

Koosharem, Utah—1914

Three brass-skinned boys of Box Creek Reservation
in new Grass Valley Mercantile pants
black hair cut straight above their wary eyes
moved soft as any hunted cottontail
through deepening grass that fenced the school yard.
They sat by bolted gate prepared to wait
in blunted wind, pointless as old pain;
the heedless hours passed and no one came
though sun rode high and they could hear the skies
begin to roll and swell, conjuring rain.

Then cracked the sailing sun and hung impaled
in blood-red sign from Spirit of the Sky;
out of the fabulous rain,
in the fierce clouds,
a great wound bloomed for Red Man,
on whom a world of ills came down like fire.

Till well past noon they waited in the storm,
walking forth to meet him when he came,
Old Schoolman moving fast, to keep a vow,
and calling them by name: "Tommy Indian, Joe Bob
and Walker, come in now and take a seat!"

Dawn Baker Brimley has published poetry in Church magazines and in *Mountainwest*. She teaches children's literature at the Brigham Young University.

That evening, still in rain, sun going early,
three white boys fell like arrows on their prey:
Old Schoolman, white hair sliced down to the scalp
where blood coursed out as copiously as the rain.

Then cracked the sun again and hung impaled
in blood-red sign from Spirit of the Sky;
out of the fabulous rain,
in the fierce clouds,
a great wound bloomed for Red Man,
on whom a world of ills came down like fire.

“Ain’t no dumb Indian I’ll sit by in school,”
they told the local justice of the peace,
one Harry Payne, who heard the case
and spoke quite artlessly of “scalping
in the streets.” He passed down quick expulsion
for them all: “A group of white skinned savages!”

Old Schoolman went to school no more that year
or ever, though in six months his hair was thick
and whiter than before, for he remembered
times of vows and signs, the day the
sun bled twice and open skies cried long.