

The Little Fire Inside ~ a work in progress

“Little Flame,” the mother called “Soon the snow will be so deep that you will not feel your paws upon the Earth. You will sink in large holes of snow and will not be able to breathe. Listen to the winds. They will tell you stories of many young wolves who wandered as foolishly as you do now.” Little Flame grumbled when that name was spoken to him. I should be called ‘Big Flame’. I know how to take care of myself. I’m not a pup anymore! He was tired of being told what to do and of people making fun of him. He wanted only to run free with the wind, see new places, do adventurous things.

The old medicine man who gave him his name was the only one who understood the young wolf. He remembered the same flames of curiosity, bravery and intelligence that burned in the eyes of Red Cloud, the great grandfather of Little Flame and he understood the restlessness in Little Flame’s heart.

The long winter ended and spring was now at hand. Little Flame could feel the earth beginning to stir. He had grown a lot and his strong, young body grew more restless every day. Oh to be free he whined thinking of the hills and meadows and lakes and trails, all waiting for him. When Little Flame woke on that first day of spring, he could not contain his excitement. His relentless begging over the past weeks had weakened his mother’s resolve. “Yes!” his mother said this fine spring day, “Yes this is the day for you to explore on your own but you must listen carefully to what I tell you.”

“Little Flame, you are soon to become a hunter for the pack. It is easy to play listening and attack games when we are within our pack’s safe living place. You think you cannot get hurt but venturing to the outside world is a different place. Your sense of smell may be what keeps you alive. Your keen eyes and quick reflexes may save you from the talons of Great Eagle or the sharp teeth of Brother Coyote. Your speed will be needed to catch your dinner. I tell you my son, if trouble finds you remember to call to the spirit of Red Cloud, your great, great grandfather. His spirit still wanders the land, teaching us and protecting us.

Little Flame’s own voice however was louder than his mother’s. It was telling him how big and smart he was and how he could take care of himself. A few days after his first spring outing alone, he called to his mother. “Mother,” he said in his most mature voice, “Please prepare a pack for me. I may be gone for some time. I have much to see and do.” His mother knew that nothing would change her son’s mind. All she could do was pray to Great Spirit asking that he be protected on his journey.

So it came to be that Little Flame found himself in a strange countryside with no one and nothing familiar – a long way from home. His peaceful journey was rocked by a fearful sight. The beautiful green rolling fields like the valley he had just travelled through disappeared. From this hill top he could only see colourless and lifeless outlines of trees. What strange happenings. He made his way into the nearby forest to find fearful and quivering animals who would not tell him what was happening. Fear started to grab at him. This danger was not like the eagle or coyote. How had he prepared himself for this? Thoughts of ‘Go home!!’ ‘Save yourself!’ squirmed through his mind. Another voice spoke from deep within him. How can you leave Little Flame when there is a great need here? He moved away from the animals to a safe and hidden spot to sleep and to consider these strange events.

Little Flame made himself comfortable in a safe place behind great rocks and under large old trees and pulled out the special package his mother had given to him for the times when he felt very lonely. Within it he found beautiful gifts. As he looked at the feather and crystal and smelled the juniper, sage and cedar he heard the echoing of his mother’s voice. ‘Remember my son, when you feel alone, you are never alone. Feel my heart and spirit with you. Here are medicine plants that will protect you and help you know what you should do. Ask the Divas of the Forest to be with you. Remember your great, great grandfather. Call to his spirit and listen carefully for his message to you on the wind.’

The wind blew strong that night and Little Flame felt tossed and carried into and out of the hot breath of a huge monster. Although he was afraid there was always a distant gold light that kept calling to him. He felt safe with the presence of the light. When he awoke the next morning he knew from a place deep inside that he could not leave until this mystery was solved. Most importantly he knew he would not be alone in this venture into danger.

The new day brought sunshine and with it Little Flame’s determination to find out what was happening. Turning the corner around the big rock where he slept, he ran smack into a skunk. “Watch yourself!” hollered the skunk. “Do you think you own this place?” Little Flame was most annoyed by the fright and the rather nasty reply from the skunk. It took him sometime to come to his senses. Finally his mind woke up. Maybe this skunk knows what happened. Well he was right about that. This was no ordinary skunk! Walks Tall was a very independent and clever skunk, fearless too. “This awful problem started far away you know. Few have been there and come back. I returned.” she said with great pride. “. Come with me and we’ll talk.”

Little Flame followed Walks Tall with great curiosity. What a surprise to meet her father and to know that their great grandfathers had been friends. Little Flame and Walks Tall listened to the stories of their grandfathers' adventures and of the journeys taken by other animals to find the monster. Little Flame knew that if he was going to take on this monster he would need to find courage like his great grandfather.

That night a ceremony was held for Little Flame and Walks Tall to help them prepare for their journey and to ask the spirits of their great grandfathers to surround them with protection. As they looked at each other across the gathering place, they both knew they might meet danger on their journey. Though fear ran through them yet they knew they could not stop. As they headed for their beds that night each knew they had been touched by a special force, an ancient energy that would be their guide into the unknown.

Their journey started on a warm day with brilliant sunshine. The forest trees were so green and the world so lush that they seemed to forget about what lay ahead. The green soon gave way to the grey lifeless outline of scorched land. They walked in silence, each making a prayer to Great Spirit that they should be brave and wise in all they would do.

They decided to find out everything they could before they made their move. The ground beneath their feet felt very warm now. They knew they must be close. Ahead they saw bright red and orange flecks jumping and dancing in the air. They heard snapping and swooshing sounds and saw animals and birds running ahead of the flecks. As he watched, he remembered the stories told in his pack about escapes from fire. So this was fire.

Little Flame looked puzzled. He was sure he had heard a voice that was calling for the birds and animals to play. "How could that be? He exclaimed to Walks Tall. Could this be the fire talking? How could a fire talk and who would play with a fire anyway?" Walks Tall listened carefully. "If this is a talking fire then let's hear what it has to say."

They waited till the sun had almost set and the day and the ground was cooler. With great care they moved closer. The big fire of the afternoon was now a small fire behind a big rock. Again they heard sounds like someone crying. That was strange; nobody was near the fire. Little Flame called out in his softest, kindest voice. "I am Little Flame. Will you talk to me? The fire was most happy to have company. She had been sad for many days.

The fire explained how she had run away from home and how she was all alone now with no one to talk to. They talked through the night about many things, about the fearful and destructive power the fire could have, about the light and heat and many gifts and uses of fire for the animals and the people. This fire was impressed by the wisdom of her new friends and thought deeply about the choices she could make.

After much thinking the fire announced to her friends that she would look for a village that would welcome her and use her gifts with care and respect. The fire knew she did not travel easily through the countryside and that she would need their help to carry her on her journey. Would her new friends help? Little Flame and Walks Tall shone with delight. We already have a village in mind. All we need is a way to carry you.

The animals in Walks Tall's village were fearful when they saw the pair return pulling a travois with a long flat rock with a fire on it. Strange it was to see and scary to know that this was the monster they all feared. It took some convincing for them to welcome the fire. The fire gave a long speech to the animals, talking about how to care for fire so it would remain loyal and true. Fire is a friend not an enemy. I am your friend. I have strong powers that I will share with you. Into the night fire showed the animals the many things she could do.

How grateful the animals were once they stopped fearing. The listened carefully to what the fire said. She talked about the Great Sun's fire, the fire inside Mother Earth that came out sometimes in great thick rivers, the fire like her that people used in their homes to cook and heat and lastly she talked about the flame inside every living being. I will give you all a little bit of my fire to burn inside of you. This little flame of fire will keep you warm and shining and alive with joyful energy.

Now that Little Flame was no longer caught up in solving the problem of the monster, he had time to think. Here he was a long way from home, surrounded by new friends who loved him and admired his bravery. He was at peace yet he missed his family and his pack. He realized that it was time to return home.

It was hard to part from his new friends especially Walks Tall. They had done so much together and he would miss her. As he headed out his thoughts turned to what he had he learned on this

journey. The fire's message about the little fire inside all beings was what had made Little Flame take notice. The little fire in every being was precious and needed to be cared for and protected. Was that what his medicine name was teaching him? It is not the bigness that really matters. He and Walks Tall had helped with their wisdom, not their size. He was proud of being Little Flame.

As Little Flame made his way back to his pack, he felt all tiredness leave his heart. In the distance he heard the singing howls of a wolf pack, his wolf pack. How could they know he was coming home? A smile filled his face. The winds, the divas of the forest, the spirit of his great, great grandfather, crow and eagle, all had brought the news day after day and now they awaited the return of a hero, the big spirited and big hearted Little Flame.