The Migrant Farmworker
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We arrive with the twilight to the camp hidden in the fields
bats swoop low
stars come out
the distant summer thunderstorm flickers and rumbles
He and his fellow farmworkers gather
the monotony of dawn to dusk labor broken by our presence
as tables lanterns charts and blood pressure cuffs are set out
He offers us water
hospitality
his handshake
we work to deserve his trust
Bearing witness to his industry and expertise
we inquire after his family
admire photos of those for whom he toils
and race to finish so he can rest before his daily predawn rising

His hands harvesting sweet spring strawberries rash and itch
Is it pesticide or plant?
His back bent for hours priming tobacco aches at night
Is it oppressive ergonomics or systems?
His eyes exposed for years to sun and dust cloud with pterygia
Do they dim his vision of his future?
His shoulders bearing heavy bins of sweet potatoes wear at the rotator cuff
Are forty five cents per bin worth what he pays in pain?
His arms plunging into ripe berry bushes are scratched and scarred
But how to tend the scars of separation on his soul?
His body brushed by dewy tobacco leaves involuntarily absorbs nicotine
Why should he bear the burden of our cravings?
His mind once aspiring to creativity is now depressed by isolation
What could he have created?
His heart justly proud of hard work and provision is broken by injustice
Does our care though compassionate serve as scaffold for the sin?
We are the consumers
Is he the consumed?

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