

## Bird Feeder



When they chose to come and include me in their world.

There was a time when people thought they could communicate directly with the wild and often unseen forces that live deep within the recesses of the unconscious. There were also people who felt they could travel into the dark and primordial forests and commune with the hidden and magical-elemental creatures who live there.

My Uncle Bud was just such a person. When I was a child, I would visit him and my aunt Eve and their trailer in the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest. I spent endless hours with him as he instructed me on how to “talk to the animals.” Now I don’t really remember if he meant that I should be able to talk to them. Because to this day, I am not at all sure that I know how to. I think what he meant was for me to learn to spend time with them, and even



I think, be able to listen and hear what it is they have to say. I don't really know, because like I said, I was just a child.

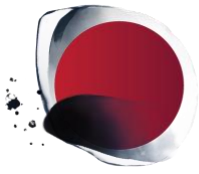
However, I do remember this one day sitting by the kitchenette window watching Uncle Bud out by the bird feeder. This was the first time I realized what is possible when you are still, and open, and available. There stood Uncle Bud, arms outstretched, palms facing the heavens, as still as an ancient pine on a breathless summer eve. His hands were full of seed. I could hardly believe my eyes when chickadees started landing and grasping the seeds, one at a time, and fluttering off to eat their tiny meal in private.

How was this possible? Were they trained? Had he learned tricks . . . special tricks? Could I learn to do this? Was it safe? Was it magic? All these questions flooded this young boy's mind.

I asked him these questions and more, later as we headed out for a one of our long hikes into the night. The sun hung low in the sky and the forested mountain shadows hinted that soon the land beyond would soften out of sight. As we talked the sounds, and smells, and feel of the forest would be all there was to rely on as we navigated the once familiar terrain into the descending black of night.

Uncle Bud related then, as he most often did, that "no, there was nothing special about what he was doing," he explained that he simply waited, invited-in, and received what wanted his attention. In fact, he said that the seed in his hand was there primarily for him so that he would be more comfortable and could make sense of his experience. He even said there was a time when the boundaries between men like him, and all the other creatures were not so great.

Sometimes, when I was alone in the trailer and my aunt and uncle were off to work, I would glance out of the window and see deer feeding. Their soft black noses twitching, skin rippling, and their eyes darting as they too ate the seed but with much less of a sense of



safety. This prompted me to race out to the feeder to try my luck. “If uncle Herm could feed the birds, maybe I could feed the deer.” Of course, they scattered.

I would attempt to approach them and be as quiet as a whisper. Yet the moment they smelled me, or heard the faintest sound, or caught the slightest movement, off they would go, back into the wood. I even tracked them, saw their trails crisscrossing in the snow, smelled their musk; yet I could not sneak up on them. It was as though they would reveal their presence on their terms when it suited them. The only time I would get close to them would be when they would seem to sneak up on me. I would be walking over a hill and hear something behind me and there they would be.

Occasionally, and with practice and if I were very still, the Chickadees would land in my hand too. When I worked in the garden the Catbirds would often be close enough to touch. But try as I might, I could not get close to those deer. Like dreams they came close to me on their terms when they chose to come and include me in their world.

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### Link

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