Emerging,and the blades of sweetgrass shining in the sun.In that moment,I know that I am not alone.I lie in the meadow surrounded by the legions who do stand with me.I may not know what to do ,but they do,giving of their medicine gifts as they always do,to sustain the world.We are not powerless against the Windigo ,they say.Remember that we already have everything we need,And so-we conspire.

When I get to my feet,Nanabozho has appeared beside me,with resolute eyes and a trickster grin.”You have to think like the monster to defeat him,”he says.”Like dissolves like.”He points with his eyes to a line of dense shrubs at the wdge of the woods.”Give him a taste of his own medicine,”he says with a smirk.He walks into the gray thicket and laughter overtakes him as he disappears.

I’ve never gathered buckthorn before;the blue-black berries stain my fingers.I’ve tried to stay away from it,but it follows you.It is a rampant invader of disturbed places .It takes over the forest ,starving other plants of light and space .Buckthorn also poisons the soil .preventing the growth of any species but itself,creating a floristic desert.You have to acknowledge that it is a winner in the free market,a success story built on effeiciency ,monopoly and the creation of scarcity .It is a botanical imperialist ,stealing land from the natice species .

I gather all summer,sitting with each species that offer itself to the cause.listening and learning its gifts.I’ve always made teas for colds ,salves for skin,but never this.Making medicine is not undertaken lightly.It is a scared responsibility.The beams in my house are hung with drying plants,shelves filled with jars of roots and leaves ,waiting for winter.

When it comes,I walk the woods in my snowshoes,leaving an unmistakable trail toward home.A braid of sweetgrass hangs by my door.The three shining stands represent the unity of mind,body and spirit that makes us whole.In the windigo ,the braid is unraveled;that is the disease that drives him to destruction.That brid reminds me that when we braid the hair of mother earth we remember all that is given to us snd our responsibility to care for those gifts in return.In this way the gifts are sustained and all are fed.No one goes hungry.

Last night ,my house was full of food and friends ,the laughter and light spilling out on the snow.I thought I saw him by pass the window gazing in with hunger .But tonight I am alone and the wind is rising