

## **After the Great Turning**

*with thanks to Joanna Macy for her clear sight and brave work*

Yes, child, all that you've heard is true. Most among us were sick, hungry and dying, whether in our bodies or our minds and souls. So much of our money and creativity went to planning and executing new forms of destruction rather than caring for what we had in our midst. The bulk of the changes had happened fast, and collectively we were unprepared for the machines that we were using on the soft flesh of each other and the land. We allowed our memories to be taken from us too, to believe Them when They told us that it had always been like this, and that They didn't like it any better than we did, but we could trust that the Great Minds were working on solutions. The solutions were always more machines, and we should have known better, but we had been taught to look for saviors outside of ourselves.

We didn't realize that we had the power within ourselves and in the relationships between us. That was Their most successful lie — making us feel that we were powerless. We never were, and They were scared of this truth. There have always been so many of us, so few of Them, and we've known far more than we've been aware of — the ancestors have never stopped teaching or communicating with us. We simply came to drown out their voices with constant noise, the hum of electricity, the disrupting vibrations and many distractions that were employed to cause us to look away from each other and the world around us.

Yes, we were scared and in pain — if we stopped to think or feel. But we rarely did. We tried to break time — not experiencing it as the warp and the weft of

the present, but as small increments in which we needed to “maximize our efficiency.” We were promised that ever-more leisure time was just over the next hump, that the machines currently being designed would aid us in achieving this; but this hoped-for rest remained elusive. People spent most of their time working at jobs that had nothing to do with their family or their lives. Not working like you see all around you now, where together we care for our homes and our land, tend the gardens, craft herbs for medicines, make and preserve food — not the day-to-day work that is necessary and interwoven with our lives. Our work then was simply a financial transaction. We worked for money — first bits of metal, then paper, then numbers dancing on screens — that we’d use to buy things we didn’t need that made us feel better, more whole and happy and sated for short periods of time. The freeways that are in disrepair now, where the great trees are pushing through, were once a way for people to travel from their homes to their jobs, hurtling down these massive paths in metal boxes at speeds faster than the fastest animals can run. Much of our money from our jobs went into maintaining these metal carriers, feeding them with fuel from the earth that then passed into the air when burned. We’d forgotten what we once knew — that the air and the soil and the water could only take a limited amount of pollution. We didn’t understand that our waste products had to go somewhere, that we would be meeting them again in some form or another.

The fabric of society was ripping. It had been fraying for a while, but now there were gaping holes. People paid other people to watch their children for them, to care for their elders. People were sick, using harmful medicines that took them

away from what was really happening and turned them even more inward. They hurt themselves and each other. Many became increasingly frightened, feeling as if they couldn't even trust their own perceptions, to say nothing of anyone else.

That was the biggest accomplishment of the Dividers — the fear and suspicion that grew up between and within us. We need each other; we always have and we always will. Without each other, we are vulnerable and cannot access the Great Intelligence. But They projected images of the worst of ourselves, and we stared at the images and took them to be true, closed our window shades and locked our doors and didn't stop to see whether we actually were how they said we were. I remember, as children, my brother and I being allowed to wander for miles on our own, through sun-lit woods, onto neighbors' acres twined with blueberries growing wild, into the center of town where the librarians and general store clerks knew us by name. By the time my own children were born, we didn't let the young ones leave our sight. Every neighbor was a potential threat.

And yet, even in the midst of this, even at our worst, there were always acts of kindness. A man drove his truck off a bridge, and immediately the man driving behind him pulled over, stripped off his clothes and dove into the water after him. Others pulled over and assisted, their ever-present concern for their own wellbeing lifted, flown away, in the face of a stranger's unexpected need. People returned money and goods that they found, even when times were desperate for people financially, when so many people couldn't find work. There were always those who remembered, who remained awake when so many of us had fallen asleep.

We have these people to thank for the Great Turning. Staying awake when all around were sleeping was not easy. It took an enormous amount of energy, and it was difficult to watch people caught in their nightmares. Those who had fallen asleep and woke once again were in incredible pain for some time. It was as if they'd been out in the cold for too long and had started to go numb before they came inside and began to warm up, to regain feeling. The returning feeling is far worse than the numbness, at least at first — all awful itching and stabbing and clawing. But people stuck with it, because the children — like yourself — kept being born, and we couldn't give up on the world when you were in it. We continued talking to each other, telling stories, maintaining contact with each other in the flesh as much as possible, and again and again finding ways for our love to be stronger than our fear.

And many were lost along the way. The world that you're in today is much less inhabited than the world I grew up in, and there is still much healing and cleansing that needs to take place in the soil, the water and the air. But there is a more widespread understanding, now, of how precious our people and places are. We don't take life for granted.

You must know that there will always be Dividers in our midst. The tendency toward greed and fear can never be eliminated. It slumbers now, because our need for each other is so evident during this time. But when the crisis that we just moved through is further past, a lesser memory in the minds of those who lived through it and a non-memory in the younger ones, the same suggestions will resurface — that this person doesn't need quite as much as they have, that there are easier ways of

doing things, that some people deserve more than others. That working together is weakness and that only power over another is the true Power.

That is why it is so important to keep the stories alive, to trust our own senses, to walk in stillness so that we can hear the Truth for ourselves. When we feel our bodies clenching tight, our shells becoming more rigid and less permeable to all the forms of energy around us, that is when we must breathe and open, reach out for connection. When we retreat from it, when we begin feeling resentful of one another, that is when we must pursue it all the more. Remember that this fragile weave of life is dependent on all of us.