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STANDS ALONE,  
FACES,  
AND  
OTHER POEMS



PATRICK RUSSELL LEBEAU

Stands Alone, Faces,  
and Other Poems



# Stands Alone, Faces, and Other Poems

by  
Patrick Russell LeBeau

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# Stands Alone

referring to the man known as ...

# HUNTER



## DEER DRAGGER

Browser—  
Buck Rubs—  
Your Presence is evident.  
I wait for your return.  
As Deerslayer  
Food Provider fall.

Red hoof prints—  
Bloody snow  
Food Provider fall  
Animal strength die,  
You give for your death.

Pollen, tobacco to feed  
The spirit—  
Food Provider fall.  
Long range, short range—  
Blind behind the branches—  
Give that animal his death

He staggers.  
He falls,  
Blood clots—lung shot,  
Whispering, whistling, wheezing song of buck.  
Provider for the two legged,  
Steam rises as buck melts  
his place in snow.

Food Provider fall,  
The will of your deer nation  
Is the strength that drives the rut.  
I hunger and I am cold.  
Provide me deer nation,  
Food Provider fall.

I feel your warmth,  
The steam envelopes me and  
I feel your spirit,  
Feed my animal strength.

I seen you jump  
Into your death,  
Well-placed projectile that  
Ended your  
Acrobatic grace.

I kissed your wet  
Warm nose and thanked  
You for your life.  
It is the perfect gift,  
Life provider.

Ambushed and killed,  
Twilight hour  
My patience.  
Your sexual drive—  
made a perfect copulation  
Of life and death.

I kissed your tongue  
And covered your eyes.  
I tied a wreath of sage and

Sweet grass around  
Your neck.

I wept for the love  
Of your life.  
And I enjoyed the  
Moment of your death.

I cried for you.  
Food Provider and  
Rejoiced in your wealth.

I waited,  
The spirit left,  
Tobacco—  
Steam dissipating.

Your covered eyes—  
So I cannot notice  
The black cold look of your death—  
I know that you will live again.

Inside of me.  
I look for you later—  
Mountain descent, young pine,  
Dusk, smoky haze—  
Time to go.

I lift you up  
Strain on my back.  
We leave your home and  
I drag you toward mine.

## GROUSE SENT ME HOME

Seeking the mule deer,  
I found a grouse  
Paw prints, hoof holes,  
of dog and deer  
Crumpled, eyeless,  
Lying still

—within a crevice—

Created by dog,  
Stepped on by deer

Both I will be able to eat,  
If old ground bird died from fear

—frightened by dog—

—trampled by deer—

—create this hunt—

You are sign  
Dog and deer  
Work  
Side by side

So that when I approach,  
One will bark

The other will leap  
Both will escape  
my  
Attempt to ...

Or, deer is seeking revenge  
For a ravaged brother,  
Torn by canines,  
Chewed and dragged  
A strange thought for a deer

You are victim  
And cannot tell  
Only hunger  
Starving for flesh,  
I talk to you,  
Dead on their trail

I seek this deer  
Now, also this dog  
What are you grouse?  
A decaying,  
Benevolent provider?

Kick, kick, I will kick  
Dirt over you  
Grouse

So I can follow this food trail,  
Leaving my print,  
I join dog and deer,  
Unable to stop this hunt  
And wanting at least one more meal

I shoulder my rifle  
Pick up my pack,  
Head for home, just one more  
Home cooked meal

## FEAR OF BEARS

He reminded me of bear, smelling  
Thoughts had to be hung high in trees  
Or buried deep in ground,  
To preserve or discard them,  
Like spent provisions or perishable  
Food—but like bear,  
He would try for them anyway.

Foul smelling thoughts,  
Rotting like used soup cans,  
Empty sardine tins, and bacon grease  
You could not even go to bed with food  
Smell on your clothes for fear of  
Bear investigating and tasting the smell,  
That is feast to his thoughts.

He has a keen nose  
—that man—  
I will not tell him I like his land  
Suitable only for bears  
That I do not fear the high climb to his  
Cold Water Creek,

A nice place to fish for both man and bear,  
That I am not lazy  
Will wash my clothes before sleeping,  
Bury my waste and hang my food  
High in trees.

Bear is a foul smelling beast  
His presence is known long before he is seen  
The same for me with that Old Man: We smell each other:  
His bear-like reek and my bacon-greased, tin can smell.

He reads my thoughts by the food I have eaten:  
Sardines: Cold mountain stream, beer and whiskey  
Bacon: Cedar trees, mountain goat, soft women,  
rough-skinned women  
Chicken Soup: Sore feet, tired legs, blistered hands  
and next week's pay.

He smells of Bear  
It tells me  
He is dangerous but kind  
He will not hurt me  
Yet, I fear and smell his powerful  
Breath blowing at me.

I could eat a bear  
I know that he can eat me  
I stay, as breather, and to  
Recognize the smell of bears  
From the smell of me.

I am afraid to be mauled,  
Carried away  
Buried in a shallow food ditch  
I should be the one to eat him,  
If my fear is as great as his,  
If I was as hungry inside of me.

But, I am not hungry  
We do not wish to kill each other, Old

Bear, he is teaching me to survive  
I should thank him, Old  
Man, your kink of smell is disappearing and  
Mine permeating.

These thoughts,  
I hide,  
High in trees, buried in ground,  
Unable to speak them,  
Although you are able to smell and identify them  
Without being able to reach,  
Strange gift? No reason to hide?  
A camper's trick to do so? It is for survival.

You are a simple survivor,  
Old Man,  
Teaching me to fish, like bear,  
To be clumsy, and safe, like bear.  
Truly an experience, such confidence to be alone,  
Not really frightened,  
Taking and smelling  
The garbage of hikers, skiers, and mountain climbers  
Scaring them away and eating their garbage.  
A long way back down  
I wish to stay, like you man, like bear,  
but,  
I will never smell as you do;  
I will return back down to eat  
My usual breakfast, and dinner,  
Only thinking, harboring thoughts,  
Like a frightened camper,  
Of this climb,  
Only to be found  
High in trees and buried deep in ground.



---

KNOWN AS ... **VETERAN**

## HIT WITH A SLEDGE HAMMER (Grandpa Talks About Vietnam)

He died for a good cause.  
He did die literally machine-gunned down,  
An act of combat.  
Bullets,  
“The pioneers of civilization,” Buffalo Bill said,  
Meant more than just cold, piercing lead.

They hit him  
Like a sledge hammer  
Crushing his chest.

He also lived.  
What he lived for caused him  
To not mind dying.  
The trees, the grass, the ground, and the star nations,  
Made him not mind.

The jungle reminded him of his life,  
The cold, jagged earth rock of badlands  
The dark pine smell of  
Turtle back shaped hills, and  
He would ride the pole fence line.

He decomposed rapidly  
In tropical jungle,  
Medi vac was late,  
Jimi Hendrix was on the news.

It did not last long.  
He began life  
When snowflakes were falling.

He fought well.  
He called himself  
The free-doe-ban-dee-toe  
(a Mexican-like Corn Chip Bandit)  
Because,  
He wore machine-gun ammo belts  
Cross wise over each Shoulder,  
Like Miss America girls do.

America,  
They all called it the world, grandpa said  
Miss America reminded him of it.

He never made it back.  
He died bleeding in jungle  
He saw  
The big sky, night lit by star nations  
Day lit by sun,  
Soft green earth floor,  
Different parts of his  
Mother's body.  
The same to him:  
Jungle-Home

## THE HAMMERHEADS

The Hammerheads stood  
In a tight group on the eastern hill,  
Standing straight up with pride,  
The sun glaring around their dark solemn shapes.  
Their heads nodding up and down  
As if driving their pride into the ground.  
They could pound your fragile body  
Into a pulp of bloody flesh and broken bone  
If you did not respect their strength.

The Hammerheads feed off the earth,  
Rip the hair off her body,  
Then turn their heads upward  
With the hair, flesh and blood dangling  
From the sides of their drooling mouths.  
Then, with slow methodical chewing,  
They devour their sustenance  
Food to keep their mammoth bodies alive.

*He survived Berlin, Seoul, and Dai Nang to be smashed by one swing of a Hammerhead. I found him, bloated body, his thick sticky blood already soaked into the red clay. His bones snapped and twisted, leaving his body with no defined shape, resembling jelly—a blob of flesh. It could have been a bomb in Berlin, Seoul, or Dai Nang. It was a Hammerhead instead.*

The Hammerheads grazed on the hill  
Until the sun rose high above their heads.

Their deep lungs filling with the cold crisp air.  
Their noses exhaling hot streams of steam  
Turning their heads into smoking furnaces.  
Their eyes red with fire and a wildness unrestrained.  
Their legs long and muscular with circular knots at the joints.

The Hammerheads stood,  
Then began to move, slowly, down the hill  
Into the tall grass which fell before them,  
Like soldiers being cut down  
By sustained machine-gun fire,  
Then trampled into the womb of their mother  
By Hammerheads.  
Paths formed and traced back up toward  
the light on top of the hill.  
They stopped, submerged in the tall grass, as if forgetting  
something,  
Then moved more rapidly and carelessly toward the river  
And the water they thirsted for.

*He had tamed a Hammerhead, the one called "Breath." He had worked and played with him—castrated Breath who would never learn love, only work and play. One day they both walked toward the hill; he leading Breath. A music snake lay, bugging the earth, blocking the path. Its song frightened Breath and Breath jumped high and trampled him, like the grass, into the womb of his mother.*

The Hammerheads approached the river  
Some of them took walking craps at the edge  
Before bowing their heads to drink.

They drank the cold water until their bellies were bloated  
And they could hardly walk.  
Their heads rose and looked across the river.  
On the other side, some dogs refreshed themselves.  
The dogs were skinny and did not drink as much.

The Hammerheads stood in a tight group on the eastern  
shore,  
Watching dogs, nodding their heads, their bellies full,  
Watching the sun glare around shaggy, skinny shapes of  
dogs,  
Until the horizon burned red and slowly grew dark.

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KNOWN AS ... **OLD MAN**

OLD MAN RAIN-IN-THE-FACE DRIVES A  
PICKUP TRUCK AROUND THE NATION AND  
HE REFUSES TO GIVE UP SMOKING

Coughing, choking, coughing,  
cigarettes hang and dwindle  
from distorted lips, elongated ears, tied to ribbon,  
hanging from hair.

Clicking, kicking, clicking,  
cowboy boots sticking,  
gas pedals and braking,  
saddle bags flapping  
canteen full of whiskey.

He handled chickens and slapped hungry cows,  
pissed on the hay and chipped at the ice  
but now he is traveling around the nation  
with the whiskey breath and cigarette lunch.

With the long drives near Turtle Mountains,  
to Crazy Mountain and Uncle Long Daddy Mountain,  
to bright red pocket canyons, to "Deadwood Rodeo,"  
riding bare ass — Brahmin Bull — rodeo clown  
Dry Gulch Whiskey.

whoring in Deadwood  
whoring in Deadwood, whoring in Deadwood

Once in Topeka and once again in Portland  
white-breasted women wanted to braid his hair,

play at his ears, bead his vest, yet, whiskey breath went ...  
puking, puking, puking,  
possibly an unexpected white woman pickup,  
his prairie friend said, "shit, shit, shit,  
we could've had some white ... shit, shit, shit"  
—lights a cigarette—

Eating grass on the Bighorn,  
eating bass on the Bay Mill,  
reading signs in Banff and eating cactus near Window  
Rock,  
Burning maps on Mackinac.

Burning bars on Franklin street,  
running guns to Coyote Dog Soldier camp,  
and burning tires on the way to Washington  
and learning French in Quebec.

Breaking down near Rapid City,  
getting jailed in Sioux City,  
losing a wheel near Porcupine,  
coughing up blood on Smoky Mountain,  
and breaking an axle on Grand Teton.

Transporting one-hundred-two children  
to the nation's survival school  
and taking his mother to Mobile for an ear infection.

And doing all of this to stop smoking.

## YELLOW DOG AND CHAINSAW

Dog, you should not have pissed on the chainsaw  
leaning so fortuitously on the stacked cut timber.

stained snow freezing yellow,  
the man is too  
old for an axe

Dog, you better hope your piss is frozen when the man  
returns from drinking coffee and shoveling ash  
from the fireplace.

freezing piss coating  
the workings of the saw  
blade, nuts and bolts,  
the man can't find his axe

Dog, you better get the hell out of here—the man wants  
to boil you but first wants to shoot you in the  
throat.

angry bead is lowered  
the yellow dog is  
barking  
until he puked

Dog, you should not have pissed on the chainsaw with  
so many trees around.

the hiss and buzzing of  
chainsaws echo in the  
wood as the man lay  
dreaming dog skeletons  
dancing on chainsaws and  
pissing on the wood

## THE KILLING OF THE YELLOW DOG

He stands, feet sinking in mud.  
His fingers touching gently the hill that surrounds him.  
His red cataract-filled eyes are unable to mold reflections  
of tears, of cattle, of home, or of me holding the reins of a  
horse.

The wrinkled touch of his fingers  
wraps the brown star quilt around  
his stoic, rigid stance.

He is content with the warmth generated  
by the wind like movements of arms  
beating at his side.

He is searching for the shiny guitar  
lying face down beside him  
with the fingers he finds it  
and he attempts to play.

Old man, I have found you knee-high in the prairie grass,  
coughing, trying to play that shiny guitar, bought with the  
alcohol spinning, bought with the cold weather money.

You ran over the yellow dog when you brought that  
instrument home.

I can forgive you for killing my dog when I see you on the  
hill, unable to play songs, afraid to gnaw at the sweet air,

moving your arms frantically, you are a blur against the white of the sky.

He stands  
the mud sucking at his feet, attempting to play steel strings that reflect brilliant shafts of yellow gumbo—the thick mud that is always caked on the tires of his white Ford pickup truck.

He tries to pluck out a song, when the image of the pickup, sliding and rolling in the mud, enters my mind—the dog was coated with the thick gumbo and was buried wheel well deep.

Man you are a willow and a cactus—face reflected in steel—being absorbed by gumbo—I must have dreamed this was so.

Your yellow work boots  
trample grass in time  
while the fingers work  
steel of guitar strings

The music whines and whimpers  
begging for talent  
or at least the intricate workings of bones  
resulting in the howling of familiar folk songs.

He plays unable  
to brand eyes with  
browns of cattle  
yellows of hills  
whites of sky

Old you stand on a gumbo hill  
ragged, and gnarled and loose cedar bark  
the human touch causes great ruptures  
and splintering

Old and tall tree  
with barbed wire wrapped around the trunk  
reflecting the work of fingers

A thorned life saver  
embedded deep  
the line is taut  
vibrating the song of yellow-coated wheels  
—sliding in the gumbo—

I mourn the death of my dog  
as the roots and branches  
touch gently the memory  
of the man, stout and rigid,

now soft as clay



---

KNOWN AS ... **BOOTLEGGERS**

## WHISKEY AND A TATTOO

Spirit,  
Spirit drink  
Tattooed on his breath

That is not spirit  
That is death

Spirit comes

Lie down man,  
Lie down,  
blow your tattoo on the sun

Lie down man,  
Lie down,  
Using your fingers touch your tongue

Spirit comes

The tattoo is you  
Burning, burning  
Finger, fingers

The tattoo is you  
Learning, Learning  
Tongue, tongues

Spirit,  
Spirit drink  
Tattooed on his breath

That is not whiskey  
That is death.

## HAVING MACABRE DRINKS OF PLEASURE

He has eyes like moles  
He has to squint very hard to see beauty in this world  
Yes, he sits in a hole of his own making  
A bar stool uplifts him  
His left arm dangles, then searches pockets,  
Shirt pockets, then dangles, then reaches

Many would prefer him to leave  
Or would think him a fragile buffalo leaf  
Or an alcoholic buffoon

His eyes, my man, his eyes  
Squint, like a ground hog  
His cheeks puff out

He might be drunk —  
The right hand speaks with signals  
The juke box he is paying, the hamburger clutched by two  
Hands rudely and the way he scratches and  
Twists the glass that contains his drink

Many drinks —  
Some drinks squat in glasses  
He sees the liquid as having a brown sheep skin color  
The kind he used to tan

Some drinks are moat waters of a towered castle  
The watch tower liquid resembles the texture of the  
tree bark

He knows back home—the stuff he made those great  
canoes out of—he'd tame those water snakes with one  
stroke of the carved paddle

Some drinks are lily ponds raised in  
Cracked in two duck eggs  
Extended on a rod made out of that translucent substance  
The liquid is cool and crisp  
Clear as the turquoise lakes of the Canadian Rockies

He pulls frogs and rounded flat metal from shirt pockets  
Yes, he pays for the rich colored kind

He prefers to sit alone—alone—  
The smell is rank  
She would believe his clothes smell of  
Cigarette smoke

He swivels, occasionally,  
Squinting outward, sometimes he sees  
Splashes of exotic people  
Splotches of hued clothing  
Waves of people in circuitous movement

Usually by this time, he falls asleep  
Or it seems that way  
When he lightly rocks, side by side  
Nudging the people around him  
He feels the epidermal fabric of

Her world  
He sinks and presses against that exterior  
He seeks warmth, death and the feel of the  
Hot resilient skin of earth

Resiliency  
The vision of his meditation  
That one he induced in a crevice of his own making  
Sweating, hungry, and wanting

He perceived objects—  
Events with no existence  
In his bar room reality  
He wanted to see drinks existing in glasses (Manet,  
Renoir)

patches of paint

Anthropological exhibits  
Of bar room mind—  
Beer bottles, like chewed fingernails, ripped  
From clutched fingers

He must face glasses alone  
His skeletal mask spits  
He licks dirt off skin

Provide him,  
The drinks of the creek  
He loves to eat the filth of the world  
It's like trying to get rid of it

He squints and burrows through crowd  
In the toilet he must discharge resiliency of  
Mind and returns to drink—more—  
Resiliency—Catholic Holy Water—Macabre drinks



## EARTH TRAPPED

He lay, prone—face in ice.  
Dead, bloated, half submerged  
Icy water.

He lay, alcohol spinning in his head.

Alcohol refusing to freeze his blood.

It flowed, circulated a dizzy perception.

White snow fell, pressing on his back, a burden driving  
him down,  
Making him stumble, slip into the ditch,  
Horse hoof prints on his back, making him change,  
Submerged in icy water.

He lay, thinking, his face freezing, his skin freezing,  
But his mind thought—alcohol refused to let it sleep.

He lay, thinking.  
He lay, knowing, occupied a space between two worlds—  
a hole, a Ditch.

To the east,  
a road—flattop—blacktop—whitelines—plowed snow,  
snow dirty with soot, exhaust  
Turning it gray.

Snow pressed on him, blanketed, smothering white—ice,  
water underneath—freezing, binding him to the ground—  
earth womb—  
Ditch.

He thought about that road that bit of technology, confus-  
ing his Perception—walking, riding, crawling, he traveled  
that road.

He lay—roadside bars and rest areas—to ease his mind,  
to give Him a glimpse of what was and what is.

A road, metaphor for life—a journey—  
But this one is made of tar, rock, bituminous material—  
Coal—  
The guts of his mother!

He cried frozen tears when he thought of this.

To succeed, to overcome, to demonstrate—he had to press  
those Guts into a sticky form and surface that road he  
walked on.

He stumbled.  
He fell.  
He slipped off his horse into the ditch.  
He had fallen off that road.

He remembered neon—roadside cafe—red neon shaped  
into the Word bar. He remembered the road; his glasses  
broken.  
His face featureless without them, that bit of technology  
to give him style.

Alcohol kept him alive.  
His perception blurred.  
He was frozen to the earth.  
Face downward he thought.

He was merged—to the west a field—plowed—the soil  
churned—The reddish brown pigments facing the sun.

BONANZA—furrow after furrow—he puked, all that  
rotted Vegetation, all that bloody land came heaving out  
of him, until he Squirmed with dry heaves and nothing  
more would come.

Blood was the land he lay.  
Blood was the land he perceived.  
Blood was the air he breathed.  
Bloody was the world he cared to feel as he looked and  
his guts Turned inside out.

He lay, steamroller pressing another road over his back.  
Mammoth power lines hammered into his face.  
Alcohol refusing to let him die.

Powdery snow fell, icy water filled the ditch.  
He remained prone—refusing to let his mind freeze—  
Wanting to understand  
More

## EARTH DEATH

somebody spoke  
he heard his name  
somebody spoke  
he heard his name

existing, he spoke  
existing, he spoke  
dancing, dancing he

heard his words

“not the earth”  
“not the earth”  
he dreamed of the sky

“not the earth”  
“not the earth”  
he dreamed of dying in the sky

somebody spoke  
he pulled at his ears  
somebody spoke  
he tried pulling off his ears

not beneath this earth  
not beneath this earth  
or beneath the surface of the sky

“please bury me in the sky”  
“please bury me in the sky”

the ground is cold, colder than the sky  
somebody spoke, he heard his name,  
he heard his name

“not the cold, only the sky”  
“not the cold, only the sky”

somebody spoke  
he refused to hear  
somebody spoke,  
he refused to hear

“not the cold, give me the sky”  
“not the cold, give me the sky”

somebody spoke  
existing he spoke  
“please, please bury me in the sky”

dancing on the surface, he jumped into the sky  
dancing on the surface, he jumped into the sky

jumping, jumping, he slowly died



---

WHAT'S TO BE DONE WITH  
THESE TWO FACES

*The following is true as far as it goes. I remember Grandpa Allard—my mother’s Mother’s father—used to tell many stories and such when we would come visiting but only if us kids would sit quietly and tend to his needs. I always brought him a pack of Camels; a brand he said he began smoking in 1917. In 1976, when I was eighteen, he told me a more serious story because he overheard my father and me discussing what I should do with my life. My father wanted me to go to college rather than throwing block in Minnesota or raising horses for the rodeo with my uncle in South Dakota. The story Grandpa Allard told was analogous both to his life and to my father’s life. But, I wonder how much the story was meant for me.*

*As the story goes, in his youth, Grandpa Allard was a self-proclaimed Frenchman from Montreal who had blue eyes. He married my mother’s mother’s mother. She was either full blood Chippewa or full blood Cree or simply full blood Indian of some sort; nobody knows for sure which. They all spoke Chippewa, Mitchif, French, and English. At that time, Grandpa Allard was known as the “White-Man-From-Bellcourt,” who, as my mom would say, “bought all the booze for those drinking Indians.” Grandpa Allard was prosperous with a very productive farm where he raised corn and sold the timber off it. He took care of my mother’s family and several other families as well. Then it became known that Grandpa Allard wasn’t full French and was more than half—or whatever—Cree or Chippewa. Because of this fact, as the story goes—and I am not sure how—Grandpa Allard lost his land and had to move onto the reservation with my mom’s mother’s family. He consequently had to admit he was “Indian” and in fact, had to be Indian for the rest of his life. At least this is what my mother, my aunts, and my uncles from Turtle Mountain tell me is true. This is the story as I remember it, doctored up with my “college education” and because of my fuzzy memory.*

(Grandpa, I have brought you some tobacco so that you may tell me a story. And I have brought along a lap-top computer: this, here, electronic device I've brought from the university. I want to write all we say and gesture 'down' so that our meeting will be recorded and shared beyond ourselves.)

(All right grandson, I will accept your tobacco, and I'll accept your electronic device as well. I do this because it is winter and the story will relate to you. It will relate to you young men and women who chose to listen to the university and chose to listen to old men, old Indian men—who like the university—have many stories to tell. This, I hope, will not embarrass you, but I only wish to make our sharing worthwhile.)

(A short pause, as he lights a cigarette and drinks some water sweetened with maple syrup.)

There was this man with two friends. This man was a bit dull because he concentrated so hard on everything around him. He could imitate the call of every bird, and describe the idiosyncrasies of any animal from the track he left, whether the animal had to take a piss or wanted to make love. He could tell you how many limbs were in a tree, INSTANTLY, and tell you which limbs were preferred by the squirrels, birds, cats, or even ants. A long time ago, many, like this man, existed among our people. As you might be able to tell, there wasn't need for much talking when everybody knew most things. At this time I am talking about, however, he was the only one in the community like that.

His two friends loved to learn things from him but they could only master a skill in one thing, like the creation of efficacious traps or fletching arrows. They were mediocre in all else. You see, one had to concentrate very hard to know most things well, but there are hazards to knowing it all, as you shall see.

One day, his face fell off. He washed it in a creek. Some say it was cut off, stolen and sold. Poor, pitiful man, he couldn't even cry. What's to be done with him? He couldn't even

tell us what happened, or really happened. We were all curious. He simply went down to the creek to wash his face. He came back faceless, without a face. It just wasn't there.

Although this man was well informed and followed every rule, he did make a mistake. At that time, the custom required a person to offer tobacco as a gift to the water before one will wash their face. Otherwise, the Under Water Panther, will steal it, the face that is, and never will it be returned; although the man will live, he will live without a face. He probably was caught up in counting the scales of a sun fish and forgot to make his offering. Nobody really knows. You can see that this mistake can have drastic consequences, but it is not altogether without solutions. You see, this man had these two friends who were determined to help him.

This faceless man returned to our village following the knowledge still left in his feet and stood by the council fire while all the curious slowly mingled around:

"What's to be done with him?"

"He can't do much without a face."

"How will he eat?"

"How will he make himself useful?"

About everything was said but I don't think he could hear. You see, he didn't have ears. He just stood there: long black tangled hair, and long blank stare. Even his shadow lacked a face. He had a clear hole—bright as the ground underneath—where the sun passed through.

People were beginning to get worried.

"What's to be done with him," everybody said.

"Let's kill him. We can't have somebody with no face around here," said another.

Then:

"I will make him a face," cried out one friend.

"I will make him a face," shouted the other.

(By this time grandson, you will probably notice a familiar pattern. The university probably tells a similar story so you should anticipate what's coming.)

The council decided that making this man a new face was a good idea, even if making faces wasn't a practice of our people. We decided to give it a try anyway. The two friends left in different directions. We tied the faceless man to a post like a prisoner to keep him out of trouble, anticipating their return.

One friend examined ten thousand trees looking for the oldest, wisest, grandfather tree. He wanted to make a face out of wood but because his friend was so knowledgeable, he had to find a tree that had been around for a while, that had fought the wind for years, that had endured animals, insects, fire, cold, rains, and just about knew everything a tree could know. This was a hard task for this friend because he didn't know much about trees. He knocked on some, took the bark off others and looked underneath the bark of a lot more; he examined the leaves of several and even tasted the sap of a hundred more. Finally, he found one he liked: a tall black solemn tree showing the scars from constant battle with wind. Communities of moss, regiments of ants, it really is quite amazing, the abundance of life that exists on trees.

The carving was smooth and gentle: a surgical sawing. This friend took part of that tree and formed it into a distorted, deranged likeness of his face. It had large eyebrows, gigantic crooked nose, and elongated ears, with lips turned inside out, revealing a distorted whimsical smile. Tree wasn't hurt at all; the living piece of itself was so small that it wouldn't even be considered a scratch in man's terms.

Meanwhile, the other friend chose clay, but like the other, he wanted some clay with style—not some ordinary mud. And like the other, he didn't know much about what he was doing. He went all over digging and digging. He tried the mud underneath rivers but it simply washed away before he could get some. He tried making his own but ended up only making mud cakes. He dug in forests, out in clearings, by lakes, on top of hills, on the side of hills, under some moss, and in a hundred dried up river beds. He still couldn't find

what he wanted. Most of the clay was too commonplace. Discouraged, he sat leaning against a tree thinking that he would never return to our village with an empty face.

Just then, he began watching the flight of some wasps. They landed in yellow mud. They appeared to be building nests out of this mud and some dead insects they had previously gathered. Delighted, he decided to make his clay out of these nests because of the diversity of things it was composed of: mud, wasp eggs, insect larvae, and a host of other things. He made a round face, with round eyes, and tiny round mouth, and small ears. He fired it for four days. When it was done, he hurried happily back home.

(Now, grandson, you will not be shocked at what will happen next. I think you have a pretty good idea that this story is bit ordinary for your tastes. You will just have to accept these commonplace themes.)

The two friends arrived on the same day. We sure were glad to see them because they were gone for a long time. Their friend was almost dead from starvation. He was no wider than the post we had tied him to. We also realized that now we had two faces. We didn't think to send these friends out together to make just one. Now we had two and we didn't know how to face this situation. Two faces, but which one? Now the wooden face had delicate features and would blossom in the spring but the clay face had a more worldly look and could take any form. Beauty? Versatility? The man had no say in the matter and we could not decide. The summer was almost over and soon everyone would disperse to hunt and gather supplies.

"That's it," said one. "With a wooden face in the forest, he could fool the deer and become a great hunter supplying our needs for years to come. He would have tree sense, the deer wouldn't mind him and he could ambush them easily, as well as other beasts, too."

“But, on the plain, or by beaver lodges, with his clay face, he could fool the buffalo, the otter and the beaver. Perhaps he could fool fish as well if he lay face up on the bottom of a lake or river. The fish would think him part of the bottom, part of the shoreline, or part of a bank,” explained another.

This man was sure getting bothersome. Nobody could decide. “Let’s kill him,” said the one who said this before; “this man is too much trouble.” We all wished he never lost his face. We went back to the creek to see if we could find it but when we looked in the water all we could see was ours. Now something had to be done. So we went searching for an answer and we ran across Nanabush picking some insects off a tree stump and eating them. “Hey, Nanabush, we will provide you with something better to eat if you can help us decide what’s to be done with these two faces and this poor man.”

We gave Nanabush most of our dried meat, half of our stored corn, berries, roots and things. We also gave him some tanned hides, black ash baskets, and a gigantic black kettle. You see, we didn’t want to kill this man because we liked these two faces. We were willing to sacrifice all else to arrive at a solution. We waited for four weeks for Nanabush to decide. We also prepared for a long hard winter with less food than usual. We were sad at this prospect but eager to find out what Nanabush had to say about this matter.

He said: “The easy way was to kill this man, but after spending so much time trying to save him, I will help you. I will weave both faces onto his head. Therefore, all of you will be satisfied. I only hope you all think it was worth all the trouble and all the summer and all the fall, for now it is the beginning of winter.”

When it was done, He-Who-Has-Two-Faces was the happiest man alive. He went out singing and dancing and he married two wives. He also ate up most of the remaining food. After the celebration, however, he helped everyone

survive the winter. He was an amazing hunter and an enduring traveler. For he had to wander far and wide to procure food and then deliver it to the family most in need. He was a lot of help but by spring most realized that He-Who-Has-Two-Faces was very indecisive. Never could he make up his mind. You can imagine the indecision, wanting shade and wanting sun, sleeping indoors and sleeping outdoors. He traveled half the year and he stayed put for the other half. He became our greatest diplomat, traveling far into the forest, desert, and coast and all people seemed to like him. In the springtime, he was the most beautiful man that was ever seen with blossoms and green leaves growing madly across his head, out of his eyes, and under his tongue.

He spent half of his time outside our village and half of his time within. He could function in both the outside and the inner. He wasn't by any means dull anymore, nor was he all that knowledgeable about things. In a way, he was rather rude, forgetting half of our traditions, ceremonies, songs, and such. Even half our world refused to have any thing to do with him anymore. He had a two tracked mind and there was nothing we could do about it. After all, it was our fault. Although he could stand between our differences and look both ways, he was a bit of a nuisance. He persuaded half of our young to go hither toward there and hither toward here, learning things not very useful to our world. Half the time, he was a bad influence but he still remembered many useful things.

And he ended. *I adjusted the time-frame of the story to fit my own needs, and I probably told the story in a way that I would tell it. Unfortunately, I forgot all the names he used and most of the facts, so this story is only half accurate —no pun intended. At any rate, I created what I had to and I remembered the rest.*

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OTHER POEMS



## RIFLE AND WOMAN

Blue Woman laughing  
at man and broken rifle

“fix that thing”  
slipped in the creek

sophisticated bore  
“you have broken muzzle”

Blue Woman friend  
laugh, laugh, laugh

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE TALKS TO THE  
AGENCY'S PSYCHIATRIST

Red Lake Singer beats the blue drum

Sings:

Bring forth the new

Please

I can't find out

Source,

Find it

Find it

I opened up

Expressed my toe as a crushed oak leaf

Stepped on — hear the source

Kicked a stone

The ripples went inward

And disappeared

Within the Lake.



Sliced by the arrow,  
The people spilled out.  
The forest was a scene of  
A dramatic amputation.

Yellow brown liquid spewed  
Through warm flesh of a severed black hand.  
The source of the arrow  
Is believed to be from the other hand.

Brown corn liquid  
Absorbing into pores forest floor  
Dead flesh flaking off  
The tepid smell of coagulated blood  
The black wrinkles revealing a stark paleness

Through the deep cut road,  
A people move.  
The forest road clutching a stained

Black Arrow.

## BLACK KETTLE

He psyched himself out  
He poured white paints over himself  
charged with a red hot  
bloody rag flapping in air  
space above his head  
extended on a serpent carved stick  
sweaty hands gripping

Red and White  
Stripes—being dipped into  
fired kettle  
filled with buffalo  
Stew

He has eyes  
no nose  
ears  
or mouth  
yet a tongue  
straw bent slithers out  
eyes catching flies in  
sticky blood

He is blind  
has scorched his tongue  
rotting vegetables, carcass of horse

fallen, beside him  
pinning his leg

His head cut  
blood blinding eyes  
in a corn field  
mud stuck in ears

saber cut  
nose

He has eyes  
but cannot smell  
eating insects  
stuck to his blood—horse  
sinking in mud

He contemplates  
cutting off his leg, woe  
the plowed corn  
stuck in a furrow

His face bloody  
like the flag beside  
him

Ripped,  
Shredded  
—Hot red rag—  
He feels himself  
drag it  
wave it.

## CONTRARY MAN

He saw another self  
Inside a frozen lily pond  
A funny self  
    —always doing things backwards—  
Saying no when he means yes  
Generally, just goofing around

At night, he slept  
Early so as  
To dream  
About  
His contrary self

He walked backwards  
Among his people  
Contrary Man

People don't mind him  
They think him  
Humorous  
They like (and want)  
One of these guys around

Little kids follow him  
Around,  
Teasing  
Taunting him

He teased them back  
Showing respect

An unchanging  
Attitude he had for children

The problem with  
Contrary Man is  
He always thinks of himself  
He gets engrossed  
Playing his role

He likes that self  
He saw him  
In the frozen lily pond  
He just couldn't  
Get him

Off his mind

He began sleeping in day  
Eating breakfast in  
Evening

And when the people asked if he was to be  
contrary  
For a long time,  
He said,  
"No"

To have a Contrary Man  
Around  
—does get kind of irritating—  
These people were sure getting mad

The entertaining contrary  
Becomes a nuisance

When he Beats his work song at night  
When he shits in the Middle of camp

They had to do something about this!

So they took a huge cast iron kettle  
Boiled some meat

Boiling hot,  
They ask Contrary Man  
To look at his self in  
The meaty water

Then,  
He reached with his arm through his  
Reflection and grabbed  
Some meat

He ate it  
And became himself  
And the people were not mad  
anymore

This is what you should do  
If Contrary Man happens to  
Come  
Among your people

You ask him  
    —to eat up his old self—  
So that he might become  
Wholesome again  
But, only after he goofs off for awhile

## SIX KILLER DIES

Loading shells, made of sulfur  
black powder—drinking whiskey  
Two guns and cards

*Fired red propellant  
No white, greasy smoke  
puffs of red,  
red stone smoke*

*Six Killer shoots  
him, twice, through each shoulder  
cut and dried  
prairie sheriff*

*Cb*

*Er*

*O*

*Kee Lawman*

He ate cow—Texas fever longhorns—  
He got himself a black mount, shelf clothes, and  
silver badge/ He double loads all his guns.  
He drinks expensive whiskey

His face looks like side of mountain  
blue, chipped and vertical  
He rides long and hard  
Hunting children and taking them to cow farm  
Methodist boarding school

*Deuce of clubs, remember one-eyed king wild,  
the diamond man and one other ace*

*give me two/ he gets three of diamonds,  
two of hearts*

He burned down the six,  
orange, he burned down  
red and black tripps—vertical  
nose dropped down—chipped with red  
stone—a crumpled bull on prairie green  
cut and cut

the cards  
are yellow  
as the hands  
with two guns

No white smoke  
Feeling with face the green rug  
Rising as he wonders about the tripps  
the last whiskey drink  
the red stone bull, dragged home, cow, he  
crumpled like a half moon in his chair,  
slouching down

He raised his hand to eat and the barrel of the  
gun hit his chin, the edge  
He stayed right there, pocketing his  
badge

And ate his meat

## WATER CARRIER

He enters fast  
as fast as  
he leaves  
forgetting nothing

Giving water  
he recedes  
back

to ditches  
to holes  
to untapped water

fast as a gopher  
as a snake  
in and out of familiar  
holes, crags, canyons

or even as a worm  
diligent,  
willing to be cut to pieces  
to survive to enter fast

to plow  
to cultivate  
pierced by hooks  
eaten by fish

Remembering  
because  
he was told to  
remember

Gophers  
with their heads  
eaten by  
buzzards  
or shot off by  
perfecting  
cattle ranchers

Garden snakes  
squirring  
in wrinkled hands  
seeking the touch of something  
new, unfamiliar, strange, or exotic

Earth worms  
pieces of flesh  
continually  
digging  
pushing into  
Earth, repeatedly

Especially  
water holes,  
found deep,

energy  
uneaten flesh  
providing

water

He will deliver  
remembering flesh  
an unending thirst

He carries buckets  
to be filled  
to be emptied and  
filled

again and again  
unpleasantly  
he carries  
not really wanting

replenishing  
desiring  
to stay

within  
inside  
earth flesh  
like an earth worm  
preferring to stay  
in earth  
but

surfaced by rain water

like snakes baking in sun

or gophers peeking out of holes

back and forth

bringing water

wanting to stay longer

he is forced out

drained of water, dehydrated

He is entering and leaving

continually

faster

he works

faster

he arrives

yet faster

he leaves

plunging down

like gopher

like snake

like worm

Working

forgetting nothing

always carrying water

always digging at earth

always coming to surface  
then, going to find pure

unending water

finding dirt  
dead gophers, uncomfortable snakes

worms

TITLE: THE EMPTY COLON

She: Open the door  
Count to five  
Enjoy your soup

He: Momma please be  
With me without  
Your pink dress

Narrator: The door opened  
Closed  
Opened  
Five times

The soup burned his  
Tongue as the pink  
Dress dropped slowly  
To the ground

Empty:

## LOCKED OUT

I,  
outside  
the window  
saw my cat  
looking  
at me  
inside,

I'm  
locked out

Sometimes  
I wonder  
if the white and green  
paint  
needs a new coat

only,  
I would paint it  
sand  
or  
some kind of brown

But now,  
I only want  
to get in,

me in my  
deer skin coat  
ice cream cone in hand,

that cat  
in the living  
room window,

his chocolate ears,  
face, tail, and paws  
the rest of him  
vanilla

staring at me with  
those blue eyes—

Fucking Siamese  
open the door.

## ATOP THAT MILK-CRATE SHELF

I caught you  
looking at the  
moon,  
cat

Staring at that  
white disc,  
through glass,  
reflecting  
my image  
—in one's teeth—  
incarnadine, unman  
scarecrow

Your eyes  
brilliant  
as two of the  
SEVEN SISTERS

your dark  
silhouette  
looking up through  
foliage  
scattered on  
milk-crate shelf  
angled like a telescope

So poised  
your ears  
flat back  
as if ready  
for flight

I  
a prone  
image  
in  
glazed  
embrasure

read history  
red war paint  
—grappling hooks—  
atoms,  
formless and blue

Cat  
a merciless  
devourer  
of animal flesh  
jumps at the red  
icy image  
toward his prey

Robin and Starling  
who replace the  
moon in  
daylight

## WHAT A LOUSY DAY FOR OUTDOOR WORK

Bury me in a pine box  
with the chocolate and vanilla painted cat  
with The Complete Sherlock Holmes  
with Sky and Telescope  
and my chess pieces

I am a lonely man  
painting this back wall  
white and green

Bury me in a pine box  
and get out of this house  
and take the black dog  
and the small car  
with banged out head-lights

I'm sequestered in  
back yard  
raking those brown  
orange leaves left over from  
last fall

Bury me in a pine box  
with my white Ford pick-up truck  
with a loaded Winchester model '64  
with grandpa's World War One helmet  
and an eagle feather

I ain't feeling so hot  
agitating this gravel  
in the driveway

Bury me in a pine box  
and come home to bake bread  
and to feed that old black dog  
and that tired old cat  
with eyes only for you

I'm not so sure  
I can care for those  
flowers and bushes  
left rudely unintended

On this lousy day for outdoor work

## THESE ARE NOT HAIKU

down in the well  
looking for water  
“for Christ’s sake”

eating seafood in New Orleans  
drinking Australian beer  
“because it was there”

one hill off toward  
right side of shoulder  
reflecting light  
of his rank

my bike  
totally demolished  
I  
unhurt  
went to a movie

the fish  
flopped, died  
of dehydration  
the salty deck

wet and salty cards  
cracked

I  
won fifty bucks

kitty cat  
hey you cat  
stop shitting  
by the garbage

## WHALE WATCHERS ON TOP OF NEWFOUNDLAND CLIFFS

### I.

Whale watchers on top of Newfoundland cliffs, peering,  
seeking the great water spouts, the prize of their endeavors.

They stand straight up with hiking boots and Arctic parkas distorting their forms, binoculars strapped around their necks and refractor telescopes strategically placed—aiming downward at whales—resembling the hated harpoon gun.

They stand, peering, straining to see these great mammals while clinging to black rock, their faces feeling the salt wind and tanning in the cold sun. Black sails interrupt their search.

Black smoke sails of whaling ship—enemy of the whale watchers. The seekers hate these ships that come close to hear whale songs.

At their distance, they only observe the surface breathing of these great beings, the great water spouts through binocular eyes, the rolling of oceanic waves.

What do whale watchers really know about whales? They stand aloft  
peering down around noses at beings they never touch.

They make whale buttons, read whale books, raise whale flags and regurgitate their presumptuous whale-like feelings through popular press. They watch Jacques Cousteau and study high powered photos of whale babies.

These watchers do not believe Herman Melville. They see the great white devil in the gray-black steel of whaling vessel.

Strange to see ships that resemble whales, the gun powder harpoons, the Moby Dick of steel: "Sink the Pequot, sink the Pequot," yell whale hunters with Japanese and Russian tongues.

What do these whale hunters really know about whales? They kill them and squeeze their flesh like sponges filled with exotic waters. They see no mind or beauty—object, object of their endeavors.

## II.

I watched  
a whale once,  
landlocked  
in a tiny inlet cove

one night,  
when a raging storm  
produced  
50 foot waves,  
whale, pursuing his feed

slipped over  
jagged black rocks,  
unknowingly

In the morning,  
townspeople  
shot it to death in  
target practice frenzy

as the town biologist  
flew down to Mexico  
to study the behavior of whales from  
century old whale bones

His mate waited  
outside, in the relative  
freedom of ocean, for  
his return

She died of starvation as the  
townspeople towed  
her mate  
out to sea,

when his decomposing  
body contaminated  
their drinking  
water

Oh, whale  
Oh, whale

I wished I  
could have  
talked to  
you

## THE KID

He cried.

He knowing why the tree-house was  
being torn down.

Rebuilt, backlawn  
hammered back together underneath  
the big oak,

That big tree,  
with limbs sawed off,  
next to the buried milkman's box

That received little boy's secrets,  
toys and mice and pigtails and  
chess  
pieces, rocks and flowers and dead  
spiders,

Not simply Ashley Dairy's  
pint-sized glass bottles filled  
with white milk.

He hated milk.  
He liked the tree-house and  
the buried milkman's box.

Both held secrets and fun.  
But, both were different.  
The milkman's box only he knew  
about.

But, the tree-house he didn't even  
build.

And when  
he rolled out of the tree-house  
When ten feet off the ground,  
He could still hear his mother cry,  
"Now goddammit didn't  
I tell you somebody was  
going to get hurt."

He did cry (a little)  
But he knew fun,  
To jump and pounce, to roll around,  
Even with a split open head with  
blood gushing out.

He cried.  
Really, when they ripped the nails  
out of the branches and the boards  
came crashing down.  
Now the tree-house would not be so  
much fun  
rebuilt back on the ground.

He still had the milkman's box,  
That little aluminum box that could  
hold four whole pints of milk.

He did steal it  
From the front porch.  
He did not know that;  
He sought fun.

Anyway, the dairy replaced it with  
another

And  
He only wanted one,  
To be buried with little red  
shovel,  
To hold only his secrets:

Dad's favorite pipe, mom's  
necessary hair spray,  
Brother's favorite Tonka truck,  
older brother's cigarettes and  
Sister's love letters—especially  
sister's love letters.  
She was furious—he was only having  
fun—

But the tree-house he liked too.  
He was disappointed that  
it had to come down.  
But it was going to be rebuilt  
right next to the milkman's box.

Would they find it?  
He hoped not.  
It was too much fun.

The tree-house on the ground!  
What would he call it?  
A ground-house?  
No this would not do.

He cried,  
For the tree-house to be  
put back up in the tree.  
After all,  
that was where it belonged.

Nothing doing—“We can’t have  
little boys falling out of tree-  
houses  
No more  
—No sir ree—”

He was mad.  
He stopped crying.  
No sir ree      —aye—

“Well,  
I’ll teach ‘em.”

So, he began to hide more things:

Mom’s new wig, dad’s automotive timing  
light, brother’s Mickey  
Mouse watch,  
Older brother’s tennis shoes,  
and sister’s diaphragm  
—especially sister’s Diaphragm—

She was walking around like the  
wicked witch of the north;  
He was only having fun; after all, he  
didn’t know what it was.

The milkman's box was getting  
pretty full and  
the lid was sticking out of the  
ground.  
The whole family was in an uproar,  
wondering where all their things  
were.

He did not mind.  
He only asked if the tree-house  
would be put back up in the tree.

He pleaded his case before  
they got it totally rebuilt  
back on the ground.

No sir ree!

But then his dad noticed the lid:

“What’s my timing light doing in  
here and there’s little brother’s  
Tonka truck And his watch—My  
PIPE!—and mom’s wig—and what’s  
this hair spray doing in here, and  
older brother’s shoes, and all of  
this paper. What in the heck is  
this? Hey, darling!  
Come over here.”

You can imagine the uproar,  
The screaming and yelling.  
He did not understand.

He cried.  
He only wanted the tree-house  
back up in the tree.  
What was wrong with that?

A long time would pass before  
he would have any fun—  
I guess that was the only thing  
he was sad about.

No more tree-house!  
Only a ground-house!  
And of course,  
no more milkman's box.

Oh, he did admit everything.  
After all, he was only having fun.

## SWEET GRASS AND SUN

Burn sweet grass  
rinse your face  
with smoke

Eat the moon  
slowly, then spit  
the pieces out

Eat it again  
spit it out

Burn sweet grass  
wash your hands  
with smoke

Speak the wind  
angrily, then cover  
sky with hand

Speak again  
cover sky dark

Burn sweet grass  
bath your body  
smoke, smoke

Lick the earth  
sun, don't let  
it melt

Smoldering sweet grass  
cleanse my face  
with smoke













From the ceremony of the hunter that opens the book, to the burning of sweetgrass that ends it, this collection moves like a poem, making an arrow's arc across the sky, taking us both high and low, leaving us with memories worth keeping.

There's an elemental quality to Patrick LeBeau's unflinching poetry that reminds me of a young Pablo Neruda. Here is a writer who is unafraid of impurity, honesty, or the full range of human emotions, the breath of living—and dying, I recommend this journey to anyone interested in the living voice of Native America.

Joseph Bruchac  
Abenaki Storyteller  
Author of *Between Earth and Sky*

Intense and ragged in its honesty, LeBeau's poetry speaks to the journey toward self—tremendously personal, yet familiar to any of those who have taken that first step.

Mark Turcotte  
Author of *The Feathered Heart*



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