



## Prickly Pear Cactus

This prickly pear has grown up alone,  
The hard scrabble brush country is its home,  
Nopales sun-bleached a weathered green,  
Red tunas lighting up this dusty scene.

I see the natives harvesting fruit,  
Attacking it as if war-party loot,  
Cabeza de Vaca in the land of the tunas,  
Near to our South Texas mother laguna.

Tunas protected by barbs thin and pointed,  
Barbs to be noted – to be avoided,  
Barbs telling all to keep their distance,  
Barbs dedicated to prickly pear existence.

Barbs representing a formidable reality,  
Barbs engendering a form of spirituality,  
This cactus sitting alone and quiet,  
Living life in this dry harsh climate.

How do we balance the need for barbs  
With openness that can often lead to scars?  
What's the right combo to survive and thrive  
To safely interact, to successfully survive?

In the U.S. today I'm feeling hopeful  
But is it for real or only wishful?  
Can I drop down my barbed exterior  
Without being dumped on my posterior?

I come to the thorny one to hear the answers,  
Accompanied by wise shamanistic chanters,  
I come to the base of the prickly pear  
Asking that it listen – that it hear my prayer.

The prickly plant talks a bit with me,  
“Success in life is no great mystery,  
Just come to Earth church in a south Texas temple,  
Your thoughts in the right way will reassemble.”

So welcome to Earth Church,  
Pull yourself up a pew,  
Here a slight prick of the pear  
Is a baptism for you.