

Desert Harvest

At last, it came,
The cleansing rain at the fading
Of this long, parched day.

We had arrived in the dark,
When the pre-dawn sky proved flawless,
And the familiar constellations staunchly challenged
The rebellious glory of a falling star
Until their light
Was absorbed by the glory
Of greater light.

The covenant of warmth from the nascent sun
Drew diamondbacks from deep within their den
Opposite this curious desert tree,
This giant Nopal
With its desirable fruit, the prickly pears,
And their promise of succulent pleasure
In the arid Sonoran terrain.
Six rings on an upright tail
Rattled a beguiling cadence
Like a summons to pick the first,
The beginning of our day-long harvest.

So it began.
With naked hands
Consciously tentative, we
Reached between the spines and I,
With the pricking of my thumb,
Recalled the warnings of my Dad
That such a fruit cannot be had
Without the pain and payment
Of sweat and
Blood.

The desert has been exacting,
The labor, arduous,
And yet,
Rewarding.
Blossoms stipple fruitless nopal blades,
Harbingers of a harvest yet to be, but
Our basket is full.
Clouds deepen the inevitable twilight:
We can pick no more, and the gathering: well,
It is finished and I—
We—my worthy helper and I
At last, together,
Can contemplate
The crimson rapture of the cactus rose
Redeemed by the sudden grace of desert rain.

—Ben de Hoyos

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