



5-1-2017

Incident

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Recommended Citation

Balog, Ashleigh (2017) "Incident," *Westview*: Vol. 33: Iss. 1, Article 14.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol33/iss1/14>

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Incident

by Ashleigh Balog

(Dedicated to Natasha Trethewey's poem "Incident")

We tell the story every year—
Of squatting behind the bushes, watching
as everything burned, the tents
crumbling like flakes of charred skin.

Watching from behind the bushes, we squat
as the Comanche—the enemy—in war-paint,
tasted the charred flakes of crumbling skin.
We stilled our breath, so they couldn't hear us.

Our enemy—the Comanche—painted for war
and crying for blood on plains ponies,
caused our breath to still. They couldn't hear us
or the shake of our hearts, the blood in our chest.

Even the plains ponies cried for blood
as the Comanche ended their moon raid.
The blood drained from our swollen hearts as
the north wind came to cool the fires to embers.

The Comanche moon set; the raid was finished.
Everything had burned to the ground,
only the wind from the north cooled it to embers.
We tell the story every year.