



Elaine Sutton loves men, women and children, and especially animals who love her back. She has been a crisis

counselor and writing teacher, and often cannot distinguish between the two. A woman's rights activist and mother of three eccentric adults, she manages to weave the chaos of everyday life into a fine tapestry of metaphor and quiet passion: "Elaine is a good person to see if you've just had your uterus removed," a friend says, "because she walks into the room carrying a bouquet of red roses and star-gazer lilies, and massages your body with coconut oil, and puts a dab of rose oil from Nizamuddin's tomb on your third eye." Elaine lives in the clear turquoise air of Taos, New Mexico.

Spring

Bright green shoots cluster
in lush pockets beside the river
sturdy as prayers.

Standing ankle deep in icy water
I watch a turtle lumber by
signing the sand in
elegant claw calligraphy.



The wild world follows me,

PROSE & POETRY BY ELAINE SUTTON



Walking and writing are the ways I organize my stay on earth.

After enough miles I forget the heavy pull of death and love, the bitter taste of failure or blame. Enough hours with pen and paper and things begin to come clear. My life fits into the shape of the world, my thoughts as organized as seasons.

I take off across the bone-dry mesa. The wind, spring-like and insistent, keeps pushing me towards water. I walk to the acequia, the shining, winding boundary across Indian Land. The cottonwood calls and I cross the creek, the other side suddenly marshland. From a stand of

ruined cattails the haunting, sweet trill of a red-winged blackbird. She sways on a tattered stem, singing. Water-cress and emerald bubbles of algae blossom in the stream and a herd of wild ponies keep flinging up their gaunt heads, dredlocked manes ragged flags in the wind, the whites of their eyes blazing like lilies.

I cross the windswept field, feeling small and exposed under the blue eye of sky—walking gingerly through thick pockets of mud, sometimes sinking to my ankles, black water oozing up through tufted grass like the shreds of a dream, clinging to morning. I pass outcroppings of gray ghost thistles, empty pods rattling, through clusters of wild rose branches clawing at my legs, all the way to the Rio Pueblo. Here, the beavers have been hard at work. Toppled trees are everywhere. Huge cottonwoods girded by teeth marks list into newly dammed ponds, water creeping up their gnawed trunks. The river wildly rushing

Morning Glories

I think of morning glory vines bright green and surprisingly sturdy
as they twine around tulip poplars and fence posts,
sidle up sunflowers
open their bright blue cups and drink in the morning.
Little glories, wrap your leafy arms around my brown shoulders, and
bind me tightly to this world.

Now see how they fling their long limbs, cling too tightly
try and take over.
Finally, they are like everyone we love,
endearing and annoying.

Today the sunshine pierces me like a sword of light,
a Zen stick across my shoulders, cracking me awake.
I lie down in damp grass and smell the worms turning
the soil, swollen seeds sprouting.

I dream under ten million stars singing the language of sky.
Round vowels of moonlight leap from my mouth
I say sun, pain, shadow,
Whisper love, rain, longing.

Soon, too soon, I will be buried
beyond vines and blossoms and poems
I will melt back into the earth, a dark clod of matter,
white bones dissolving beneath the lonely stones.

Recipe for Disaster

Take one small nation, agrarian based,
divide it down the middle with religion,
carefully separate the people with prejudice and superstition.

Drop in small amount of complex technology,
add a drought,
3 years of the crops failing,
slowly stir 100 dusty villages into a dry river,
omit sewers and clean drinking water,
add hunger, dysentery, typhoid.

Mix with a small number of the very wealthy
who have all the power and plenty to eat.
With a light hand,
throw in a pinch of foreign intervention,
start a civil war,
train young boys to kill,
take away the women's rights,
add more weapons.

Now — carefully
turn up the heat 'til boiling.
Clamp on a lid and let everyone
stew in their own juice.

Close your eyes, look the other way.
When it is almost too late,
throw it up in the face of the world.

and I write what it says...

to meet its lover, the sea, down in sunny Mexico, a secret
tryst in warmer lands, stopped in twenty places by
random dams, callous to the river's urgency. A pair of
mule deer flounce by, a coyote slinks through thick
underbrush.

I find the intact skull and long vertebrae of a horse. It is
a gift horse, and I am looking it hard in the mouth. It's
rows of yellow teeth ripple like freshwater pearls in the
giant oyster jaw. They sit in long rows, quiet as Zen
students, dutifully facing the wall, waiting for satori. The
ponds are filled with singing frogs. I climb into the
crotch of a giant cottonwood, a tree whose thick trunks
point to the five directions, and I watch the world. From
this solid lap I pray for all of us in our busy lives, looking
for love and salvation, for money or fame, for someone to
trust and tell our secrets.

I am touched by the relentless struggle to be human,

what it takes to keep these magnificent hearts beating,
keep the churning blood clean. Wisdom seems as unat-
tainable as immortality, and happiness a child's dream.
Still, I am comforted by the thrust of life all around me,
the sharp teeth of the beavers, the strong roots of these
trees. Life begets life. We are surrounded by, and part of, a
thousand breathing, sweating cycles. We are programmed
to produce. We are driven to live. What we feel, and who
we love, is as important as the owl's silent flight.

When I follow the small winding trails through the
forest I don't so much wonder why, as just feel blessed to
be here. I walk to the far edge of Indian Land, to the
barbed wire fence, and there I turn back. Slowly, I return
to my small house, to my notebook and pen. The wild
world follows me there, and I write what it says.