

Lone Bear Sky

Gather round this fire and hear a tale. It's a legend that comes from the sky;
About a man, after judgment was passed, was left on a trail to die.
But long before this man had glowed with a passion deep and true -
To find his lot from an earthly spot and release Mother Nature's jewel.

"For," he said, "although my life's a mire; gold is now my grand design.
I'll head out soon on my own to blaze on the trail of forty-nine."
He made his way through the masses deep, to find a group to call his own.
He was met with scorn, his search in vain, left only with an ox out on loan.

With eyes now blinded by treasure deep, he hadn't thought of a departure plan.
"I'll strike out now, no need to wait, I'll find a camp on the trail when I can."
But the season now was turning gray; in haste, men just can't see -
For eyes are blind when the mind of Man just can't let treasure be.

So out he strode with an ox in tow, carrying a wagon of food and hope;
But the long trail now was growing cold, and despair is hard to cope.
Many a time he plead to join a camp, with adventures on their way -
To strike it rich from a mine down deep, basked in California's day.

But judgment is easy when you've got your crew and see a derelict beg.
"Begone," they said, "you've made your lot. It's now time to drink your dreg."
After months had gone by, Independence Rock was barely in his view.
But nature had turned - it was stark and grey, and seemed to mock him as it blew.

The cold beat down with daggers of snow as his mind began to race.
"Why did no one help me?" He cried as he struggled now to barely keep his pace.
The night dragged on; the cold beat down, and death was knocking at his door.
"Oh well," he thought, "I'll soon just stop, for to be dead is better than poor."

After blistered skin impeded his march, he knew it was almost time.
"I've got no food or shelter here." Not even death would take his dime.
When at last he slipped and fell face-first, his pain muffled in the snow.
"I'll give all!" he said, "even treasure deep, to feel a fire's glow."

His hands retreated to his meager pockets to find relief from the terrible cold.
He felt a match in that cove of hope as if by Provenance told.
His eyes slowly fixed on a dying tree with branches hanging low.

With all his strength, he snapped a twig, "I'll give this last match a go."

He struck the match across his frozen boot, and a flame began to surge.
He gravely hoped as the flame drew near that the bark would start to purge.
But to his surprise, and Cold's great demise, the branch, like a keg, did burst.
As he dropped the twig in recoiling fear, a large bear did the flames coerce -

And out of its mouth, he heard a fiery growl that echoed through the sky.
"At last!" it said, "my time has come! Now you, prepare to die!"
"Do your worst!" The man croaked. He was barely alive. "I've been freezing here all night.
I've given my all, and I'd rather die warm. Now pierce me with your fiery bite!"

The bear balked back, for it had never heard such a courageous or pitiful plight.
"I'll spare you now if you hear my tale and swear to serve me now this night.
Like you, I was alone, cast out from my tribe when they believed a murderous tale;
And without words to defend, they marched me to my end, on the eternal winds to sail.

No burial was given. Under the bear-shaped stars I did rot, ever connected to where I did die.
For out of my ashes, you see, my new name was given to me - you may call me Lone Bear Sky.
Ever since my demise, my ashes fed this ground and mixed with the soil down deep.
Like a phoenix of old, new life did sprout; my tormented essence ever to keep.

And with new life, you can hardly tell in what direction the winds will blow -
Where has it taken my inimical essence, you ask? Only Nature now can know.
So watch where you gather your wood for your fire, from the ground on which I died;
For the fire indeed might inadvertently concede, my ashes left inside.

This land is now my sacred spot - this tree, and where all my ashes have spread.
I must protect this burial land and banish all those travelers who dare to tread.
I've been trapped in this wood for many years and yearn to gain my revenge.
I've transformed now to a legend of lore, and this is my sacred pledge.

But you, my friend, will serve me now by bringing those wanderers of greed -
Back to this spot, grown from the wood of revenge and ignite my vengeful seed."
And so, unsure of his fate, the awestruck man went to work for his newfound chief.
He lured many men to that spiteful spot by offering travelers warmth and relief.

Each time, he would light a fire so bright, with the promise of drink and a meaty pie.
But unbeknownst to each group, their blissful retreat would soon cease, by the roar of Lone Bear Sky.

Night after night, this despondent man will try to trick you into his camp.
Be on your guard as you travel and see in the woods a glow from his eerie lamp -

For it might be he who's torn by revenge and, in truth, is a fiery spy -
For the man long gone to whom a bear can turn, yes, the man named Lone Bear Sky.
So you better watch out when you gather your wood - you never know just what it hides.
Starting a fire with wood grown from his hate will release the fiery bear from its insides.

But wait, you may ask, how can a man recite the tale of those who found a fiery demise?
If all who were there were taken by this bear, and all that's left are their haunting cries?
Good question you've got, but here I'll pose you another as you look in that fire nigh.
In the flames, do you see, through the smoke, your own face? Or is it that of Lone Bear Sky!