I’ll listen for ravens yelling.

My friend Paul, an Anishinaabemedicine man, is dropping by the cabin tomorrow morning to look at my Trygg historical map, MI 14, which is a composite based on the U.S. original land surveyors’ plat maps and field notes. The map identifies presettlement Indian villages, sugar camps, burial grounds, and trails, as well as Christian missions. Trygg maps were created for lawyers, representing Indians, to establish values for tribal land ceded to the U.S. Paul is studying Michigan treaties that ceded millions of acres of land and water to the U.S. He’s going to be an Indian lawyer. The trail begins with a fork from the mouths of the Misery and Elm Rivers at Lake Superior on the west coast of the Keweenaw Peninsula. The Misery trail stretches about five miles east where it intersects with the Elm River trail. The trail continues thirty-five miles southeast across the Peninsula ending at a Catholic mission, at Assinins on Keweenaw Bay, which is on Paul’s reservation. I want to show him that the L’Anse Trail runs over the dam, in front of the cabin, and through the forest about a mile east before the trails fork. I want to show him the wolf scat too. Paul is bear clan…from his mom.

In a dream that night, I met Paul on the L’Anse Trail. He came out of hiding, north of the reservation, to celebrate the group’s first, traditional powwow—an arrest warrant was issued for his part in the tribal headquarters takeover. The dream was like a dust storm. Grainy images of women whirled in place then moved into a circle like pieces of colored glass in a kaleidoscope. Eagle fans sliced through the dust in sync with thunderous honor beats while men dancers wearing animal skin regalia, dipped low to the ground, with feathered staffs, gesturing the hunt, then disappeared into a plume of dust. Suddenly, Paul’s red, painted face rose from beneath the cape of an enormous black bear. In a brilliant flash of colors, his shield covered his face, and a gunshot cracked. I felt myself falling and jerked awake. Shaken, I tried to make sense of the dream. I recalled the police receiving a 911 call a few years ago; a black bear was walking around in a residential area. A young officer chased the black bear and shot it in its back as it climbed a tree in a family’s front yard. Her three cubs disappeared into the darkness. The newspaper’s coverage of the incident, and an image I hold of her falling to the ground like Faulkner’s Old Ben grieve me. It was only 3:00 a.m., so I fell asleep easily and continued dreaming. I dreamt that I was in a tent amidst the pines that border the Catholic mission’s cemetery at the east end of the L’Anse Trail. I was on a four-day fast, with six Anishinaabe women, in preparation for the first, traditional powwow. Besides the sips of cedar water in the sweat lodge, we didn’t eat or drink. As a medicine man, Paul checked on us periodically; however, his mother conducted the sweat and fast. I smudged with cedar throughout the day using a beige, circular, soapstone smudge pot with a bear cutout on its dimpled, domed cover. During the seething heat of the day, I lay quiet in my tent. At sunset, I sweat. And on the cool nights, I surrender myself to another world. I think it was the final night when it came to me. It’s blackness brushed against the tent, and it took in my scent. I heard it’s rough, muscular tongue licking the dew from the blue nylon. Suddenly, I saw myself, outside, licking water droplets from the pine needles that hung in bunches over the tent.

I snapped awake to the interminable, crazed baying of Plott hounds, a half-mile away, that penetrated the forest with a disturbing eagerness.

“Hey. Boozhoo…anyone home?” Paul pressed his hands and face up against the window.

“Boozhoo*,*”I waived, “door’s open.”

“See ya had a visitor last night,” he said. “Saw tracks down by the bridge.”