

**2012**  
**NATIONAL ANNUAL SENIOR POET**  
**HONOR SCROLL AWARD**

**WILLIAM CHILDRESS**  
**Folsom, California**

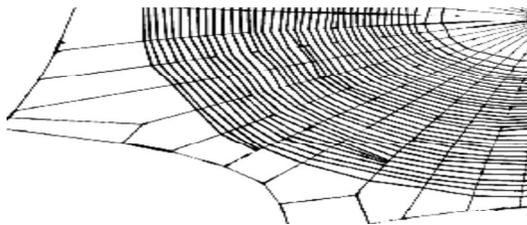


**THE SORCERESS**

*Boma stela casa poca timbo*  
 my aunt said, and green corn grew  
 where she placed her withered feet.  
 Others thought she was old and crazy,

but I knew she was a witch from the start.  
 I was fascinated by her gift of tongues;  
 she talked to roots and berries by the hour,  
 and they sang back to her.

One summer day by the barn,  
 she fell down and started kicking.  
 "Another fit," my father grunted—but I had seen  
 her earlier, communing with spiders,  
 and knew she was just casting a spell.



That night the sky grew shimmering trees  
 and deep voices split the dark.  
 Cyclones touched down, hundreds died,  
 but we were safe. "Thank God," my mother said,  
 little knowing she had a sorceress to thank.

Years went away, and I left for war  
 with the forces of evil. She gave me an amulet  
 to keep me from harm, an enchanted diamond  
 mined from a broken fruit jar.

When I returned  
 I found her in a tin shack, thin-boned  
 and tallowy, dying with no one  
 to admire her magic.

That night I sat beside her as she slept,  
 her seamed face softened by candle light,  
 and at midnight, ten thousand stately spiders  
 came down and wrapped her in gauze,  
 and carried her webbed spirit away.

William Childress, MFA, 79, shown on dust jacket of his 1986 collection of poems *Burning the Years and Lobo*, has led a successful multi-genre writing life that includes poet/paratrooper in Korea, songwriter/musician, author, teacher, magazine writer, *National Geographic* editor, and columnist whose Out of the Ozarks column in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. He was a sharecropper and cotton-picker between ages 8 and 18.

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