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## Desert Harvest

Ben de Hoyos

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## 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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This poem won honorable mention in the 2020  
Clinton F. Larson Poetry Contest, sponsored by  
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