

Bride of Dream Man

By Susan Carew

It is what we do
all the long days of August.
We pick onions under a fifty cent sun,
worship ice water, shade.
Up and down Rattlesnake Mesa
pickups arrive carrying families
of pickers.

My Odee Villa,
Pancho's great great grandnephew,
calls the shots.
In the field the onions
are expecting us.
They yank easily from the ground,
jump practically into our boiled hands.
We pitch them like baseballs
into gunny sacks,
stack them on flatbeds.

Under the killing sun,
even the babies pick onions.
Las abuelas kiss them while they gossip
and string onions together like
fat pearls.
We don't stop until the field is clean
as my Aunt Rosie's kitchen floor,
until the sun is a canoe
floating down the brown river.

Some of us are afraid of snakes
and sleep curled like spoons
inside the trucks.
Odee says it's only Sheriff Rattler
out there acting bossy
with his tin star. Me,
I don't trust anyone
who has to change his skin,
leaving it behind.

Still, I sleep with this boss man
in the cool dirt, and the moonlight
with its papery leaves,
covers our backs.

Once, under the glittery field
of stars, I dreamed of paradise.
It smelled like onions.

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