

Red

Beside the gravel drive way
are a grove of trees.
My husband has hung
four red dresses.
I watch them sway and dance
sleeves uplifted in the branches.

Red.
Valentines, Anniversaries.
Birthdays, Christmas.
Red lipstick, nail polish,
Shoes, dresses, purses
accessories matched
for love.

My father butchering
deer, rabbit, duck, beaver
muskrat, moose or elk.
Nohkom's headkerchief.
Nimosoom's neck bandana.
Smouldering hot embers
smoking dried meat.

An infant's birth blood gushing
from the tunnel of life.
Its placenta buried
in the root of a tree.

The red hand paintings
on a river's cliffs, caves
where people meditated
their vision.

Four fires tended by the oskapewisuk
for four days mourning the truth
at reconciliation gatherings.
They return to the hearth.

Prayer cloth offerings to the south
where thunder and lightning
rip the heavens.
Fire bolts

racing through the tree
it's arms bursting with flames.

Red dresses hanging
in the Canadian Human Rights Museum.
The people's blood
coursing through our veins.

**© Louise B. Halfe – Sky Dancer
Parliamentary Poet Laureate**