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**THE
LA LUZ
JOURNAL**

by Juana Maria Paz

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Juana C/o Twin Oaks, Rt 4 Box 169
Quisa, VA, 23093 (703) 894-5787
Other works by the author include: (703) 894-5126

PLAYS: *La Luz: A Musical Play*; *Johnson*; *Dead Men: A Woman's Fantasy*;
The Ancient Matriarchy of Atlantis; *In the Beginning*; *Frankly, My Dear . . .*
I'm Eating

JOURNALS: *Dream Come True*; *One Mad Dreamer*; *Alone*; *The Acting*
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WORK IN PROGRESS: *The Matriarchal Book of Costume*

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project.

This book is dedicated

to the person who has always loved me—
my daughter, Mary Ann.

To all the womyn who make a place like La Luz possible and those of you who hate me for writing about it, I say – REMEMBER . . .

I Am Not Shutting Up

The trouble with women
is that it is too easy
to shut us up.

We think that by hiding
we protect our identities
– while going slowly mad

We are trading silence for security
and getting neither

I put the men and the rest of the world
on notice:
I am not shutting up

I will scream and rave and rage
and kill you in the process

Our emotions are deadly
our silence kills us
our rage kills them

Love will not conquer all
but honesty will send our enemies
back to their corners, crawling
on all fours

Truth is our most powerful and deadly weapon
we all possess it in the same proportions

We all know how to use it as a weapon
I am not a humanitarian or a liberal
I want the men and the rest of the world
to get the hell out of the way
'cause I'm coming through
and I'd love to run right over their asses.

– Juana Maria Paz

La Luz de la Lucha means “the light of the struggle” in Spanish.

One

In 1977 I was doing welfare rights work in Los Angeles. The inner conflicts that I saw there among womyn and activists surprised me and foreshadowed the events to come. I was one of those people who thought all we had to do was to get womyn together and then total bliss would follow. Competition, gossip and back-stabbing were all the order of the day in social service work. We were fighting for the few scraps of recognition and power that came with political work.

I was staying with friends in the neighborhood when the body of a naked womyn was found outside the People's Playgroup. She had been murdered by the Hillside Strangler who was terrorizing Los Angeles. The womyn I lived with were very involved with the Playgroup. One of the womyn was a childcare worker there. I was already fed up with city life. I realized that I contributed to my own destruction by subsidizing slum landlords, utility companies and grocery chains.

I wanted a simpler life and I was ready for it. I reasoned that ten welfare mothers, at \$300 per month, could pool our money and buy land. Three thousand a month, I thought, could support almost anything. Little did I know that in my search for freedom I had fixed on yet another loaded issue—money-sharing.

I wrote a play in response to the killing of womyn; this while we were being advised to stay in our houses. It's called *Dead Men: A Woman's Fantasy*. It's a very short play in which a woman kills a rapist. I've had a lot of trouble with this play. People think it's representative of lesbian politics. I was still straight at the time I wrote it, though disillusioned. Womyn thought the play was too violent, imitative of male politics. The dykes thought it was redundant. After all, they weren't ambivalent about men. The straight womyn in my welfare rights group loved it but not the theaters.

Sister, an L.A. newspaper, published the play and talked to me about a series of articles on my welfare rights work. In the same issue as my play, there was an article about a piece of womyn's land called Nourishing Space. (It has since been turned into a boys' camp.) I wrote saying I was interested in visiting and learning more about the concept of womyn's land. I received a rather vague response in return, but since it was okay to visit and I was at the end of my rope in the city, away I went, with my two-year-old daughter, Mary Ann.

I wouldn't say womyn were actually open to me when I arrived, but they weren't hostile, either. More than that, everyone seemed too involved in their own personal life and relationships to even notice me. I got frustrated with the lack of communication and started complaining. Gradually, people opened up to me, but getting acquainted took much longer than in any kind of ordinary group. I had been on the land for weeks without making friends with anyone.

This is not the kind of problem I usually have, since I'm friendly. When I finally got into the library in the main house, I got all the womyn's land information I wanted—newsletters, addresses, policies, goals, etc. My disappointment was that I expected lesbians to be closer than other womyn. Nothing prepared me for the elaborate avoidance ritual that I encountered. A womyn who I became close with, Morning Drum Fire, told me about La Luz, womyn-of-colour land, which was "the coming thing" in the tribe.

She let me know that I could go there because I was Puerto Rican. The rest of the womyn couldn't live there because they were white. They let me know that they felt real bad about that, excluded and hurt and oppressed by the unsisterly behavior. From a group of womyn who hadn't said a civil word to me in weeks, I thought they had a hell of a nerve. I decided I'd better check out La Luz and see what it was all about. La Luz de la Lucha, the light of the struggle, also known as the Third World Warriors Earth Collective, seemed like a dream come true.

At the time that I wrote in my journal I intended that it be read only within the tribe. Consequently, in its original form and first edition much background information was left out. In this edition, I have attempted to include the necessary information through narrative. However, the actual journal entries remain as untouched as possible.

I have tried not to edit in a way that represents myself as more "together" than I really was back then. Unrelated details and repetitions have been omitted.

Nourishing Space
Vail, Arizona
January, 1978

It is not the same, is it? It is never the same. There are no answers, only questions, and life goes on, in wonder and bewilderment. I fell in love, again, in my own inimitable way. Only this time it is not a man, it is a woman. There is nothing in my experience to compare with it, no way to make sense or reason out of it. It is always so absurd with me, circling around like a wounded dove and never landing. It is much simpler with men; they make rules and lay down laws and you know, you always know what they want. Power.

It is not like that here. There are no men, and where we live, in our house in the desert, there is no power. The men and the power and the violence are all outside the gates. We have managed to keep them out of here. So far. We went for a walk this morning and held hands. We jumped over rocks crossing the water and I felt like a stranger in a new world. Perhaps I have always been a stranger in the old world, the one we all came here to forget.

I am so afraid and I am so amazed by everything I see around me that I have no way to digest it. I do not know what will happen but in some ways I do not care. There are no games here and no losers. We are all womyn, living with and of each other, and with the grace of God, that will go on.

I think she said she didn't have time. When I fall in love I never understand it. I don't know what that means. This time will be different. There will be no scream of terror and no gun. There will not be a man to bind my arms and muffle my mouth. He will not lie above me as I wait for death. Someday I will forget. Someday I will make love with wild abandon. Someday I will love my body and cherish it as my own. I will not be what they have reduced me to, a trembling mass of frightened womanhood.

Someday I will not be afraid. The men and the madness, the pain and the violence, someday they will not be a part of me.

Maybe someday starts today.

Sunday, January 22, 1978

Limesaddle Earth Collective,

I am presently living at Nourishing Space in Arizona. This is not a collective and is mostly a retreat for white womyn who have fled the middle class.

I have a daughter, Mary Ann, who is 2½ years old. I am looking for someplace outside the city where I can live and raise my child.

I am very interested in the long-range goal of breaking with man-made systems. I am paid here until Thursday. I would like to hear from Limesaddle before I leave here. I am enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope with sheet of paper enclosed, in the hope of receiving word from you by return mail.

I am also enclosing my list of welfare tips. I worked for several months as a welfare organizer in L.A. County. Since AFDC is a statewide program, the information should be of use to you.

I would also be available to share with other women effective techniques that have been used to collect \$ from the welfare department. I firmly believe that we should, as women, get as much money as we can from the state and then use it to build our own power.

I receive AFDC in L.A. County and have an income of about \$300 a month. I would, therefore, be able to contribute financial resources in exchange for space.

In sisterhood,
Jean Gonzalez

P.S.—I realize Limesaddle is for Third World women only. I am a native New Yorker, both my parents were born in Puerto Rico. I am first-generation American.

MAILGRAM FROM LIMESADDLE:

La Hermana,

You and Mary Ann come. Welcome Home. Call us 916/534-9649 for directions.

Yours in struggle,
Sundown
Flying Thunder

I got a ride with two white women from Nourishing Space. They got a lot more interested in me after the enthusiastic mailgram arrived. They had initially offered to drive Mary Ann and myself as far as they were going, which was somewhere on the west coast. When it became clear that we were welcome at the new land everybody was talking about, they offered to re-route their trip and take me all the way to La Luz. And they did, too.

Two

La Luz
February, 1978

And so I have come to the end of the rainbow. There is nothing here that I have not seen in another shape or form, and everything that I ran away from, only different. The disappointment is, ultimately, that people are the same all over and power flows in cycles and circles, between groups and individuals, but it is the unseen ruler of us all.

I knew when I came here that I would find struggle. I knew that power would be abused. I surmised that there might be an out-group and I wondered who it might be. I wondered who the out-group of the larger society would ostracize and I pondered the question with intellectual amusement.

I never thought that it would be me. So, here I am, pen in hand, lying on the mat of my loft in paradise. I feel that I do not belong here. How dramatic that I am a woman with no home, no place, no culture. I mock so easily the absurdity of life and self and yet, underneath, I have always felt the need to go home.

Sometimes I feel that home, that elusive quality or mysterious entity, calls to me and beckons me toward it. And I leave again, wherever I am, whatever role I am in, and my being scatters about the earth like bits of paper fluttering in the morning breeze.

To what purpose do I roam the earth, to what end? I am tired of looking, tired of searching, tired of compromises forced on me by those in power. If there is anyplace on earth where power does not take precedence over people, please tell me so I may know of it. I am afraid, dearly afraid, that if something does not change, I will evolve the philosophy that power is inherently evil, that it is inevitable, and that it simply moves in circles.

Perhaps I am a madwomyn roaming the earth in search of a vacuum where I might find peace. And perhaps their reality is different from

mine. Perhaps my language is foreign to them and my words fall around their circle like dead leaves, sinking in the earth, forgotten, before they rise up in another form. Perhaps I do not know the answer and I am tired of searching for the question. It is too much work now, life; I need a rest. Perhaps it would help if I remembered my dreams, completely, not glimpses of men and madness and murder.

In truth, I do not aspire to be a brave warrior. I would like once to be a coward and get away with it. This absurd outlaw existence does not soothe me. I came here to shed my armor, to let down my defenses and open my arms, and once and for all, to abandon my gladiator role.

I want to admit that I find life tiring, frustrating and frightening. That fear is with me always. I do not want to play Robin Hood in the woods, nor do I want to steal horses by the light of the moon and pursue the life of a fugitive.

I want to be happy and I want to find peace. I want to relax my body and unfold my mind. I want to attain a spirituality that is beyond violence or power or pettiness. I want to sleep, really sleep, the rest of the contented. I want to stop raging battles and burning bridges long enough to find myself. I feel another self deep inside me, waiting, indeed, screaming, to get out. I fear that if I do not find that self now, in my youth, it will be lost to me forever.

I fear so much that perhaps I am, at best, a gutless coward. I envy the coward who avoids battles and walks away from confrontations. I envy the womyn who is satiated in her ignorance. I envy the people who do not care, the men who do not struggle, and all those whose voices do not compel them to cry out in pain and suffering.

Is anywhere a womyn happy, or is happiness another illusion, an empty ideal that is held up to us to keep us quiet? Perhaps happiness is the ideal unattainable and the only satisfaction is in striving. I don't know. I just don't know.

Like Sassafras here in Arkansas, Limesaddle started out in the seventies as a heterosexual commune, part of the whole "back to the land" movement that was going on then. Limesaddle, or Rattlesnake Gulch, as it was sometimes called, was a 24-acre spread right off the intersection of a small road and a major highway. It contained a large farmhouse,

garden space and several smaller cabins that had been added on by the communal group and did not meet any housing code standards.

I know very little about the original straight commune, only that womyn came out and as men left or moved on they were replaced with womyn, until sometime around 1976 or '77, Limesaddle became womyn's land, like OWL Farm to the north. OWL Farm (Oregon Womyn's Land) was bought by white lesbians in Southern Oregon. Lesbians of colour experienced frustration and exclusion in the white tribe and joined together to demand autonomous land and money. Reclaiming the land for womyn of colour was not an easy process. It was mostly over by the time I arrived, but the bitterness and hostility remained.

In February of 1978 there was a land trust meeting at La Luz where the tribe agreed to give half the remaining inheritance money to La Luz and the third world warriors. Our share was \$40,000. I left the land before it arrived. I left the meeting before it was over, too. The white womyn and the womyn of colour were involved in such a symbiotic love/hate relationship that I did not think the money would save us.

In choosing to tell this story, it has been necessary for me to protect the integrity and sometimes the anonymity of my tribe. None of the womyn from La Luz have ever consented to publicly disclose the details of their lives. I have chosen this book to bring our experience to other womyn.

We went back from La Luz to Los Angeles with the friend who had joined us. Several months later I went to Eugene, Oregon, and learned that Flying Thunder and Too Bad* had left the land with most of the money and had gone into hiding.

Though disappointing, their departure gave me the chance to go back and try again. I went to OWL Farm, which was a few hours from Eugene, and stayed for about a month. From there I got a ride to California, and Mary Ann and I arrived to find La Luz empty.

* Sundown, Too Bad, & Felecia are all the same person.

Three

La Luz de la Lucha
Thursday, June 15, 1978
5-6 p.m., Main House

As we start out here again, at this living collective, I feel the need to look at what happened, to learn from it and grow, so that ultimately we can get beyond all the pettiness, the power struggles and the mistrust. It is my intent, with this writing, to discover and write down my feelings on what happened and why, as I saw it, one womyn speaking for myself, a womyn who came here with many needs and many dreams. It is my hope that other womyn, womyn who have come here and gone, will read this and think about what I've said, then decide in their own minds what they think. I feel the need, at some point, for as many of us as possible to get together and talk about what we saw.

I guess the first and foremost thing in my mind when I think of the break-up of the collective, and the community being in a state of limbo, as it is right now, the first thing that comes to mind is the incredible power structure that I saw here.

Some womyn seemed to think that power and privilege were the rewards for a job well done. Some womyn, I perceived, were not going to admit that anything was wrong until the place went up in smoke, literally.

Being here was one of the cruelest experiences of my life. Many times I felt raped or deliberately ostracized. Not that that's any different from what I knew in the outside world. The devastating thing for me was that I expected it to be different here.

In the beginning, I was sincerely open to working with womyn and creating a bond of trust. I can't say I actually trusted anyone not to hurt me, but I was honestly open to building the relationships that would create that kind of trust. When I found that I was not going to

be able to contribute my energy because it would upset the balance of power, then I held back and closed myself off to people.

In many ways, the collective never had a chance, because there never really was a collective. Two womyn were a team and they stayed while several womyn came and went. I don't think a whole circle of womyn in the living collective ever had a chance to challenge the power set-up because we weren't here at the same time. I wasn't going to take it on alone.

I did not defend my beliefs or say what I saw going on. I stated my positions when I thought womyn were the least closed to them, but it didn't take much indifference and negative reinforcement to make me shut up. I think womyn knew that I disagreed with most, if not all, of what went on sometimes. I did not state my objections at every opportunity. It was too painful and too disheartening. For the record I will state my objections here:

First: I disagree with the warrior mentality. I feel that violence begets violence. I feel more strongly all the time that all womyn need to defend ourselves against men and overcome the fear of them that has been instilled in us by the patriarchy. I am considering buying a handgun but will bring the idea to the rest of the collective.

I do not want to live in a guerrilla training camp. I don't feel the focus of our existence should be to destroy the patriarchy. It may seem like a fine point to some but I firmly believe that by withdrawing our energy from men we take back our power and reduce theirs. Every woman who quits a straight job, leaves a husband, or just stops working for men weakens their hold on us.

We don't need them. They feed on us. I don't want to blow up the cities. I just want to leave them empty. I look forward to the day when all womyn will abandon their ties to the patriarchy and leave men to their buildings, their machines, their toys and their garbage.

I think the way to do that is to create a place where womyn can come and then let them know it's here. In the process of achieving what we call political awareness, people change very quickly. The meat eaters of today are the vegetarians of tomorrow. Housewives and welfare mothers take their kids and move to womyn's lands, school teachers come out, activists become separatists, liberals become revolutionaries and capitalists collectivize their money.

Any guidelines or living philosophy that we agree to have to include change as a constant factor. Otherwise, we become what one womyn called a private club that only admits people who already agree with the rules. A lot of good womyn who could have stayed and worked here, including myself, didn't because other womyn weren't open to us. I was essentially thrown out of the collective for not sharing my money. When I got back to Los Angeles I really needed it.

Second: I think the mutual selection process has got to go. It sounds like after I left the remaining womyn de-selected each other until only three of them were left. Out of those three, two womyn took off with most of the money in our account and disappeared.

I think it's important to not just dump on the womyn who aren't here but to take responsibility for how we, individually and as a group, contributed to what happened.

Third: I think the food trip was neurotic. Most of our eating habits are neurotic because we are so obsessed with food. It's a status symbol and a form of self-gratification, especially for poor womyn. In political circles, it's very "in" to be knowledgeable about food. I, myself, eat too much. I use food as a form of self-gratification because it's relatively cheap, accessible, and I can do it almost anywhere. It's a much more socially acceptable addiction than drugs or drinking. I use food to fill me up, weigh me down, and to neutralize my anger. When I start to get my basic needs met, I hope to let go of this addiction.

I do not want to hear a speech every time I put something in my mouth. I refuse to deal with womyn who do not respect another womyn's process. In the guise of honesty, some people get away with a lot of put-downs because what they say is politically correct. Politics can be used as a weapon to power-trip womyn who are struggling to find their personal/political identities. It is important to share our knowledge without being oppressive because politics, a class analysis and a pure food trip are luxuries some womyn still don't have. Womyn in the slums don't eat raw food. It's a status symbol for them to have a steak for dinner and ham and eggs for breakfast.

For all our rhetoric, some of us, including myself, have been racist, classist, and oppressive to womyn with less privilege than ourselves. When a womyn says she's been eating a certain way all her life and it will take her years to change, do we honor her struggle and hear her

pain? Or do we add to it by trashing her in unison because she's politically incorrect again? Do we lay all our trips on her, our trips that are a part of our privilege to have time to sit around and talk politics, while she's been in the slums eating beans?

The basic error here was thinking that saying something made it happen. We all decided this place was going to be different. So—ZAP!—we expected it to be different. We weren't even allowing a couple of years for these changes to be made. We had a circle and it was all decided.

What we didn't see (I thought I did) was that we were the same people we had been before we came here, and we brought that past, meaning the patriarchy, with us. It will be a long and continuing process to purge ourselves of the culture we grew up in. Perhaps we cannot even do it in our lifetime. Perhaps only our daughters, who will not learn the ways of men, will be truly free.

Perhaps this is only the beginning of a long, long process. It takes years, even centuries to build a culture. For all the talk of a transition process here, we closed the circle to womyn who did not agree.

It is just exhausting to write this. I can't possibly document every injustice, every foolish, stupid mistake that we made while refusing to consider any other way. I guess the power and the money were overwhelming and womyn got caught up in the same old thing—violence, greed, individualism, trying to make others conform.

Fourth: I think the couple-ism was divisive. Everybody took her pain to her own lover or held it in. No one was open to everyone and we were never a close committed circle.

Fifth: I don't think womyn should be pressured to collectivize their money. For one thing, as long as I have known this land, it has been self-supporting. The problem seems to be how the collective money is handled.

The beauty of womyn's lands is that they offer a greater degree of choice than we have ever known. That's scary but I think being so closed to each other resulted in the isolation on the land now. Mary Ann and I have been alone for over a week here. I wonder if I'll ever see another womyn's face on this land.

Fifth: I don't think we should ostracize people. If a womyn is part of the collective she should have the same amount of power as everyone else. No unspoken rules that someone always handles the money, leads the meetings, or speaks for the group. I think that will be our hardest struggle here, not setting up another power block. We're so used to new regimes coming in and taking over that some people never realize that one person or a few wind up with more power than the rest. It's just the way it's always been.

My fear in sharing this book was that in telling the truth I might become vulnerable, exposed, that I would lose power. I have found that the truth has its own power. Its expression brings with it its own reward. Looking back on my early writings on the land, I find that I held an innocence back then that I no longer possess. I am not untried anymore. I have failed now. I have been blinded by the emptiness behind my dream and humbled by the failure of my visions.

But I have survived. I have loved and lost, seen and believed and let go. And I have lived to tell about it. I am not a loser anymore. I am a beautiful and sensual womyn. I say that without shame or pride. At one time, I was more afraid of identifying myself, so much safer to let other people define me. I turned twenty-eight this summer. Friends tell me it has something to do with my Saturn cycle. I don't know.

I only know that it's time.

Four

La Luz de La Lucha
Monday, June 20, 1978
6 p.m. Porch of Main House

Full moon

Tonight is the full moon. The peace and the serenity that I feel fill me with energy that is not scattered or desperate like before but with a purpose now.

I am creating a new age. I am reading *The First Sex* by Elizabeth Gould Davis, and I feel that at last I have come home. I have found myself in women who lived 50,000 years ago. So, at last, we do not have to build a whole new culture. We can merely reclaim the old one.

I see how the women's movement has taken so many wrong turns trying to integrate ourselves into men's society, playing their games and trying to correct their mistakes. Western civilization has failed. The cities of today are the ruins of tomorrow. Men's buildings and possessions will be their tombs. Let us leave them to their destiny and reclaim our own.

They are not our equals. They soiled our temples with their phalluses when we ruled the world. They sat idly by while we invented science and music, built cities and gave birth to civilization. We are their mothers but they are a mistake, because each man born is merely half a woman. We must stop producing halves of ourselves. The year 2000 will mark the end of the Age of the Ram. By that time I am certain we will have reclaimed the earth.

I think lately of having more daughters. Think of it, ten or twelve daughters for the matriarchy. What a gift and what a privilege. To think of the things we almost gave up in the name of liberation—beauty and motherhood.

Since being alone these past two weeks on the land, with my daughter, I have found so much of myself. I have begun making our clothes,

it feels so right somehow. I have never felt so right before. I have only felt like I was moving toward something that was right for me.

Motherhood is so right. Since I have reclaimed my motherhood Mariana and I are more comfortable with each other and more caring. I must write more, every day, perhaps, so the words truly reflect my thoughts. I feel that I am giving birth to a new world here, the world of women, the last and final, eternal matriarchy. I cleaned the altar room today. When I woke up I planned to clean the attic, but somehow I just started to clean out the altar room and when I was finished, she looked for all the world like an ancient goddess temple.

I am inside now and as I turn my head I see the long table pointed to the statue of an ancient goddess. The room is framed on both sides by an archway of wooden shelves and plants hanging at the entrance. It seems to separate the room from this one and make it a separate entity. The work is good and I am pleased.

Both windows are open in the altar room, and I will leave them so all night and let the full moon come in and cleanse it. It is good. Everything is good now and I am pleased.

A man came last night and I screamed. He put his hand in the window of the Sunset House and spoke. I screamed. He said he was looking for Meeshra. We went and slept in the attic after that so we would be safe from outsiders. I am lonely here sometimes but I have so much purpose and such meaning in my work that I am filled with it. I just asked Mariana to go into the library while I write because she distracts me.

We got a letter from Morning yesterday. It filled me with much happiness. There are no more stamps to mail letters until someone sends some, so I can't answer yet. I made a dress today by cutting holes in an old laundry bag for head and arms. With the necklaces I made it was quite beautiful. I was pleased and surprised.

So, at last, I have reclaimed my beauty. I thought I would have to let go of it forever because men defiled it and for that reason, my sisters deny it. What fools the men have made of us and how we are still so tied to them in the way we lead our lives. We cut our hair and wear their clothes in rejection of their feminine values, so what do we wind up with? Their masculine values.

And where are the warriors now, my brave beautiful warrior women whose bodies are strong and whose words are stronger? Where are you, when the garden needs planting, while the trees bear their fruit, while our daughter asks for you and life begins again here at home?

You are in the men's world. There is nothing for us besides home, no calling and no purpose. This land is our life's blood because you have reclaimed it for us. Where are you when the battles are done and the moment of glory has passed? Where are you when there are floors to be swept, rooms to be aired, and meals to be cooked? Where are you when life begins again?

For all your bravery, your beauty, all your warrior words, it is "the earthmother" who will tend the land while you have your fling. Will you be like men and sit in a bar while I clean the house and bear your children? I do not envy you your fling. I thank you for this opportunity, for this new beginning, for myself and my daughter together to create a new land. I see how held back I have been here by women who are not ready to make a new beginning and I know that for me to have accepted that means I was not ready either. I am ready now.

Mary Ann, next to me, is fidgeting on the bed. She is exhausted, as we both are, from a day of good, hard work. She is a good child to me and I am much blessed. May she grow to love and revere me in later life when she no longer has need of me as she does now.

Three kittens were born here a few weeks ago. Two of the peach trees are bearing fruit. It is good, that. It is a sign of life, a new cycle beginning here. Tonight is the full moon. Mariana is tired, the kittens restless, the altar room sacred and the fruit perfect. Tonight will mark the beginning, I am sure of it, of a new age of peace and purity on the land.

The cars in the distance mean nothing to me now. They have no meaning. Everything is here and now and starts again. Life is good. Life is rich. Our land is sacred and at last, I am free. Flying Thunder Woman, where are you?

9 p.m., same night

The moon is full, the night air rich and warm. A warrior has returned. Burning Cloud is here with Nebu and friend Makara. I am no longer afraid of the dark. Perhaps I will sleep outside tonight or write or think or just be, in the moonlight, after all this time, as I am. Our land

has been much blessed tonight. Perhaps our sisters to the north prayed for this. Tomorrow will be pain and guilt and shame, perhaps, but tonight is good and we will give thanks. Blessed be.

They were actually apricot trees. I couldn't tell the difference. My sisters, when they came, were glad to point out all my inadequacies. There are things that I left out of the original edition of this journal. I thought it would go better for me if I were simply a mournful latina lesbian in search of myself, without stressing how much I saw beneath the surface of everyone's politically correct behavior, including my own. I left out how much I hated my lover, how much I utterly despised and loathed the sight of her. I knew enough to keep my mouth shut in an all-womyn tribe where Jewish identity was emerging in womyn who had supported every other struggle over the years but their own.

Looking back I can see that I was not ready for a lover and Eli's suffering filled me with silent rage because I could not openly reject either the womyn or the relationship. I admit things here in print for the first time. I left Eli because I wasn't ready. I loved Flying Thunder because I thought that love would bring me the tribe and homeland that I needed. I wanted to go home and I wanted to go there with you, all of you.

Five

Two womyn of colour came while I was at La Luz with Mary Ann and Burning Cloud. I knew someone would come and challenge my power. I told Burning Cloud that I was ready to relinquish it. We knew it was all over when two disturbing things happened in the same morning.

I woke up to the sound of the two womyn screaming at each other at the top of their lungs in very harsh, shrill voices. I tried to go back to sleep but the screaming persisted. I got up and went to the main house, where Burning Cloud greeted me with a series of dreams—*falling dreams, it's all over dreams, the end dreams*. So we had our sign.

The new womyn challenged my power immediately. I was the one taking responsibility at the time because Burning Cloud was still in mourning. Her lover had recently been raped, and though she was outwardly unharmed, it had been a trying time for both womyn. I suggested to the new womyn that they do whatever they liked but made it clear that I was not going to take orders from them or clean up after them. On somewhat unfriendly terms, I retreated to my cabin in the gulch.

We were running low on food. It would be the first of many times. I started a fast but Mary Ann didn't want to. I wrote the play *Ancient Matriarchy of Atlantis* while in a daze after three days of my first fast. I went up to the main house only when I had to and finally the inevitable happened. I felt it coming but felt powerless to stop it. I didn't know what to do.

The two womyn followed me into the yard when I left the house to get away from them. They jumped me on the driveway and threatened to hang me from the nearest tree. They didn't think I was spiritually evolved enough for the work I was trying to do. They didn't think I deserved Mary Ann, either. *My daughter Mary Ann*. I held my child to me while they showered me with blows, mostly around my arms

and back but a few times they hit me on the chest, where my child lay motionless.

I tried to get to the car and asked Burning Cloud to drive me to town. She wouldn't do it: I remember thinking in that moment, "I slept with you. I laid my body next to yours and went to sleep. *How could you?*"

They ripped the shirt off my back as I fled down the driveway. I was naked as I held my child and they punished me for all their fear and all their pain. It became clear that retreat was impossible and my lover of a few nights before was helpless. I fell back on what I always fall back on in times of need and stress—my mind and my uncanny ability to act and give people what they want.

"Did you want to show me something?" I asked my attackers. They did. They wanted my attention. I stood naked in the kitchen and let my people tell me how to live. I played my part well. In fact, it was easy. I've been raped many times, once at gunpoint. I know how to perform under pressure.

I remember seeing Burning Cloud come in the kitchen quietly and sit at the table watching me get my education and glad, I supposed, in some ways, that the arrogant Puerto Rican had been put in her place. Akida was teaching me how to make popcorn with hair grease. A lesson on survival in the ghetto. No one has to go hungry, she said. No one has to be on welfare, which, she said, is a bad thing for womyn. It makes us dependent.

I *ooled* and *aahed* on cue long enough to calm everybody down and start formulating a clear plan. Finally, I said I needed to go back to my cabin for some clothes and got Mary Ann a pair of shoes from the closet "so she won't scorch her feet on the driveway" and we were on our way.

We were packed and heading out through the bushes in fifteen minutes. I had been fasting and had no energy though I didn't feel tired or sick. I couldn't carry Mary Ann so I made her walk up the highway with me till we got a ride.

I remember laughing to myself at Burning Cloud, sitting at the table, badly frightened by all that was going on. "Is she really buying this performance?" I wondered. "I must be a better actress than I thought."

There is no entry about this in the La Luz Journal. It was in the altar room in the main house at the time and I could not get to it. I took a

smaller, red journal and wrote in it while I hid out in the hills and waited for the land trust meeting that was coming three days later.

I spent my birthday, July 12, hiding under a bush across the highway from La Luz. The land trust meeting was moved from La Luz because the plumbing was broken and we had no water.

I met Morning Drum Fire at the land trust meeting and got a lot of support for staying as long as I had. I went back to OWL Farm with her group. We camped at some beautiful spots along the way and I healed my relationship with Mary Ann and with myself. I learned to swim for the first time in my life.

Years later Morning became a Jewish separatist. She came to OWL Farm while Mary Ann and I were running low on food again. She didn't want to be communal so we didn't share resources like the tribe usually had. She sent me some hate letters about not wanting the Jewish womyn to settle at La Luz and so ended what had once been a beautiful friendship.

But that first summer after La Luz she was a friend to me when I needed one. Little did I know the worst was yet to come. I settled into the forest tipi at OWL Farm and took a good long rest. It was there that I felt Flying Thunder's spirit flying around my head in endless sadness. I sensed that she wanted to come home and I, too, wanted a respite from my awful loneliness. I used my mind to reach out and hold onto her when I felt her spirit wandering aimlessly. I wrote in three journals before she answered me.

My own, the La Luz Journal, the OWL Farm Journal, and the journal of a nearby piece of womyn's land, Cabbage Lane. Our entries to each other, before reuniting, attracted readers from miles around. I wondered about the ethics of our display and our performance but I did not have a direct line to my friend who I thought would help me reclaim my land so—I performed. My friend had already come and gone when I wrote the following journal entry.

Forest tipi

OWL Farm

Friday, October 13, 1978

I have decided to start writing in the La Luz Journal again since everything I do seems tied up in my struggle to go back there. Having my dream come true was hard in that seeing Flying Thunder again brought out in me feelings I've held inside all these long months of waiting and

watching and searching, for myself and other things, too. Sexuality is beyond my comprehension. I never felt quite like this before and there are always such heavy social barriers around my love relationships.

She feels like an outlaw. I don't want her to. She wants to run. I want her to stop. She's a hustler and I don't want to be hustled. I'm a believer and she doesn't want to believe. I don't want to surround myself with my own fear. I don't feel afraid exactly but I don't know what to do. I wanted to slap her face yesterday for showing her breasts on the road. I don't want men to see her, touch her or know how beautiful she is.

I stared at her, knew if I said anything I'd explode and I didn't want to do that. I held it in. She put a shirt on and laughed and I loved her very, very much. It is very deep and long that I have felt this. But I don't want to fall into bed and then part ways at the first sign of conflict. I want her to be a part of my life from this day forward. I don't want to dump my anger on her but what can I do? No matter what she says she *is* part of my dream.

Tuesday, October 17, 1978

OWL Farm – Forest Tipi

Afternoon – sun shining

Where are you now, my brown-skinned beauty, when the moon is full and my flesh is warm? Where are you when the sun rises over the hills and, at last, the clouds disappear? Where are you when I want you, when I need you, when I want to slap you and revere you at the same time? Where are you when the baby wakes me in the morning and the white people fall in love with the womyn I become when I feel close to you, when I believe that you are with me even when you are not here, which means that you are enough like myself that I am not truly and horribly alone?

I still hadn't had a lover yet. The white womyn decided I was too new and inexperienced, plus emotionally unstable, for them to get involved with. Of course, every once in a while someone would play an exquisite game of torture called, "let's flirt with the little Puerto Rican" and then appear shocked when I seemed to expect that something would follow.

I was too new and inexperienced to call this what it was, a game and a rip-off, and I was afraid of their labels and their put-downs ("Juana's being heavy with white womyn again") so I backed off. That's how I wound up in a tipi in the rain for two weeks. But once I adjusted, I liked my solace and my comfort and my safety—no more trips, sexual or otherwise. Of course, the same womyn who felt oppressed by my needs followed me to the tipi for visits to continue the energy.

I was afraid of what they'd say if I refused to communicate so I started a talk fast. I let them visit but I just didn't talk to them. A white womyn wound up in bed with me but I decided to be forceful and nurturing about it and not allow any more sex games. It was a very pleasant night and I enjoyed sharing my space with a sister but still I would have preferred to spend the night alone.

I had not learned to say "no" yet or to ask for what I wanted. Peer pressure was so strong in the tribe that I had a lot to lose by being politically incorrect. Besides, the white womyn outnumbered me in a tribe where the political consciousness about racism was high. Which means that they hated the womyn of colour for what they thought they had to do for us. Or not do to us.

Eli wanted to sleep with me when she came back from a short trip and found that I'd met Flying Thunder on a bridge at dawn and under very dramatic circumstances. I suppose I did cut quite a romantic figure singing along the ridge in costume. My head was so high in the clouds with my visions and future plans that I didn't realize the full impact of my decision when I got involved with my first lover. I thought I'd just take her into my bed and nurture her like I had with the other white womyn. I never expected the turbulence and anger that followed.

When a group of womyn decided to head south I got a ride with them to La Luz. I was afraid to sit and pine for Flying Thunder. I had already told her I wanted to go back and she had already told me that she didn't. I was afraid to stay at OWL Farm and wait for her to change her mind. I had already made my choice and I was ready to go back. I hoped that she would follow me. Again, I arrived to find La Luz empty.

Six

Main house

La Luz de la Lucha
Sunday, November 5, 1978

We arrived one week ago today and I've been afraid to write in the journal, afraid to lend expression to my fear. Being alone on this land with the baby has once again been exhilarating and terrifying. Night before last I heard a womyn hooting. Then last night I heard someone playing a flute, both of these things happened after dark.

I awoke in the night feeling the terrible fear of loneliness with an unknown presence nearby. I cannot face this alone. When I wake in the night with only the baby to keep me company and hear these sounds, I am afraid of going mad. I almost wrote down my fears yesterday but I was afraid of expressing them, afraid, as always, of letting go.

I have missed Ocean so much, have become numb feeling the loss of the trust and safety that I felt with her. I am afraid of holding on too tight, of being clingy. I was all right at first when you left. I was filled with vision and purpose and the knowledge that you would be back. I had my dream before me and I began to work. It was all right at first but gradually, though I fought it and pretended it was not there, the loneliness reached up and held me in its grasp and gripped me with its claws until now I do nothing but lie and wait and feel my own fear.

I am nothing alone. I cannot live alone, cannot go on in isolation. I need caring. I need comfort. It is because you believed in me, you understood my mind and shared my thoughts. You said that you saw my soul and I am ancient. For that alone, I will never forget you.

Eli called today and I was afraid of her, too. Perhaps I should be more careful. And perhaps all that is an illusion and I should simply throw caution to the wind and take what comes to me.

Monday morning, November 6, 1978

New day, a new determination, the air is fresh and clear and I am in a hurry. I am on my way to town to buy food, hitchhiking. It is okay. There are no saviors, only womyn and daughters and lovers and mothers, too. But it is my dream and no one can live it for me. I must cast away my fear and build my world.

Perhaps the earache will go away now, and this is what I needed to hear. I woke up this morning determined and strong, knowing that I alone can fulfill my dreams, no one can take them for me, or from me. All right, I hear it. It is my dream and I will live here and create it. Mary Ann is my daughter and I will feed her when she is hungry, not wait for lovers or warriors to come save me.

Perhaps I need to be my own warrior or perhaps I simply need a better food supply. Off into the world for supplies. I will write again. I love you, whoever you are, wherever you are. I feel the unseen forces moving toward me quickly in care and kindness. We shall meet again.

La Luz de la Lucha
November 9, 1978

What a scene! New people are here, two trucks are parked in the driveway. I breathed a sigh of relief that it wasn't my friends. I'm feeling better now; yesterday did me good, I was very gentle with myself, trying to heal my wounds from encounters with the outside world.

I suppose dreams do come true and wishes are granted and then, of course, one has to deal with the consequences. What can I say about you that is kind and caring, that is rational and responsible and objective, that will not hurt you if you read this? Or just once can I let go of your response and say that you are killing me? It has been like this for years.

I fell asleep last night thinking of death but when I woke up I was afraid that if I killed myself the white people would take back my land. How can I make sure that won't happen?

So you came. I wanted you to come and you came. I was terrified alone. I am a desperate womyn with an obsession. You found me when I was alone and afraid and what did you do? You told me over and over again, in many hours, with many words, all the reasons why I should not be afraid.

I told you I was in need and you said I shouldn't be. You asked me to reassure you as to your position as a white womyn on my land. You wanted to be insured respect. And who will insure me respect in your world and who will comfort me as I lie dying?

It is true. I have always loved you and it has always been the same. Perhaps when my warriors return I will be safe and perhaps if they do not I will choose another form of death besides this one, where you stand before me in judgment as I lie dying.

You see that I am dying, my friend from another world, and when you push me it is death that you push me to. I was dying at OWL Farm when you found me. They thought it was an earache but I knew. I felt myself slipping away, falling into it. I could not tell them because, of course, they would have said it was drama, romance. They would have compared me to you, my love, and when I died they would have been very surprised.

But I did not die. Another womyn of colour came and we planned to come here so on my deathbed I spoke to her from very far away and I knew it would be all right then, that I would come back to myself. I no longer feel Flying Thunder close to me. Perhaps it is because I have sold myself to the white people and only before that was I truly pure. I am dying without my warriors and your words and your criticism of me and your constant reproach are pushing me into death.

And if this hurts you do not tell me. Do not come to me with your feelings when I make you uncomfortable. Leave me to die in peace and never again, never as long as we both shall live, come to me in criticism and then drive off in your chariot into the outside world. It is not my world and I will not live in it or be a part of it. Or even enter into a man-made vehicle to go back to it.

Perhaps it is my own weakness I cannot bear to be confronted with, my own faults, my limitations. You saw in me all the things I am not and together set out to make a proper American womyn out of me, confident, efficient, functional, and most of all "out there" making it in the man's world, the death culture we call it sometimes. Remember that?

I am not an American womyn and I do not want to get into my car and go shopping. And if this is my survival perhaps I will die and perhaps I will prefer it. And so what if there is no room in this world of ours for a womyn who wants to pitch a tipi high in the hills and rise above the everyday agonies of modern life? Does that mean there is no place for me in the world? Perhaps. It is so easy for you to go back, to go out there into the desert, to the other side of the world, because it is your world and it still has its claim on you and you on it.

It is not the same for me. I am not an American womyn or a white womyn and when you bring me there I have nothing to go back to but death. Because the white culture came and killed me many years ago and I am still living and still dying and they are still killing me every chance they get.

Like you, my modern friends, with all your responsible ways. But it is not my world and they are not my ways and you judge me by your standards and of course I do not measure up. I fall short, in so many ways, of the American ideal. I am sensitive. I cannot drive a car. I feel things I cannot explain. You tell me I must be a warrior. I am a creator and I cannot be both. I have made my choice and taken my place, in this, our lifetime.

Will you come back angry or hurt or upset or with words again and will I have to comfort you because you do not understand me and cannot help me? Will I have to forgive you because you are killing me? Will I have to be less of myself because my obsession makes you uncomfortable?

You see that you have criticized me and in order not to die from it or kill you for it, I have had to criticize you, too. When we last spoke, I said the words, "I'm sorry" many times. I do not want to be any more sorry than I am right now. Perhaps we can stop now. The time has come for you to leave me, to go back to your world and leave me to mine. It is better without words, I think. Goodbye.

The vision is a part of me. It lives with and of me and it does not die. It has created me as this book has molded me from a myriad of unconnected emotions into a whole and dynamic person.

I had the vision while lying in bed with Eli. I never admitted that before. I despised her because I considered her an obstacle. And I

loved Flying Thunder because she had something that I wanted. Aside from all the obvious reasons like spirit and beauty and a boundless will to live unencumbered by life's trappings, I loved her because she had something I wanted.

And I thought she could give it to me. The vision explains that. You see, I thought the power and the beauty and the vision flowed through her like blood and that I could cut her open and take them from her. Or, at least, entice her, in my lovely lesbian way, to share it with me or give me part of it.

I know now that the truth I sought lies within me where it always lived, untaught and untouched and unrecognized by myself and the world around me. I was never taught to love myself. I was never taught to be what I am and to know what I know.

Time has changed that. I look in the mirror this morning at the black and red ritual costume that is my latest creation and the ferocious passion surges up again in me but this time the object of my affections is myself alone and my own image.

I am a strong woman now. I have become my own warrior. I find strength in my knowledge and my sense of power. I find satisfaction in my work and my accomplishments. And the costumes that are the creation of my soul and the vision personified—my costumes mean the world to me.

La Luz de la Lucha
November 14, 1978

I had a vision of you this morning, my love, and at last my truth has come home to me. Not a dream because I do not remember them, but a waking vision of you and me. It was the desert, I think, and the colours were grey and brown and the sky was filled with the warmth of the sun. There were nothing but rocks and a high summit. I ascended to the highest peak and stood perched on the rocks looking into the sun. And you were there, a grey eagle with a white beak and I followed your motion with my eyes.

I was so spellbound by you, so enthralled by your exquisite grace and beauty that I saw nothing but you and the light that shone behind, surrounding you. I watched you for a time and stood transfixed, seeing nothing but you, hearing no sound or feeling no rhythm but that of mine pulled toward you and watching you in your flight.

It was a long time before I realized you were trying to give me something. I had been so busy watching you and feeling you that I had not seen you trying to let go of something, pass it on to me. And you did not want to let go of it until you were sure I would catch it, would even see it fall, would know you were trying to give me something.

I knew you were trying to reach out to me but was so filled with my own emotions when I looked at you that I did not see clearly what you were trying to do, could not tell. So, at last, after much time circling in the air, I noticed you held something in your great claws, a stone or wood or branch, I could not tell but I began to see that what you held was tying you down and you had come a long way with it.

Then at last I knew why you had performed for me, why I had the exquisite pleasure of watching you fly and dance and wave about my head. You had a journey to pursue and you were headed off into the sun, except for this thing that you held in your hands. And I saw that it was something precious to you and you could not go on with it, you needed to relinquish it and only when you knew the dream had been safely passed on and taken up by another could you be totally free . . .

So, here I am, my love, I have climbed very high this time, almost to the sun, high enough to see you circling alone in your timeless grace and beauty waiting for me to take up the dream before you head off into the sun. So here I am and there you are and the sun begins to set in the sky and I perceive that you are impatient. It has been a long time that you have waited for me and I have looked for you and I have seen anything but the dazzle of the sun.

You are still now but farther away, your back is toward the sun and you are facing me. You are saying your last goodbye. I see now that you are tired, very tired and I feel that you must be on your way. I look closely and your wings move in a strange flutter and in an instant I know that you are falling. You are a flying spirit and you cannot stop in mid-air or you will fall.

You have transferred the object to me. It was not necessary to come close to me to do this, but I never knew that. I saw you and your endless beauty and wanted you and searched the world over for you in my mind until at last I found you behind a crevice of my memory, on a high summit facing the sun.

I saw only you and your beauty and I loved you and I worshipped you and I was afraid for you in your ancient innocence in the ugly world below. I wanted to protect you from that and hold you to myself. But I must let you go. I was wrong to try to hold you, to reach out and try to catch you when you only circled by me.

I see now that you are very still in the path of the sun that grows orange around its fringes. You are very still like a picture painted on the sky and I know that you cannot stay so very long because you are a bird spirit and must fly. It is your way.

Your task is finished, a long and arduous one. You have captured the attention of myself, your admirer, and you have passed your message on to me, your legacy, the dream.

You are watching me and I wonder if you think I see what has passed between us or will feel anything beyond yourself. You face me with your eagle eyes, your white beak. I watch and hold my breath. I see that we are caught in the space between us and neither can be the first to say goodbye. I see that it is hard for you, too. Your dark eyes are shining and I wonder if I see a mist.

You flutter again strangely and I am aware that you are tired, you must go on, your flight will comfort you and ease you in its familiarity. You have waited too long, so much time, you must fly off and I must descend. Descend to the world and those we left behind, filled with the dream, the vision I felt from you, the dream you inspired in me to start all over again.

There is nothing in this vision beyond the moment, no point where I turn away or do you, only the knowledge that my vision must be pure and it must not be for myself or for you that I do this. It must be for the sake of the simple purity of what I believe in, what we believe in.

So I know now that it was the dream I learned from you because the journey to yourself, the sun, the light of all knowledge within, is not completed. And you could not go on until you were sure that I had taken it on, that I would make it my dream, too, and live for it and die with it, if necessary and not just reach out and touch you, because your journey is not finished and you must go on. You must go on.

It is in the desert that I feel you, high on a rock, in the clean, cool air with none but the sand and rock and cactus to fill your soul. Perhaps

you will stay there until you find yourself, and perhaps Thunder Chyld, our daughter, will go to you. It is what I hope for all of us, you, the desert, barrenness for clarity; I, the rich clay earth for a new beginning, for the building of a new world.

Sunday, November 19, 1978

Early morning—gulch

It's raining lightly now, almost stopped. The Sheriff came yesterday, said the land is being foreclosed on, I have to call Serrita and make sure the payments have been made.

I felt very pensive yesterday, and thought about the futility of my coming back here to clean up the mess every few months if nobody cares or can take it on. The day before yesterday I walked in the hills. Eli had just left with Shem and some other womyn to take Mary Ann to OWL Farm. I was feeling desperate with Eli, I didn't know what to do. I knew I wasn't dealing with her. I felt that if I just let them go on the trip, fate would intervene and things would be different when they got back.

In the hills the day they left, I was filled with emotions I hadn't expressed: desperation, anger, loneliness, the isolation of being one womyn with a dream. I felt full around the middle. I had been eating too much. I need to get my emotions out of my stomach. I crouched down on the side of a hill next to the stream, the one I loved so much, and tried to calm myself, take back my power, feel okay. And I swore I felt your spirit standing over my right shoulder, watching me and smiling—very serene.

I had already decided not to be unrealistic about you, to stop pining about a womyn who says and seems not ready to come back. I tried to shake off the feeling, stood up, put my feet in the water but it only stirred up mud.

Am I being unrealistic again, I wondered? Am I so madly in love with you that I deceive myself, or is your spirit still here in these hills? I decided not to write about it, didn't want to make it real, wanted to let go of you, really let go, so you could find your own way and come back on your own, when you're really ready.

I talked to Arrow when she came, she said we share the same vision. Yes, I thought, that I still believe. I read your words in *WOMAN SPIRIT** when I had my doubts, and I was sure you still believed. I need to keep on believing and remember the message of the High Priestess, to trust my own judgment.

She went for a walk, says it pulls her spirit back into herself. She came last night as I lay on the couch in the main house with a white womyn. I had been in the altar room earlier kneeling before the table when Evertime came in and sat behind me. She was very kind and I was drawn to her.

I was about to reach out and touch her when she heard a car coming up the driveway. We got up, me first, very fast.

"It has a camper," she said.

I went outside and stood in the same spot as when I saw Ocean go. I saw a big blue truck pull in and turn. I couldn't see the driver.

"Are you just turning around?" I asked.

She rolled down the window and spoke. I didn't recognize her voice and went closer to look. There she was, in a hooded sweatshirt, less scared and less arrogant than before, but I felt she'd been upset.

She moved to park the truck and Silent Thunder came up behind me. I reached out and hugged her for a long, long time.

"Who is it?" she said.

"It's Flying Thunder," I answered breathless, excited, a little nervous. I felt awkward and silly but somehow underneath it very calm. She said she just came for a bath. I told her we didn't have any water. The dogs were hysterical. I nearly fell over an excited Malamute several times as we walked to the gulch.

I made love to her. She said she was tired and didn't want to but I felt that we would. I felt she needed it; I needed it, too. I'm trying to write what I feel right now. I am not anything. I just am. Like the sun and the moon and the stars, I just am.

* Flying Thunder had an article in *WOMAN SPIRIT* magazine (P.O. Box 263, Wolf Creek, Or 97497).

Wednesday, November 22, 1978

Cabin–gulch

And so now what do I do with these words, all these words of love and passion and desire and most of all striving, always striving, to build a better life, create a new world? Sometimes I am not even sure why I do this, what force pulls me, what unseen thing moves me. I do not think, only feel.

I am not sure it will help for her to read this, all this profound passion, when we can hardly speak for the heavy space between us. But then what is a hidden truth but a lie and what good will this book do on a shelf or hidden in a drawer?

For all my fire and desire I find myself to be quite a puritan at heart. This is embarrassing. There, I've admitted it. Puerto Rican visionary and idealist calls to long-lost native warrior. Warrior returns and idealist is embarrassed. Too much drama, there is too much stage play in our lives and not enough truth. So what is truth? That I love you, and you, I suppose, care for me and all of a sudden I cannot stand the strain? I must cut the bond, sever this tie with the past. What I need is a tribe and a friend, not a romance and a drama.

December 10, 1978

Cabin–gulch

People talk so much about the spirits on this land. I don't think there are some abstract ghost-like creatures roaming around. I think the spirits are us and the emotions we leave behind or carry with us—hate, fear, jealousy, weakness, greed, anger. The spirits that haunt us are the spirits of death and destruction we bring ourselves, and only we can change the spirit of the land by changing ourselves, by loving and caring, by creating and forgiving.

Seven

I had a hard time in the city. Onita and Serrita seem not to trust me or see me at all. Onita I am in love with, may as well be honest about it. Her anger hurts me too much for me to respond well to it. I don't want to take on another power struggle, anyway. Serrita I feel less intensely but the womyn seems simply not to like me very much.

Things here on the land seem good. Got nice letters from Zelima and Maya, both said good things about my work here, first praise I have gotten from my own people. It means a lot to me. I sent Zelima a very emotional letter. I felt like I was dying and didn't know if she'd be put off by that.

I got a beautiful, soothing letter in response. The womyn cares for me, the sister of my tribe, as we become a tribe. Onita reminds me a lot of Zelima many months ago, I could never quite figure out why she was so angry with me. I know why she's angry, that's obvious, she's a womyn and in pain, but why did she take it out on me? I felt that she loved me despite the anger, or underneath it, and I loved her very much. So, at last, a friendship, a caring, a feeling of goodness and caring after all these months.

And how long for the rest of you, till we see each other, touch and feel, till the fear and mistrust fall away? Is this my role in the tribe, to love my people and believe in them until they can love, too, until they can even see me loving them, feel anything but their own oppression? Will I stay or will I go? Will I suffer or begin to heal? And the land? What about the land?

Next I'll copy in here the writings from my trip. The journal wasn't with me. Perhaps I have at last become something of a warrior, have begun to understand what that means, to see my role as more than the vessel of truth, the bearer of dreams and the holder of emotions, near and far. I wrote a song on the ocean to my two warriors, fools that they are about money:

Song to My Tribe

We had a land that we wanted to share
 we got some money and that was our scare
 we had our land when you left me behind
 we had our land when you went off to find

The dream that you thought you could live out alone
 but then when you got there you found there's no home
 in a life filled with money and driving through towns
 where when they awaken you're never around

The womyn you meet in the travels you do
 they love you and feed you and want to be true
 the money you took, well it gave life to me
 the money you took, let it now set me free

You never saw me, I loved you and then
 you ran away and I loved you – again

You had some money and when it was gone
 I loved you and called you and brought you beyond
 the dream that you thought would at last set you free
 but you see what it brought was my tribe home to me

You never saw how I loved you and then
 you ran away and I loved you – again

We had some money and we were afraid
 you took the money when you could have stayed
 you never saw how I loved you and then
 you ran away and I loved you – again.

November 23, 1978
 Albion, California

On a cliff high above the sea

This one was written a few days earlier, for a peyote circle I didn't go to.

I love you, I love you
 and I don't know why
 I love you, I love you
 you light up the sky

I love you, I love you
and you are my friend
I love you, I love you
the day starts to end

You are my mother and I am your child
you are my mother, I give you a smile
you are my daughter, I give life to you
you are my daughter and you need me, too.

November 29, 1978
Albion, California

*A few days later
on a cliff by the sea*

Ah, Ocean, I thought of you today on a cliff high above the sea, with the waves breaking, and it saddened me a bit that you are not here. Then I thought, "But how foolish." And I knew what you would have said—what difference does it make when you are here in spirit and you believe in me? And so I believed you and in believing I gained strength and I knew that I must love like that, too. I must love with faith and belief and knowledge in the face of all adversity, for what is doubt in a world full of lies?

The sea has calmed from a raging torrent this morning. It seemed for a while that it would storm but it did not. The sea has gone back into herself. And so shall I.

What does it matter that the world calls you a pair of thieves and what does that mean in a world of lies? You are my tribe and there is no other and alone, perhaps we will all die.

Who will come to me now and who will dream as I dream? And so we were not happy back then and so we were never truly free but we had something and I want it back. I want it back.

La Luz de la Lucha
December 11, 1978

Middle of the night

The moon is full or almost. In truth, I cannot tell, but it is the middle of the night or early morning and I could not sleep so I came here from my cabin in the gulch, called by some force to the journal, my

truth in words, in written form on paper, to look at myself in the night, in the dark, and wonder, the ravings of a madwomyn or does it make sense to anyone, even myself?

So, an American pen to hurt my fingers because it is all I can find and it is easier than a quill and a bottle of ink to spill and blot and stain but what is ease in a world of falsehood? I hate this pen . . . a feather and a bottle of ink. I like that better.

Reading over what I wrote in the city and what to do with my truth besides write it in the book and leave it for all the world to see? I think sometimes what a coward I must be to sneak into the altar room in the middle of the night and leave a part of myself in this book and then think about leaving my homeland because I have been hurt again and I need to let go of it, or run away from it, whichever comes first.

And where would I go from here—Puerto Rico, my island in the sun, and why should I expect not to get hurt there, too, when the emotions that fill me will follow me to the grave? Anyway, here it is, this is what I wrote in the city. I am afraid sometimes that if I tell people what I see and feel they will tell me that I am wrong, and crazy. So, here it is, this is my fear and my truth and perhaps, after all, I am crazy.

I had just returned from a trip to San Francisco to deal with the city womyn about the land. At the land trust meeting the previous summer, new womyn of color had signed on the deed and agreed to handle the business end of owning land from their homes in San Francisco. Although I was delighted and much relieved that womyn were still interested in La Luz, it became a problem that the new womyn had never actually lived on the land and did not understand our tribal ways.

Miscommunication followed misunderstanding until it was decided by several of the new womyn that all the people who had been involved in La Luz before they took over were crazy and irresponsible, including me. I tried to give Serrita and Onita, especially, since she was newer, some background information on the land and the tribe that would help them understand how we got in that situation and, hopefully, help us figure out how to get out of it.

Unfortunately, they decided I was part of the problem and they really wanted me to leave so they could begin a program of improvements. They didn't know enough about the tribe to understand how little I

had been involved with La Luz when the money was taken, and somehow in their minds, I was indelibly linked with the past and problems at La Luz.

It was easy for them to decide that since I had been sitting on top of all that mess when they came along, it was, therefore, all my fault. I did not give up easily. I tried explanations and pleading and offered help on whatever projects they had planned. I tried to make myself easy to get along with. They thought I was hysterical. I probably was.

They ignored me. It became abundantly clear that the city womyn were not going to support me in any way and were essentially waiting for me to get burnt out and move on, so they could get a chance to make something of the place on their own.

They eventually won. They got the best of me later on but at this point I was determined to hang on a little longer. I had been through so much and outlasted so many people. Living on the land became simply a matter of outwaiting everybody else.

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San Francisco, California

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