



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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