Wind

The wind was whipping my clothes harshly around me,
slapping me,
hurting me with the roughness.
The wind was strong that evening.
It succeeded in blowing my clothes all around me.
Unlike others I revel in it.
I open my mouth and breathe it in.
It is new air,
air, coming from faraway places.
From skies untouched,
from clouds not yet formed.
I breathe in big gasps of this wind.
I think I know a secret, this is only the opening act
of what is yet to come.

I see it coming from a long distance away.
A brown wall of dust and dirt,
moving debris that is only moments old.
debris that is hundreds of years old.
All picked up in a chaotic dance.
The dust settles in my nostrils.
It clings to the moisture in my mouth.
It settles on my skin and fine hairs.
Memories of father and how he sat in front of the house
watching the wind come.
First he would smell it, then he would see it.
He would say, "Here he comes;"
much in the same way as if he saw a person on the horizon.
He would sit.
Letting the wind do with him what it will,
hitting him with pieces of sand.
Creating a fine layer all over him.
Finally when he could not stand it any longer
he would run into the house, his eyes shut,
shut against the tears getting ready to cleanse his eyes.
We all laughed at his strange appearance.
He also reveled in this wind.
This was as close as he could get to it.
to join it, to know it, to know what the wind brings.
My father would say, "Just watch, when the wind stops,
the rain will fall."
The story goes.
Wind got in trouble with the villagers.
His punishment was that he should leave the village forever.
When he received his sentence of exile
Wind went home and packed his things.
He packed his blue winds.
He packed his red winds.
He packed his black winds.
He packed his white winds.
He packed the dry winds.
He packed the wet winds.
And in doing this he took by the hand
his friend who happened to be blind.
Rain.
Together they left.
Very shortly after, the villagers found their crops began to die.
The animals disappeared,
and they were suffering from hunger and thirst.
To their horror the people realized they were wrong
in sending Wind away.
And like all epic mistakes it took epic events
to try to bring Wind back.

In the end it was a tiny tuft of down
that gave the signal that Wind was coming back.
With him was his friend, Rain.
He brought back the dry wind.
the cold wind,
the wet wind,
the cool wind.
but in his haste,
he forgot
the blue wind.
the white wind.
the red wind,
and the black wind.
The annual seasons and rhythms of the desert are movements of wind, rain, and flood. The critical importance of weather and climate to native desert peoples is reflected with grace and power in this personal collection of poems, the first written creative work by an individual in Tohono O'odham and English, a landmark in Native American literature.

Poet Ofelia Zepeda centers these poems on her own experiences growing up in a Tohono O'odham family, where desert climate profoundly influenced daily life, and on her perceptions as a contemporary Tohono O'odham woman. These fine poems will give the outside reader a rich insight into daily life of the Tohono O'odham, or Desert People.