

# The Broncos' Song

## The Light

by Norbert James

My master took on a woman as his student, which was controversial at the time, even in Wado Tao. She was from Yang-Tsi, where the lights always burn, and had rarely been out to the country, where my master and I lived. At the end of her first month here, my master woke me up and told me to fill the water skins and prepare to walk. Having been by master's servant for some time, I knew better than to ask why. I filled the skins and wrapped my feet. The master and I then went to his student's room. The master woke her up and asked her to accompany us. The moon was new, and I sparked a lantern. We walked silently far through the forest, our eyes searching the ground before us in the lantern's weak and airy light. We came to the site where I had cut down a sick tree last winter, leaving a stool stump. The master closed his eyes and sat down.

"Taigoro, the lamp please." I gave the master the lamp, and he extinguished it and placed it back in my hands.

"Hittomi, please look at the ground."

"Where, sansei?"

"Can you not find the ground? What are you standing on?"

"Yes, sansei, the ground sansei."

Hittomi always answered the master's questions exactly as he phrased them. She learned it from her father, a venerable old man who married the princess Mai Lin Ying. I think the master appreciated her exactness. She kept his abstract musings "rooted."

Hittomi stared at the ground, at least, I think she stared at the ground. The night was so dark she could have been drawing a sword on the master and I wouldn't know it. The flames of the lamp still danced on my eyes. I longed to stare at the ground, to see what the master was trying to teach his student, but I kept my eyes on where I thought the master was, waiting for him to call.

My legs began to throb, and I knew at least an hour had passed. I thought the master was asleep. I heard the woman say, "Master, what am I looking for?"

"No," he said, "try again." This meant that she had asked the wrong question. I knew that. I hoped she'd get the right one soon, my legs were aching and my feet had swelled and the cold was sapping my feet of warmth.

"Master why am I looking at the ground?"

"You can see the ground?"

"No, sansei."

"Wait, and try again."

It felt like we waited another hour, but my legs hurt so that it may have been minutes. She spoke again.

"Master, why am I looking down?"

"Because," he said, "it is then so much more beautiful when you look up."

I looked up, and beheld the brightest stars in the darkest sky, and my soreness left me, and my body seemed light and young and strong, and my hara sang.

I do not know how long I stood there.

"Taigoro, the lamp please." This time he meant for me to light it.

"Master, I do not need the lamp." it was the woman.

"Nor do I, master." said I.

"Then leave it unlit." said the master, and we went home.

## Cease to Sense

by Maureen Washington

I see a yellow rose  
Out the corner of my eye.  
As I stretch my open palms  
Into a vast unending sky.

How I dread the day  
I cease to sense.

My lungs are filled with spring.  
The air is crisp and clean.  
My toes clinch the ground  
That is so thick and green.

How I dread the day  
I cease the sense.

Even those in pain immense  
Dread the day  
They cease to sense.

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