

Brother Older than Myself

Brother older than myself,
Do you remember when you were Chief Mighty Cloud and I
Was Little Wing?

Ah ah

I will tell you what is in my heart.

Even before recorded history
The legends tell of how you took me by the hand
And guided me across the fields to the place
Where the earth no longer lives.
Through all the days of all the wintercounts of my childhood
You guided me.

You showed to me the beauty of the land.
Early, when the sun was waking up,
You took me through the sinew grass
To the little water place.
And I became friend to:
 the little stripped back
 the tall ears
 the swims-carrying-stick-in-mouth creature
 the shell that walks
 the double wing with red shoulders
 and
 the bird who knocks on wood.

You taught to me the secrets of the little-people-of-the-air.
I learned to read the music of their wings.
And find their home among the sticks that point toward sky.
I learned to blow the smoke so they would not stab
And raise a lump.
But always, you taught, leave to them their winter food.

When the winter voice sang strong across our land,
You placed your deerskin robe across my shoulder
And stoked the fire in our lodge to drive away the bitter cold.

When the fever burned within my brow
And evil spirits owned my tongue,
You gathered and mixed the healing herbs
 the snakeroot
 and borage
 the milkweed
 dock
 and coneflower.
 and the mint
 meadow rue
 and
 calamus.

When the bone-setter had worked his magic on my foot,
You played with me the games of childhood.
 the guessing game with cherrystones
 secret of the soft voice
 paint the parchment with many colors
 and
 hide the moccasin.

And you taught to me the legends of our ancestors.

Brother older than myself
My heart is grateful.