

## **THE WAGON IS READY**

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*Second Place, Poetry*

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After *Shinelli* died, I went back home . . .

I remember him alone in the large tent, set up for him,  
so he could use the crude toilet by his bedside.

He is able to stand up and walk a little.

I rub the smooth shiny stone *Shash* fetish in my pocket.

He picked it from his *jish* to give to me.

Such kindness.

*Happily, on a trail of pollen, may you walk, Shinelli.*

I miss his constant smile and his jokes.

He is silent now.

He has a vacant far away look,

he sees a vision

of his spirit

in the happy hunting ground—

riding his horse, high in the clouds.

We bring him food—

Hot mutton broth,

corn meal cooked in goat milk,

soft tortilla, and

Navajo herbal tea—

but the food is hardly touched.

*Happily, on a trail of pollen, may you walk, Shinelli.*

I feel bad he has to be alone in his tent.

I see he likes his privacy and

he understands our tradition.

With the front tent flaps open and pulled back—

He can watch from his bed.

He sees his children bring in the herd.

Two or three lambs

come close to the tent

to observe him.

He talks to them,

blessing them

with his holy corn pollen.

One day, my father says to him,  
"It's time, my Little Father.  
The medicine man  
has finished the ceremony.  
Now it is time  
for the white man's medicine.  
The wagon is ready."

*Happily, on a trail of pollen, may you walk, Shinelli.*