

Except from *All The Wild and Holy* by Gayle Lauradunn

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I am frozen. I cannot move.

My eyes do not see

what they see.

I want to scream

and scream with those

around me. My mouth

opens on silence.

They drag us away

across the meadows.

Those who stumble

receive a hatchet stroke.

Hepzibah Belding

calls out to God

as she falls.

I will not look at her.

I will not.

My eyes open

to our village

red with flames.

Ice and cold. My slippers soaked
through. I stumble and fall. A tall
redskin grabs me hard, swings me
high to his chest. I cry out and kick
at him. He holds me tight and sings
low in his throat. I do not like the sound:
a wolf growling in the forest.

Where do they take me?
I have never been from my Father's house.
He and brother Stephen lag
behind. Father's anger will be harsh
for I am not allowed outside the palisade.

Where is my mother?
She lay abed
with Baby Jerusha,
just born. The eighth
child in our family.

It is my job to hold
the newest baby, her
skin soft against my hand.

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My mouth holds tight
to keep the tears inside.
But I kick as hard as I can
and beat the redskin with my fists.

He wraps me in a blanket
and ties me to his back.
I cannot move.
My face presses
into him—he smells
of sweat and the bear grease
he smears on his skin for warmth.
I hold my breath.

As he walks
his hard muscles ripple
under his dark skin.

In the sway of his steps
I fall sleep.

Dreams of fire, the crack of ax
on wood, screams.
Someone drags me from my bed
in our flaming house.
The stench of black smoke
in my nostrils.

Goodman Nims fights to save Henry
and Mercy. Goodwife Stebbins wields
an iron skillet, her nightcap askew.
Indians and hatchets and knives.

I must wake.

Must wake.

Oh, Baby Jerusha burns!