

# Blue Marrow

**Louise B. Halfe – Sky Dancer**

Third Edition



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*Strive in boldness. Strive in strength.*  
*Live.*  
âcimo.

*âcimowinis*

Smoke shrouds the dried meat  
hanging on a tripod. The sun dips.  
She shifts. I puff small winds.  
Knee-deep in earth, fingers clawing,  
head bobs up and down.  
She is there. She is not. A dog howls.

*I am câpân, the grandmother who shamed her family  
when sound choked me. Bless me father, this is my sin.*

*I watched my people hunched  
under their belongings,  
worn-out pots, pans clanking.  
Babies wailing or asleep in cradle boards.  
Bony dogs pulling their travois.  
I hear the buffalo hoofs pounding  
in their stomachs.*

*Our men's faces grim,  
braids fraying, hair in mud.  
Only the young bucks strode,  
jaws set for the rising sun.*

*âcimowinis*

And we barricaded them.

It was not the only time  
I hated the man  
whose white flesh  
shared my bed.  
My memory snared  
by my people, beggars in the land  
that once filled their bellies.

I still see those  
Grandmothers clench the Bundles,  
whisper songs through the night.

*câpân*, Grandmother, continues strangling, an  
umbilical cord tied her to the earth.

*I'd steal flour, sugar, tea,  
pass it to my children late at night.  
My efforts received by  
swollen tongues.  
I hung  
my husband's twine on  
lone tree.*

*âcimowinis*

In the arbour twilight mouth  
flags bend, eagles whistle.

The Sky Dancers circle  
my head.

*kahkiyaw iskwêwak, nôtokwêsiwak, câpânak, êkwa  
ohkomipanak.*

Grandmothers, and the Eternal Grandmothers  
murmur

*Squirrels, tall pines, cones, moss.  
The jesuits ask do you believe in soul.  
When wolves howl, I descend into his mouth.  
When coyotes pluck prairie chickens,  
I fill his belly. Terra Nullius. Amen.*

*âcimowinis*

My words get in your way.  
I feel your sting.  
My printer refuses to feed my leaves.  
A squirrel stakes out  
the sink.  
I feed him my apple.  
My printer sins.

*Father, these robes I wear confuse me. I have forgotten  
who I am. A jesuit. A monk. A brother. A priest. A  
nun, perhaps. It matters not. I have sinned. My last  
confession was in 1492. Yesterday. Ah yes, late today.*

I wrote His Eminence,  
offered my life to save savage souls.  
My mother kissed my crucifix,  
said, God go with you.

I am filled with wind, empty forest,  
savages peek beneath my robe,  
tender hands send heat up my spine.  
I bless them.

This whip doesn't bite hard enough, Mother.  
I crouch under the cross. Shroud my face.  
Swallow. Swallow. Swallow.

This salt water I trickle,  
send the Father's Bible thundering.  
God be with you.

These savage men – they laugh at my disdain  
of their brown-breasted women.  
I grind the crucifix. Dry myself.  
God be with me.

*kahkiyaw iskwêwak, nôtokwêsiwak, câpânak, êkwa  
ohkomipanak.*  
Grandmothers, and the Eternal Grandmothers  
proclaim

*There are Holy iskwêwak – nôsisim, all over.  
We were the ones who burned down the jesuits'  
church, trilled, danced and laughed through the night.  
We watched those cabins eaten by our flames. We  
were the ones, nôsisim, who hid the Bundles,  
held council when we learned how those brothers  
lifted their skirts to spill their devils into our sons' night.  
And did they think they suffered as they burned,  
screaming against our flame?*

*nôhkom âtayôhkan*

*I am weary  
Snakes dance above my head.  
Spit from my womb.  
Entwine my legs.  
I am not done.*