



1988

# A Night Summons

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## Recommended Citation

Rhodes, Steve (1988) "A Night Summons," *Calliope*: Vol. 1988 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.  
Available at: <http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1988/iss1/17>

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## A NIGHT SUMMONS

A kerosene lamp burns low  
on a small wooden table,  
guiding neighbors and relatives  
in from the night  
Some from town  
some, just down the road.

They gather around  
the lamp's light and sing.  
a child smiles  
but quakes  
against his mother's breast  
His body pays no mind to  
Banda medicine, but  
keeps burning as  
hot as red coals.

Village radios crackle  
and lovers secretly  
stroll down a garden path.

But only the names gone before  
Ali, Karam, Balla, Mambouto  
flow through the mother's mind. She  
holds him tight as if he was her  
last child.

*Steve Rhodes*