

A BREEZE SWEPT THROUGH

For my daughters, Lori Tazbah and Misty Dawn

The first born of dawn woman slid out amid
crimson fluid streaked with stratus clouds

her body glistening August sunset pink
light steam rising from her like rain on warm rocks
(a sudden cool breeze swept through the kitchen
and Grandpa smiled then sang quietly,
knowing the moment).

She came when the desert day cooled and dusk began to move in
in that intricate changing of time she gasped and it flows

from her now with every breath with every breath.
She travels now sharing scarlet sunsets
named for wild desert flowers
her smile a blessing song.

And in mid-November, early morning darkness
after days of waiting pain the second one cried wailing.

Sucking first earth breath,
separating the heavy fog,
she cried and kicked tiny brown limbs.
Fierce movements as outside
the mist lifted as the sun is born again.
(East of Acoma, a sandstone boulder split in
two — a sharp, clean crack.)

She is born of damp mist and early sun.
She is born again woman of dawn.
She is born knowing the warm smoothness of rock.
She is born knowing her own morning strength.

They are Silent and Quick

by

Luci Tapahonso

We sit outside on the deck
and below, tiny flickers of light appear here and there.
They are silent and quick.
The night is thick and the air is alive with buzzing and humming insects.
"They're lightning bugs," Lori says. "Fireflies."

I wonder how I will get through another day.

"I think they are connected with magic," she says,
peering into the darkness. "Maybe people around here tell stories
about small bits of magic that appear on summer nights."
"Yes," I say. "it must be."

I walk inside the house and phone my mother.
From far away, she says, "I never heard of such a thing.
There's nothing like that in Navajo stories."
She is speaking from hundreds of miles away
where the night is dark and the sky, a huge, empty blackness.
The long shadows of the mesas stretch across the flat land.
"Someone is having a sing near here," she says. "We can hear
the drums all night long. Your father and I are all alone here."
Her voice is the language of my dreams.
I hang up the phone and walk out into the moist air.

My daughter sits there in the darkness, marveling at the little beings
filled with light, and I sit beside her.
I am hoping for a deep restful sleep.
In the woods below, teenagers are laughing
and the whine of the cicadas rises loudly.
"What is it?" she asks. "What's wrong?"
There are no English words to describe this feeling.
"T'áá 'iighisíí biniihaa shil hóyéé'," I say

Because of it, I am overshadowed by aching.
It is a heaviness that surrounds me completely.

"Áko ayóó shi"navl" hóyéé.'" We are silent.

Early the next morning. I awaken from a heavy, dreamless sleep
and outside the window, a small flash of light flickers off and on.
Then I recall being taught to go outside in the gray dawn
before sunrise to receive the blessings of the gentle spirits
who gathered around our home. Go out, we were told,
get your blessings for the day.

And now, as I watch these tiny bodies of light,
the aching inside lessens as I see how
the magic of these lights precedes the gray dawn.

From *Sáanii Dahataał The Women Are Singing* by Luci Tapahonso, University of Arizona Press.
© 1993 Luci Tapahonso

[Return to the Luci Tapahonso website](#)