

4-15-2020

Homecoming

Jasper Vanspoore

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Recommended Citation

Vanspoore, Jasper (2020) "Homecoming," *The Oval*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/oval/vol13/iss1/14>

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HOMECOMING

Jasper Vanspoore

She came from the east.
Morning sun,
hot summer sap,
dripped over her shoulders,
down a long dark braid
trailing behind her feet.
The warmth of auburn hair woven
thin, winding lines into
soft, wet earth.
Her fingertips trailed across the sky,
pricked swollen clouds,
and rain fell.

The rivers followed her westward.

A place appeared,
five waters coalescing into one.
and she stopped,
heavy bellied and sway backed.
and she lay,
knees bent and neck arched
and the midwives came.

One from the south:

she came with red stones etched into her sides, resin burned in her palm.
hot wind billowed, swirling flaxen hair
tangled shards of lightning searing canyons of
ochre serpentine and granite.
She followed them up.

One from the north:

she came with snowmelt streaming over her hips,
sparrow-red cedar woven with raven blue hair
carried pillows of emerald bedding,
her soft footsteps mirrored by stardust
leading her way.

The midwives came
and the eastern woman labored.
Water broke
flooding
until a deep well formed
and silty murk turned to grass,
soft autumn hazy golden.
The skies quieted.

Children came,
tiny fists clutching camas bitterroot
balsam cous.
Limbs of larch and pine.
And through the valleys
scattered

thousands of years
later
we came in the afterbirth,
my grandmother, my mother
myself.

It is fall and
after many years
I have just come home,
nestled at the bend of her knee
where pine trees tumble off into piles at her feet.
I see the midwives still, broad and proud like she is:
the mountain in the south, and the mountain in the north.
the river still flows.
Today it was colored with clay.

I came home
but it looks different than in my dreams,
I see rivers of asphalt
and rusting metal snakes through the valley.
charcoal coats the golden hillside,
the soft spot of her inner thigh.

At night I lay in bed.
The lonely howl of the city
seeping through my window,
I try desperately to recognize her voice,
to remember her story,
desperate to know
if I am a worthy daughter.

And then,
looking across the valley
in golden evening.
I bury my hands into the
soft, wet earth,
trailing my fingertips through the soil,
I remember what it means to create rivers
and I remember

what it means to come home.