

“The Wisdom Tree”
by Corrine Ardoin

When I had just turned five years old, I went walking in the early morning out into the fields with our dog. After about a half mile, we reached the edge of the grassy fields, where a sharp incline led down into the native chaparral region. We stopped as, suddenly, a commotion began, numerous dogs barking I knew were the junkyard dogs at the end of our street. Below the hill I stood upon, they were chasing off a very large pack of coyotes, seemed like a hundred to me, but there were actually twenty or thirty of them running through the chaparral. It was a powerful experience that instantly won me over as a nature lover from that time forward.

When I was twelve years old, I began to teach myself how to play various musical instruments. The first song I wrote was called, “The Lonely Tree.” It went like this: “See the lonely tree, as lonely as me. High up in the sky so blue, not on the earth, not close to you.” It never occurred to me at the time why the tree was up in the sky and not on the earth. On my spiritual healing path, I have learned it is The Wisdom Tree, which I have needed to incorporate into my spiritual reality, my purpose and destiny.

I had a very difficult and painful childhood. I loved nature and spent most of my time alone out in the fields, day or night, exploring and developing a special connection to the earth, its trees and plants and animals, and to the sky, its sun and stars, moon and clouds, the wind. I came to an understanding that I was often called outdoors by the wind, which I know now is how the ancestors call to me.

After I left home, I lived in various places throughout California, working for the California Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service as a firefighter and doing trail work. I married and we began a family. Our homes were always close to nature, in the woods, by rivers, and we spent all our time outdoors. My love of nature deepened and the spiritual connection that I treasured became especially strong. Not only the wind, but the animals, I knew, were calling to me, calling me into the woods, day or night, to the water's edge. I think that the coyotes I saw at age five had called to me, too, to witness, to be initiated, to learn their ways, to learn about Truth. Those lessons continue to this day.

In my explorations, I developed my connection and ability to communicate with all animals, though some in particular. In addition to the coyote, the bear, the mountain lion, the deer, the snake, and the eagle stood out as messengers, teachers, protectors, and guides. When I saw them, I knew there would be a lesson to learn or a message would follow. It was not uncommon to find myself surrounded by owls on the branches of a tree I stood beneath, or bears, or awoken to see a magnificent, twelve-point deer standing over me. Not just wild animals, however, but domesticated animals came to me often, herds of horses, crowding around me, smelling me, nudging me, dogs coming up to me needing help with something. I have come to realize that this is connected to my spiritual work.

One day, I prayed to God for the thousandth time to help me find “real” work. I was driving in my car with the intention of going to the park, yet, all the while, driving to the beach. I got to the beach, grabbed my jacket, though it was too warm for one, walked down the beach, saw a group of pelicans and made that my destination, reached it as they flew off, saw the long-billed curlew floundering in the surf, picked it up, wrapped it in my jacket, walked back to my car. The ranger called the wildlife rescue people, I met them somewhere and they took the curlew from me. I then drove home. I had prayed for a real job and I was given one. I knew that Spirit sent me there to help the bird. Another time, I rode my bike out into the hills, saw a mourning dove sitting in the middle of the road, cars speeding past it, their wind knocking the bird around more. I stopped and the cars slowed down then as they saw me, and would drive slowly around the bird. When I could, I went to pick up what I thought was an injured bird, but it simply flew away. Later that day, or the next, I learned that a young man on his bicycle had been struck by a car and killed at that spot.

The Wisdom Tree is my spiritual anchor. I belong to it and it belongs to me. We are One.