

## CHERYL LEUTJEN

# Crimson Seed

A full moon, a woman,  
and a budding seed

I stumble through the dark house, eyes half open, not quite sure why I'm up. Perhaps the cats have knocked something over or the old window has blown open in a draft again. I find myself in the kitchen. I fumble for the light switch and cover my eyes until they adjust. I scan the room for signs of disturbance. While the kitchen is in complete disarray, it's of the usual sort: dirty dishes stream out of the sink, abandoned shoes lurk under the table, my favorite pen's flung to the floor by my least favorite cat. Nothing out of the ordinary, and yet nothing is the same.

And then I see it. Where yesterday there was a plain brown seed pod, now flaming-red seeds protrude from every orifice. I picked up the pod on my walk a few days ago, completely unaware of the budding fertility lying within. Now the scarlet ovules erupt out of their tiny wombs like impertinent tongues impatiently seeking their first tastes of ecstasy. They are pulsating with the hormones of a budding teenager, eager to be on their way, and to be on their own in the great big world. Their naked display of desire is at once vulgar and titillating.

What combination of light, temperature, and moisture has coincided here in my kitchen to awaken these sleeping buds of sexuality? Or was it the full moon of this night that awakened both my sleeping self and these tender seeds? Ah, yes, the full moon. I remember it and sigh. Who can sleep on the night of this super moon?

I make myself some tea and settle in to contemplate. These seeds are from a *Magnolia grandiflora* tree, a species neither native nor sustainable to grow here in drought-stricken Southern California. Magnolias require water—and lots of it—to get established. An abundance of water is something we have none of right now. Why there are so many magnolia trees in our neighborhood is a puzzle, one whose roots extend far longer than my tenure here.

One thing I know is that I'm unwilling to irrigate the progeny of a water-hungry tree with the precious water supplies we have. It's unlikely these seeds will get the rain they need any other way with the rainy season (if it materializes at all) still months away. It seems heartless to fling these eager and hungry seeds out into the heat and onto the bone-dry soil where they will surely wither and rot.

I consider the options. I could eat them. I could compost them. I could hope the squirrels will eat them. I could send them to my family in Louisiana where magnolias flourish.

I keep coming back to this thought: These seeds are eager to be out in the world, how can I not oblige? I am the unconscious city dweller who interrupted their natural process by picking them up and keeping them in the sterile environment of my kitchen. It seems cruel to deny them their one chance at fulfilling their yearning for freedom. Who am I to deny the chance to experience the utter joy of being alive?

It's the question I ask myself whenever I pull weeds. Who am I to decide that any particular expression of green leafy life that exhales the very oxygen I need to breathe, shall live no more? Who am I to say where any living thing belongs and where it does not? Has humanity not seen, time and again, the disastrous effects of adamantly and unconsciously imposing our will on Nature?

With weeds, this is primarily a mental analysis. With these throbbing crimson seeds, pulsating with an impulse for Life so strong that it stirs me from my sleep, it is emotional. It is physical. I feel their wanting as a boiling red-hot pot of desire deep in my viscera.

I whisper my dilemma to the seed pod. Maybe it's the lunacy of this night or my own vivid imagination but I swear that it responds. It tells me that it has burst forth in this way, in my kitchen, in response to the unabashed want and need that it senses in me. As two women in the same home cycle together, this seed pod is bursting forth

in sisterly solidarity of my own naked desire to bear fruit. The yearning for new Life, new creativity, and new self-expression that we both feel is what is waking us up.

I collapse back in my chair at this revelation. Up until now, my belief in Oneness—that we are each an essential element of All That Is—has been but an abstract construct. That a seed pod and I could be influencing and responding to each other so intimately and collaboratively had not entered my imagination. Until now.

Everything we do matters. Everything we say, think, and feel reverberates across creation, and life responds, whether we realize it or not.

I need to sit here awhile longer and allow my mind to catch up to what my heart and soul have already integrated. One thing is for sure. These seeds aren't going in the trash or the compost bin. Their chances for expressing their fertility may be slim, but I'll not be the one to slam the door on anyone's dreams. The bright and pulsating intersection of our collective desires on this moonlit night just might be the impulse that slingshots both of our destinies from stardust to starlight.

**Cheryl Leutjen** draws from experience as a geologist, attorney, spiritual practitioner, business owner, writer, wife, and mother to inspire, ground, and inform her creative non-fiction writing. She holds degrees from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri (BA, interdisciplinary ecology); the University of Missouri-Kansas City (MS, urban environmental geology); the University of Southern California (JD); and a modern day priestess certification from the Institute of Modern Wisdom.

## LAWRENCE BACH

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COURTESY THE ARTIST