

(Words inset as a spiral poem by **Sherman Alexie**, installation overlooking the Lower Falls, downtown Spokane, Washington. Reader's note: context includes Avista Utilities' concrete dam atop Falls, stairway penstocks and turbine enclosure, and Monroe Street Bridge)

"Coyote was alone and angry because he could not find love.

No, Coyote was alone and angry because he demanded love.

Demanded a wife from the Spokane, the Coeur d'Alene, the Palouse.

All those tribes camped on the edge of the Spokane River, and he received only laughter.

Coyote rose up with his powerful and senseless magic and smashed a Paw across the water which broke the river bottom in two, which created rain which lasted for forty days and nights, and which created Spokane Falls, the place where salmon traveled more suddenly than coyote dreamed, that place where salmon swam larger than any white man imagined.

But coyote I know you broke the river because of love.

I saw you catch salmon on the falls after you had created them.

I know you slept all fat and happy beside the river, and pretended it was all done by your design.

Coyote, you're a liar and I don't trust you. I never have.

But I do trust all those stories the Grandmothers told me.

They said the falls were built because of your unrequited love, and I can understand that rage Coyote. We can all understand.

But look at the falls now and tell me what you see.

Look at the falls now if you can see beyond all the concrete the white man has built there.

Look at all of this and tell me that concrete ever equals love, Coyote.

These white men don't always love their own mothers, so how could they love this river which gave birth to a thousand lifetimes of salmon?

How could they love these falls which have fallen further, which sit dry and quiet as a graveyard now.

These falls are that place where ghosts of salmon jump, where ghosts of women mourn their children who will never find their way back home.

Where I stand now and search for any kind of love, where I sing softly under my breath, alone and angry."