

There Are Songs by Barbara McAfee

Scientists are now affirming what many indigenous peoples and mystics have known for a long time: the world is made of sound. Everything around and within us is comprised of vibrating stuff. As a songwriter, I am always listening for the songs that are already here. My job is to catch these whispered suggestions and bring them into form.

There are songs in the soil and the rivers and trees

And the ears of your heart can hear them.

And some come alive in the meeting of eyes

If you take the time to see them.

My hands are clumsy with cold as I type these words.

This morning - like every morning - I began my day with a five-mile hike from my home down into the St. Croix River valley. When I arrive at the river's edge, I sing some prayerful songs and leap into the brilliantly cold, clean water. It is no longer a struggle to enter the cold water. My body welcomes it now, and the tingling aliveness that comes afterward is unspeakably delicious.

Since I moved to this small river town in northwestern Wisconsin a year ago, I have spent hours outside every day. Every morning I am humbled to walk among stones that are over a billion years old and linger under ancient white pines. I watch the dawn light play on the surface of the water. I come face to face with the same white-tailed deer, watch bald eagles fly upriver, and witness beaver at her breakfast. This land, these waters are teaching me a deeper story.

There are songs in my bones, won't leave me alone

Calling for creation

And some that fly on the whispering wind

Seeking incarnation.

Whenever my attention reaches out into the world it is met by a blast of lavish generosity.

Whenever I look, I see something wondrous.

Whenever I listen, I hear music all around me.

Whenever I breathe deep, I smell the exhalations of creation in my nose.

It happens every single time.

How can this be?

My friend, Julie Brown, also draws deep inspiration from the place she lives about an hour north of me. As a “poetic photographer,” Julie chronicles the daily miracles she encounters through the lens of her camera. For decades she has stepped into the woods outside her door with eyes and heart wide open to see – and then chronicle – the wonders she finds there.

Her work is first and foremost a spiritual practice. She humbly and faithfully makes herself available to deeply see, and Life in its many forms responds by showing her an abundance of marvels. Julie shares an image and a quote every day on her Tumblr page <http://julesofnature.tumblr.com> and on Instagram @julesofnature.

Knowing Julie and her work has taught my eyes how to see more deeply. In turn, that deeper vision emerges in how I write songs and poems. We are in a joyful dance of mutual inspiration.

There are songs that ride on the dancing tides

That swirl through all the oceans

And some that dream in the bitter seed

That grief will set in motion.

When her images and my songs meet – as they do in the music video, “There Are Songs” – they join in a praise song for Life itself. Thank you, Julie. Thank you, Life!

For more inspiration, join this Saturday's Awakin Call with Barbara McAfee, "Midwifing Voices Across Thresholds." More details and RSVP info [here](#).