

Refuge and Remembrance: Saying Goodbye to One Feather

by JoyBoy, aka Vinny Collazo

The first few days after my beloved One Feather died of leukemia this past August, I had friends and family staying and visiting with me. Then I decided I needed to be alone in our home for more intensive grieving. A week of this proved a bit more than I could handle, and I desperately needed to be with people again. I thought of going to Destiny for Labor Day Weekend with a few faerie friends, to fulfill two of One Feather's last requests: to spread some of her ashes on the land and hang, somewhere near the kitchen, a poster of paintings of faeries that she'd designed. When I saw there was a Virgo gatherette scheduled for that weekend, which was being promoted as a low-key affair, I thought it might be best not to bring my heavy grieving energy to Destiny at that time.

However, when Bambi emailed to let me know that that weekend they'd be planting the cherry tree my sister and brother-in-law were donating to the land to serve as a living memorial to One Feather, I knew that I had to be there. Besides, I now reminded myself, sanctuary is there for when you need it, not on a schedule. Certainly the Virgo gatherette would be able to accommodate me and my grief.

Captain Moonlight, Wally and I were the first to arrive on the land. It was such a gorgeous day I suggested we immediately go to the brook. I wasn't prepared for the torrent of emotion this would evince—One Feather and I had spent so many delicious hours soaking up the phenomenal beauty of that place, most often staying until the sun was low in the sky. The Captain held me as I sobbed while Wally held space.

I received much love and healing from that long weekend at Destiny. The gathering unfolded wonderfully, and I was very grateful for the "normalcy" of daily faerie magic. Support came in so many ways—it was especially meaningful to speak with a few faeries who'd also gone through the ordeal of losing a partner to an untimely death. I literally cried myself to sleep in my tent and no one complained, though my wailing was at times fairly loud. I felt safe to do this, felt

the energy of others surrounding me in the dark, holding me, comforting me.

On Sunday we drove the cherry tree from the kitchen to the lower meadow near the brook, which someone had suggested as a planting site, and which resonated with me as the right choice. A hole was dug and we discussed and decided the best way to plant and protect the tree. Once it was safely in the ground and watered, about a dozen of us circled around the tree and spoke about One Feather. Orange had posted on Lucy his memory of One Feather at a fire circle, singing one of her favorite songs, "American Tune" by Paul Simon. I invited others to join in as Orange and I sang it in One Feather's honor. One part seemed most appropriate:

And I dreamed I was dying
I dreamed that my soul rose unexpectedly
And looking back down at me
Smiled reassuringly

The group then processed to the brook, taking turns spreading One Feather's ashes along the way. When we arrived we sat on rocks and grass; a few more people spoke, but mostly we were silent. One by one, and two by two faeries drifted away. This ritual was very much like One Feather: unpretentious, deceptively uncomplicated, quiet and powerful.

I returned from the gathering with a clear head, knowing that I needed to re-engage with life, even as I continued the grieving process. Never had the value of faerie sanctuary been more brilliantly clear or personally important than it was that weekend. While any trip I make to Destiny will forever evoke memories of One Feather's life and death and the time spent with her there, it will also bring back this restorative weekend and the transformative gifts I received. I remain grateful not only to the thirty or so faeries who were present, but to all who have made Destiny a shining reality.



Photo: Courtesy JoyBoy