

**Interconnectedness of Relationships and Nature:
Beauty, Destruction, and Family**

Turning of the Wheel

Anth 404

Dr. Rodney Frey

Lindsey Anderson

We exist in a circle of life, a wheel, interacting with nature and the people around us. Oftentimes, in this industrialized day and age, we so easily forget our interconnectedness with our world. Our existence continues on, each season coming and going, growing and forming the people we are today. In my presentation lies a story of family, a universal family, uniquely connected to nature, to each Season, and to Earth and Sky. The spokes of this wheel represent the different landscapes of our world, of our personalities, and our relation to one another, including faults and imperfections, and how they all keep the wheel of life moving and seasons changing. The hub that connects these spokes and rim, I consider to be the “Creator” or the core of where life stems from, whatever that may be. Throughout this story lies a concept of destruction and renewal between relationships and nature, a connection of give and take, and how our world is conceptualized from these interactions. Mother Earth acts as a silent, encouraging nurturer, unable to control the often reckless behavior of Father Sky. She creates the landscape and he brings forth the challenges. Their children, whom embody each one of the four Seasons, are expected to deal with this adversity in their own ways. Mother Earth will always be caring and supportive, yet allow her children room to face and discover the lessons within their hardships that they must work to overcome, in order to survive, in order to continue on and keep the wheel of life turning.

Residing in the mountains blanketed in wild Indian Paintbrush that flourished around their village in early fall, a family thrives in a time mixed with peace and terror, contentment and dissatisfaction. Four children, Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer dance through the beginning of life where juvenile innocence permeates the cells of their beings. Winter and Spring embraced life, not yet touched by the choking grasp of social conformity. The imagination of their brothers, Summer and Fall, spawned wider than the rivers and valleys that surrounded their home. These

children possessed a striking commonality amongst small beings, the ability to love and trust effortlessly in times of maltreatment from their guardians and from one another. And so they existed, a family of six, with their parents Mother Earth and Father Sky. As so often happens in this day and age, this family projected the outward image of perfection, creating normalcy in the coming and going of seasons, yet ruthlessly trying to cover up the hardships that came along with it all. It is normal as people for us to not know any better than to embrace the interactions with our surroundings. Universal is our search for acceptance, unique is the way in which we receive it. In their own ways, the children transform their world, creating unique spokes of their wheel, connected to a universality of life and death that stems from a hub of existence.

As night fell, diamonds throbbed in the sky amongst a sheet of black. The eldest child, Fall, mysteriously wandered through the woods alone. The moon called him home, and he glided back barefoot in hesitation. As this child grew, so did the storm of his home life. His father could morph into thunder and lightning out of anger, his mother turning transparent as a ghost during such rage, almost entirely disappearing. Fall's parents would vanish into a life of conventionality from nine to five, and later return, his mother in a daze speaking in whispers, his father as an angry cloud with a booming voice, bolting strikes of lightning at anything in his path, often oblivious to the destruction left behind. In family as in life, the seasons pass quickly amidst confusion, vanishing into memories one would rather leave behind, and creating an intermingling of normalcy and insanity. Fall waits for the sun to rise, so he can run to find comfort in the mountains, allowing the ever-changing landscape to help heal his wounded spirit, to help him forget. Though much was taken from his childhood, he moved through life as a loving, sharing soul, creating a landscape signifying changing times in the morphing shades of green, red, and gold. He gave to Mother Earth surrounding him, gave of his dreams and wishes, receiving

encouragement in the murmuring of her wind and waving of evergreen branches. In times of hardship, where emotions of hurt and confusion bore his spirit down, the autumn trail would guide him on until he felt weightless and free once again. Fall spent much of his time alone, in secret existence amongst family and landscape, in a world that made sense to him, often confusing his siblings with his stoic ability to change without hesitation.

Passing time moved swiftly as a raging river. The swirling golds and reds fell to Mother Earth in a thick blanket of leaves. Alas Fall's end, welcoming the time for Winter's months, a time that the rest of the family began to dread. Overwhelmed by events gone by, the loss of love and broken relationships, Winter internalized her emotions as she grew older until she became so numbingly cold that her siblings worked to avoid her. As a child, she sought comfort in Mother Nature's blistering winds and the ice-cold air that she sucked into the warmth of her lungs and exhaled in thick smoke. Her icy blue eyes gazed into the distance, softly voicing secrets of betrayal and deceit, of good times coming to an end. As an empath, Winter easily succumbed to the emotions of her siblings and parents until they created a destructive force within her, expressing rage in monstrous blizzards and vicious avalanches. Out of a lack of understanding, the landscape became recognized as dark and dead to her family during these frozen winter months, but created a deep sense of freedom in Winter's life, allowing her to become one with her own spirit, independent from the chains of her family's emotions and expectations. For Winter, each flake of falling snow sent a message of hope, of beautiful things to come, until blankets of white fell deep and thick, a time for her to move in unison with the mountain's beating heart. If there was anything that could cure her human experience of sadness from Father Sky's raging storms, it was the view downhill from mountain's crest. Departing from gravity, or normalcy, or anything that holds this world together, she leapt, racing down slope, running.

Grasping and controlling fear in the small of her hands, becoming one with this emotion she flew, as the landscape blurred. Trees, cliffs, serenity vanish with the blistering wind screaming in her ears, declaring warnings of her recklessness. She raced down mountain, chasing the sun, swept away in solidarity and freedom. Her dark emotions rising and settling like heavy forest smoke on the horizon. Earth becomes sky, fear becomes hope, lingering on the fine line of disaster and possibility, she keeps her eyes up and searches for Spring.

And Spring is found arising from the cold dead of winter. A girl with skin so soft and eyes so sweet that she could easily melt through the thickest ice and snow that Winter had left behind in her wake. Spring set her deep blue, green eyes on the world around her, allowing it to finally grow. The pain that emanated from her spirit was inevitable, yet unseen. All that she had experienced throughout the stages of her existence was wrapped up in an ache, a confused understanding for the healing of death, of losing and regaining one's own identity. Mother Earth lay silently supportive as usual, even though Spring urged her to help, to take over this burden of death and renewal, but Spring's tasks were left for her to carry alone. Easily entranced by emotion, Winter could not stare into Spring's eyes, nor witness the emotion behind her soul for too long, for she would start to burn with pain, to slip and melt away, until finally nothing was left, but the feeling of utter emptiness. With roots and leaves left frozen from the passing of time, Spring had begun her life as a child, innocent and sweet, vulnerable to the occasional wrath of Father Sky, spitting thick shards of hail at her tender face as he awakened with anger at this time of year. Spring accepted his actions as truth, unlike Winter who lay numb to the pain. Mother Earth cried for her continuously from the thick, dark clouds created by Father Sky, silently nourishing her landscape. A few years ago, Spring had become so enraptured by Father Sky's seasonal rage that she fell into a deep depression. For her, time moved slower like a heavy

burden. Rising from the dead of winter became an ever-increasing challenge for Spring. Oftentimes, the landscape lay weakened without Spring's care; the sweet, pink rosebuds bloomed late and faded fast, with weary petals that fell to Earth like tears mourning Spring's state of being. As years went on, she had become so weak that sister Winter felt no choice but to intervene. So she listened. For hours, Winter would sit and stare, her power to empathize would entirely engulf her in Spring's pain until she felt there was nothing left, but this pain to carry. As Winter consumed the sadness of Spring, Spring became stronger, realizing her inner-strength until she no longer needed Winter to pick her up, until she could heal the landscape of Mother Earth for the coming of rebellious Summer. Overwhelmed by depth of feeling, Winter further isolated herself, once again succumbing to snow and ice.

Suddenly the time had come for blasting heat to surround their world. Hot-tempered Summer exuberated his existence, being sure to make himself known, often diverting the attention away from the hardships of Winter and Spring onto his own. He'd run off into the wilderness for days, leaving family behind without a word, rarely sleeping, engaging in reckless behavior. It seemed he struggled most with the secrets of his past, dissolving his scorching pain in the passive comfort of Mother Earth's serene blue lake. He called on the mountains to listen in order for him to vent his frustrations, well-known secrets that fell on the ears of his siblings. Summer used his might to present a picture of normalcy, ultimately fearing the realization of the family surrounding him, of its darkened reality, covering it up with sweet smells of June flowers in full bloom and the Indian Paintbrush spotting the trails and creeks. He tried his hardest to create laughter and joy in order to fill up the hole in his heart that he felt inside. Summer balanced on the line of being appreciated and depreciated the most by Father Sky, receiving more sunlight, and clear, turquoise skies, combined with some of the most violent thunderstorms

setting the entire sky ablaze. Although he used his father's attention to his advantage, it secretly disgusted him, causing a greater sense of self-loathing, often losing the ability to divert the attention away from his own pain. Summer drowned himself in his sorrows, covered them up with a charismatic air and witty speech and aimed his life at reaching perfection, reaching for the sun, yet unable to make it last before the coming of Fall's cool autumn months entirely consumed him. He faltered at the reality of his life after only two months time until he once again vanished into thin air not to return until the next year to come.

And so it continued. The interactions of these seasons, of landscape and atmosphere performing the roles of each spoke that allowed the wheel to continuously move all connected by a set of emotions, of a common struggle. After a lifetime of interpreting their lives, the realization arose that these hardships were needed for the world to go on, for if Fall was not easily willing to let go, Winter would cease to exist, and Spring would no longer take on the task of renewing the landscape. Summer would not be able to absorb the heat of Father Sky, leaving Mother Earth with no one to nurture or encourage. Even in the most trying of circumstances, one comes to a realization that their place in the wheel represents the importance of the continuation of this life, of each season. Amidst the purpose of this existence, a common theme seems to arise from our need to survive, our need to continue on, no matter the challenges that our relationships and experiences create.