

“Hard to Take”

Poet: Luci Tapahonso | 1982



Sometimes
this middle of the road business
is hard to take.

Last week in Gallup,
I was in line at Foodway
one checkstand open and
a long line of Navajos waiting
money and foodstamps in hand
waiting to buy food and pop.

My turn and I fumble, dropping the change.
Sorry, I say, sorry
The cashier looks up smiling
first smile in 20 minutes of Navajo customers

Oh--that's okay. Are you Navajo?
I swear, you don't have an accent at all!
She's friendly too quick and I am uneasy.

I say to the people behind me
Ha' 'at'ii sha'ni?
Why is she saying that to me?

We laugh a little under our breaths
and with that
I am another Navajo
she doesn't greet or thank.

My change is dropped in front of me
and we are not surprised by that.

Merle Norman offers a free make-up job
just the thing for a new look
I say to myself and stop in
for an appointment.

For 15 minutes, I wait for a saleslady
Then, I ask for an appointment outright.
Just a moment, she says, someone will be with you shortly.

I wait some more while the salesladies
talk about a great hairdresser,
General Hospital and Liz Taylor.

So I just leave, shortly is too long,
seeing as I'm the only customer in the place.
I guess I can do without a new look
but this kind of business sure gets hard to take.