

5-1-2011

My Lady of Tears

Eunice Bridges

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Recommended Citation

Bridges, Eunice (2011) "My Lady of Tears," *Forces*: Vol. 2011 , Article 44.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2011/iss1/44>

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the saints—what must we do to survive? The elders declared their solution: Remove the new god. Return to the power of the kachinas!

As she had been taught, PaKuula knelt before the Blessed Virgin and painted saints. Her eyes were drawn to a graceful water pot. Illuminated with reddish-brown and white geometric designs, it had been placed on the altar as a gift that rain might come.

With fettered breath, she entered the sacristy. Even before he touched her, she sensed his nearness. They embraced. She could feel the coarse fabric of his garment against her cheek; how warm he was in the new day's chill. Whispering, she told him that her grandfather had received the knotted string indicating today was the day the kachinas would vanquish the friar's god. After this day everything would be different. They both knew what he must do. PaKuula rested her head on his shoulder. As he touched her dark hair, the scent of desert reminded him of all he was leaving.

He was gentle in pushing her away. "You know I must take her and go."

PaKuula left the church. She latched the door behind her and moved noiselessly along the dusty path. As soon as she was gone, he left the sacristy. Genuflecting, he made the sign of the cross, then stepped toward the altar. As tall as he was, he stretched to reach the carved wooden figure dressed in fine white silk and a blue lace mantilla. He wrapped her in soft deerskin, praying that saving the statue from the coming destruction would bring blessings. As he passed the altar, he caressed the edge of his grandmother's water pot. Departing the mission unseen, his precious bundle tucked under his arm, he muttered, "Perhaps rain will now come."



MY LADY OF TEARS Eunice Bridges

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