

WENT  
TOWNS

THOMAS  
821

My wife asked, "Dad, why did you paint that?"

I answered, "Well, it was a hot dry day and that old cottonwood tree had sent its roots deep into the ground and found cool refreshing water and its leaves were chattering about it to the hot dry winds and it sounded like rain."

My wife, after a long thoughtful pause, responded, "Dad, have you been out in the sun too long?"

— Lawson Thomas

# **Absolute**

**Fall 1983**

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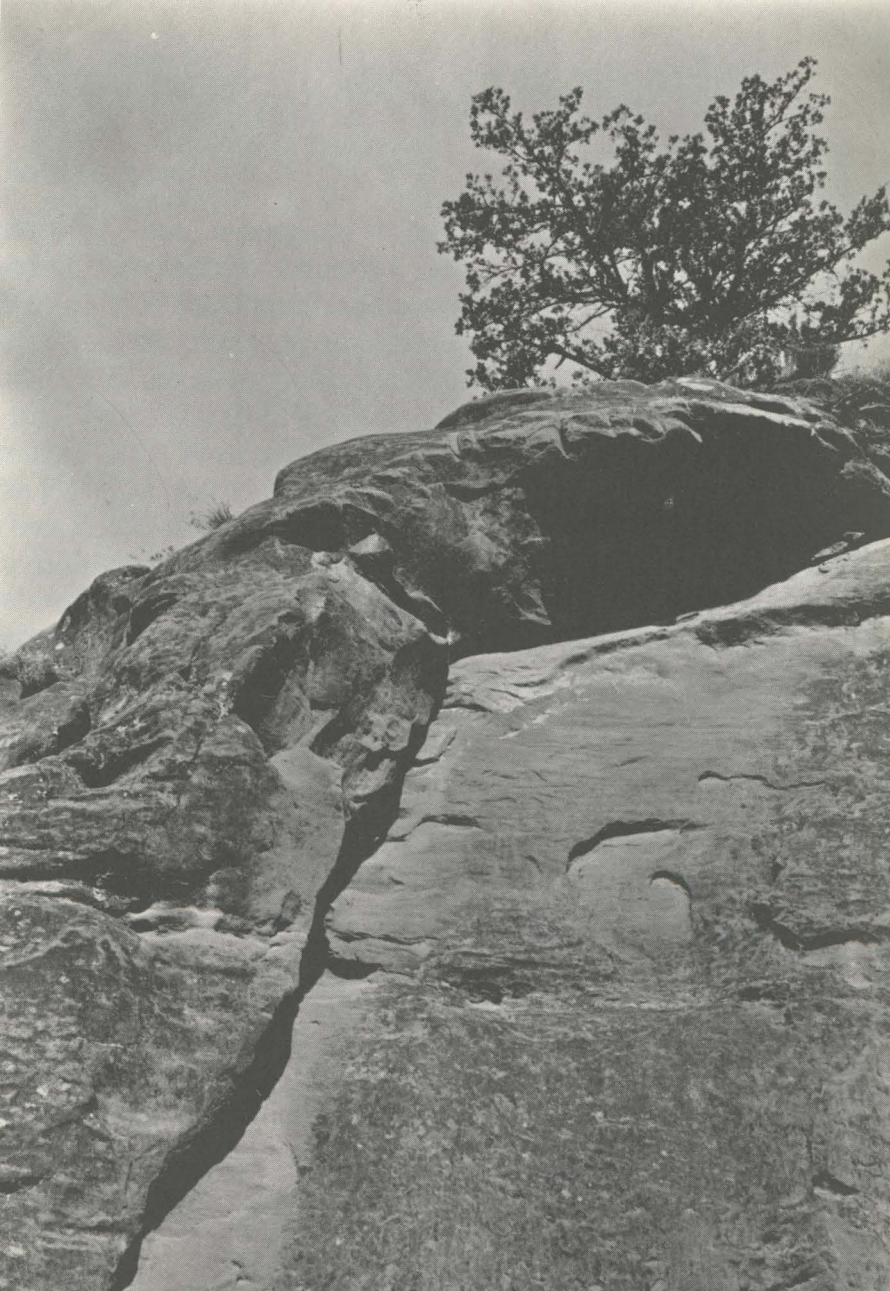
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# **Lend Me Your Land**

give me a cedar deck  
untold numbers of blackjacks  
and a pebbled road  
winding like sweet river  
and i will give you a Nobel-winning girl

a girl with bare feet calloused perfectly  
whose breath rushes like fever  
who clings to iron gates for life support  
who climbs prickly hills  
just to learn the feel of soft mud  
the sting of sticks  
the rhythm of the ascent

this will be a golden girl  
who chooses tangled hair and wind  
raggedy shirts torn and blowing  
poems made with footprints, tire tracks,  
marks left by cat paws  
tributes tender — always — to verse  
living inside red earth

give me moonglow like October fire  
pots of stars on rainy nights  
wind that whines like fog

and i will shred the hearts of paperdolls  
real girl, Nobel girl, will stand instead

— Karen Young Holt

## Life Times

Have you watched an eagle soaring  
and wished that you could be so free?  
Have you watched a river flowing  
and longed to follow it to sea?  
If freedom calls, but silently,  
love binds with velvet chains;  
the world calls, sometimes violently,  
and commitment seldom reigns . . .  
If someone waits intently,  
and your time is not your own,  
go to her and lead her gently  
to a place she's never known.  
Take no thought of sudden leaving  
or of what you leave behind;  
if you do, you'll soon be grieving  
for the things you did not find.  
Our life is meant for sharing,  
an adventure of the mind.  
Remember always to be daring:  
don't be trapped in place or time.

— F. James McGaha

## **To Mister Or Sarah Jean:**

As I lay on the fringes  
of anxiousness  
I realize that  
it was beyond  
all my imagination —

this incredible feeling  
that comes from  
the making and waiting  
for life —

how does one wait  
for nine months?

— **Rayfer Earlé Mainor**  
**September 5, 1983**

# Prism

There are windows  
that evolve the soul  
through the use of mirrors —  
there is no slight-of-hand,  
no smoked-glass  
to deceive your sight.  
Visions are numerous  
beyond the horizon —  
you must stretch your mind  
to accomodate dreams  
that are not readily seen  
by the naked eye.  
Hold out your hand  
and rainbows will appear  
through a cloud of dust —  
open your heart  
and magic will  
dance inside . . .

— Wanda Lea Brayton  
February 9, 1983



## **Red River Revel Fragments**

1.

In the absence of your presence  
I weaken, withdraw in a shell.  
I assume I belong to you and want  
To, but I hide like the tortoise  
In the face of the unknowns.

2.

Her body sways naturally to the  
beats of the music; her hair long,  
brown-black against the white of her  
blouse. She must be some cousin  
of mine from hundreds of years past;  
her nose gently aquiline, long deft  
fingers, indian, french, sexy and lovely.  
I croon a slow song  
while the band pounds rock and roll.

— **Richard Rouillard**  
**October 7, 1983**

What is the word that is  
A glowing coal as it breathes its first flame,  
And is also the leaves turning to gold  
Against the breathless sky?

What is the name of the blue which is also  
That moment in the mind of an apple  
When time turns to honey?

What is the word describing  
The memory of the exultant autumn rebellion  
In the still fields of certainty, and also  
Describes where light meets shadow?

What is the word that describes  
The moment when you stood under the hill,  
The candleglow of gold alive  
In the smouldering dream of the dragon?

What is the word that is  
All these words, and is also  
The first word of an ancient enchantment?

— **Brooke Smith**

## **Suddenly**

Silence; then,  
a scattering of birds  
through Winter's air—  
as they fly,  
the sky comes down to meet them.  
Softly, sounds  
illuminate  
the path I walk—  
as I near my goal, the echo  
prepares to fade into gray.  
Peaceful; then,  
an opening  
of dreams  
into daylight—  
I pursue  
the passions of time  
unaware.

— **Wanda Lea Brayton**  
**January 27, 1983**

# **Sensory Deprivation**

In the intimate darkness,  
secrets are quickly revealed  
by dusky silence.

In the fiery night,  
visions are created  
with the breath of dreams.

In the lonely evening,  
souls are tossed on an endless wave  
of emotion.

In the depths of shadows,  
hearts are known  
by their frantic pace which,  
in the end, reveals everything  
they attempt to hide...

— **Wanda Lea Brayton**  
**February 1, 1983**

There are silent sounds heard only by the heart,  
matched not by the meaning of a million words...

the sound of a widow watching  
lovers with stilled breath,  
the sound of an old man by the  
window waiting death;

the sound of golden daffodils  
gaining distance from the earth,  
the sound of a woman's strength  
giving life through birth;

the sound of a daybreak when in  
snow a mountain's gowned,  
the sound of a stillborn babe pressed  
still between the ground;

the sound of fading grandma eyes  
wrinkling into smiles,  
the sound of the trusting look  
of a soft, young child;

the sound of a forgotten farm  
that sees only birds anesting,  
the sound of my heart when at  
last my soul is resting.

— Kathy Holliday



# **question for a lady**

this moment  
resonates  
bright and dark

our disjointed  
worlds ricochet  
from sun to moon

continents  
revolve      tides  
intervene

you there      me here  
contrails and time  
zones between us

how is it  
we still are  
able to reach

out      gently touch  
one another  
whenever      we      choose?

— G.K. Williams  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
Christmas, 1980

To Mister or Sarah Jean:

## **Inherent Illnesses**

To think that your little body  
will quickly learn hunger  
fatigue and tension . . .

good and evil

You might be able to avoid  
polio, diphtheria, and even the measles...

If only I could provide you with  
inoculations against  
the nauseousness of  
hate and  
pity and  
the other  
odious horrors  
of mankind

— **Rayfer Earle Mainor**  
**September 10, 1983**

# Poverty

Poverty...

Smoke, trash laden streets.

Dim-lit bar where emaciated unemployed  
forgets worries.

Famine stricken, brown-eyed babes,  
wander among burned out teens,  
look for measly pieces of bread.

Young girls pose in doorways;  
a night for \$25.00.

Bruise covered wives wonder how to feed  
a family of nine while on the guard against  
roaches, junkies, and husbands.

Spouses try to pay yesterday's bill  
with today's paycheck that WAS tomorrow's  
meal.

Boy waits in dark alley for one more fix.  
Cries in the night,  
Another dies.  
Rats' paradise.

— JoAnn Swink

# **The Inevitable End**

Forswearing elegance to fling  
Our souls headlong into the blast,  
We burst our eyes with reaching;

To burn is better—

To swallow slander no more.  
I, not fate, have turned the key  
Of towering doors divorcing us  
From the Gadflies of our minds.

What sonic terror now

Can force us back

To grapple with inanities?

Our worlds implode within a dance

Deafened by the Titan thunder.

Out of the ashes pulled to live,

We listen now for the sound

At the core of the Sun.

— Gary D. Cooper  
May 7, 1982

## **Delete Donald Morgan**

The day was everything we hoped it wouldn't be. It was an unusually hot day, the kind of day a person only experiences in November in Oklahoma. The car was hot and stuffy with the sun beating harshly down, reflecting heat and light. The glint off the rear-view mirror gave me a headache. In the backseat sat the macaroni salad, slowly warming in the bright sunlight. It was a two-hour ride, so there was not much hope that it would be at all palatable when we arrived at the Morgans'. My husband drove the car. He kept wiping the perspiration on his brow with his now-soiled white handkerchief. The sweater vest and tie had been thrown in the backseat, mingling with my doomed-to-be-unused shawl and macaroni salad. On the radio blared "Only Love Can Break A Heart." My husband turned it off and we sped towards Lawton in silence.

On Saturday, Sherry's husband had called to tell us that Sherry's father had died. I remember thinking how flat his voice had sounded. It was strange. Only later did it occur to me that what I had heard was the absence of feeling. Anyway, he told us that at 11:00, the evening before, Donald had died. No, Sherry did not make it to Lawton in time. Oh, would we come to the house before the funeral? Yes. Are you sure? Of course. So sorry. So sorry.

I called my mother. Between the oh-my-gods and questions came the tears. My heart soared at such a display of emotion. In tears I could find the familiar. Yes, Mother, I promise I will go to the funeral. For you. For him. No, I will not play the jack rabbit. am not always the skittish child.



As my husband paid the turnpike toll, I thought to myself that this business of dying sure was a lot of trouble. What would I say when I saw Sherry, one of my very best friends? I thought this over for a while and decided that I would look tragic. I practiced making my round, blue eyes rounder.

At last we arrived at the house. It looked familiar and warm. I remembered in a flash the all-night talks, the initials carved in the headboard, and the egg salad always waiting for me after a double date. I remembered vividly the image of Donald sitting at the dining table, one arm crooked so that his elbow was on the table, his hand cupping his chin, while his sunken gray eyes stuck to the television set. Every now and then a huh or a yes or an unintelligible mumble. At dinner he always said grace. I don't think I ever saw him move.

All the details I remembered in a second. Then I got out of the car, prepared my face, and slowly stepped toward the front door. Before I was halfway there, the door swung open, and an animated Sherry came running out, gold hair flying and arms stretching skyward. We hugged and kissed and laughed. It's been so long, too long. Yes, we must get together more often. Come in. The food is terrific. We pushed our way through the crowd in the living room. What a grand party. What a hoopla. What a funeral.

I made myself a ham sandwich and sat in the corner. The dry bread stuck to the roof of my mouth, and my eyes stung from the yellow fog of tobacco smoke. The good news was that we were just like family, so we got to ride in a shiny, black limousine and sit with the relatives. How thoughtful. The best position in the parade, the best seat in the house.

The funeral went as planned. It was much too warm for comfort. When the soldier played taps, my heart fluttered like a cold breeze. I saw Donald cupping his chin, smiling at the football game, nodding every now and then, and saying grace without much conviction. Thank god the service was brief.

Afterwards, with urgency, Sherry begged to go get a coke. We went to Wayne's, the old high school hangout. We honked once for old time's sake. In a fit of giggles, Sherry and I reminisced about old boyfriends and songs. It was really good to see her again.

Two days later I went back to Lawton. Two days in the ground, Donald was vague enough in memory that there was little pain. I wrote thank-you notes and ran errands and cooked and talked. About three that afternoon we bundled up (a cold sheet of air had surfaced with interminable force) and went down to the insurance office. Sherry asked the girl to change some policies by placing them in her mother's name since her father had died. Sure. No problem. Let me get the necessary forms. I couldn't help but notice the clerk's bright red lipstick and four rings glittering from her fingers. Her nail polish was chipped. She brought the forms and Sherry signed those that required her signature. The chipped nails gathered them, paper-clipped them, and then on a fresh, white sheet of paper wrote DELETE DONALD MORGAN across the top. With a big red smile she said, "That's it." She managed the self-satisfied expression of efficiency with professional ease. We left.

I shuddered when the cold wind broke against me. In the car I pressed into a corner and my eyes unavoidably blinked tears. Sherry turned to me and ran her gaze over the outline of my shrunken figure. Quizzical lines crossed her forehead, and she wanted to know what was wrong. Brushing my mouth with the rough wool of my mitten, I felt a sob and shiver caught in my throat. Looking straight ahead, I told her absolutely nothing was wrong.

— Karen Young Holt

## **preparing for death**

a shaft of light falls from the window  
across the fence  
like toilet tissue gone mad

is this a pattern i should recognize?

my nights are highlighted by question marks  
that leave me morose  
and nervous as a mind reader

i know what i know:  
the people i love will die,  
some before i do

so i am preparing myself for death  
and funerals  
and for the eating of foods  
that taste of sorrow

i should probably seek out someone  
with whom i can share memories  
(though it is not unique to have  
memories)

instead, i lean against the truck  
and watch poplars caressing a sky  
that looks as if it has never known rain

i want to be dangerous  
and philosophical  
i want to see the larger pattern

but i can focus nowhere

— Mary Ann Peters  
Autumn, 1983

## **The Original Sin**

Cruel miracle now.  
The way we watch the light  
Glow into wonder,  
The way the leaves sang out and  
Burned to joy  
Before us and  
The faces were three-dimensional, bright...  
Cruel past, cruel miracle  
Now, here,  
In the boneyard  
Where the dust sighs, humming  
Through the hollow sockets of  
Wind-haunted skulls;  
Dandelions  
Turn bright hands to the sun  
On the flat square lawns  
Of our existence, and  
We stand in shelter where  
The gun barks turn and  
Miss our faces,  
Hitting instead the soft  
Sharp-scented skin  
Of the young.







## **“That Concludes Today’s Broadcast...”**

Blue haze radiating from across the room,  
He stares at it bleary eyed,  
Watching its ever-changing pattern.  
Electric faces come back to him:

“Young man killed when thrown from his  
truck...Girl shot in local neighborhood...

Water system failure in Mustang... Drug  
bust in Westbury... Black-out in southwest  
part of Oklahoma City... Man kills gas-  
station owner...”

He pulls out a small pistol,  
Silencing the box,  
Ponders a moment or two,  
Before...

Silencing his own set.

**— JoAnn Swink**

## Ode To Shakespeare

O Avon's Bard, O Gifted King  
Of Poets Laureate,  
To thee our shallow praises ring,  
You whose verse did re-create  
The human psyche (learned through years  
And cast in ink), who save  
Our hopes, our hates, our mortal fears  
From sleeping in the grave.

When in that April (of ancient showers),  
That spring when you were born,  
The Muses summoned artful powers  
And did thy crown adorn,  
The ancient British gods did smile  
On fields of your bright birth;  
Time buried legends on your isle —  
And your quest: to unearth!

Your thoughts like hoes were hammer-honed  
On stones of English wit;  
Your word-craft weaving skills were loaned  
From threads of Roman knit;  
Your play-plots formed a paper throne  
Which held with old Greek pastes;  
Your puns were roasted, served well-done,  
To meet with common tastes.

You plumbed the deepest mysteries  
Of England's rocky shores;  
You lived the noble histories,  
And fought in epic wars;  
Your mind soared with great fantasies  
Which o'er-viewed distant times;  
It crested aching tragedies  
And captured them in rimes.

Enriching our society  
With jewels of boundless worth,  
Your poet-acts of piety  
Have blessed this sphere, our earth.

# Reluctant Apparitions

## 1

“Fine apparition! My quaint Ariel, Hark...”

*Tempest I:ii*

Epiphanous and cloud-like dream  
that seeks its apparition through  
fleeting fragments and shadows of art.  
Silver gleamings in the gauze of indecision  
marking time for sudden inspiration  
opening the way to intensest purpose  
and struggle for ephemeral achievement.  
Ah, Ariel! Ariel! Fine Apparition,  
reluctant though you seem to be.

## 2

“Touching this vision here, It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you.”

*Hamlet I:v*

She steps lightly up the staircase,  
stirring ghost dust lying in the air.  
Four-sided post holds the rail  
that guides the steps to that  
unfinished work that needs be done  
throughout one's days of involved  
determination to shape the image  
from its reluctant concept to result:  
perception, effortless and semi-contenting.

"May I be bold to think these spirits? Spirits which by mine art I have  
from their confines call'd to enact My present fancies."

*Tempest IV:1*

Present fancies, past regrets,  
Perpetual images enshrined in  
Reluctant memory and now  
Existing as semblances,  
Impressions, apparitions.  
Past fancies, present regrets,  
Perpetual memories enshrined in  
Reluctant image and now  
Existing as apparition, apparition, apparition...  
"May I be bold to think these spirits?"

"Remember Thee! Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat in  
this distracted globe. Remember thee!"

*Hamlet I:4*

Seat a ghost at table and there will be a table.  
Seat then an apparition and there it will sit, now  
and in permanent memory on its chair.  
Stand a ghost in a corner and there will be a corner.  
Stand then an apparition and there it will stand.  
Move a ghost from memory and there will be emptiness.  
Move then an apparition and it will not move.  
Reluctantly the apparition stays.  
Move it hard and hard it stays;  
move it softly and softly it stays;  
swiftly, swiftly stays and slowly too.  
Reluctant apparition stays until  
the moment's right for going  
out into intended permanence.

— Richard Rouillard  
November 17, 1982

## **Tennessee Williams Is Dead**

ordinary afternoon  
listening to my radio

abra abra abracadabra  
she's gonna reach out and grab ya  
she's a maneater  
she'll chew you up and spit you out  
oh, you can't hurry love

we got the words for the 80's, yeah,  
fer sure, fer sure

news bulletin: Tennessee Williams Is Dead  
dead in a room, one room,  
for God's sake  
amidst the jangle and the clang of a  
honky tonk city

it's so hard to say you're sorry

unicorn magic

moon dreams

Paradise Dance Hall

Blanche DuBois

southern heat, steamed and ready

iniquity, pain

the vision of truth

here today/gone today

he gave it to us all:

the confrontation with terror

pain transcended in black cold alleys of our minds

they say that Tennessee Williams is dead today

but when i woke up this morning

i felt the temptation of dark winds blowing

and i know he is still alive...

— Karen Young Holt

# **Kafka**

It is easy to be misled, and I would not have said,  
as Bröd does, that Kafka was a happy man  
who joked with his friends.

Of his likenesses I've seen,  
only two lacked the very perplexity of "K,"  
nonplussed,  
clutching anxiously at wisps of an unstable life,  
anticipating his executioners in grey daylight.

But he and Brod had many good and friendly times together,  
for which knowledge I am glad, and I believe that it was so  
for in Bröd's book I see Kafka smiling at the reader shyly,  
honestly, modestly, in each of the years 1909 and 1918.

— **Joyce Marks**  
**10/23/81**



## **Nada**

Remember the fellow in “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”  
who knew it was all Nada?

He suffered from not fear or dread, he said,  
but solitude of the Nada sort,  
exacerbated by thinking (especially after working late)  
of the end of his days, loss of youth, confidence, love.  
He bore it well, and said of his insomnia: “Many must have it.”

— **Joyce Marks**  
**12/19/80**



# **Three Views From Wanda's Cafe: An Exercise In Point-Of-View**

by Linda Thornton

**Scene:** Wanda's Fried Chicken Cafe, located in a small town in Oklahoma...

- Points-of-view:**
1. Customer: Leon White, D.D.S. (third person)
  2. Child: Jason Sanders (third person)
  3. Waitress-owner: Wanda Sanders (first person)

All three characters witness events leading up to a quarrel between B.T. Maguire (a hayhauler) and Buddy Sims (a local farmer).

## **1. Leon's Story**

Dr. Leon White was not the sort of man you'd expect to find in a small Oklahoma town. Tall, well-groomed, almost scholarly in appearance, you could tell he was out of the ordinary by his smooth manicured hands. It then came as no surprise to learn that he had moved there to practice family dentistry. Although well accepted as the town's only dentist, Dr. White remained aloof from any attempts to socialize with him. He seemed content to see his patients and read books, always alone whenever you'd see him.

On this particular summer afternoon Dr. White found himself facing a longer than average break between appointments. As a matter of routine he liked to walk the block from his office to Wanda's Cafe to have a cup of coffee and read the paper. Today he might even have time to read a few chapters in his new book-club book. He appreciated the absence of customers in the cafe, choosing to frequent it in the afternoon for that very reason.



As he walked into the cafe shortly after 3:00, he noticed that Wanda was busily engaged in listening to a loud-voiced man. The man had to be a hayhauler, the driver of that semi parked across the street, judging from his sweaty jeans and dirty hands. Dr. White was grateful for the man's presence, whoever he was, because it meant that Wanda would be too occupied to strike up another conversation. He simply picked up the newspaper along with his coffee and prepared to relax for a few minutes.

Unfortunately Dr. White was scarcely able to read even one article because of the rowdy hayhauler's distracting voice. Every time he tried to concentrate on the news, the man's voice or laugh would jolt him from his reverie. Nothing annoyed the doctor more than listening to some rude Yahoo forcing his opinions on other people. As polite and retiring as he normally was, Dr. White was on the verge of asking the man to calm down. However, a curious event occurred before he could make even the smallest objection.

The door to the cafe opened quietly, just wide enough for two men to slide in. One man Dr. White knew quite well: Buddy Sims was not only a prosperous farmer in the community, but also a regular patient in the dental office. He was one of the first townspeople Dr. White had met upon arriving there a year ago. Yet the other man, accompanying Sims, was a stranger — noticeable because he stuck closely by Sims' side. It created the impression of a shadow lurking ominously next to the farmer's body.

As Dr. White was pondering this image, he saw Sims and the stranger forcefully lift the big hayhauler from his barstool and guide him outside. With a man holding on to each of his elbows, the loud-voiced braggart seemed unnaturally silent now. It occurred to the doctor to question the larger man's compliance, but he never seriously suspected that anything was amiss until he saw Wanda staring out the front window. Her mouth was slightly open, as though she were startled and perplexed at the same time. Finally she shut her mouth, shrugged her shoulders, and went back to her cleaning.

Dr. White slowly sipped his coffee and consciously dismissed the incident from his mind. He was greatly relieved that he wouldn't have to confront the loud-voiced hayhauler with his rudeness.

## 2. Jason's Story

Jason Sanders could hardly wait for school to be out that afternoon. Though he could already tell that second grade was going to be decidedly more challenging than the first, he was nonetheless ready for the bell to ring and the fun to begin.

When the long-awaited signal finally came, Jason almost leaped out of the room. It was 3:00, and he knew precisely just how many activities he could fit in before reporting to his mother's cafe to help with the supper crowd. He could manage to tease a few dumb girls, ride bikes awhile with his friends, and still watch *Speed Racer* and *Pink Panther* cartoons on T.V.

Jason's mischievous face glowed beneath his mop of red hair. Nothing was more satisfying to him than irritating girls. He could count on any one of them to respond with a high-pitched "Stop or I'm gonna tell!" and then to run tattle to the teacher in any case. However, Jason was long gone before the teacher could scold him. He was alternately skipping and hopping the three blocks to Wanda's Cafe, knowing well enough that he had to ask his mother for permission to ride bikes.

As Jason approached the small downtown area, he saw B.T. Maguire's semi-truck, loaded full with hay, parked outside the cafe. What a sight! B.T. had crammed so many bales of hay on that truck that it almost seemed to lean over. Jason was aware that B.T. would never let him fool around the haytruck, but he had known the man just long enough to make another observation: as long as B.T. was talking to his mother, nothing could distract his attention. Thus, the only sensible conclusion Jason could arrive at was to sneak around the side of the truck and climb up into the cab.



The view from the semi's cab was magnificent! Jason felt so powerful as he perched behind the steering wheel and surveyed the territory far below. He had no trouble imagining himself as ruler over a vast universe, sitting at the controls of his sleek spaceship. He was deep in planning a strategy to capture the neighboring galaxy when he caught a movement from the corner of his eye.

Oh no! B.T. was headed back to the truck! But who were those men on either side of him? Jason barely had time to recognize Mr. Sims before ducking to the truck's floorboard. Somehow he knew he had to slip out of the cab before B.T. caught him, yet he wasn't sure how to make his escape. Even if he could get the door open, it was quite a drop to the ground below.

As it turned out, Jason had no more time to think. Harsh, angry words rose from the men now standing by the driver's door. The boy's heart was thumping so loudly he could scarcely hear what was being said, but he knew B.T. was in trouble!

### **3. Wanda's Story**

I admit it was a slow day, but then weekdays was always slow except around noon or close to suppertime. Anyhow, it was about three in the afternoon when this all happened. I was takin' advantage of the dry spell by changin' out the grease in the vats where I fry chicken. I should've been wipin' grease off the counters, or off the walls, or off the whole place. I never seen such a crew as come in here for dinner everyday! You'd think I was feedin' Cox's army!

I saw B.T.'s semi-truck pull past the front window, but never thought nothin' about it until I heard the bell over the door jingle. When I turned around, there he was. I never seen such a grin on the face of anyone — man or beast — unless it was the cat that swallowed the canary. He come close to chokin' on a wad of Red Devil, he was grinnin' so hard.



"Wanda," he said, as he plopped down on a stool at the counter, "I just done it again. I ain't braggin' or anything, but godammit, these farmers around here got to have corn mash where most folks got brains! This is the third load of hay I've bought from ol' Buddy Sims and he ain't wised up yet. All a feller needs in this world is an honest face!"

I broke in on him then because the bell jingled again. It was Leon White, comin' in for his afternoon cup of coffee, regular as clockwork. I guess he must get awful tired of pickin' at people's teeth all day. Anyway, I was glad when he just picked up the newspaper, got his coffee, and headed for his usual corner. I wanted to hear exactly what B.T. was braggin' about.

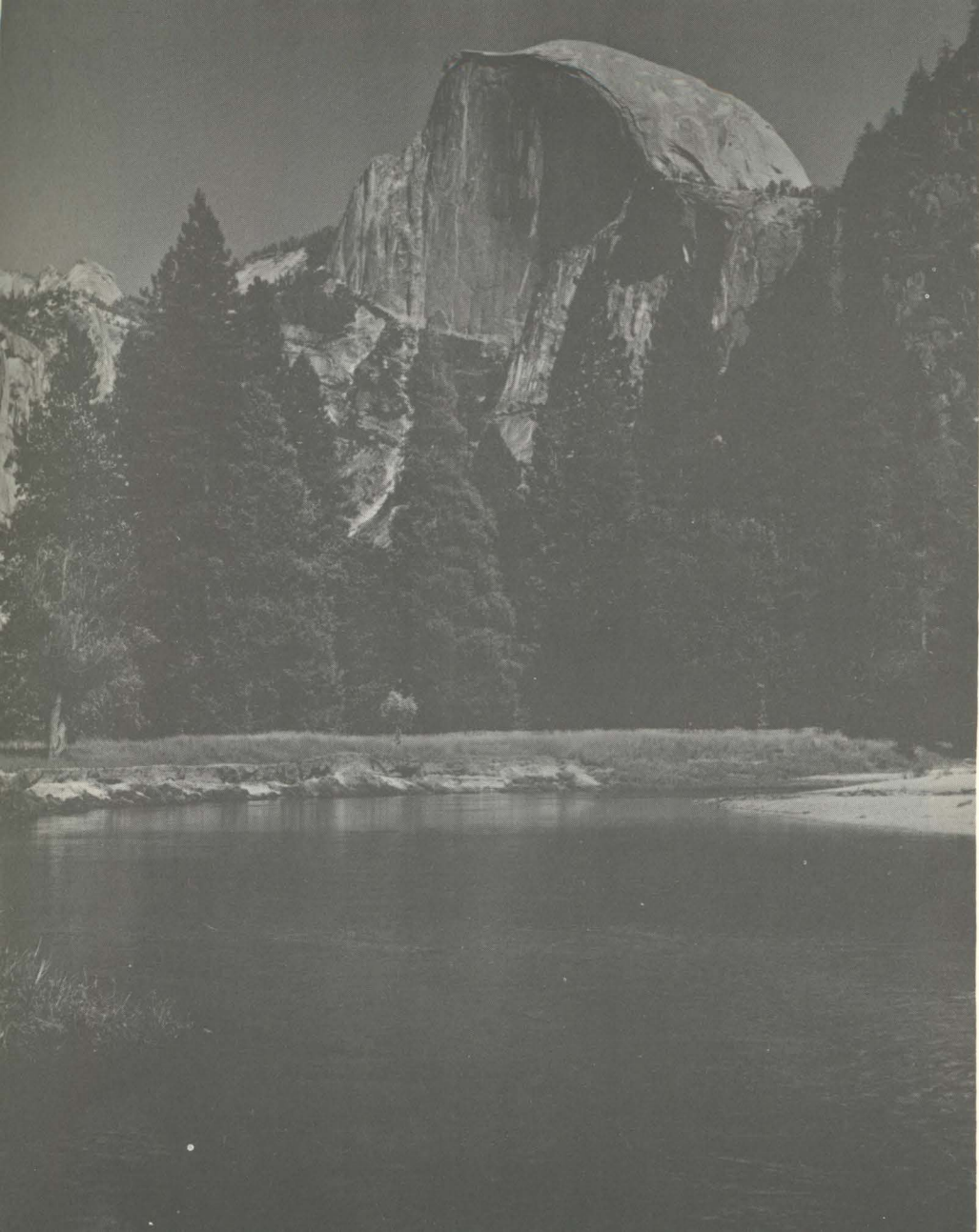
"Like I was sayin'," B.T. went on, "ol' Buddy is a certified yo-yo. I gave him a check today that was so hot, it may cause smoke damage before he can deposit it. He told me over the phone to bring cash this time, but if there's one thing farmers understand, it's hard times. I just whined a little, post-dated my check, and told him it's the best I could do. What he don't know is that this bank wrote me off six months ago. There ain't a dime in that account."

I smiled at B.T., but didn't say nothin' — just brought him a glass of iced tea. I didn't need to say nothin'. He was havin' fun enough pattin' himself on the back. I can see now that maybe I should've told B.T. a few things about yo-yo farmers, but then hindsight is always easy, ain't it?

I went back to changin' my grease while B.T. sucked down his iced tea. All that hard work must've dried him out. Neither one of us looked up when the bell jingled this time. All I know is that when I did turn around, B.T. was bein' led out the door by Buddy Sims and some other man I don't know. They never said a word or I would've heard 'em, I swear. B.T. just left his iced tea, sweatin' there on the counter, and walked out with them two.

Of course, I was curious — no need to fib. But no way could I hear what was said, short of goin' outside to Windex the front window, and I wasn't that desperate. So I just stood there for a minute, not knowin' quite what to do. Any fool could see there was goin' to be a fight, but I just figured B.T. would have to handle that problem himself.

**California Views: From A Portfolio By Artie Hicks . . .**









# Roaring Silence

Roaring silence  
Quiet thunder  
Lightning flashes  
Shadows disappear  
Momentarily  
Darkness again  
Images closing in  
Silently creeping  
Everywhere you turn  
Danger threatens  
Imagination soars  
Senses acute  
Listening  
Wondering  
Waiting  
Expectantly  
Silence reigns  
Clouds part  
Shadows recede  
Noises start  
Light  
Filters through  
Threatening clouds  
Are gone  
Peace is, once more  
After the storm  
Is gone  
Emotions are calmed  
Turmoil ceases  
The mind rests  
Once more  
An idea  
Has been born.



**You are so near, yet so far;  
fading in and out  
like the shadow of a ghost.**

**You tease me, you lead me on  
and then you're gone  
into yourself;  
alone in your own space.**

**— Annette Grill**

## **The Voice Of The Familiar**

I want to speak, but, of necessity, must speak  
through her lips, out of her mouth,  
with my childish voice, saying: "I have a message . . ."  
In the circle they grip damp palms.  
I say: "Let me out." Then, "No,  
for I am naked, even to my thoughts."  
Grey attitudes trail in space around me.  
I look strange. But no one sees.  
I am hidden in emptiness.

If I grasped an opportunity,  
I'd take the old red dress from her wardrobe  
and a hat to recover the thoughts of my head.  
Such action might wizen her, and she'd fall with a shriek.  
Then lights would go on, while the circle of hands  
would separate and someone would say:  
"Oh, my goodness, she's dead.  
Phone the constabulary."

At this time would anyone notice my sudden appearance?  
I'd slip through the window into the night,  
and we'd meet in the garden, walk north in the moonlight  
to a small town, and settle there.  
I'd weed the rockery in summer. Read in winter.  
If the snow wasn't too deep we'd go for a walk.

## **Before**

Sleeping Beauty sees the prince  
But can't get through the haze.

"Don't move, don't

Kiss me."

And slowly through the days

His face gets nearer.

"Stop. Don't wake me.

Don't make it real."

## **After**

There *were* no thorns,

No bramble forest.

But with his kiss

They sprang up all around

To cover his retreat

After rousing her

From her waking dream

To a paralyzing moment

Of tenderness.

— Brooke Smith

Take me away from life's blunt disarray  
of darkening shadows unclaimed,  
To moments of calm, framed by your power  
while chaos in brief can be tamed.

Take me afar from bleak, bitter cold  
which strips from the heart inner mirth,  
To fields flushed with sunshine facing new  
life to reap for a time a rebirth.

Take me back when strife's whip was restrained  
by the victor's strength still abreast,  
To peaceful quiet held braced in your arms  
where rhyme and shape still exist.

— **Kathy Holliday**



## Passage On A Foreign Train

Alone in a compartment,  
I watched the Netherland fields  
fall quickly away.

I cracked the window,  
and my chamber exhaled the breath  
of a thousand passengers, since gone.

I lit a cigarette,  
and watched the five empty seats.  
The wheels ticked away the pace.

I saw the family,  
speaking in broken tongues,  
tied together.

I saw the hidden spy,  
with his briefcase between his legs,  
anticipating.

I saw the tourists,  
arguing playfully  
over their sacred cities.

I sat smoking, staring,  
and thought too of places never lived, only visited.  
Far off places behind the next corner.

I looked through the window as the door slid open.  
Like a pattern, he extended his arm.  
His eyes were blind and his mouth mute.

I drew from my beaten jacket  
a ticket.  
No destination.

The wheels ticked away the pace, forever.  
Time and motion are together.  
I thought of America.

— Thomas Fahey



# **The Exiles**

We are the wild geese  
The children of Dark Rosaleen  
Sent into harsh exile  
                    by tyrants and bullies  
We have kept the seeds of fire alive  
In our loneliness  
In dark coal pits  
                    and alleyways  
We have have survived  
                    as our grandfathers did before us

We are the inheritors  
                    of poetry and blood  
Of the harp and destruction  
Of the green banner and endless defeats

We are the proud ones  
Filled to the top with defiance  
Shouting  
                    or mumbling with despair  
Inheritors  
                    of barroom politics

We have lost a green land  
We have never seen  
                    and that we will only touch  
At the end of the long road  
                    and the long sleep

— **Leigh Perry**  
**4/28/80**

## When The Well Came In

Why doesn't someone answer that telephone? Who is so stupid as to call at this hour of the morning? I was making dire and distressing threats when I heard Mother's voice suddenly change.

"You think it will be in before daybreak? Yes indeed, we shall be out very soon. Thank you for your kindness."

I dashed from bed and met my sisters out in the hall rushing down to see if they had heard rightly.

The field boss had said that Number I Kivett would be drilled in at any time. Did we want to go? There was nothing we wanted more.

During the ten-mile drive to the field we were all very quiet. We were busy with our thoughts because this was the day, the great day, toward which we had been looking.

It meant so many things, more than a producing oil well to us. For my older sister it meant a year in Europe and all that connotes. For Mother leisure for things she had wanted to do for a long time. To me it meant New York, Columbia University, and attendant pleasures. But "our youngest and our dearest" insisted that a new sport roadster would satisfy all of her present longings.

When we reached the well, good old John Fitts came rushing up to congratulate us.

"Of course it's a producer. Everyone says so. Haven't I been telling you this day was coming?"

He walked over with us. At the well we saw the geologist, who had stoutly held to his belief in this field, the driller, and the tool-dresser. They were quietly talking as they "sat on" the well.

Bill came over and spoke in his usual deliberate way.

"Can't tell anything about her, but she'll surely be in before long. She's as wild as a March hare."

It was hardly necessary to tell us that because the tools were constantly being jerked here and there. Also there was occasionally a mighty rumbling.

Excitement was at fever heat. People had thronged out from town when the news became known.

Friends came by to congratulate us. All were joyous and exultant. Hadn't all of us known that sometime a big producer would be brought in in this field? No one doubted that this was it.

But to think that it was ours, really our very own. It couldn't —

But wait. Bill's orders. "Back — all of you — farther than the fence — 'way back — run boys. Here she comes!"

With a mighty roar it came. High over the top of the derrick and down with a great splash. The well was in.

A stifled cry of dismay came from numerous throats as we stared in amazement. It wasn't, it couldn't be, but it was — salt water.

Mother turned to us, smiled, and said, "Well, little girls, we don't mind waiting just a little while — until the next one, do we?"

— **Daisie Belle Britt**  
**Ada, Oklahoma**

## — MIXED EMOTIONS —

I might not be able to shower you in diamonds,  
But I can bathe you with love.

— Scott Bohlman

Education is the tool  
That prepares a man to rule,  
But wisdom over education  
Prepares a man to rule a nation.

— Bill Bishop

### **Intimidation**

if boomerangs can  
be termed blunt instruments      then  
what about logic?

— G.K. Williams  
Oxford, 12/9/82

## **Postscript**

Suicide is for the brave,  
We cowards live and try;  
If Dorothy Parker felt that way,  
Then who am I to die?

— **Pamela Ferguson**

**“A” Troop,  
1/1 Cavalry,  
I Corps, RVN.**

noonday memory  
peel it back      just keep rippin’  
time is scar tissue.

— **G.K. Williams**  
**London, 12/15/82**

# **My Tang Gets Tungled When I Talk**

My tang gets tungled when I talk,  
My tweet get fisted when I walk.  
This yessage is just for mou,  
My ferds are clear, just a wew,  
All I seally want to ray,  
Is may God's wessing pass your bay.  
Oh my deetheart, Oh my sear,  
Let me isper in your wear.  
I hope the dest of this boes rhyme,  
"Darling, Please Ve My Balentine!"

— **Gary D. Cooper**  
**1/22/79**



