

War Curio

During the aftermath of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, an infant survivor was found and taken by General William Colby against the will of the few surviving Lakota. Raised by the General's family, Lost Bird was his "displaypiece for profit." She died in Los Angeles in 1920. Not until 1991 did the Lakota obtain the rights to her remains to rebury her at the Wounded Knee Memorial mass gravesite.

Lost Bird, find your way
alongside your buried family
in the killing field of one hundred years ago
where the survivors were hunted down and
executed
because the blood running in their veins was Indian
as editorials solicited wholesale extermination
by laws of conquest
"beloved justice prevails with civilization."

You fly now, Lost Bird
amongst children left for dead
wrapped in the shawls of their frozen mothers
a red coat of snow smothering the bodies
who had gathered to dance and pray in open-air
circles.

Lost Bird, you - little girl child -
who was found unharmed,
adopted by the army officer
his bric-a-brac for show
for profit
"A genuine Indian"
displayed to no fewer than 500 of his closest
friends.

Lost Bird, his newly acquired possession,
you sing the remnants of your mothers
surrounded by soldiers despite their flags of truce
fired upon
despite the babies in their arms despite
their promised safety.

You no longer need to entertain, Lost Bird
as you were put on display
in Buffalo Bill's Wild West
authentic, exotic
torn from the carnage
to serve as the reason for his destruction
epitome of savagery.

At 29, filled with disease, in a place so far from
your own
Lost Bird, did you hear your people's call
The whole world is coming
singing into a trance
their backs to the line of Hotchkiss.

Lost Bird, you carry a message
you - Zintka Lanuni, Lakota -
dance with them now, Messenger to the spirit world
you rise in their sacred circle.

Molly McGlennen