



THE SOULFUL CHILD



Twelve Years in the Wilderness

CHLOE RACHEL GALLAWAY

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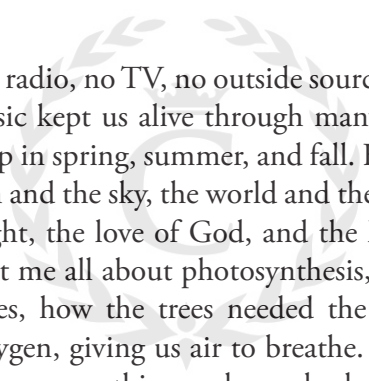
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Please enjoy this sample of Chloe Rachel Gallaway's
The Soulful Child, launching on September 23, 2017!

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The Singing Heart



There was no radio, no TV, no outside source to entertain. My father's music kept us alive through many winter days and lulled me to sleep in spring, summer, and fall. He was a man who sang of the earth and the sky, the world and the heart of man, the dark and the light, the love of God, and the hope of mankind. His songs taught me all about photosynthesis, and how the rain watered the trees, how the trees needed the sunlight to grow and produce oxygen, giving us air to breathe. His words wove a magical tale of how everything and everybody was needed.

When he told his stories with song, it was an even bigger magic. He sat in front of the fire, his feet with wool socks tapping the wood floor, his strong hands a soft whisper on the guitar strings. He sang of the moon and the sun dancing in circles together. The sun was like the father pouring out his bright light and strength to better the world; the moon was like the mother, graceful, mysterious, with a strong pull upon the earth. The earth was like the children who danced between the sun and the moon, the moon pulling the earth along with her, making the ocean waters glide back and forth from sea to shore. The sun tugged at the earth and the moon, making a life circle of up and down, round and round.

I could see the dance in my mind, feel the dance in my body—I was living the dance in the woods. We woke when the sun came up, and we crawled into bed just after the sun went down. We planted by the seasons and knew time by the sun's location in the sky. At night the moon was my only guide; there was no true darkness. Life had a rhythm and we lived within that rhythm.

God's Country

The September morning sun cast slanting rays across the yellow and brown dirt. I skipped through the front yard twirling in circles, my peach faded dress covering over my brown pants and flapping to the sides as I spun. My multicolored knit hat was tucked tight around my ears, and my orange sweater was buttoned taut over my dress. My father loaded the truck with small brown burlap sacks once filled with beans. His black cowboy hat was tilted slightly down. I could not see his eyes, only his thick, untamed beard.

In five-ten-fifteen minutes, we would load into the truck and drive away.

There was no clock to show the passing of time, only the pounding of my heart that raced through my chest, past my legs and right out my feet. All I could do was dance. It had been six months since I had been off the mountain. We piled into the back of my father's red '57 Chevy.

There were six of us children, and we were all about two and a half years apart. Except John, the eldest, and Carey, who were born fifteen months apart. Then came Nye, me, Rose and Jacinth.

John's body resembled my father's, tall with broad shoulders and soldier-like straight lines in his back.

Carey was muscular, but shorter than John. He was witty and moved his body swiftly, like an arrow through the woods.

Nye was still small. His frame was athletic, his arms and legs still trying to reach their muscular potential. Nye was shy and held back his voice until he had something really important to say. Every so often, he would make a joke that seemed like it came out of nowhere.

I was a mixture of my brothers, strong and quiet, and observant, too. On this day I was six, grown up enough to notice that Rose was barely old enough to make this trip. She was walking but still needed to hold someone's hand. She too was shy and clung to Mom, Dad, or John, depending on who was there for her to grab onto. Her blond ringlets of hair naturally flowed around her neck and down her chest. Her skin was porcelain, her hands little, but her walk sturdy. She always looked as though she was taking it all in, but she never spoke.

I sat squeezed in between my brothers, John on one side and Nye and Carey on the other. Rose sat on John's lap; his long arms reached all the way around her, holding her tight like a seat belt. We were a collage of colors—orange, purple, green, and red—in our hand-me-down sweaters, corduroy pants and knitted hats that my mother had made for us. Our skin was slightly darkened by patches of brown dirt from weeks past.

The smoke from the two-room cabin rose slowly from the chimney into the cloudless air. I watched my mother standing in the doorway, holding baby Jacinth in her arms. His tiny feet stuck out from the edge of the blue knit blanket. She had worn the same long, brown wool skirt for a week. Her auburn hair was pulled back from her face and wrapped loosely in a bun.

Poor mama, I thought. She has to stay behind with the baby.

But as we pulled away, I noticed the lines in her face relax and a glimpse of a smile appeared.

No seat belts, hands free swaying in the wind, we traveled up the long canyon road. We climbed higher and higher. The air felt cool and thick. The truck etched its way through a tunneling, bumpy road, spruce and aspen trees brushing against the sides of the pickup bed. I could feel my body vibrating until the truck jolted to a stop. All at once, my brothers and I hopped over the side of the pickup. My brothers were strong and fearless. I saw no reason I couldn't keep up with them. My father handed each of us a bag.

"Let's meet back here once you have a full bag of raspberries," he said. Taking my little sister by the hand, he set off. My brothers shoved one another back and forth, making small talk as they walked away. To prove my independence, I marched in the opposite direction.

I walked alone up a slight hill and through a grove of aspen trees, the leaves a delicate shade of yellow. I stopped and listened to the whispering of the leaves brushing back and forth, surrounded by a blanket of wild oregano plants, the tops beaming with deep purple flowers, the aspen leaves overhead glowing in the sunlight. Whoosh, whoosh, back and forth, the leaves danced.

These woods had a secret message, and that day they whispered it to me. I felt it with all my body seeping through me like a cool drink of water.

As I started through the field of oregano, the green leaves slipped against my pant legs, the minty thyme-like smell awakened my body, as a field of purple stretched out before me. I bent down and picked a handful of flowers to save for my mother. I held them tight in my hand.

I looked back and couldn't see my father or brothers anywhere.

I'll go a little ways further, I thought, as I spotted a thick raspberry bush in the distance.

Fuchsia-red berries dangled heavy from the bush. I grabbed a handful. Bitter, sweet, soft, and moist—the colors of rain mixed with sun melted onto my tongue. I dropped the bag and shoved a handful into my mouth. Juice ran down the sides of my lips. After several handfuls, I realized that I had eaten away at the goods while my bag lay empty. I began to pluck away, hurrying to fill my bag, when I was interrupted by a large crunching sound.

I peeked over the raspberry bush, and there, not far off, was a black bear. She looked stocky and round with thick fur covering her body. She was grounded on all four paws, sturdy and balanced; she was in her element. I clutched my bag tightly and pressed my feet into the solid earth.

My mind raced. *Should I hide...or run?*

My legs were heavy and I couldn't move. Then, a few seconds before my panic set in, I remembered what my father had told me about wild animals.

"Animals are only afraid when we are afraid," he had said.

My father's voice came clearly to me now. I watched the bear intently.

"Don't run. Be calm. Stand up tall, and state your intentions to the animal."

The bear stood on all four legs, its nose twitching, its eyes bearing down at me. I gulped, my mouth dry as I pressed my lips together. I could see that there were no cubs around, and this gave me confidence to speak.

“I am here to pick the berries—I don’t want to bother you.”

The bear wobbled a few steps forward. I stood my ground with my feet planted firmly, my body facing the bear.

“Now you go on your way, and I’ll go on mine.”

We stood there for a moment, each of us taking in the other. She was beautiful. I had never used that word in a sentence of my own, but now I knew what it meant. Her light black fur was soft and fluffy, her eyes looked with longing. I waited, my body now calm, my mind still. She turned her head and started up the hillside away from me. I clung to my bag of berries until she made her way over the hill, her butt bobbing back and forth as she disappeared into the aspen trees.

As the sun sank low, lines of soft light stretched out from the aspen grove to the meadow of oregano—purple, green, yellow—the earth spun around me with color. I felt the chill of evening come over my body. I grabbed my bag and ran, tumbling over my footsteps all the way back to the truck. Out of breath, I yelled as I neared the pickup bed, “I saw a bear! I saw a bear!”

I came to a sudden stop in the dirt and leaned forward with my hands on my knees. My father was on the left side of the pickup bed loading a bag of oregano, the purple stems sticking out the top of the burlap sack.

He approached me, “You saw one, did you?”

He knelt down and looked at me. His face was soft in the evening light, tanned by the summer’s sun. He wore a red handkerchief around his neck and his brownish red beard glistened in the light.

“Dad, Dad! She was right there when I looked up from the bush!” I breathed out all the words in one breath.

“Well, this is bear country. How big was she?”

Nye, Carey, and John came running from the hillside with bags full of raspberries.

“Look at my bag!” Carey shouted as he propelled his body forward, still running.

John and Nye walked behind him.

"She was big, Dad." I got out before the boys swarmed the truck. Dad stood up and announced it to my brothers.

"Chloe saw a bear."

"I did! I did!" I echoed.

"Cool!" Carey said. "Where is she?" he asked, looking off into the forest, his body ready to charge after her.

"She is already gone. I watched her climb over the hill through the trees," I said.

Dad went around and finished loading the truck. John and Nye asked about how big the bear was. I told them what she looked like, and how I wasn't afraid.

They both looked at me as though it was not a surprise that I wasn't scared.

"Good thing she didn't eat you," Nye said and poked me in the belly before climbing into the truck.

Rose looked tired. She sat in the back of the pickup bed, her head drooping down, her arms wrapped snug in her sweater. John climbed in and scooped her up onto his lap. I followed and curled up next to him and Rose, then Nye and Carey climbed in and smashed against us. The truck started, and we pulled away. I looked back down the long, bumpy road, the aspens glowing in the evening sunlight, the purple oregano fading into the distance. Dusk enveloped us as we drove. I leaned my head over onto Nye. The soft wind blew across our faces as we made our way down the mountain.

That day I came to know the woods and what my father saw in them. Secret messages encoded from God—a passage to an unknown place.

There is a place
Filled with grace
Where beauty abounds
I can be found
Traveling along
A canyon road
Carrying a
Delightful load
Of raspberries



*Out of the counterculture movement
of the sixties arises a true story about risking it all for true freedom.*



Folk singer Jerry Gallaway and ex-ballet dancer Reva Lynn Gallaway leave behind a life of opportunity and fame to raise a family in the woods of northern New Mexico. For six children born in the wild with no birth certificates, no worldly identity, only the song of nature printed on them at birth, the woods became a place of learning and a place of refuge, until tragedy uprooted their foundation, leaving the youngsters split between two worlds. When forced to choose for themselves, would they live in nature with their parents, or seek a new life in society?

Chloe Rachel Gallaway is the soulful child, bringing us the healing power of the wild through her photographic memories, authentic voice, and a tale of modern-day warriors and free thinkers carrying in their hearts an essential message about the priceless gifts of Mother Nature, her cycles of life and loss, and the transformative power of forgiveness.

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