

*Queen of the Andes,  
Puya Raimondii*  
by Lynne Goldsmith

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She defies the odds, monocarpic  
shallow roots set down  
high unsheltered in Andean Mountains  
forming leaf rosette ten feet wide  
lined with thorns'  
protection of inflorescence towering  
into thirty-foot-tall stalk of 30,000  
flowers once-in-a-lifetime  
emergence from soil's globe of leaves  
luring hummingbirds  
before six million seeds to fall  
by forgotten winds with a trunk  
a hundred years needed to bloom,  
largest bromeliad,  
surviving cold  
on rocky slope and standing out  
in terrain she has grown from  
this far thrust to let go.