

The Mormon Peace Gathering

Las Vegas, Nevada : March, 1992

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Fresh from Mountain Meadows, headed home
from the Nevada Test Site, we were high
from crawling under barbed wire, and trespassing,
when I flipped the doe into the suicide lane.
She hardly registered before she rode
the hood & bloodied the windshield like a Cretan
facing a hornless breed of rampant bull.

We'd tried to bypass Vegas on back roads.
No way! Each one the map showed ended at
gates and a guard. Our gamble failed. We took
the byways west of St. George, compensating.
Until the doe cashed in her chips we'd thought
the Mountain Meadows Massacre was over.
I walked back praying she'd leap up and run,
a player in another combat sport.
Hand on her ribs I learned she was warm and dead.

My mother kissing my father across the fence
made the news that Sunday night in Salt Lake
(while we were driving home with a dancing hood),
his white hair, her dark brown, blown in the wind.
Our ritual booking and release did not—
protesting our exclusion from the war rooms
where men we couldn't reach would make our choices.
By Cedar City we were talking over
a re-finance I hoped would free me in seven

years from the dead hand of mortgage. I saw her turn,
turning and running to safety into the cedars,
when she jinked into my fender and flew off over
the roof before I heard her forelegs snap.
A passing driver offered to call the cops
as I knelt in the grit of the two-way left-turn lane.

“I used to lecture the driver” the trooper said
“automatically. This winter I hit one, too.
Jumped out in front of me. Been a bad year
for deer. . . .” The night before, on Shabbat, we’d
shared a stew and poems and biscuits in
the community hall of a Catholic church in Vegas.
In the morning I went running towards the temple,
turned back before I got there so we could convoy
to the Test Site. My father, riding shotgun,
saw her as I did — my mother, not at all,
divvying grapes from Safeway’s in the back seat
of their Accord. “Which one was driving now?”

Her tail no longer a flag, the trooper drug
her off to the shoulder to wait for the Roadkill Squad.
Cock-eyed and all we drove up-state to Provo,
keeping an eye out for phantom herds in the hills,
headlights crossed like someone with lazy eye,
tufts of her hair snagged in the windshield gasket,
blood on the glass that neither wiper could reach.