

Be as a Question  
(Unedited tape transcript)

*In the time of the Old Ones, when our ancestors still walked the Beauty Way, there lived a woman called She Bear and a man known as Looks Far. They felt deep love for each other — they were of shared soul. After they were joined in ceremony, they went to build their lodge beside the rapids upriver from the main camp. In a short time they were blessed with the birth of a daughter, who was given the name Sees-Like-Frog.*

*One day while out checking their fishtraps they heard a series of frantic yelps coming from far up the rapids. The sound was so intense and piercing that it carried over the gushing sound of the rippling waters. They listened intently trying to figure out the source of the sound, but the yelps grew fainter and soon there were no more.*

*A few moments later something bumped She Bear her in the back of the leg as she was standing the water bent over the fishtrap. She jumped with a start, dropped the fish she had just grabbed and spun around to see a waterlogged Wolf pup, face down in the water as though drowned. Instantly she recognized him as the source of the yelps and instinctively picked him up and began to rub him.*

*His mouth gave a slight quiver. He was not dead. She rubbed him all the more vigorously and pressed upon his chest to help him breathe. In no time he was coughing and wheezing trying to catch breathe on his own. She dried him with soft grasses and warmed him in the folds of her body and soon he was meowing and whimpering as contentedly as though nothing had happened.*

*"But now what?" she asked of Looks Far, who had been watching all this intently.*

*"He is much too young to be on his own, his eyes are barely open."*

*"Will his mother come back for him?"*

*"For some reason the she-wolf must have been moving her pups across the stream." Looks Far said, "And for some reason, perhaps she slipped on a rock, dropped this one. The current must have pulled him away from her before she could grab him."*

*"Perhaps she was reluctant to leave the rest of her pups behind to rescue this one, or I should think we'd have seen her by now."*

*"It may be that he is our gift, that we are intended to caretake him.*

*"If that be so I will nurse him. He is one of my own, as my Dodem is Ma'ingan" She Bear said. "He is too young to eat and I have milk enough to share between both him and our baby." And so they raised the two babes together, as brother and sister. They called him Rock Dancer in honor of his mother and of the way he came to them.*

*The next turn of the season went peacefully as both pup and child grew together. In the time when the child was leaving the cradleboard and*

taking her first steps it was again time to tend to the fishtraps in the rapids. One morning after ShadowMoon left to gather nettle in the downstream meadow Looks Far went down the bank to check the fishtrap just below the lodge. Sees-Like-Frog was sleeping in the furs at the back of the lodge and Rock Dancer was on guard outside the door. Shortly after Looks Far waded into the river he heard an agonizing scream pierce the still morning air. He knew the voice, it was his child. He raced up the bank, first into the lodge, there to greet him was the Wolf with blood on his mouth. Looks Far rushed past Rock Dancer to the back of the lodge only to find Sees-Like-Frog gashed open and laying lifeless in a pool of blood.

In a mindless rage he spun around, grabbed his hunting club and sent it crushing into the skull of the Wolf. Then he fell to his knees, released the club and soberly crawled over to behold the tragedy of his babe. As he leaned over to touch her he saw a bloodied track exiting the lodge covering right behind the baby's bed. The father's heart stopped and he let out a wail of agony that quieted everything, even the river. The tracks were of a Cougar, the old crippled one who they had seen hanging around to steal in close in the night to scavenge a meager meal of fish scraps. Rock Dancer had attacked the Cougar to defend the babe, which is why he had blood on his mouth.

Down river She Bear heard the scream that stilled all other sound! She dropped her basket and bolted for home. The wail shook her like a peal of deafening thunder after a lightning strike. Even louder to her was the silence after the wail. It was as though death itself had a voice that only she could hear. Immediately the fear that only a mother can know rose in her breast like the burning heart of a volcano about to erupt. She saw images flashing before her of her babe swaddled peacefully in the furs and of the aged starving cat lurking menacing around the perimeter of their camp.

Her worst fears could not have prepared her for the sight that greeted her — across the threshold of the lodge lay Rock Dancer, his head misshapen and bloody.

In the shadows at the side of the lodge sat a man who was barely recognizable to her. There she found her mate sitting before their lodge, his hair hacked off, his face smeared with black ash. He had slashed himself twice across his chest. He was marked with the agony of death! Each gash was slowly dripping the fluid of life into the death-bringing wrenched hands that lay in his lap.

He barely acknowledged her as she touched his face and then turned to enter the lodge. She couldn't breathe. Her pounding heart pained her eyes and crackled in her ears. As she stooped to enter the low doorway she came face to face with the listless form that was once her babe's unswerving guardian and companion.

A second soul-searing wail, this time from her, rose like a tidal wave and stilled again all of life as it crashed through the forest.

*They laid the Wolf before the child just as they had been in life and lit fire to the lodge so that the spirits of the babe and the Wolf would travel together to spirit lodge where they would now dwell. Then they returned to their people who clothed them in castaway skins and fed them as they mourned for a full turn of the seasons.*

*In the final days of their mourning they sought the counsel of their Elders who guided them in their meditations and envisionings to know the profound teaching they'd been given. Soon thereafter she became with child and a new joy rooted in the wisdom of their teachings took hold in their lives. Their family grew and flourished and the example of their life — to honor the question in every voice and every movement — inspired many.*

Their guiding voice rings down through the ages. Here, laced with the teachings from my own failing to remember the question, I will share with you the echo of their words so that perhaps the question's guidance can be known to you with less pain.

I'm more impressed with intelligent questions than right answers. The questioning process leads to answers, and well-developed Attunement and Awareness skills lead to questions which are actually clues to the answer. Even if the answer can be arrived at quickly, improper or incomplete questioning will not bring the desired depth of feeling or understanding of the answer.

For example, a short while ago two Seekers brought me a conifer branch they wished me to identify for them. If I did so, they would have their answer and likely be content, learning little about neither the tree nor the learning process. So I turned the question back to them, along with some guidance as to where to find their answers.

I discourage their use of field guides "in the field", as books can give answers almost as quickly as can I. Instead, I encourage them to ask the plant who she is — why she is growing where she is, who her neighbors are, why she is structured the way she is in consideration of her neighborhood. Then I suggest they flow into the plant so they can feel thirst and sun and wind as does the plant.

A person's potential to learn is more important to me than what he already knows. I gain a feel for that potential by the questions he asks rather than the answers he gives. His questions give me insight into how his mind works, his perspective, his potential adaptability. Questions unfold your future, answers reflect your past. So your growth would benefit more from an insightful question than a knowledgeable answer. Both your time and that of your guide would be better spent questing the unknown than restating the past.

I do not give the Seekers whom I Guide, tests in the standard sense. I give them challenges and scenarios that stimulate them to ask themselves

the questions that will lead to the knowledge they need. This is seldom the knowledge they seek, for they are looking into the unknown— their own future, and know not what they will find. One thing they do find with this approach is that their life with the Mother unfolds as a series of questions, one blossoming into another, rather than graspable answers, as they had been taught in their rational lives in boxes.

Questions reflect flow, answers are concrete. Questions stimulate, answers state. Questions travel, they carry you like the flow of a stream; answers sit, they hold you as would a weighty stone upon your back. An insightful question reflects depth; a knowledgeable answer displays storage.

An answer feeds you; a question teaches you how to find food. A question brings knowledge in your language; an answer speaks in a foreign tongue. A question honors your time, your ways; an answer asks that you adapt to its time and ways. An answer shows you a facet of the crystal; a question takes you inside the crystal, were you are bathed in a kaleidoscopic rainbow of its faceted light.

The root of the word 'question' is quest. Quest!