

Piercing the Illusion of Separateness

Stars sprawl across the desert floor
in the shimmering stillness of midnight
reflecting the glittering darkness
far above the Superstitions,
whose sharp, spindly spires
pierce the speckled sky
punctuating galaxies
with their terrestrial exclamation points!
Saguaro silhouetted stilettos
finish the job
poking holes in the illusion
of light and years.

THIS POEM is a testimony to the imagination. It was first scribbled on a scrap of paper at 10:30 in the morning in the blazing Arizona sun (at 4500 feet) . . . and finished the next day in the cabin of an airplane (at 30,000 feet)! It began on a cloudless Sunday morning. I was hiking solo, ascending the Upper Basin in Lost Dutchman State Park, just east of Phoenix. As I scrambled up the steep craggy trail, four young men were descending with backpacks and sleeping bags. I asked the last one what it had been like spending the night up there, and he replied (literally, in passing) how amazing it was seeing stars spread out on the desert floor. That image was so vivid to me that I knew it was a gift from the muse, and that I would have to write it down as soon as I stopped for lunch. As is my nature, I veered off the trail and found myself at the top of a formation of spires so rugged I could not get back down. I was surrounded by spiny stone sentinels, and some of the most magnificent cactus that I have ever seen—all in full bloom. It was obviously time to sit down and write! So, I dedicate this is to that young anonymous acolyte of Gary Snyder.

As you may have surmised, I did manage to find my way back down to the 92° desert floor, through an ocean of yellow, red and purple wildflowers . . . back to civilization and a word processor. But not until after I had shared the majesty of the moment, while still precariously perched upon my rocky bastion—with Autumn, who was sprawled out, sunning herself on a granite slab some 2500 miles away, listening to *this* poem in the making (via the wonders of wireless wizardry) and the icy Atlantic lapping at her toes . . . her flesh, impressed upon that same stone slab where we had held each other just the week before, on Easter morning—while I recited for her, some of these very poems that you have just been reading.

