

## You Never Could Have Known

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That

We would know,

That we would grow into a writhing tide of tongues,

Forced to accept your brutal invitations to short-haired schools

With Black Robes pointing iron fingers through us like

The thorns of Jesus.

"It's Good! It's Good!" you said about your schools.

"Pray! Pray!" you said about your Cross.

But you never understood how good it was,

Or how hard we prayed—

Prayed for us, and preyed upon you.

Our preying has brought us the knowledge of language,

And it's good . . . "It's good!"

For you who were our Butchers, are now our bakers,

Our candlestick makers, no longer the takers of Land,

But the seekers.

You rock wearers and tree huggers,

You bird watchers and bear lovers,

You shoppers shopping for Indian bargains

In your microcosmic catalog of smudged fudge

And mints shaped like turtles wrapped in gold foil,

With flutes and ashen clamshells on the dashboard.

With empty dream catchers. . . You never stopped pointing fingers

Out of windows of your cars

As you collected trophies from your trip

To Santa Fe.

While the people kneeled on blankets under the Portico

Of the Governor's Palace,

Across the Plaza the adobe is illuminated with neon

And purple cowboy boots and golden idols and somewhere

On a balcony cafe, tourists flick cigarette ashes to the street below

While the old man holds up hands full of silver.

How could you know that we now know?  
You never could have known.  
It always was our own,  
This waiting,  
This patience and this time,  
This good language of the school and the prayers.  
Hear the sounds of words creeping in as you tip up your ears  
With surprise . . . they pry apart your thoughts  
Of Dartmouth, Yale, and Harvard,  
As you shake your fists at our degrees.

"What have we done!"

"Why did we ever cut their hair!"

"Now . . . THEY know."

Doctors, Lawyers, Indian Chiefs,  
Land claims, settlements, legal briefs . . .

"And now they have their own damn schools!"

"Not schools FOR them . . . But their own.

Before you know you know, they'll have their own damn stores  
on the OTHER side of the plaza! And we'll be sitting on blankets!"

"God, why did we give them so much, when we had it all!"

"Now they talk about micro-business, incentive, profit . . . and  
Worst of all. . . Co-operatives."

"After all we did."

"We could have killed them all,  
Like Mr. Baum suggested before he  
Dropped his house on the Witch."

(Wasn't that the same L. Frank Baum who wrote editorials exterminating  
human  
feelings, who killed Indians with words, who provoked Wounded Knee with a  
pen?)

Still sitting in the cool shadows of the Portico,  
knees turned sideways,  
The eyes are looking up at the sunburned woman  
With the baby stroller  
"Yes, I make these earrings."

(So my children can fly to schools you never heard of!)

"How much?"

"\$15"

"Will you take ten?"

"No."

News update: Today a consortium of Native American Investors locked the market on turquoise with a 10% overbid on Santa Fe retailers. Commercial property values decline. Native leaders say, "The only thing between us and them was the glass showcases, so we bought the glass showcases. They're our stores now."

You never could have known  
That we would understand your demons more than you do.  
Know more about your money and your God,  
Know more about life and death without  
The need to hug rocks.  
How resentful you are to hear  
A thousand years of laughter  
When we show no smiles;  
How bitter you must feel when the  
Dog teaches the master,  
Holding the slap-swollen hand  
Between sharp tense jaws  
—Not quite breaking the translucent skin;  
How confused you must be sensing  
Our Spirits snapping at your ankles,  
Ungracious rocks that won't hug back,  
Grass that stands upright when the snow wind sleeps,  
The gurgle of thunder against a green-bruised sky.

We know.  
We know all about lightning and rain;  
All about gnawing pain;  
All about the sounds beneath sleeping lowered lids—  
Dreams of children playing, women loving, men at war, dogs barking, birds  
screaming, kettles steaming, earth churning, beetles copulating, interest accru-  
ing, volcanoes lurking, trees blossoming, destruction, and the birth of cross-eyed  
babies.

We Know.  
Uranium slag,  
Children's sandboxes full of dead cactus,  
Radioactive rainbows.  
But counter-allegations  
Justify your appropriations,  
Your deceitful invitations,  
And we hold back a smile . . . Knowing patience.  
We never had clocks, but the heartbeat of Mother Earth  
Showed us the way,  
Taught us about time.  
You forgot to wind the clock.

JOEL MONTURE