

The water waits
In her wandering bed,
Threading along edges of rising hills,
Over rocky floors
Through parched desert.

Her watery arms are laced
With willows and mesquite.
Verde Valley Sage
and Arizona Cliff Rose.
The regal, spreading Cottonwood towers above it all.

Rustling along her verdant shores
Bobcat, rabbit, coyote and grey fox.
Slithering beneath, lizard and snake.
Winging over the skeins of her journey
Bald eagle, heron and swallow.

Within the womb of her waters
Catfish, bass and trout
Flash through sun-tipped shadows.
Otters breaks the surface, sleek and cool,
Beaver builds and makes her mark.

The River is waiting, waiting.

On hot, still days she welcomes us.
My grey horse and I find her edge,
Step gratefully into the slow-moving cool.
The mare rhythmically, almost in meditation,
Scoops the river - over and over - to her chest.

The little bay horse turns and turns
Creating a whirlpool in a sloping hole
Black tail out behind her like a silken oar.
She dips her head in up to her ears
Then circles some more.

The black, deep-mud smell rises,
Meeting dusty overhanging willows,
Horse sweat turns to red rivulets,
My jeans change to wet-blue
The dog on shore, shakes off an arc of river.

This river, this river.

Seasons change as they always have, always will.
The river changes with them.
The water waits no more.

Bobcat and coyote
Heron and beaver
Catfish and willow
Attuned to the river
Prepare, ready to bow.

The river cleaves her way through.
The water waits for no-one.
The human animal doesn't suit this new river.

The old pathways
Destroyed by the unattuned -
She has no real boundaries now.

The path of the river
The strength of the water
Unfettered. Unstoppable.
From a trickle to landbound tsunami
This water waits no more.

They say she is dying, that she is not what she was.
Be careful! The dying will fight to the last for survival.

There is no time for waiting.

She takes her newly fed energy
Gathers it up into a towering call of desperation
And thunders into our yards and over roadways,
Drowns our gardens and knocks down bridges
Taking cars and animals, trees and garbage with her.

Afterward, when the roar fades and the bulging red water recedes
We tip-toe out to see the messages she left for us.

Remnants of her wild way.

Leg-sucking mud that can trap a dog,
New hidden narrow holes that can drown a crossing horse.
Vanished pathways, higher cut banks
Branches and wire piles tangled up
Against sturdy cottonwood or wrapped around elegant willows.

This river does not welcome us into her embrace.
This water isn't waiting as it rushes down freshly scoured beds.

We are stranded on her shores.

Don't mistake this huge wall of water for health.
See in it rather the excesses of the anorexic-bulimic
Who starves and then vomits.
Or the imprisoned who breaks out to find the way home.
The wild creature searching back to pathways of ancient memory.

Tame the river?

Build your berms and ditches
Wrap up the skeins of her travels?
Trim the trees that dress her edges
Corral the creatures who wander her banks and shoals
Silence the birds that see it all.

Do so at your own risk.

Not a canary in a coal mine
But a waterway in a desert.
For all that she rises and falls each season
Note how her breath is weaker each summer
Her frantic flapping more each Fall.

The water is waiting.
It can't wait forever.
The river holds out her arms
Inviting us to travel with her.
We must float the waterways together.

As long as creatures travel her banks
Fish dart in the shadows,
Birds feed and fly.
The little mare circles in the pool -
While the boat can still leave the dock

This river, this river
Will welcome us.

If we fail her...

A final great surge of her life-stream
Cascading through parched pathways
Will empty her.

The water will wait no more.