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Poetry

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I Found a Woman

I climbed the high mesa
 where the Salado had been before, ancient people.
 Once on top, I found shards inside the earthworks
 and a hand-stone used for grinding,
 heft tool brought by a strong arm—
 some grandma, 700 years long past.

(I could sense her smell, her hide dress,
 the thin smile of her silence)

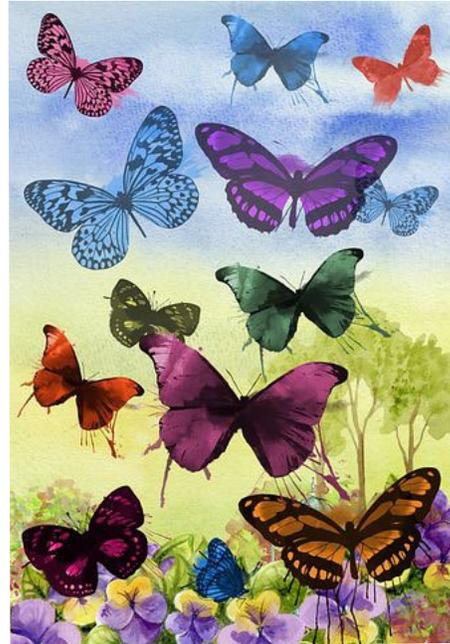
I held the stone for a long time
 motioning the grinding action.
 Its warmth weighed my palm and spoke to my heart.
 I answered—Hello, Dearie,
 you, who held this last,
 crushing the morning corn for the pot.
 I am holding this now.

I cook too, and like you, I have no lines in my fingertips
 from working flour into bread. I know
 the preparation, the anticipation of feeding people,
 my granddaughter's face, looking up,
 secure there will be food—while she plays at my feet.

You are not erased by these past 700 years, or by the wind
 blowing across this high place
 or the sun endlessly drying time to dust.

Our hands embrace
 through this root stone
 and the work we do.

Joyce Benvenuto is a Michigan resident, and has spent the last 20 years as an Arizona snowbird. Her newest book, *Poem Journey: More Poems & Prose from along Old Grand River*, and her first book, *A Grand River, Poems for Michigan*, both contain work inspired by her Michigan roots. Learn more about her work here: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-Grand-River/263862777061717>



Oberholster Venita (butterflies) for Pixabay (2016)

Soldier On

He is a Mexican who was a U.S. soldier
 in Iraq, his sad heart a fallen raven,
 a tough man around glass dishes.
 I made him homemade pizza
 with pepperoni, peppers, mushrooms.
 He was overjoyed to be welcomed,
 to eat warm food at my table.

For him, it was like he was home
 with his parents in Mexico, yellow chairs,
 dog at his feet, table-talk of laughter.

He said—*I've had enough of guns,
 never again in my lifetime—
 Church is a good place for me.*

But he is now here in a hard life
 of Arizona tricks—roadblocks always
 on a highway; harsh flashlight beams
 on his Latino face; he passes his license
 through the car window.

He is an experienced warrior,
 on piece-work wages.