

## **The Calculus of Skinwalkers**

Your mother is telling skinwalker stories.

When we go to see her,  
when we bring her cigarettes,  
when we bring her milk,  
she tells us her stories  
about the skinwalkers.

While she digs in the garden,  
while she tosses handfuls of corn to the chickens,  
while she moves stone, wood, and water  
as the nameless mesa watches,  
she tells us that skinwalkers  
will know your name.

They will call to you, she mumbles,  
when you walk to your outhouse  
in the middle of the night,  
or linger too long to smoke cigarettes  
beyond the humming lights of your trailer.  
They will lure you away because they know  
just which words will draw you  
into the coyote darkness.

Skinwalkers are happy these days,  
she tells us as she makes fire  
in the shadow of the nameless mesa.  
Because so many bones grow in the desert these days.  
Because so many native girls gone missing now.  
Because so many Mexican children  
blow away like snakeskin  
with the wind now.

Because a skinwalker,  
you remember,  
makes his powder from the leavings of the dead,  
blows it like a sudden scirocco in your face,  
and simply waits until you are ready to  
strip yourself naked and run  
on all fours with him  
in the dark.