

Fasting and Feasting

In the dark tied-in lodge
Huddled in a blanket
Smudge smoke wafts
Around the vision seeker.

She is familiar to entering
Her mother's womb
The ribbed willows nestling
Around her enclosure.

Covid has imprisoned people
Into homes where spaces are too small
Or too crowded
Where there is no room to breathe
But far too much room to ruminate

People yearn to stretch
Removed masked mouths.
Window-shop, dine-out,
Share coffee,
Feel the arms of loved ones.

In the confined night
The seeker struggles.
Roots poke her body.
Ants, mosquitoes, spiders
Are constant companions.

She rubs her temples
To erase intruding images
Thoughts that thunder
Into her being.
She clutches her Pipe.
And beseeches Spirit.

Where to turn?
When the god of delight steals?
When the neighbor's diseased breath
Could drown your sorrows?

What to do when the fist
Of frustration smashes against

The wall? The flesh?
When screams toward racing children
Rob your solitude? Your peace?

At dawn the Elder
Lifts the tarp flaps to smudge
Inside the enclosure.
This brief contact
Brings hope, laughter
When she is parched and lonely.

Four days
Without food, without water.
Four nights
Of suffering, weeping.
Four days, four nights
Of dreaming and revelations.

One year of confinement.
One year of social isolation.
One year of receiving
Lessons
Yet to unfold.

This too will lift
Tasting life
On its own terms
To work its way
Through the depth
Of the soul.

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Parliamentary Poet Laureate**