

Headstone

by Jane Hammons

We bake a whole lid into a batch of brownies for the drive from Roswell to the Indian School in Santa Fe where Linda Rondstadt and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band will play for us at the Paolo Soleri Amphitheatre. Chocolate bales of hay our last meal.

Steve Martin opens the concert
makes balloon animals
wears them on his head.

The crowd boos around us.

We laugh so hard we are embarrassed. Cactus roses creep off my peasant blouse embroidering my face red. Pearly snaps button you up when Linda comes to the stage and sings *Desperado why don't you come to your senses you been out riding fences for so long now.*

Guitars and fiddles and voices that shimmer
the Dirt Band promises

There's a better home awaiting in the sky Lord in the sky

The concert ends.

Coyote flings his blanket of stones up and up mapping pathways
to my mother's farm outside Roswell

(I am home from school)

to your father's ranch near Sitting Bull Falls

(you are foreman of the H-Bar-Y).

Yikáisdáhí.

Milky Way

Night lit with music and stars.

Three prisoners—convicted of rape, robbery, rape of a child—escape

from Eddy County Jail
rob abduct turn loose two adolescent boys.
Unharmd their parents say.

Later in Dog Canyon dawn the three who broke out break down.

Not looking for you
they find you
take your truck
leave theirs behind
hood up in distress the photos show.
Between bumper and creosote bush they drop you
shot through the heart
you are just a caption
appearing only in your absence
a blank space I will fill in
when I get the news.

On the ground deputies comb the back roads.
Border Patrol scouts from the air.

Driving back to school
I turn on the radio
KSWS
the hog report and local news:

Eddy County Rancher Murdered

Name withheld. Details sketchy.
Oblivious
I fiddle with the dial
fill the sunrise with music
KOMA from Oklahoma City
until it fades at the I-40 turn off to Albuquerque.

I drive through the llano in silence while one commits suicide
on the banks of the Pecos River as the Border Patrol closes in.
Two surrender.

The first time I fly
I fly home
for your funeral
I-40
U.S. 285
Roswell
H-Bar-Y
creosote
blood
earth
Yikáisdáhi
Milky Way
in the sky
lord
in the sky

