

DELAWARE MUDTUB AND THE MIGHTY WAMPUM

A full-length play for young audiences by
Greg Romero

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TURTLE, female.

FOX, female.

HERON, female.

TWO HERON CHICKS, one female and one male.

EARLE, male; an otter.

PEARL, female; an otter, and Earle's sister.

TWO BLACK BEAR CUBS, one female and one male.

A DEER THAT BECOMES A WHITE BUFFALO, female.

WOLF, male.

A PACK OF WOLVES (in the silhouette of the moon).

THE GREAT SPIRIT OF THE BLACK BEAR, female.

Note: In addition to these characters, there are many times when the environment becomes alive—the river, the trees, the stars, the wind, the moon, a thunderstorm, etc.—and can be played by performers.

Also—it is possible that the Heron Chicks might be puppets, perhaps manipulated by the performer playing Heron.

This work was originally created for a highly physical ensemble (of seven actors) able to transform in and out of characters and environment as needed, like a dance. The author suggests you approach casting and performance as best suits the talents, passions, imagination, and size of your particular creative team.

SETTING

The wild banks of the Delaware River.

Note: It would be most awesome if the playing space is immersive, including the performers, set, and audience all in one shared, living space. The author also suggests working with natural materials to help express the environment.

There are many things described in this play that are specific to the Philadelphia/Delaware Valley area, as the play was deeply inspired by the animals, people, and stories of this place. While exploring this work and these worlds, the author encourages you, however, to imagine your own unique ideas of these places (or perhaps other places that are more personal to you) and how they breathe and move. Also—the first few moments of the play and how the animals interact with the world outside the performance space (i.e. Spruce Street, Rittenhouse Market, Delancey Place) are describing the first performance of this play in production at Plays & Players Theatre in Philadelphia. The author encourages you to imagine your own specific environment and how these animals and this play might be seen in relationship to your own sense of place, your own performance space.

ABOUT SCRIPT NOTATION

Breaks in speech are noted by a series of ellipses after the character designation. i.e.:

TURTLE: ...

Each single dot represents one heartbeat. These ellipses create space for the character to react to what was just said, or to think of (or to hold back) the next thing to say, or both. These are definitely not moments in which to relax.

When you see the following notation below, it describes a breath that passes between the scenes it separates. It also indicates a passage of time, which could be as short as a few seconds (a literal breath) or as long as several hours, depending on your own understanding of the moment. It is also possible that the moment before and after the breath actually overlap one another, developing and moving together, like a dance.

(Holding still, teasing us, she smiles and, with a flourish, exits.)

.....

(Silent, determined, the Great Blue Heron enters. Her eyes are intense, but not unkind.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was originally commissioned by Plays & Players (Daniel Student, Artistic Director; Rachel Dukeman, Managing Director), inaugurating their young audiences program, Philadelphia Local Artists for Youth (P.L.A.Y.). The play was developed and workshopped during the summer of 2013, leading to production in the spring of 2014.

Delaware Mudtub and the Mighty Wampum ran for 3 previews and 15 public performances, March 13–29, 2014, at Plays & Players Theatre (Philadelphia, PA).

The production was directed by Candace O'Neil Cihocki, and performed by Andrew J. Carroll, Heather Cole, Katie Croyle, Tyler Garamella, Maria Konstantinidis, Tess McChesney Kunik and Mary Beth Shrader.

The creative team also included Set Design by Colin McIlvaine, Lighting Design by Andrew Cowles, Costume

Design by John Hodges, Sound Design by Kyle Yackowski, Puppet Design by Leila Ghaznavi, Props Design by Danielle Ferguson, and Dramaturgy by Laurel Hostak.

The production was Stage Managed by Angie McGuinness, with Assistant Stage Manager Lisa Sullivan.

Additional contributions came from Will Bankhead (Technical Direction Intern), Lena Barnard (Literary Manager), Nikki Bromberg (Education Intern), Amanda Jensen (Technical Director), Briana Pfleegor (Audience Services Manager) and Lauren Tracy (Production Manager).

The author thanks all of the members of this original process for their unending creativity and generosity, and for caring so much for each other. I love all of the worlds you all created.

Thank you as well to all the living things that are native (or once native) to the area we now call Philadelphia—especially to the Lenni-Lenape people and the animals in this play, all of whom offered infinite inspiration. May this play continually and sensitively share your stories in ways deserving of your bravery, strength, and integrity.

Thank you as well to Sarah Elizabeth Anne Lloyd, whose heart is even bigger than a mudtub.

(Even before the audience arrives, they might see these animals on their way to the performance.)

(Maybe they see FOX, walking, full of alertness, across Spruce Street.)

(Maybe they see the Otters, EARLE and PEARL, juggling fruit near Rittenhouse Square.)

(Maybe they see HERON, turning the corner, impossibly slowly, down Delancey Place.)

(Maybe seeing these animals beforehand makes it possible to see them again, imagined or not, afterward.)

(As the audience arrives, TURTLE is making a necklace of wampum, or a similar kind of gift. She is outside the performance space, surrounded by channeled whelk shells and quahog, which she can later fashion into beads. Perhaps she is also surrounded by leaves, sticks, bits of earth as well.)

(Turtle's face has glorious lines, each telling an impossible story, her eyes full of wisdom and humor. Made from gravity and strength, Turtle carries the world on her back. She has a hook-shaped scar on her cheek, another impossible story.)

(Turtle invites others to help her string beads together, offering the helpers to wear or take their necklaces with them.)

(In the same area, a journal [or perhaps several] hangs from the sky above.)

(The journal invites you to write down a question, or to offer a thought or illustration.)

(When your thought or question is ready, tug on the string from which the journal hangs.)

(The journal is reeled in from above, perhaps by one of the animals, who responds to you, then lowers the journal back to the ground.)

(Audience might also have opportunity for their faces to be painted like an animal; ideally of a species native, or formerly native, to the area, or of one of the animals that comes alive in this play.)

(While these activities are engaged, Turtle begins a wampum belt, the details and designs of the beads telling a story, maybe the stories of this particular play. Each performance, more of the wampum belt's story is revealed, expressing itself fully by the end of the run, which can then be gifted.)

(When ready, Turtle leads the audience into the performance space, taken over by nature.)

(Great vines hang from the wild trees that grow from the ground and through the walls.)

(The air is wild, breathing from the leaves which exhale it. We hear the natural sounds of the environment – the wind, water, animal calls, all the living organisms making their way through their lives.)

(Through the center of the space, a small part of the Delaware River flows, on its bank is a sturdy rock that is home to Turtle.)

(The source of the river begins from, or empties into, a small pond or pool, bordered by wise, ancient stones, wildflowers, as well as a few toys, mostly whittled from wood cuttings, made by Turtle.)

(There are many small rocks and leaves strewn about, inviting themselves as gifts for audience to take home with them.)

(Above all, the boundaries between performance and audience are unclear, with the area living as a place to imagine and breathe deeply.)

(As the audience explores and inhabits the space, they find the Mudtub's animals – the Otters, Heron, the BEAR CUBS, etc.; all except for Fox – curled into a pile of resting bodies, each breathing deeply and dreaming.)

(Turtle, humming softly, gently wakes each animal, nudging each being into life. As each animal wakes, they join Turtle's humming, find their animal bodies, and move to the place in the Mudtub that is theirs.)

(After all the animals are awake, Turtle stands on her rock and listens closely, waiting for the space to find its stillness.)

(She blows a note into a wooden flute, calling out for Fox.)

(She listens, but Fox does not reply. Fox is sometimes tricky that way.)

(Turtle blows again.)

(No reply.)

(Turtle blows again, then hums the note, placing her vibrating, earthy, testudinal voice in the air, inviting us to join her.)

(After we all hum for a moment, Turtle motions for us to stop.)

(Turtle blows another note, then motions for us to join her again.)

(We hum for a moment, Turtle listens closely, then motions for us to stop.)

(This last time, Turtle invites us to all hum together as loud as possible as she blows into her flute.)

(This finally gets Fox's attention, who steps into view.)

(All quiets as we take in the Red Fox, who stares back at us.)

(She is playful, dangerous. Her smile comes easily, unveiling her sharp teeth.)

(Her hair is a deep red, with pieces of sun and tree bark, and a bit of pumpkin because she loves them so much.)

(Her eyes dance, as does her nose; her face constantly taking in all the sights and smells around her.)

(Her tail, fluffy and expressive, extends around her, sometimes curling up playfully, sometimes a whip.)

(Holding still, teasing us, she smiles and, with a flourish, exits.)

.....

(Silent, determined, the Great Blue Heron enters. Her eyes are intense, but not unkind.)

(She searches a few moments, then begins picking up grass and straw with her large beak, carrying it to the makings of a nest, all while Turtle watches her quietly.)

(Heron continues finding and carrying pieces of grass, straw, reeds until she gathers as much as she needs.)

(Once she collects it all, she sits in the middle of her pile, allowing her weight to rest into the grass and reeds. She rotates her body within her gatherings, forming the nest around her own shape.)

(Nested, her body rests, her eyes remain active, watchful.)

(She listens.)

.....

(Fox enters, listening, completely alert.)

(She hears something rustling in the distance and sends a sharp fox bark toward the sound.)

(She listens again, completely.)

(The rustling transforms into sounds sent from a great distance by the Great Spirit of the Black Bear, somehow echoing and colliding all around Fox.)

(She listens again, completely, the sounds and movement and breath of the Great Black Bear surrounding and moving Fox slightly around the space.)

(The sounds shift again, placing us back, perhaps, into the mudtub, where Fox hears the rustling again, this time bounding after it, teeth bared, barking loudly, and out of the playing area.)

.....

(Turtle sits on her perch, resuming her work on the wampum.)

(Otters Earle and Pearl enter, rafting together in the river, drifting with the current.)

(Their otter markings are endearing – Pearl with a bit of white around her neck [a pearl necklace] and Earle, a white bow-tie.)

(Two well-worn, but jaunty, top hats drift toward them, eventually bumping into the otters floating on the water.)

(The otters inspect the hats – they sniff them, tap them, bark at them, look closely at them – they don't know what to do with them.)

(From her rock, Turtle looks on as Earle and Pearl continue inspecting the hats, Earle sticking his head underneath one to look inside.)

(When Earle raises his head, the hat accidentally stays perched atop him – it fits perfectly.)

(Pearl thinks he looks fantastic. Earle is unsure, he feels silly.)

(Pearl bends down, tucking her head underneath the other top hat, then stands, keeping the hat atop her head.)

(She carefully displays herself for him, becoming Earle's mirror.)

(Earle looks at Pearl and, through her, understands just how great he looks.)

(A smile creeps on his face as the two otters, top hats magnificently atop their heads, beam at each other.)

(Watching each other closely, they try out different movements, different angles of looking at themselves through their otter mirror.)

(They were made to wear these hats.)

(Satisfied, they swim up the river together, reflecting the sun.)

.....

(The Great Blue Heron is near her two CHICKS at the river.)

(With great effort, the chicks are walking – their young, gangly limbs keep them from being very good at it.)

(The mother Heron walks to the river, searches, then gracefully pulls a small fish from the water.)

(She drops the fish a few paces in front of the chicks, then retreats behind them.)

(The chicks walk, stumbling a little, toward the fish and, once making it here, they don't know what to do.)

(Heron grabs the fish, chews it, and drops pieces of it into the waiting mouths of her chicks.)

.....

(Turtle and Fox are sitting on Turtle's perch, sunning themselves.)

(Two Black Bear Cubs enter, one of them sadly rolling a ball with his nose.)

(Fox tenses up; the Bear Cubs spot her from across the space.)

(They all stare at each other a moment.)

(The Bear Cubs roar at Fox with as much intimidation as possible.)

(Turtle, listening closely, hears their heartbreak.)

(The ambitious roar of the Cubs trails off as the two little bears catch their breath.)

TURTLE: Where's your mom?

(The Cubs are too sad to answer.)

(They look at Turtle and Fox for another moment, then slowly walk through the space, nosing the ball with them, and exit.)

(Turtle turns to Fox, searching Fox's face for an answer.)

(Fox knows the Bear Cubs, but she kind of shrugs her shoulders and leaves.)

.....

(It is nighttime.)

(We hear each of the animals from their habitats go through their nighttime rituals.)

(We hear Heron and her chicks singing to each other.)

(They are high above, nested. They continue singing, finding the coarse, pithy musicality of their croaky voices.)

(The mother Heron finds a croaky lullaby, singing her chicks to sleep.)

(The chicks sing along here and there, until their little heron eyes are too sleepy to keep open, and they lean into their mother's great blue plumage, falling asleep.)

(One of the Heron's chicks has a dream:)

(A DEER is standing on a cloud.)

(The deer leaps high into the air, landing majestically on the cloud.)

(The deer leaps again, a little higher, and this time falls through the cloud.)

(When the deer passes through, she becomes a white buffalo, falling to the earth.)

(The white buffalo continues to fall, and just before she hits the earth, the chick wakes and croaks, waking her brother and mother.)

(The white buffalo vanishes, the Great Blue Heron wraps her large wing around her chicks, pulling them closer.)

(She sits silently in her nest, her eyes intent, watching, she is caring for her chicks through her vigilance.)

(She closes one eye, resting it without falling asleep.)

(The stars, dim at first, shine more brightly as we pass deeper into the night.)

(The sounds and starlight continue, dancing, while way in the distance, a wolf howls.)

(If we are not listening closely, we might miss it.)

(The stars twinkle, night continues singing, the Delaware River gently rolls along until the sun rises from the East.)

.....

(Turtle stands on her rock, completely still, listening closely.)

(Deep in the distance, we can barely hear it, is a wolf howl.)

(She turns to Fox, resting in the grass.)

(Fox does not hear the Wolf.)

(Turtle listens closely again.)

(This time, they all hear it, a tremendous crack of thunder startles and shakes each of the animals.)

(They all look up, searching for the sound, but the sky is clear.)

(Way off in the distance, a wolf howls again, Turtle just barely hears it.)

.....

(The two Heron chicks are in the river.)

(They playfully dip their beaks into the water, grabbing grasses, minnows, and small bugs.)

(They are wonderfully awkward and earnest.)

(Fox, very quietly, creeps behind them, watching closely, inching toward them, crouched low.)

(The Great Blue Heron calls out from high above – an intense warning cry to the chicks and to Fox.)

(Fox, still crouched, follows the sound to the Heron's eyes. Heron and Fox take a long look at each other, speaking deeply under the silence.)

(The chicks keep still, frozen in the shallow water.)

(Fox stands and, for now, slinks off, conceding to Heron.)

(The Heron chicks stand in the river, a little bit changed.)

(The Great Blue Heron sings to them, trying, with her croaky song, to smooth out the worry in their faces.)

.....

(Otters Earle and Pearl enter, each with an armful of wild blackberries, freshly picked.)

(Fox enters with a large pumpkin, but stops to watch the Otters, who lay on their backs, place the piles on their stomachs, and begin to eat their berries, one by one.)

(Earle and Pearl dance with happiness – these are the best blackberries ever.)

(Fox, hungry, watches a moment until she places the pumpkin aside, going instead for the blackberries.)

(She approaches and stands above Earle and Pearl.)

(The otters are unsure how to respond, they continue eating, a little uncomfortable with Fox's eyes closely upon them.)

(Fox stares at the Otters until, finally, Pearl, outstretching her arm, offers Fox a blackberry.)

(Fox dismisses Pearl's offer, and begins gathering acorns, making a pile of them.)

(Earle and Pearl find their happy place again, eating and dancing with their berries.)

(Once she is sure they are watching, but pretending not to notice, Fox tosses an acorn high into the air, elegantly catching it in her mouth on the way down.)

(Earle and Pearl, deeply impressed, rise from the river and walk over, blackberries in hand, to Fox.)

(Fox throws another acorn into the air and, Earle and Pearl watching closely, Fox catches it once again.)

(Fox motions for Earle and Pearl to try.)

(They nod their heads at each other – one, two, three – then each otter throws a blackberry high into the air, each joyfully catching it in their mouth.)

(They did it! They are so happy, all of them, Fox included, they all do a little dance.)

(Fox selects another acorn and barks a few quick fox barks – one, two, three – and all three animals toss their treats into the sky, each landing safely in their mouths.)

(They are all so happy!)

(Fox selects another acorn and barks a few quick barks – one, two, three – and the animals toss their treats into the sky.)

(As Earle and Pearl follow the flight of their blackberries, Fox snatches the remainder of the Otters' pile, hoarding them to herself.)

(Very self-satisfied, Fox admires her armful of blackberries, then places a single berry in her mouth.)

(Oh, this blackberry is so delicious, says the Fox's toothy grin.)

(The Otters are crestfallen.)

(Fox reaches delicately, oh she is putting on such a wonderful show, for another blackberry.)

(Just as Fox is about to place the blackberry in her mouth, Earle reaches to grab it from her.)

(Fox snaps at him, a loud fox bark escaping from her as she gnashes her teeth at the Otters.)

(Earle and Pearl, shaken, retreat, as Fox's eyes blaze, a low growl rumbling from her muzzle, she watches the Otters return to the river, empty-handed.)

(Earle and Pearle sit together, saddened, as Fox prances around her stolen treats.)

(The Otters watch as Fox, joyful, ballet-like, tosses a blackberry high into the air. But the leaves from the tree above her swallow it up as she stands waiting, open-mouthed underneath.)

(Fox does not like this.)

(Fox tosses another into the air, even more elegant than before, and as she stands again, open-mouthed, the tree swallows this one as well.)

(The Otters are enjoying this. Fox glares over at the Otters, silencing them with her furrowed, glowering Fox face.)

(She looks up into the tree's canopy, takes a deep breath, and, full of fury, Fox barks into the limbs and leaves.)

(Fox's bark, piercing through the tree, breaks off a few limbs, which come crashing down on her in a mess of leaves and flowers and splintered branches.)

(The Otters giggle a little. After a moment of stillness, they become concerned.)

(Fox finally lifts her head from the fallen pieces of tree, bruised and embarrassed.)

(She shakes off the debris from her thick red hair, and, with as much dignity as possible, walks to her area, glaring at the Otters the whole time, and curls up on the ground with her paws over her eyes.)

(When they are sure it's safe, Earle and Pearl walk to the blackberries, each quickly and quietly gathering a pile to carry with them.)

(As they walk toward the river:)

PEARL: Wait.

(They look at each other a moment.)

EARLE: You're right.

(Earle and Pearl each leave a handful of blackberries for Fox, placing them carefully near her slumped figure.)

(They return to their spot in the river, laying down again on their backs, placing their remaining pile of berries on their stomachs, eating them one-by-one.)

(These berries are very delicious, even more satisfying than before, the Otters now tasting the berry's entire journey.)

(Fox will eventually eat her berries, but will wait until much later, when no one is looking.)

.....

(Turtle is planting seeds into the ground [corn, beans, or squash] as Fox looks into the horizon.)

(Turtle knows something is bothering Fox. She continues planting as she speaks:)

TURTLE: Did you know your mother was the wife of an old pond?

FOX: ...

TURTLE: You could watch her swim in her husband, your father, if you were in the hiding bushes. And she spoke to your father, we watched her, by the way she swam gently.

FOX: ...

TURTLE: One time in their lives there was no rain and the sun began making the pond smaller. Soon the sun took the whole pond! For many nights the old fox, your mother, slept near the hole where her husband once lived.

Then, all at once, a storm came. But in the morning there was still no water in her husband's old home. So your mother set out on a journey to find her husband, your father, and followed the puddles on the ground, which were the storm's footprints.

She followed them for many miles.

Finally she came upon her husband sitting in a hole. But he was in the wrong hole! So the old fox brought her husband home little by little in her hands.

You could have seen him come home if you were in the hiding bushes. And we were. We saw your mother carrying the pond until the hole was complete, until the ground held the entire weight of the water and your father in it.

And your mother swam in the pond, again, and, this time, even more gently.

(Fox allows Turtle's story of her mother sink into her bones.)

FOX: Thank you, Turtle.

(Fox slides off the rock, and takes a long walk through the trees, looking at the footprints of all the things.)

.....

(Earle and Pearl are pretending to be cats, just for fun.)

(They slink around, joyfully trying all kinds of fun musicalities, rhythms, and full-body sounds, all deeply exploring what it might be like to be a cat.)

PEARL: Meow meow meow meow meow.

EARLE: Meowmeowmeowmeowmeowmeow.

PEARL: Meowmeow meow meow meow.

EARLE: Meooooooooooooow.

PEARL: Meowmeowmeow.

EARLE: Meooooooooooooooooooooooooooooow.

PEARL: Meowmeowmeowmeow.

(As they continue, the rest of the animals – Turtle, Fox, and Heron – look on with interest.)

EARLE: Meooooooooooooooooow MEOU!

PEARL: MEOU MEOU!

EARLE AND PEARL: Meowmeowmeowmeowmeow!

PEARL: Meooooooooooooooooooooow!

EARLE: Meowmeowmeowmeowmeowmeow.

PEARL AND EARLE: MEOU MEOU.

PEARL: Meow!

EARLE: Meow!

PEARL AND EARLE: MEOU!

EARLE: Meow!

PEARL: MEOU!

(PEARL and EARLE hold the "o" sound until they run out of breath.)

EARLE AND PEARL: Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeoooooooooooooooooooo-
oo
oo
oo
oo
oo
oo
oo
ow!!

(Whoever holds their breath the longest erupts into a victory dance, expressing both Otter and Cat, full of triumph.)

(Earle and Pearl realize the rest of the animals are watching them.)

(They are a little embarrassed, but above all, they are Otters, gloriously uninhibited.)

PEARL: *(To the others:)* We wanted to see what it would be like to talk like cats.

(The rest of the animals aren't sure how to respond, though they are all, as usual, at least partly delighted by Earle and Pearl.)

EARLE: *(Raising his hand:)* I was a lion.

(Pearl, very proud of her brother, flips him, playfully, over her back.)

.....

(Turtle sits on her rock, sounding a few notes here and there through her wooden flute.)

(The other animals are away, except for Heron, silently foraging the river for food.)

TURTLE: Another old turtle used to say that this river was made from the tears of wolves.

(Heron listens as she continues to hunt, moving gracefully, impossibly slow.)

And that the wolves left here only to make rivers in other places.

(Heron is listening, silent.)

I used to try to imagine what it would be like to be a wolf. To move like that.

(Heron is listening, silent.)

What do the other animals see and hear? And smell?

(Heron is listening, silent.)

Heron?

(Heron looks at Turtle, listening.)

I think you're beautiful.

(Without moving, Heron thanks Turtle, and continues hunting.)

I would try to imagine why the wolves would be crying.

(Heron reaches into the river and pulls out a fish.)

(She heads toward her nest, carrying the fish, giving Turtle a little nudge with her head as she passes.)

(Turtle sounds a few more notes on her flute, a little absently, as her mind moves back and forth through her own questions.)

.....

(The sun is setting on the Delaware River.)

(All the animals are resting in their habitats – Turtle on the rock; Earle and Pearl rafting together in the river; Fox, near her fox hole; Heron and her chicks in their nest.)

(They breathe in the final moments of the day's sunlight together, drinking up the rays, slowly disappearing into shadow.)

(A sleepy twilight breeze, perhaps rolling off the distant Kittatinny Mountain, dances through them, brushing affectionately against each animal, whispering a kind gift into each of them.)

(The breeze continues dancing, its passage made visible by the things it nudges and embraces.)

(From the deep distance a low rumbling works its vibrations through the ground.)

(The rumbling grows louder in the shared stillness.)

(Finally, it ceases.)

(A second moon appears reflected in the water, confusing the boundary between earth and sky.)

(In the double moonlight, one of the Heron's chicks has a dream:)

(A fire forms, its light reveals WOLF, sitting upside-down, quietly near the flames.)

(Wolf takes a piece of coal from the fire and writes on the ground.)

(He draws an oval, to which he adds four paws or feet, a head and a tail.)

WOLF: This is a tortoise, lying in the water around it.

(He moves his paw around the figure, continuing:)

This was all water, and so at first was the world, when the tortoise gradually raised its round back up high, and the water ran off of her shell, and thus the earth became dry.

(Wolf takes a reed and stands it on its end in the middle of the figure of the turtle.)

The earth was now dry, and there grew a tree in the middle of it. And the root of this tree sent forth a sprout beside it, and there grew upon it a man, who was the first male. This man was alone, and would have remained alone. And maybe the tree knew this.

(Wolf demonstrates as he talks:)

Then the tree bent over, over, all the way down, until its top touched the earth, and there shot up another root, from which came forth another sprout. And there grew upon it a woman, and from these two sprouts, these two heartbeats, are all humans created.

(The Wolf, hearing his own howl in the distance, swipes his large arm across his drawing, drops the coal into the river, rippling the moon, and jumps into the fire, waking the Heron chick, ending the dream.)

(The Great Blue Heron nudges her chicks back to sleep; the wind gently pushes the tops of the trees.)

.....

(With the sun rising, Turtle wakes and sits on her rock, continuing the mighty wampum belt.)

(She works slowly, intensely, listening to the bits of hard clam and whelk shells as she places them into the belt.)

(She stops to rest her hands and rub her eyes.)

(She holds the belt to the sky, allowing the low-hanging sun to reveal its stories.)

(She places the belt on the rock, rubbing her eyes once more.)

(She rubs her hands, working out the cramps, the tiny muscles sending red-orange fires through her large, rugged hands.)

(She slides off the rock, slowly making her way to the river, where she places her hands into the water, trying to cool things down.)

(She lets the water work on her, breathing into it, before she removes her hands from the river, shakes them out, and heads back to her rock.)

(She sits atop the rock again, gathering the wampum belt, and continues working.)

(Turtle pauses her work, stands on her rock, completely still, listening closely.)

(Deep in the distance, we can barely hear it, is a wolf howl.)

(She turns to Fox, resting in the grass.)

(Fox does not hear the Wolf.)

(Turtle listens closely again.)

(This time, they all hear it, a tremendous crack of sound startles and shakes each of the animals from their sleep.)

(They all look up, searching, but the sky is clear.)

(Another loud crack of sound, followed by another – metallic, clanging, scraping – banging against the sensitive ears of all the animals.)

(They each try to retreat from the noise, attempting, at the same time, to listen and discover what it is.)

(The loud noises – banging, clanging, scraping, electronic, high-pitched frequencies punctuating it all – continue, unrelenting until, mercifully, they stop.)

(The animals, shaken, look to the sky for an answer, but there is none.)

PEARL: What was that?

(None of them know.)

.....

(Earle and Pearl are sitting on the bank of the Delaware, grooming each other's dense fur, when Heron and her chicks enter.)

(Earle, Pearl and Heron look at each other, Heron closely reading the two Otters.)

(They are all silent, looking deeply through their keen animal senses until Heron sees what she needs, choosing to trust the Otters, and nudges the chicks toward the river.)

(The chicks step into the shallow edge, splashing playfully as Heron looks on.)

(Pearl, finding Heron's eyes, rises up and, with as much grace as she can offer, extends her otter arms into wings, tilting her head into the sky, attempts to transform in a Great Blue Heron.)

(The attempt is earnest, but unsuccessful.)

(Heron watching, curious, she sets her wings, demonstrating to Pearl. Pearl tries again to become a Heron—a little more beautiful this time, closer to having wings, but not completely transformed.)

(With the chicks now also watching, Pearl turns to Earle for help, looking hard at him until Earle finally understands.)

(Together, Earle and Pearl lift each other into the air, gracefully becoming Great Blue Herons, stretching out in all directions, dancing with the wind that shapes their flight. They are peaceful, joyful, their otter-heron wings taking them on new journeys, showing the new things they've never seen.)

(Heron watches them from the ground, flying alongside them with her eyes.)

(Finally, Earle and Pearl come down, landing back in the mudtub, returning to their otter selves, but now knowing, a little, of what it is like to fly.)

(They all sit in silence, breathing all of this in, until the two heron chicks jump together into the river, splashing water all over Pearl.)

(Heron croaks a little bit, a tiny bit, maybe it is the hint of a little heron laugh, before she stifles its full expression.)

(Heron leans toward Earle and Pearl, gently thanking them with her eyes and breath before she gathers up her chicks and heads back to their nest.)

(Earle and Pearl continue sitting on the bank together, watching the herons and their silhouettes lengthen along the river.)

.....

(An enormous spirit of an enormous BLACK BEAR enters the space, empty of all the animals, except for Fox.)

(The Spirit of the Black Bear lets out an enormous roar, impossibly loud, that shakes the entire area, rattling the trees and vines, rippling the Delaware, shaking the bones of the Red Fox.)

(Fox is paralyzed with fear, unable to escape.)

(The Black Bear moves toward Fox, impossibly slowly.)

(Bear continues making her way to Fox, impossibly slowly, until they are nose to nose.)

(Bear lets out another enormous roar, filled with the full spectrum of harsh and surprising sounds that make Black Bear's entire life.)

(Fox, still frozen, feels the waves move all through her, jostling her tendons and bones and joints and hinges.)

(The Spirit of the Black Bear's roars come to an end and the Bear pounces, full-speed, into the river, disappearing inside of an unforgettable, earth-shaking tidal crash.)

(The Black Bear now gone, the river bank is quiet and calm, except for Fox, who continues to vibrate through the Spirit visit's aftershocks.)

.....

(Turtle is planting a young dogwood tree, with help from Earle and Pearl.)

(After planting it, they all stand and admire the tree, watching it magically grow into a lovely, full, blossoming dogwood.)

(Turtle takes a deep breath, then wiggles a bit in her shell, doing a small dance celebrating the new tree.)

(Turtle slowly walks back to her rock, letting the sun warm her back.)

(Earle and Pearl continue looking into the dogwood tree, Turtle smiling from her sun-warmed rock.)

(The otters recreate Turtle's dance then exit, rafting together down the river.)

.....

(Turtle sits on her rock, working on the mighty wampum belt.)

(The two Black Bear Cubs enter and watch her. Feeling their gaze, Turtle meets their eyes.)

(Each Cub reluctantly reveals their injury – each has a limb painfully wrapped inside a thicket of thorn bushes.)

(Turtle makes her way to them, taking a close look at each cub-wrapped thicket.)

(The Cubs are embarrassed.)

(Turtle gently calls out:)

TURTLE: Earle? Pearle? Otters?

(The Otters swim up the river to find Turtle's voice.)

(They pause when seeing the Bear Cubs.)

(With caution, the Otters make their way to Turtle and the Cubs, who try to hide their misfortune.)

(With Turtle's encouragement, the Cubs shyly reveal their injuries, holding out their thicketed limbs.)

(The answer becomes clear to Pearl, who approaches one of the Cubs and begins breaking through the thorny thickets with her teeth, demonstrating to Earle.)

(Earle doesn't move.)

PEARL: Earle?

(They don't know how to get past this moment, Earle still unable to move, until the Bear Cub stands and holds his arm toward Earle, the Cub's limb shaking with pain and fear.)

(Earle still doesn't budge.)

(He looks to Turtle:)

EARLE: I'm too scared.

(Earle sits on the ground, facing away from the group, disappointed in himself.)

(Pearl continues setting the Cubs free, gnawing through the thorny thickets until they are completely untangled.)

(Each Cub approaches Pearl and affectionately rubs the side of their furry Black Bear face against hers, tickling her.)

(The Cubs exit, renewed, bounding out of the space.)

(Pearl and Turtle aren't sure what to do about Earle, still sitting despondent and sullen.)

PEARL: Are you ok, Earle?

EARLE: ...

(Pearl doesn't know what else to do, so she burps.)

(A smile creeps onto Earle's face. So Pearl burps again, a little louder.)

(Earle smiles a little bigger. Then he burps.)

(Then Turtle burps, a little louder.)

(Then Earle burps, a little louder.)

(Then Pearl rips loose an earth-shaking fart. The trees shake, the Delaware River ripples, the muddy banks tremble and vibrate. The air is changed.)

(They are all stupefied, impressed into silence.)

(Finally:)

PEARL: Blackberries.

(Pearl, very demure, oh she is such a little lady, prances off into the river, leaving Earle and Turtle.)

(After a moment:)

EARLE: I should have helped that bear cub.

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