

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Literature/Poetry

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/49q4p8ps>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 19(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

1995

**DOI**

10.17953

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## I Had a Dream

I had a dream of many dark shapes  
Following me rolling across the plain  
Coming closer in the midday sun

The dream was a waking dream  
The midday sun was very real and warm:  
Someday I will know its voice

I heard an eagle-whistle in the other room  
As a strong man prayed  
For one of his brothers who was crying

The smoke of the sweetgrass  
Lifted his words to Wakan  
With the wave of an eagle-feather fan

I held a friend in my arms shaking  
Close within a prayer circle  
Being spirit-healed by a sacred song

I helped a friend to know herself  
She leaned upon my shoulder  
Healing me with her trust

Two men came to us with an answer  
To an old, old prayer  
And took us to a place of power . . . .

—Mike Cutler

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### God's Work . . .

We had driven far that day, and I remember feeling kind of sick from breathing too much air-conditioning. It was cool, but with the plastic smell of new Toyota. The temp outside was in the high 90s but not humid. When we got out of the truck the west wind blowing in over the yellow plains hit like hot air coming out of a dryer that had been running too long—harsh and bone dry . . . but I preferred it to new Toyota.

The road and the heat were playing games with my head, the watery mirages shimmering on the highway, dancing to the Kevin Locke flute music my companion was playing on the car stereo. He had asked me to come along to do some photography work for an anthropological study he was doing. He had promised me a 50 percent cut of any profit he gained from the presentations he would give and the book he dreamed of someday getting published. Sounded like a deal to me, but the money would prove the least of the benefits.

It was one of those trips that I almost didn't take, so strong were the feelings that something significant was going to happen. My logical self told me that my feelings were unfounded, but the fears were there nonetheless and were made only greater by the fact that I was once again walking into unknown territory. With some effort I reminded myself that all experiences, even the negative ones, can be of benefit if only for the lessons they teach.

Our destination was a settlement outside of Marty, a little town that can be reached from Aberdeen by simply following Highway 281 as far south as one can go without plunking into the Missouri River on the Nebraska border. Marty is on the Yankton Reservation, the boundaries of which only the Indians seem to know, as it, like Sisseton and Flandreau, isn't recognized on any map authorized by the state of South Dakota.

But Bob knew where we were going.

Topping a low hill on the highway, I looked off to the right and breathed a sigh of recognition at the sight of the high poles of a big Cheyenne-style tipi, and a sweatlodge with a pile of rocks that had seen more ceremonies than anyone could count. It felt like home. I had been in Aberdeen too long.

We drove onto Freland DeCora's property on a well-used dirt road and climbed out of the truck with a yawning stretch, walking stiffly toward a small group of men sitting in the shade of a cottonwood arbor. The wind was still hot, even with evening

coming on, and the dry leaves rustled and whispered in concert with the brittle grass crunching under our feet.

We were greeted in the restrained but comfortable manner typical of traditional Lakota people, and were invited to join the discussion.

Freland, short and stocky, bent but not broken by a stroke that had half paralyzed him the summer before, was engaged in a lively talk with another Lakota elder, a small man with one of those funny Lakota bodies—a huge belly supported by no butt and sticklegs—named Bill Paul. Their talk was carried on in a mix of English and Lakota, a language that I can partially understand (but still can't speak). This made it possible for me to follow the conversation between the two spiritual leaders fairly well.

Freland seemed upset at how so few of the people on the reservation, especially the young, were able to stick to the traditional values, and how all of the people were suffering from the abuse of the alcohol and drugs that had come to define the lifestyle there. He told Bill that "real Indians don't drink" and that the traditional culture still had a long way to go before it would reestablish itself over the false "booze culture" that had taken over. He wondered what had to happen to make things better, what he could do, what kind of prayers would work.

I was mesmerized by the sound of his voice. Traditional Lakota people placed a high value on the power of oration, and Freland was one man who lived up to that tradition. He spoke in low, measured, sad tones, and my eyes drifted off over the rolling tawny hills looking west to the river, to the high-voltage power lines and their towers marching there like so many steel kachina dolls. I remembered the Hopi prophecy that on the day of the "great cleansing" the earth would be "covered with spider webs."

The sound of another voice jerked me back to the conversation. From his seat on the ground, Bill growled like an old bobcat.

"Young kids today . . .," he said with a flourish of his hands. "They don't know how to pray. All they do is ask and ask and ask, and never think about giving anything back!"

Other eyes that had drifted elsewhere were now riveted on him, a little one-toothed preacher with dark glasses too big for his head, spouting wisdom we all needed to hear.

"They go to church or go to sweat and all they pray for is a job or a new car for their girlfriend. Then they wonder why nothing good ever happens to them."

He fell silent for awhile. The wind died down. Bill sat there, moving his tooth back and forth with his tongue, rolling a broken blade of brown grass between his calloused fingers as if it was going to tell him something. When he finally spoke it was with surprising power.

"They forget that God don't make no deals! That stuff don't work! They got to give something back to God! They got to do some of God's work here on Mother Earth! Then, and only then, will their prayers be answered."

The wind had picked up again, fueled by Bill's passion. I was suddenly frightened, a huge question filling me up inside. The loud hissing leaves seemed to be trying to tell me what I wanted to know, but I couldn't understand. After a long, long moment, I found the courage and opened my mouth.

I sounded like a small child.

"What do you mean by 'God's work?'"

Bill looked at me, and everyone looked at Bill, waiting for some great revelation. He exhaled, and everything, the whole world, seemed to exhale with him and go still. Working his tooth back and forth, he smiled.

"Awww, that ain't no big secret."

He shook his head and looked at the sun, a brilliant orange globe half swallowed by the horizon.

"All you got to do is work to heal yourself. And when you done that, be willing to share the goodness of that healing with the people around you who ask you for help. Help them to find their path. That's doing God's work."

I've been trying ever since . . .

—Mike Cutler

### **When Sitting Bull Was Killed**

When Sitting Bull was killed  
They say his old horse danced  
Sending a message to the people  
Of a meeting never held

A man of great power died that day  
The only one that danced was his horse  
Many dreams died that day  
Some said it was the end

Totanka Iyotanke had gone away  
To a good place where he belonged  
It has taken us over one hundred years  
To receive the message

So now we will have this meeting  
And try in our hearts  
To strengthen the power that lies  
Asleep in the hearts of our young

—*Mike Cutler*

## Chaske

Chaske walks proud. His chest is out, his head tilted back, eyes looking through a pair of one-way mirror shades that he can't remember where he got. His brow and forehead are hidden by a red wind-band.

The October day is chilly with a northwest wind that whips the straight, black hair around Chaske's shoulders. He is aware of but does not acknowledge the presence of the dogs that growl from beneath the porches and old cars around the houses he passes.

The gravel from the cracked and broken concrete street crunches beneath the scuffed combat boots on his feet, announcing his approach to the group of men sitting around on folding chairs in front of a house.

"Hey, bro!" shouts one of the men, a huge bear of a Sioux named Donny Red Dog. "Where you headed, man?"

Chaske smiles a thin, yellowed smile.

"No where, man. Jus' walkin'."

The other three men turn toward Chaske. Donny motions him over. "Sit down, man. Chance, get off yer ass and get my kola a beer."

The youngest of the men, Chance Red Dog, is Donny's son. Not quite as big as Donny, he is nonetheless an imposing figure. Chance frowns, grumbling something under his breath. He hauls himself up off his seat and unsteadily rides his cowboy boots through the screenless front door of the house.

The rest of the men exchange nods with Chaske. "Kuno, how you been, man?" Chaske says to the wiry, hard man on his left. "You still dancin'?"

"Naw," Kuno responds, eyes falling to the ground. "Can't live that life no more, man. Young guys stole all my moves."

"Shiit," slurs the fourth man in a dry, whiskey gasp. "Too much wine fucks with yer legs, man. Can't dance with the shakes like you got. Ha-Ha!"

Kuno doesn't respond, his eyes locked on a beer cap half buried in the dirt at his feet.

Chaske looks long at the fourth man until the man squirms and looks away.

"What about you, Tree? What you been doin' lately, anything? You still selling beer to the kids, man?"

Tree sags a little. "Fuck, they git it anyway."

Donny, deciding things are getting too heavy, speaks. "Chaske, you been away for a long time. Yer old lady kick you out, or what?" All the men laugh, including Chaske.

"Naw, bro'. Jus' got tired of workin' for the Feds. Thought I'd come home for a while before I started to turn white."

"Yeah, I was wonderin' when you was gonna come around. Dis is yer home, man. The rez always calls 'em back, every time," says Tree.

Chaske smiles, shakes his head and pulls a brown paper bag out of his green jacket. "Hey, I got a bottle, man. Crack it."

Pulling the black-labeled bottle from the bag, Kuno exclaims, "Hey-yey, my partner. Things never change. Whooooaaa, this is some bad shit, man. Crazy shit happens when skins drink this shit."

Kuno lifts the quart bottle of Jack Daniels, eyeing it as if he's facing an opponent across a boxing ring. Grasping the bottle around the base of the neck, he holds it out flat with the bottom facing him and drives the heel of his practiced hand into the bottom, cracking the seal.

Chance ambles back out of the house, handing Chaske a Bud. "Who brought the Jack, man? Shit, that's all right. Maybe yer worth something after all, Firstborn."

Sticking the Bud into his breast pocket, Chaske is about to open his mouth when Donny speaks to his son. "Hey, boy, you treat my kola with some respect. Firstborn was my kola when you was pissin' in yer diapers."

Kuno and Tree both laugh at Chance.

"And he's a veteran, too, man," adds Kuno.

Turning the cap off the bottle with slow reverence, Kuno tips the first few drips into the hard dirt of the yard. "For the boys who didn't make it this far . . . ."

"Right on," mutters Chaske. "For the brothers and sisters . . . ."

"So what you been doin' for reals, man?" asks Chance from beneath his sweaty Stetson. "Daddy tells us all about when you came back from the 'Nam. What happened, you lose it or what? You freak out?"

Chaske leans back on his chair, surveying the decayed, wind-blown HUD pre-fabs he has seen on every reservation he's crossed in his travels. Turning to Donny, he says, "What you been tellin' this kid?"

Donny waves his huge hand. "Don't listen to the kid. He don't give a shit. He's just tryin' to give you a hard time."



Chaske is quiet for awhile, watching a BIA police car roll slowly by. He takes a long breath, seeming to shrink a little as he exhales. "Yeah, I did my time with the Corps. Vietnam was some crazy shit, man . . . ."

As if spurred by some old memory, Chaske reaches into his pocket and produces a well-rolled joint. Lighting it with a Zippo, he continues.

"I come home with both a Bronze and a Silver Star, and a Purple Heart for my sins. I was okay for a while. My folks had a ceremony for me and a give-away at the powwow that summer. It was what I always wanted, the ceremony, I mean. Shit, I was in a wheelchair. I'm still down as 30 percent disabled. I went in with three other guys, all from here."

"Yeah," says Kuno. "My brother Toby went in with you, and Arlee Little Walker and Norvin Stone. I remember that. Some all right bro's, man."

"Yeah, they were that. No shit . . . We lost Arlee at a place called Hue. He was walkin' point and stepped on a mine. Shit, blew both his legs off, man. He bled to death. We was always walkin' point. Fuckin' crackers thought we had some kind of sixth sensibility or somethin'. Shit, none of us ever been in the fuckin' jungle. Called us their 'Indian guides.'"

"What happened to the other two?" asks Chaunce.

"Norvin was a sergeant. The bloods told me that he had some trouble with some white southern boys in his platoon. They was always callin' him 'Chief' and shit, so one day on patrol he just lost it and really knocked the shit outta one of the crackers. The bloods say that they was in a firefight a couple days later and he never made it back. I don't believe he was killed by the VC. I think he got fragged."

"Who's the 'bloods,' man?" asks Chaunce.

Chaske smiles, nodding his head, "Buffalo Soldiers, man. Black marines."

Looking around, Chaske laughs, "Hey, Kuno, pass that shit around, man. Fuck, you gonna drink it all or what?" Kuno passes the bottle, nearly a third empty, to Donny, who knows better and passes it to Tree.

The men each take a draw on the bottle. Chaske winces as the alcohol burns down his throat. "Yeah, I was okay for awhile. But there was just something really changed in the world. I came back and everybody was givin' us shit at the airport in San Diego. Fuckin' hippie kids all over tellin' me that I was a baby killer and

shit. You see all that out there about how bad it was that we was in 'Nam and what we did there, and then come home here and get honored by the people. The world's fucked up, man. I remember I was watching TV one day and these white kids were demonstratin' against the draft. One of them was holding this sign that said 'The draft is the White man sending the Black man to fight the Yellow man to protect the land he stole from the Red man.' Shit, I could relate to that. There was a Hopi guy on the plane from California who got off in Phoenix. Shit, I thought Hopis was supposed to be peaceful people. Fuck, this guy had a Congressional Medal of Honor for makin' a mess out of an NVA company with six other guys. 'Happy Hopis' my ass. He was tellin' me that the Hopis say that this time is called 'Koyaanisqatsi,' man. Life out of balance, that things were turnin' upside down in the world. Turned upside down for that Hopi, man. He was missin' an arm."

"Shit, that musta been all right, man," stutters Chaunce. "It'd be all right to play Rambo for awhile."

"Awww, man. Rambo wouldn't a lasted a half-hour in that shit. Neither would you. You're too big of a target!" The men laugh at the reddening Chaunce.

"Shit, man. I could do it."

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure you could, but you better get real before you start thinkin' about that shit, man. Rambo . . . shit. They woulda found him with a pungie stick shoved up his ass. The little VC's weren't afraid of nothin'. They was ready to die, anytime, anyplace."

"There was some of them people that, if they spoke Lakota, coulda been from here, man," says Chaske, warming to his stories.

"What do you mean, man?" asks Tree, squinting through his almond shaped, heavy-lidded eyes.

"They looked just like you." Turning to the other men, Chaske smiles. "I was on my way home and we got off-ship in Hong Kong. I was walking along the harbor and I'll be damned if I didn't see fuckin' Tree, man. I was sayin' 'Tree, Tree, what the hell you doin' in Hong Kong?' The dude just looked at me and ran away. His skin was even the same color, 'cept he was Chinese. He didn't have cirrhosis."

Barely audible in the laughter of the other men, Tree growls at Chaske, "Fuck you, man."

Chaske continues, "There was these one people that lived up in the mountains in western 'Nam and Laos and Cambodia called the Hmong. They used to help us out and they were good. I guess

they never did get along with the rest of the people around there 'cause they were different, but they knew the country. They used to use crossbows and shit. It was just like an M-60 to them, man. Sorta like Donny's beerfarts—silent but deadly."

"So why was you guys over there then?" asks Chaunce.

Chaske looks at him for a long while, then drops his eyes to the ground. "I don't know why the U.S. was over there, really. There was a lot of talk about 'containment' of the communists and stuff, but all of that shit got lost on me."

"Well, why did you skins go over there, man? Why did you?"

Another long silence. "Well... we all enlisted. The bloods could never understand that. They thought we were fuckin' crazy for signing up for that shit. I thought about it a lot when we was over there, and a lot since I been back, but I'm still not completely sure. I remember my daddy telling stories to us kids before he died about when he was in World War II with the 101st Airborne and all the things he did then. I remember him showing us all his medals and his uniform and the German flag he brought home from Holland. Every year on Veteran's Day and the Fourth of July he would put away his bottle, shine his shoes and march in the parade. It was the only thing that ever made him feel really strong. He was like a different man on those days. He would get together with the other vets and talk about the things that happened when they were young and strong, and sometimes he would cry. I always wondered how it must have been for him to be a warrior when he was young, 'cause Daddy never, ever cried. The only thing that ever made him cry besides that was the booze."

The men sit silent for awhile, all understanding except Chaunce. "What happened to your dad, man?"

"He died when I was 12. He got drunk and fell down and hit his head on the corner of the bookcase in our house. He died from a swollen brain. Fuckin' waste of a good man."

"What happened to all of his stuff? You still got it, man?"

"We had it for a long time, but after awhile Mom couldn't work and things got hard. One day his stuff was just gone, man. We really don't know what happened to it, but I think my uncle stole it and sold it for booze. I was about 17 then. I didn't know what else to do, so I dropped out of high school and joined the Corps. All through boot-camp and for a while in 'Nam I was 'gung-ho,' man. I was in the Corps, man. I was a warrior, just like daddy."

The beginnings of tears form in the corners of Chaske's eyes.

"Then one day about ten months into my year we were sent into this village. All the people were really scared. It was weird. Here we were, all standing in a line facing these little people. We were some bad motherfuckers, man, real hard-core marines, and this old man comes up to me, he couldn't a' been five feet tall . . ."

Chaske chokes on his words and drops his head into his hands, quietly sobbing. His stoned, drunken lips anchor a line of saliva that slides toward the ground.

" . . . and tries to give me these chickens. He was pushin' 'em at me and saying something but I kept tellin' him to get back against the huts, but he wouldn't. Finally I leaned down to try and hear what he was saying. He started rubbing my arm and his arm, then rubbing my arm again, and he was sayin', 'Same, same, same . . .,' and I looked and we were the fuckin' same, man. I was doin' the same thing to his people that the white soldiers used to do to my own people, man. That's when the fuckin' worm turned for me. From that day on, I was just along for the ride. Three weeks later I got my ticket home. I took a bullet through my side, just missed my kidney, but I was glad."

With a sniffle, he stops talking. Chaske picks up the near empty bottle and stands. The tears have left shiny rivers on his rough cheeks. His eyes are now drying. Almost falling, he catches his balance and straightens himself and turns away, once again walking proud, losing himself in the wind and the gray day.

The men sit in silence. Finally, Chaunce speaks.

"Kuno, you said your brother Toby went with 'em, too. What happened to him?"

Kuno wipes his nose with his sleeve and speaks slowly. "Chaske was doin' good, man. We had the ceremony for him and he was goin' to stay around until Toby got home, then they was goin' to try and do something with themselves. Toby wrote me letters sayin' him and Chaske was goin' to be cops and try and clean up the place for the young kids. Well, Toby signed on for another hitch in 'Nam, so Chaske'd been around for awhile when we got a call from the marine corps sayin' he was gonna' be coming home on a plane in town. I don't even remember the phone call. I was drinkin' and only wrote down half the message. Chaske was fired up, man. We all got dressed up and drove into town to the airport, but Toby never got off the plane. We asked the airport people and they sent us to talk to a marine lieutenant who was standing by the cargo door. Well, Toby was on the plane all right. The lieutenant

showed us his coffin. Chaske was never the same after that. He started drinkin' and travelin', and that's all he's been doin' ever since."

"Shit, I'm through, man," says Tree. "That dope makes me sleepy, man. Can't drink when I'm half asleep."

Kuno rises with him. "Yeah, me too. 'Bout supper time. Take it easy, Donny, Chaunce."

"You guys take care," says Donny, coughing the cough of one who has sat and listened for too long. He turns to enter the house but stops, looking at Chaunce. "C'mon in, boy. We gotta talk."

Chaunce jerks back to awareness and pulls his eyes from the tiny form in a green jacket and red wind-band walking straight and tall along the road into town.

—Mike Cutler

### **How Does It Feel?**

How does it feel, my friend,  
To be on the short end of the rope?  
How does it feel, my friend,  
To be left on your own with no hope?

How does it feel, my friend,  
To be dragged on the rough rocky ground?  
How does it feel, my friend,  
To be forever lost and never found?

How does it feel, my friend,  
To have to battle the misunderstanding.  
How does it feel, my friend,  
To be dead but somehow still standing.

It feels to me like power.  
It feels to me like grace.  
To be able to laugh at the pressure.  
To walk with a smile on my face.

There is strength to be found in this struggle.  
Knocked down only to rise to our feet.  
In the fear that we see in their eyes,  
When we refuse to accept any defeat.

They are coming to realize our power.  
They are coming to realize our grace.  
They see the impotence of their pressure.  
They cower from the smile on my face.

—*Mike Cutler*

### Another Small-Town Saturday Night (or The Last of the High-Test Boys)

Another small-town Saturday night . . . shit . . .

Andy laces up his black Chuck Taylors, pulls on his old army green jacket and heads out into the chilly, overcast quiet of the night, looking for the rest of the boys, looking for some fun, looking for a real cheap thrill.

Nothin' else to do around here. Even the name of the town is boring . . . so boring that it's not even worth tellin'.

Barking dogs remind Andy of that. Nobody out tonight but the dogs, the dogs and the boys who gather down by the grocery store that sells the baggies right next to the Testor's glue, even though it closed up several hours before.

"Whatcha doin', man? Where's yer drugs? Ya holdin' or what?" Andy asks a sullen boy leaning against the wall.

"Naw. Town's dry, man. There's shit around, but its outta my range. I'm gettin' ready to blow it off, man. Jis' head home. Not even no drunks around."

"Shit, yer no fun. Times like this we gotta make our own fun, man. C'mon, let's see what we can stir up."

"Naw, man. I 'member the last time you said that. Shit, landed my ass in jail. Yer on your own this time, man. I'm outta' here."

"Fuck, go home to yer momma. Momma's boy!"

"Fuck yerself, Andy. And yer momma, too!"

Andy smiles, not noticing the receding sound of gravel crunching under a pair of worn Nikes, or the chorus of dogs that greet his former companion's entrance into the low-rent housing area. It's just Andy again . . . Andy and the hazy blue light of the street lamp, the bite of the September wind and the choking growl of a big diesel gearing up out on the highway.

"Hmmm . . ." is the jist of Andy's thoughts as he walks off in the bowlegged stride so common among the local boys, cigarette hanging loosely from the corner of his mouth, past the World War II monument that now serves as the favorite hangout of the local wino population. Nobody home tonight, though . . .

"What the fuck is there to do?"

. . . past the Plant and Management Garage now, coming up on the government motor pool, where Andy and his partners had so often sneaked in through the hidden hole in the corner of the fence and siphoned gasoline from the cars and trucks inside, sometimes

for Leo's motorbike, more often to pay for a ride out to the liquor store, and sometimes for . . . other reasons . . .

"Now just what the fuck is there to do . . . ?"

The question, now more of a statement, follows Andy toward the corner of the fence. He bends, clearing away the tumbleweed doorway. "Man, these motherfuckers is pretty stupid not to have found this out. Shi-hit, man."

Crawling through, a muttered curse escapes his lips, the chain-link adding another tear to his already worn jacket. The smell of the old oil that has long since killed the grass inside the enclosure fills his nostrils, a smell not all that unpleasant and full of many dull memories.

Rising slowly, he scans the area and starts off at a crouch around the snowplows, under the road-graders, searching for a likely victim—one of the pickups or cars that see daily use.

Stopping beside a late-model Dodge, he kneels and works the gascap from its receptacle with a slow, practiced touch. The cap drops from his sweated palm, and he stares into the yawning black eye of the opening, letting the pungent aroma of impending escape travel around, over and through him.

Andy looks around wishing he had a short length of hose, then leans forward, his hands cupped around the hole, and hesitates, listening to a voice calling from inside him but from a great distance, screaming a vague warning, not urgent enough to be heeded.

Long and slowly he inhales the thick, sharp, melting fumes emanating from the magical liquid way down inside the hole . . . long and slowly . . . deeper and deeper into his sacrosanct body . . . filling every nook and cranny with an invader that never comes expected, that never hints at intention . . .

Andy has lost count of the breaths he has taken and, slowly drawing a final breath, rises, eyes clamped shut, back bent back, head craned skyward on arched neck.

His eyes open onto a brilliant field of stars, solidly spangling his entire field of vision, accompanied by a shrill whine coming from somewhere between his ears. Andy doesn't hear the "awwww . . . fuck, man . . ." that slurs from his slack lips. He only knows that he's found something to do. He's taken his own private little trip. Too late to turn back. Andy's on for the whole fuckin' ride.

Slowly the stars fade, the howling whine goes away, and Andy hangs for a long, long moment, suspended in space, no legs holding him up, no body holding him a slave to the restricting bounds of earth, no life, no boredom, no pain, no nothing . . .



He doesn't know how long he stands there. He never will; he only knows that he is once again real when the tinkle of tiny bells and the crazy sound of a helplessly laughing little voice enters his consciousness.

Andy exhales a breath that he thought he could hold forever and slowly looks down at the side of the car. What meets his gaze is so unexpected, but so appropriate, that all he can say is "wha' the fuck . . . !"

"Hey, Andy!" says that little man, no more than a foot high, in little greasy coveralls with little oily rags hanging from his little grimy hands, a little can that Andy somehow knows is full of gas sitting beside his little boots with their little bells.

From under the little EXXON cap with a little bell on top stares a very large pair of blankly insane eyes above a curiously mashed nose and a smiling, mirthless mouth.

Andy's initial shock gives way to a burst of thick laughter. "God damn! You about the ugliest little fucker I ever seen. Where you from, man? Where'd you git them little clothes?"

"Boy, when you gonna' learn that you just can't take what's mine without payin'," says the little Gascan Man, with a thinly veiled hint of pained sarcasm.

"Ah, you ain't real," says Andy. "Man, this shit's really fuckin' with my head this time. God damn!"

"Yeah, it IS fuckin' with your head, or should we say that I'M fuckin' with you head," the little man chuckles, his little bell jingling with every bounce of his little pot belly. "Every breath you take out of that hole, you breathe in a little more of me, Andy. You breathe in a little more of my freezin' hot spirit, and I ain't sure I like that."

"Jeezus Chris'!" the boy says. "Yer' talkin' outta yer ass, motherfucker! Now git outta here 'for I kick yer fat little butt!"

Andy moves forward, only to find that the little man has moved out of reach, although he hasn't moved at all. Andy sees that he is no longer the owner of his arms. They have vanished from the sleeves of his jacket; his old brown gloves lie beside his feet on the ground.

"Boy, when you gonna learn that you gotta pay for gittin' away. You gotta pay for takin' what ain't yours. Ya gotta pay for your good times. That's the way things are, boy. Can you understand that?"

"Shit . . .," Andy breathes, the spectre of fear making its first real appearance in the depths of his gut. "Where da you git off tellin'

me shit, man! I can do whatever I fuckin' want. No little fucker's gonna change that!"

"I'm not gonna change it, Andy. WE'RE gonna change it, 'cause you and me is one and the same, boy. I'm comin' from inside of you, Andy. I AM you, can't you see. We got to change it, or we got to end it. It's all up to us . . ."

Andy's face contorts in the unfamiliar effort of deep thought. Through the smothering haze of his mind, Andy remembers the faint warning cry he heard earlier, and he digs down deep into his soul, deep into the essence of his being; he summons all of his strength, all of his courage, all of his learned wisdom and he decides . . .

"No f-f-fuckin' way, man!" Andy roars, closing his eyes to the reality of what the little hallucination has said to him. "I'm my OWN man! Can you handle that, little shit! Why don't you take some of the gas in that can, drink it and die, fucker!"

The little man smiles, looking at the ground, chuckling to himself. His shaking head rises slowly, black pits of eyes meet Andy's. "Okay, boy. Seems to me like we've made our decision . . . heh, heh, heh . . ." The Gascan Man picks up the little can, raises the spout to his lips and takes a long gulping guzzle, making his little pot belly strain against the confining little zipper of his little greasy coveralls.

"What the fuck are you doin', ya crazy fuck? I was jus' kiddin', man!"

Lowering the can, the Gascan Man smiles at Andy and releases a tremendous belch of stinking, deathly, noxious breath, almost knocking Andy out. He starts to lower the can but stops, instead raising it above his head and pouring the remainder in a dark flood down over himself.

"No kiddin', huh, Andy? No games no more, boy. You make the rules now. These is serious times," says the little man.

Andy feels a burning sensation on his skin, looks down at the gas-soaked green army jacket that covers his body.

"You look like you could use a smoke, Andy."

Andy stares wide-eyed at the tiny wooden match that has appeared in the little man's hand and decides he has seen enough, that it is high time to run.

In his mind, he spins on his heels in flight, only to be jerked back to shaky reality by his own impact on the ground, his pantlegs empty, himself flopping like an upturned turtle, trying to spit out the cigarette that has somehow come to rest between his foaming lips.

The little Gascan Man smiles at Andy, lifting the little match to  
the little zipper fly of his little greasy coveralls.  
“Hey, Andy. Need a lite . . . ?”

—Mike Cutler

## **Four Old White Folks**

Four old white folks in a new Buick  
Tourists in a safari jeep  
Roll slowly up the street  
Comfortable in Tom Selleck shirts  
Eyes wide like children  
Safe behind tinted windows  
Surveying the scenery of the rural ghetto jungle  
From an air-conditioned sanctuary

Young bucks on a street corner  
Passing life away  
Soaking sun in glossy braids  
In Levis and sunglasses  
Sound the heartbeat of America  
On the idle hood of last decade's Chevy  
Strong the voice of yesterday  
Worried not about tomorrow

The Buick slows to silent crawl  
A window down a crack  
Winding cameras whiz away  
Geriatric sneak attack

Singing stops heads turn  
Mirrored shades reflect the light  
The prowling approach of a stranger's car  
Looking hard through one-way sight

Foreheads wrinkle mouths fall open  
Curiosity now concern  
Safety certainly not assured  
By quarter-inch thick glass  
Wishing the car was older  
Chilled by air-conditioned heat  
Cameras fall from sweated palms  
Too late to turn back

Guard is dropped white teeth exposed  
Concern now a quiet laugh  
Only some more tourists  
Come to see the long-haired Indians  
Surviving in the rural ghetto jungle  
Cunning lions eating handout meat  
Singing the songs of a better tomorrow  
On the dented hood of last year's Chevy

Lead singer raises his hand  
Smiling his best powwow smile  
False teeth gleam from behind tinted windows  
Old wrinkled palms say "How" in return  
Just another day—another funny story  
Old white folks go back east with tales of reservation woe  
Forgotten warriors chanting songs to a reemerging god  
On forgotten cars in a forgotten place on a forgotten day . . . .

—Mike Cutler

## The Last Dreamer

Sitting in a circle, the men pay close attention to the words of Dreamer.

"It is there," she breathes, pointing over the water to the east, "In the rising sun. Many days' journey will bring you to another land."

Rising, she runs the heavy, woven string through her knowing hands, her fingers rubbing the edges of the hole in the worn, wooden object at its end.

She spins the sacred bull-roarer with great strength, turning, acknowledging each of the four directions.

"Your journey will be long, and some may not return." She leans forward and peers from beneath her heavy brow into the eyes of the leader. "I have dreamed the dreams that never lie. I have sweated and fasted over this, and I have learned . . ."

Leader steps forward. Pulling a pouch of sacred tobacco from the bundle at his waist, he hands it to Dreamer.

Lowering her eyes as she accepts the offering, Dreamer finishes her sentence: ". . . that by doing this you will change the world forever. You will see things none of our people have ever seen. You will meet other kinds of people, who will look strange to you and think even more strangely. They may come to hate you for your difference."

The men in the circle shift uncomfortably, wondering why this will be. The long silence that follows asks many questions. Again, the leader steps forward, offers another pouch of tobacco.

Dreamer kneels, her eyes looking hard at the leader's feet. She takes the offering and continues.

"Your name will be spoken as one who has done a great thing. You have proven yourself as one the people can trust and are not afraid to follow. I have dreamed that you will return to us from this journey and repeat this journey again several times."

Dreamer turns away, staring into the fire for a long time.

"As Dreamer, I know that the circle of life is once again coming to a point where it will cross paths with another circle . . ."

The leader steps forward for a third time and hands to the frail Dreamer a large bundle of meat and vegetables.

Eyes large, shaking from the weight of the offering, Dreamer again speaks.

"The Great Mystery could never look upon one of our own as being akin to the Spirit of Power. We are all a part of the Spirit, but

we must never look at ourselves as being anything more than that. We are not. We are but pitiful beings in the bowels of the Spirit."

The men nod and hum and cast their eyes earthward.

"As the leader of this expedition, you will be looked at by many as a great and blessed man. Be warned now that the road will be hard for you. You are but a man no better, no worse than any other being that walks Mother Earth. You have grown from a union of tiny seeds, as have the plants you tread upon. You have grown from the union of two older beings, as have the four-leggeds that teach you and feed you. Mother Earth has provided for you. Father Sun has nourished your growth. You must never forget these things. You must humble yourself before the Spirit of Power often. You must suffer and sacrifice of yourself for your people, and for all beings of earth, water and sky."

The leader retreats now and brings forth his final offering, a large bow and four arrows wrapped with the skin of the wolf, spinning eagle feathers attached to it.

Bowing, he places these things on top of Dreamer's feet.

"My son," intones the old one, "today you will finally start down the road that the Spirit of Power has prepared for you. You know that this road is a dangerous one; so many paths straying from it. As Dreamer I know this, and I know you will not leave this path."

Dreamer approaches the leader now and returns one by one the offerings he has given her—his life's possessions.

"Yes, my son, your road will be hard and you will need these things. I dreamed that you and your people have learned well your duties as Keepers of Earth. You will be looked at as the discoverers of a great land to the East where live strange people with soft, fair skin and round eyes, wide to behold the gray days and long nights. They are the Keepers of Fire. Do not fear them, but respect them and learn from them. Their thoughts are strange, but their spirits are still a part of the Spirit of Power.

"In later journeys you will find another great land to the South, where the people walk tall and proud in the sun with dark skin, Keepers of Water. They see the world through eyes that shade the bright light of day. Do not fear them, but respect them and learn from them. Their thoughts are strange, but their spirits are still a part of the Spirit of Power.

"In another journey still, you will find a fourth land to the West, where live Keepers of Air. Their skin is much like yours, but lighter and yellow. They see the world through eyes that squint in

the wind. Do not fear them, but respect them and learn from them. Their thoughts are strange, but their spirits are still a part of the Spirit of Power.”

The leader turns toward the great sea. His eyes search for something far away that he cannot see. The sea birds circle and dive among the people’s long boats, calling for the journey to begin.

With a wave of his hand, the men, women and children of the Earth Keepers rise and follow him down the beach.

Dreamer sings the journey song she has heard in her dream, spinning her roarer to the directions as tears flow from ancient eyes that have seen more than any living among her people—eyes that will see the old lands her sons and daughters are setting out to explore only through the eyes of her mind.

She will remain behind, the oldest Keeper of the Earth. She has waited long for one that her dreams told her would perhaps fulfill her oldest wish. She will remain behind, the oldest Dreamer of the ancient dream: the dream that all of the Four Keepers will come together in the great circle of life and make the world whole.

—Mike Cutler



### **It Rained This Morning**

It rained this morning,  
for the first time this Spring.  
Someone once said that the seasons affect our feelings,  
but I have trouble with that.  
It is rainy and gray Spring, Summer, Winter and Fall  
inside of this leaky old bucket.  
Every so often a new hole is shot through,  
another blow to the ego.  
Lightning strikes with a flash of brilliance.  
Darkness follows just as quickly, hiding a smoking gap.  
A little more cold rain leaks in,  
washing away a bit more power.  
A little comes in and a little goes out  
every single day of the year.  
There must be a lot of strength inside  
this leaky old bucket.  
The years go by, the seasons go by,  
and I'm still here.  
Maybe it comes from the outside.  
Lightning possesses great power.  
Maybe the brilliance of the flash  
isn't so destructive after all.  
Maybe the hole, painful and smoking, is a lesson  
that I can't seem to learn,  
That comes back to strike again and again.  
And I go through life relearning and relearning  
Hard lessons that strike with harsh realization,  
only to blink out in the dripping rain.  
So now I wait for the lightning and the pain,  
anticipating what I will see in that split second.  
To burn it into my memory, etch it on the wall,  
and remember where the holes are,  
And begin to patch them over one by one,  
and make my world warm . . . .

—Mike Cutler

## The Long Walk

The warm water runs down the sides of Freddie's mouth just like one of those Mexicans in the Westerns his father watches on CBN. He finishes his drink and wipes his mouth with the back of his arm. Placing the cap back on his Spee's Apple Juice canteen, he lets it fall back at his side and scans the desolate foothills around him. He has walked far this day with nothing to show for it.

Freddie feels lucky, though. The bolt-action .22 swinging at his side has never let him down. The battered little rifle was loaned to him by his Uncle Butch two years before, and Freddie's hunts were so successful that it was eventually given to him as a reward for meat in the pot.

The stock of the rifle is carved with a feather and a cross. The words chiseled by the bolt are barely legible, but Freddie knows what they say.

"Wind River Res."

"Blackfeet Res."

"Standing Rock Res."

All the places his uncle had lived over the years before he was killed in a car accident last winter. Freddie thinks about his uncle, dead at twenty-four, and why he didn't cry at his funeral. He wishes it had been his father instead, and not Uncle Butch. Someday, Freddie thinks, he is going to take this old gun and kill his father for all the things he has done. Things that Freddie has trouble thinking about. Rough memories turned into raw feelings that scrape against the inside of Freddie's head.

Topping the bluff, Freddie stops and watches a red-tail hunter gliding high against the powder-blue sky. The hawk dips side-to-side and stops, hanging for a split second before dropping down after some unseen prey.

Freddie wishes he had the spirit of a hawk. Then he could see the bad things coming from miles away. He could fly away before they touched him. He could feel and understand the voice of the Creator in the winds of the hills. He could know why things are the way they are.

The hawk brings Freddie's grandfather into his thoughts. The old man with the child's eyes who used to tell Freddie how the spirits of the animals knew all the secrets of the world and were satisfied with the knowledge and didn't need to know anything else.

As for the Human Beings, his grandfather said, only a select few know those things, although all are capable of knowing. Those who can't or don't choose to know are doomed to perpetually search and suffer. Thinking about the world, this idea sounded about right.

Freddie decides that if the hawk knows all the secrets of the world, then he must know where the good hunting is. He redirects his steps toward where the hawk went down.

Although there are no houses or roads for many miles, Freddie is not worried. He has walked these hills with his uncle many times and isn't troubled about laying out his bedroll and spending a chilly night with the coyotes and owls. Freddie has learned to respect the animals, and knows that they will leave him alone if he does the same for them. He remembers Butch's words: "They were here a long time before we were. This earth is more theirs than ours just by seniority." Freddie wonders how long it will be before the searchers and the sufferers come to take this place also.

A gopher flits over and stops atop a pile of rocks, standing his ground as if challenging Freddie to shoot. Freddie draws a bead with the .22 but doesn't fire. It doesn't feel right. Butch taught him that he would know when to pull the trigger, and Freddie decides this brave little gopher deserves to live and make more gophers.

The sun tells him that it is getting late in the afternoon. Freddie shoots a jackrabbit, skins and dresses it. He may want to eat some of it later. A magpie's ruckus reminds him that he has to leave some for the spirits. He takes a strip of good meat and lays it on a rock for the magpies to eat when he has gone.

As the sun drops near the horizon, Freddie sees that his walk has taken him farther than he really wanted to go, but for some reason the wandering spirit is in him today, and he walks on. Above him now are the high, red bluffs leading to the place his uncle called "the Sinks," a place where an ice-cold stream coming down off the glaciers above runs into a deep hole in the ground and doesn't come up again. Butch said that people had tried to find out where the water went by putting dye in it and watching the springs below but were never able to determine anything. A shiver runs up Freddie's back as he thinks of the stories his grandfather has told him of this place.

Grandpa Edmo told him long ago not to go around there because it was a sacred place, and those who walked there often did not return. Those who did return seemed changed somehow. They spent the remainder of their lives living deep inside of

themselves, listening to the voices of the ghosts that had taken up residence in their souls.

Edmo said that the Sinks was where the Little People came from and that they sometimes were still seen in the high hills above the area. In the old days, the Little People were said to come down from the hills often to stand just outside the glow of the fires during the dances and ceremonies. Edmo said that they liked the music that the People made and the men composed special songs that the Little People couldn't resist.

Once, Edmo said, a mean-spirited man among the People had captured one of the Little Ones with a special song and put him in a willow cage. The Old Ones told him to release the Little Man, but the man refused, saying the Little Man would give him power. Eventually, the Little Man shrivelled up and died. The man kept the Little Man's hair on his lance for the power it would give him, but the power turned against him, and the mean-spirited man was humiliated in a battle with the Crows. Edmo said that the man then made a vow to never retreat in battle and was soon killed on a raiding party.

Grandpa had finished his story saying that nowadays the People didn't believe in the Little People anymore and climbed up to the Sinks so much that the Little Ones cursed them with their present misfortunes and retreated into the big hole from which they had come.

Freddie thinks about these things as he climbs the steep hillside. He can feel the coolness of the evening and the altitude sneaking into his bones. He pulls the poncho from his bedroll, drapes it over his shoulders and keeps climbing.

By now he can see the snow on the high sides of the mountains the maps called the Wind River Range as he nears the lower reaches of the band of trees stretched on the mountainsides above the foothills.

Freddie decides that it is time to either turn back or make camp. He stands and thinks for a long while when a meadowlark calls from somewhere very near. The high, melodious call of this bird is special to Freddie, as it is one of the first things he ever remembers hearing. It sounds so wonderful on the crisp, clean air that he decides it is a sign and pulls off his small pack and prepares a fire.

The meadowlark continues to call and Freddie remembers another story Edmo had passed on. The story said that the meadowlark's call had remained the same for as long as the

people remembered, but had just recently begun to change. Edmo said that this was because of the way the people treated the earth. The changing cry was a warning of the bad times that would come if the people didn't change their ways and renew their ties and respect for the air, the land, the water and all the spirits that inhabited the earth.

It began to seem to Freddie that he had been born way too late, that he had come into the world at a time when everything was going wrong for his people. He felt cheated that he had missed out on the times when many of his people still spent time in the high country, hunting and fishing and living off the land. Now it seemed like they were all just living day to day. Many of his people were trapped by alcohol and drug abuse and the families couldn't seem to break the cycle. The children would follow their parents down the same dead-end road, and it looked like the next generation would do the same if something didn't change.

Freddie begins to look inside himself and realizes that he would just as soon stay up here in the high country with the spirits of the Little People and not go back down. He thinks about what he is going to do when he graduates from high school and realizes that he doesn't even know why he is in high school. He is going to graduate, he tells himself, but for what? He hasn't even thought about it. None of the kids have. Does he want to go to college? Not really. Get a job? Well, he supposes he could do that but isn't sure what he would be doing.

Night rolls in and the fire has grown to a steady blaze. Freddie roasts the jackrabbit on a stick and eats the succulent meat, washing it down with water from the glacial stream that runs nearby. He lies back on the grass as the fire burns on, trying to count the millions of brilliant stars in the clear sky above him. Freddie counts and counts, at the same time trying to find all the shapes and animals of the heavens. Thinking of the great distance of the sky, he begins to softly sing one of the journey songs his Uncle Butch taught him to sing on their long walks together. The song fits the night sounds perfectly, as if it were meant to be sung in a place like this, at a time like this. Soon his mind begins to drift, the sound of his own voice and the mountain breeze blowing through the pines lulling him toward the warm depths of sleep. Almost immediately he begins to dream. His fire flickers and goes out, leaving the embers to glow bright and go dim with the tiny gusts of the breeze.

Freddie hears the spirits of many things—the wind, the distant wails of coyotes, the incessant chreeping of the mountain crickets, the screech of a hunting puma, the movement of a foraging moose . . . and something else . . . .

Freddie awakens immediately, knowing in his gut that he heard something that wasn't part of any dream. He gathers some kindling from around the fire and stirs it back to life. He feels foolish in his fright but cradles the .22 in his lap, scanning the darkness just outside the ring of the firelight.

His eyes and ears tell him nothing is there that wouldn't normally be there, nothing that can hurt him anyway. But deep in his gut something is wrong. Something in his dream reached out and touched his heart and whispered something to his soul.

He repeats his uncle's words over and over to himself. "They will leave me alone if I leave them alone—they will leave me alone if I leave them alone—they will leave me alone if I leave them alone . . . ."

He catches himself nodding off and jerks himself back to wakefulness, and again begins to sing the journey song. The sound of his voice soothes him, and he again lies down. Soon his dream returns, even more vivid than before.

Freddie is looking down on his campsite from high in the trees. He sees his little sputtering fire and the form of his body under the blankets of his bedroll, the .22 clenched in his hand.

He watches this scene for some time when other forms begin to enter. A great gray Chief of the Wolf Nation pads silently out of the forest and circles the outer ring of the firelight. The Wolf Chief is soon joined by others who each, in turn, stop and look at his sleeping body before joining in the slow clockwise circling.

The Wolf Chief makes four passes then stops and sits, looking at Freddie's body with a quizzical expression, his great head cocked to one side as if in deep thought.

Freddie feels the spirit of the Wolf begin to enter him. He begins to hear the many things that wolves hear, smell the many things wolves smell and know the many things the wild wolves know.

Suddenly, the Wolf-Spirit leaves him and the lesser wolves across from the fire turn toward the darkness and part. From his high vantage point, Freddie can barely make out a small, vague form in the darkness. The small shape moves closer, and Freddie finally sees that the being is a kind of man, perfectly proportioned but smaller, much smaller. The Little Man walks into the light, his

shoulders brushing against the shoulders of the wolves. He moves close to the fire and looks at Freddie's sleeping form, and in a high, clear voice he begins to sing the journey song Freddie had been singing earlier. He sings the song in a set of four verses, just like Butch had sung it.

When the fourth verse is complete, the Little Man raises his head and looks at the place where Freddie is observing from the tree tops and, in a beautiful, singsong voice, tells Freddie the secrets of the world . . . .

Freddie hears once again the call of the meadowlark and opens his eyes to see the new light of dawn just beginning to touch the tops of the mountains. His fire has long since gone out, and only a wisp of smoke climbs from it. The .22 and his blankets are covered with the morning dew.

Freddie shivers as he pulls on his worn tennis shoes and begins to gather wood for his morning fire. He notices a funny feeling, almost as if he is coming down with a cold, but then again very different. He is surprised at how well he can hear the sounds of the forest on the clear mountain air. Birds are singing everywhere the morning songs of their kind, and from high above the scree of a golden eagle comes to Freddie's ears, filling him with the strength of the sacred bird.

When he has gathered enough wood for a good fire, Freddie turns and begins to make his way back to the campsite but suddenly stops, somehow remembering a dream he thinks, but isn't sure, he had during the night.

For some reason, he decides to set down the wood and take a walk down the creek, a walk that takes him for some way. Downstream he can hear a roaring sound becoming increasingly louder. Expecting to come across a small rapid or even a beaver dam, Freddie is brought up short at the sight of a large opening in the face of the rock into which the stream drops off and disappears.

He has found the Sinks that his uncle had talked about, and it is even more impressive than the stories. Freddie walks to the edge and looks down into the great hole. It seems to drop right down into the bowels of the mountains, and the sound of the rushing water comes from far, far down inside.

Freddie shivers as he remembers the stories of his Grandpa Edmo about the Little People who the People say came out of this cave long, long ago and lived in the high hills.

Something about the Little People scratches the inside of Freddie's head, as if there is something there he remembers but can't quite get a grip on. He turns from the cavern and begins to make his way back up the creek, gathering his firewood along the way.

As he walks, the feeling that something is wrong continues to gnaw at him. Why does he feel so different? Why do the woods seem so strange? He tries but can't figure out where these feelings are coming from.

Freddie returns to the campsite and soon has a nice fire going. He steps around the blaze and leans over to retrieve his blankets to dry them over the fire and freezes in his tracks. On the side of his blankets away from the fire are a huge set of wolf-tracks. The blood freezes in Freddie's veins. A further examination finds similar tracks in a circle all around the campfire. Freddie knows that there is one more thing to look for, but he doesn't want to. He can't. It would make him crazy. He stands looking back down the creek for a long while, finally turning back to the campfire. There beside the campfire is a pair of tiny imprints, each about three inches long, perfectly formed in the damp earth—a pair of perfectly formed prints belonging to a Little Man.

—Mike Cutler







**from calumet**

two days out of oklahoma  
i recall the orange panorama  
of sunset  
over twelve mile point

soft dressers headstone leaning into  
timelessness

ours a landscape turned inward  
our words escaping whispers under swirling stars

tsistsistas\*  
i have thrown my name into the water  
a full moon shimmering on the surface

—*Lance Henson*

\*name we cheyenne call ourselves

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Lance Henson is a member of the Southern Cheyenne Nation, an accomplished poet, and an activist for Native American rights. Currently, he is working on a manuscript of poetry entitled *Lines from a Revolutionary Text*.

**desert sketches**  
**10/9/92**

three weeks ago in gallup  
at the red light on central

i watched down the street the neon lights  
of bars

barely noon

and the staggering has already begun

last night at zuni  
i walked past the school into a field  
toward high buttes below the moon

later i watched the milky way grow  
out of the darkness

already the leaves of autumn were there

a dogs bark disappearing in high desert  
wind

at the navajo school  
a whirlwind of red dust made its way  
slowly across the road

in half dream i saw my shadow running  
back toward me  
my face felt a warmth like a wind  
or a breath

i wanted to say to you  
of all the shadows i have ever seen  
the one made by humans is the most alone

at rock point  
my son kneels beside desert sage  
and the track of a horse

his shadow becomes the roundness  
of a prayer

he looks across the desert  
wordless in the silence  
of a million years

the wind is touching his hair

—*Lance Henson*

**lines for a yuki\* brother**

among the notes on a morning train  
the song is darkness and passing lights

oandason told me he was going north  
to visit and settle himself

all day these netherlands clouds have  
threatened rain

i remember the balcony in 1 a where  
we passed a bottle of wine

and the ocean mist

—*Lance Henson*  
*utrecht netherlands*  
*10/5/92*

\*a tribe nearly exterminated by the racists of california.  
william oandason held on until the fall of 1992.

**a woman in winter**

i know you are remembering  
as the year that seemingly just began  
slides from the calendar into the void

the room where outside a bird was singing  
in an unkempt garden you could not see  
until you opened the curtain

a light snow in the cornfields

—*Lance Henson*  
*telluride, CO*  
*12/30/93*

**after reading at an opening of curtis photographs**

writing in this half light  
there is the hushed breathing of sleep  
a shadow of leaves moving behind the curtain

in fragmented dream you turn  
your eyes in sleep as you will tell me later  
searching the landscape of your grandmothers  
hands

what did little wolf see  
the cold dawn over fort robinson  
his shadow yearning for flight in the  
passing shadows of geese

dull knives people  
leaning from their hiding places  
the metallic taste of fear in their breath  
bitten by frost and sorrow

a soft winter rain begins  
i watch in silence  
the rivulets on the winter glass  
lit by streetlights

—Lance Henson  
*park hotel den haag*  
10/22/92