

1975

Sat in the Center

Samuel Makidemewabe

Howard Norman

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Recommended Citation

Makidemewabe, Samuel and Howard Norman. "Sat in the Center." *The Iowa Review* 6.3 (1975): 57-57. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1912>

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a small fire.
Tied up a small-stick fire!
The fire got loose its own way.

Sat in the Center / Samuel Makidemewabe

This boy went out in a snow blizzard
to catch fish. He went out on the swamp ice
and brought his ice chisel with him
to dig a hole through it.
He went singing.
In summer we could hear that swamp
sing all its birds and frogs together, BUT THIS WAS
IN WINTER.
He was the only one singing.

We heard him dig the ice hole
in the distance, but we could not see
this. It was a chewing sound
his work made. After a while we got worried
he fell in.
Or that the snow snakes curled him
away.

Worried we would never again
see him bob up among the wood duck
decoys, LAUGHING!
In summer.

He stayed out on the ice
until night. Then we saw his torch-stick fire
moving toward us, in the dark,
and he came BACK HOME to put the fish he caught
on the fire.
Our worrying did not stop there.
He sat with us and watched the fish thaw
and cook on the fire.

He sat with us
in the center, shivering.
THEN we heard his laughing thaw out
too.
That's when our worrying stopped.