

'Requiem for Sonora' is ode to

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Desert Foothills

by Richard Shelton of Tucson
Requiem for Sonora

A small child of a wind
Stumbles toward me down the arroyo
lost and carrying no light
tearing its sleeves on thorns of the Palo
Verde
talking to itself
and to the dark shapes it touches
searching for what it has not lost
and will never find
searching
and lonelier
than even I can imagine

The moon sleeps
With her head on the buttocks of a young
hill
and you lie before me
under moonlight as if under water
oh my desert
the coolness of your face

Men are coming inland to you
Soon they will make you the last resort
for tourists who have nowhere else to go
What will become of the coyote
With eyes of topaz
moving silently to his undoing

The ocotillo
flagellant of the wind
The deer climbing with dignity
further into the mountains
The huge and delicate saguaro . . .

What will become of those
Who cannot learn
the terrible knowledge of cities

Years ago I came to you as a stranger
and have never been worthy
to be called your lover or to speak your
name
loveliest
most silent sanctuary
more fragile than forests
more beautiful than water

I am older and uglier
and full of the knowledge
that I do not belong to beauty
and beauty does not belong to me
I have learned to accept

Whatever men choose to give me
or whatever they choose to withhold
. . . but, oh, my desert
yours is the only death I cannot bear

Editor's note: The following letter was
received in response to the article which
appeared in last week's "A Desert Place"
column.

Just read your column of June 11, 1981.
We had a rather large saguaro in our back
yard — surrounded by grass [Bermuda] and
right next to a pool — the grass was
watered regularly all summer. Imagine our
surprise to wake up one morning with the
saguaro in the pool, just toppled over!

Fortunately, we had a jeep and could
drag it out, you can imagine how heavy it
was. So for what it's worth, that's our
experience.

Enjoy your column so much.

Pat Brock