

Brother Ocean

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My brother has become the ocean -

From where we all came, he went and returned,
his sadness too big for his own immense heart within a body
that carried the wounds of centuries through ancient black blood
from saltwater people swimming with strength through his veins.
The ocean: the only body big enough to contain him.
He made it his deathbed, his heaven, his home.

The ocean has become my grief -

I sit on our beach for hours at a time and
grief cracks my heart and pours into the sea.
Waves crash with violence and water boils over the sand to meet me,
then recedes, melting back gently in its ebb.
I adjust my weeping in accordance with its flow
to enter these rhythms our new relationship with respect.

My grief is oceanic -

Held beneath the surface of living by death, I drown
under the weight of my loss every day. Roughed and tumbled
and strangled in its vortex, scoured into purity by salt and sand.
In moments of release I break the surface, gasping, and draw breath
just in time to be held down again. When I emerge
the ocean leaks from my eyes; I drip my lament wherever I go.

The ocean has become my brother -

Journeying his ashes across glass waves,
we return him to the ocean – his ossuary –
in a ceremony of release for us left behind to heal.
Under the water, I send him off in song;
air escapes my throat and returns to the sky.
The ocean welcomes my tears back home.

My brother has become my ancestor -

I fill a bottle with seawater to take home with me.

Beside my bed, my brother's spirit holds me safe

as I sleep and my grief seeps from my body to talk to him.

He listens to my loss, holds my pain gently,

and feeds our stories back to my sleeping spirit.

In my dream we are still swimming and laughing together.