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Hi

I would like to submit two poems for consideration. My name is Bob Supernant. I was born in Edmonton with a mixed aboriginal lineage and have lived most of life on the west coast of Canada. I have been writing poetry since I was in grade school but so far have not published a book. I have contributed articles to local magazines and just spent 18 months in Bali Indonesia where I was a featured poet at the international poetry slam in the Ubud writers and readers festival.

The first poem relates to my experiences growing up in northern Alberta with my foster family. The second is a poem I wrote to dedicate an outdoor pavilion I constructed for a retired professor who was translating ancient Chinese poetry and songs into modern Chinese and English.

Thanks Bob.

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Ode to a Forest *by Bob Supernant*

It wasn't much of a farm as farms go  
 Small, yet rich with life that the city could never give  
 Motherless since birth I knew I was alone  
 An orphan child wrapped in shrouds of disappointment  
 Came there at five  
 From another broken home  
 Hoping for some shred of security  
 But I soon found out I was a hired hand  
 My innocence belaboured - doing chores to 'earn my keep'

It wasn't much of a forest as forests go  
 Barely five acres of spruce and aspen poplar mixed by some unseen hand  
 But a place ever resplendent in the garments of the four seasons  
 Patiently I would wait for the bluebells to blossom after the snow thawed  
 Then to pick succulent wild strawberries in June  
 Wormy raspberries in July  
 Sour gooseberries in August  
 I was overjoyed when the only tiger lily for miles  
 Showed it's harvest moon face in September  
 Giving me one last colorful delight before the snows of October  
 And yes I did walk those crisp mornings  
 Crunching fresh snow  
 Adding my treaded tracks to those of birds, squirrels and raccoons  
 How the hoarfrost was magnificent some sunny mornings  
 Enrobing the trees with the sparkle of countless diamonds

It wasn't much of a playground as playgrounds go  
 Yet as big as the world could be, in a child's eyes  
 As I played in the light of northern seasons  
 Becoming chief, or cowboy, or hockey star on the frozen pond  
 Always hero of the day  
 There I was lover of all that greened and sang and cocooned, then passed away  
 Discovering intimacy, not found with family or friends

It was to you that I would go, seeking solace  
 From the oppression, the great dysfunction of my foster family  
 Mistreatment that sometimes fell as blows

Your birds sang soothing lullabies  
Your large limbed trees cradled my stinging back  
Your grassy glades absorbed my humiliation  
In so many years I never shared my troubles with human ears  
But you, my forest knew  
Listening to my sobbing silence  
Buoying my loneliness above despair

It was not much of a town as towns go  
But far enough away that I had to say goodbye  
To you  
Five angry people crammed into a tiny house on a muddy avenue  
Nowhere to go but the streets, the pool hall, or the school gym  
Too different to fit in  
No where to walk, no money, few friends  
Nowhere to go but further inside the shell  
I didn't know how much I missed you  
As my aloneness sunk into despair

One day I did return, only a short time ago  
Now a man – happier- more self-forgiving  
But you had changed  
Falling victim to the hamburger machine grinding up this planet  
Overrun by cows, chewing all leaf within reach  
Hooves mincing your ground  
Not a bluebell or strawberry in sight  
Your magic gone, except in a child's memories  
I came to say hello but it became another goodbye  
Neither of us will be the same  
But I know you loved that little boy  
As I am beginning to, now.