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Notes from the Bulls: The Unedited Journals of Verl Newman

Joe Wilkins
Linfield College, jwilkins@linfield.edu

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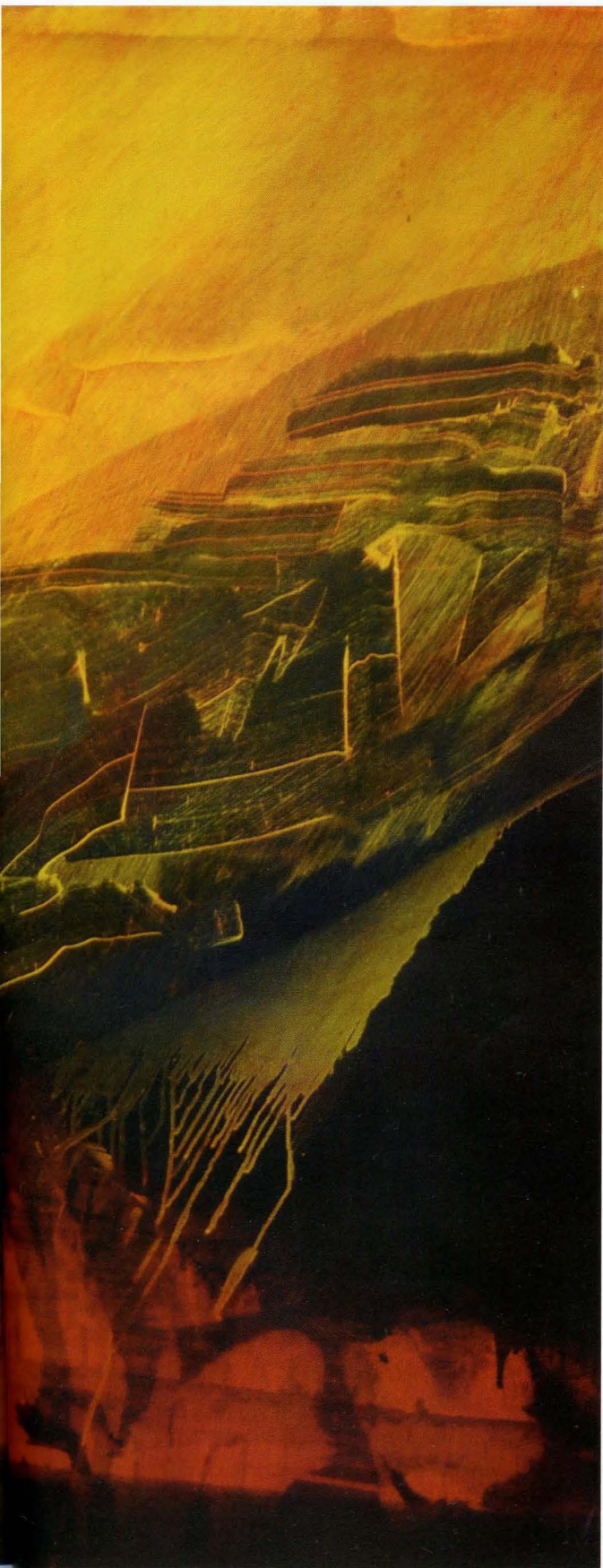
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Notes from the Bulls: The Unedited Journals of Verl Newman

A short story

JOE WILKINS

PAINTINGS BY JAMES LAVADOUR

Day Two

Not out in all this country. Not even with your ATVs and radios and such as that. Not even. What I'm saying. You won't find me out in all this country. I can run and hide and run and even if it would be only a moment at six hundred yards and you would have to put a bullet in my back these mountains here are mine you fuckers you fuckers and you cowards I am telling you for fuck all and ever these Bull Mountains are mine goddamn what is that I hear

Day Three

Goddamn but I have been running. I have not slept in three days. I hear engines and the squawk of your radios and run and once like revelation a glassy helicopter lifted itself over the ridge and flattened the grass and cracked three beetle-sick trees right near me. My heart I thought would charge out of me. But even then you missed me. I hunkered down. Then ran. When I had to do what I had to do. I did it. I did not miss. I shot the wolf clean. Each time you have missed me.

Day Six

I have been out here six days now. Day three was the last I heard you and when I was hearing you. You did not hear me. There are caves up in these sandrocks you never dreamed. Cutbanks like tunnels in earth. You are looking in a whole other place now. You do not know what you are doing. You don't know where the

water is. I know where the water is. I know these badlands and jack pines. Through and through I know them.

Don't think I am going to go tell you. What if you were to find this and know my innermost?

Day Six of the New Dispensation

You see now I have given this here a fine new title. I have said no to your laws that would not let a man shoot a vicious animal on his own land. I have said no and am here in the country that has born me and I have loved. I am living this new way. This is a new dispensation.

Also you best understand this isn't for me. This isn't some kind of diary book my boy's mother would keep. I've no need to write any of this down. Don't mistake it. I could live out here on the land without another soul around the rest of my born days. I'd be goddamn happy as a buck goat. No this here is for you fuckers. So that you will know a free man lives and breathes and if he wants unzips and hangs his pecker out and pisses a big arc off the ridge.

Damn right he does.

Day Seven of the New Dispensation

I have been thinking. All this day I have been walking. I have not done such walking as I've done here lately in a goddamn time and even over the banging of my fat heart I have been thinking and have stopped and read over what I wrote yesterday and the days before and had another thought. What I mean is I wander wonder at myself for writing this? Why tell the cowards and fuckers? Won't do a lick of good. Sick in the head as they are. They would never see the truth of any of this. I guess this ought to be for those it could do some good.

Well this is for my boy then.

For you boy. I speak to you now. Listen. It takes training to be a free man. Your television and your schoolteachers will feed you all kinds of rot. I want you to know rot for rot. Even years on I want you to know what kind of a man your old dad was. A free man. A man of hands and plans. A man of mountains. These Bull Mountains. You hear me?

Listen now. So as you'll know. Carry my voice in your head.

What is most important is I have my .270 and a thirty box of shells. I have my lace-up steel-toe boots a pair of wool socks heavy Carhartts a t-shirt flannel shirt duck jacket scotch cap. I have a wolf's tooth and two wolflaws on a length of fishing wire strung around my neck. I have thirty-two dollars (not that I will ever need such again might as well roll it up and smoke it for the good it will do me) and a jackknife. My coat pockets stuffed to busting with candy bars and copenhagen and antelope jerky and it is no shame to raid the odd henhouse. A hen's head yanks

right off and roast them in their feathers under a pile of rocks so as there is not much smoke. I'll suck an egg too. Like an old dog. I will not think twice for an egg is full of vitamins and fat and good especially for a man's body sucked right out of a little tapped hole in the narrow end of the shell.

I saw that once about vitamins on a morning show your mother watches. That's how I know.

It is late now boy. Dark but for the stars. The air sharp and cold. Writing to you this way I think of you. And your mother.

Day Eight of the New Dispensation

If you saw five minutes ago a squat sonofabitch with a patchy beard scrabbling down a rocky ridge right in the smack dab middle of the Bull Mountains. You'd have seen me boy. It makes hard going but I am sticking to the rocks in case they have dogs out or trackers who are worth a shit bucket.

Eight days. If I have figured right. Which even for the running those first hours and nights I think I have. Day eight of freedom. Day eight of the New Dispensation. Which is what I am calling it. Dispensation means a new man in charge. I learned that at school. Learn what tools they will teach you but learn through the tools too boy. There is more out here in the mountains. Where your old dad is King.

The sky is dark blue now and no good for scrabbling around so a bit ago I sat down here and began to write and thought this might be the place for sleep. This is not the place. Way off in the distance I shit you not I can see the highway. You wouldn't think you could be so far out in the Bulls and still see it. But there it is. Yellow drops of light edging the distance. I will go deeper into the mountains this night.

Day Ten of the New Dispensation

It has been some time since I wrote. I have been traveling. My breath is coming to me easier. Which is good. But the cold. It was late summer when I came into these mountains. Goddamn. Just the end of September now it is colder than you might imagine at night when you are out like an animal in the night. I camp hidden away in jack pines. Or settled in some cave in the rock. Still. The wind. Here is how it is. I lay my head on a pillow of sand. The stars a shade less white than sugar. I shiver. I feel like a little child to shiver. I am not a child. I am a man.

Anyways I shiver. I guess I cannot help it. Though goddamn.

I have thought of slipping up to some house and stealing. There are not many but a few houses out here in the Bulls. A few ranches and hunting cabins and log houses with big windows which are owned by goddamn Californians or somesuch. I think on it but I have not stole. Not yet. I know I talked big earlier about snatching hens. You know me boy. I talk. I am



thinking too of the feds. If I steal some hen or shed coat or clothes off a line someone might notice what is missing and with me still out here which everybody knows they might make a report and the feds would be on my trail. I think to shiver is better than to run. God those first days. I thought any moment to feel a bullet in my thigh. Shoulder. In the back of my neck. I think to let my belly growl is better than to run. I will shiver and wolf growl for now.

Later

I do not like to think I am some thief. That is another thing that keeps me from it. Not me. Not me to be some thief like the goddamn government taking my right to live the way I please to shoot what I please on my own goddamn land. The banks taking folks' land. Goddamn.

If I do have to steal you will have to tell them boy how it was them that made me do it. What is a man to do with only a thin

shirt on his back in the cold? They do not think on that when they think on thieves. You will have to tell them.

I write this to you boy in the middle of the night. It is too cold to sleep. How are you boy? I hope you are warm. Even if your old dad is cold clean to his rib bones I hope you are knowing your old dad is a free man and chose to be a free man. I hear now a coyote call from the ridge over Hawk Creek. Some others off south yip back. I cannot place where from.

Day Eleven New Dispensation

Have walked and climbed maybe six miles in the early dark but stopped here now in the sun by these sunwarm sandrocks and leaned my back up against them because it is nice to do and also I have thought of something boy. It is getting to be a decent stretch of time I have been out here. They are after me yet but I am not so important. By winter the feds will think I am dead somewhere and rotting and stop looking. Then I will be



free. (Of course I have been free and that is why I am hunted.) Anyways after they have gone home I can live like this is my true home. Which it is. I can shoot a mule deer through the heart and not worry about the noise. I can smoke deer chops over a pine fire. I can dry hides and wrap them around me like an old Indian. Oh I will live big then. Do not worry about your old dad then.

Must make it through these cold weeks though. These cold weeks they are looking for me.

Or you can leave something for me. Yes fuck yes I see it now boy you could leave me long johns and lined pants and gloves and sweaters and a good stocking cap. God but I might give a knuckle of a finger for a good wool stocking cap. Here is what you do. Leave a wool hat and a flannel jacket in the cab of that old three-wheel Ford in the junk coulee in the north section and give me a signal like a bit of bailing twine tied around the side mirror that all is clear and no surprises and I will go get that hat and jacket and the feds will wonder how I am doing it in the snow and cold and not know I am doing it because of you boy. Yes I will not wait but live big right now.

But goddamn.

How will I get this to you? How would I send this page to you? You must read this if you are to know. This page I am writing on. It is a school notebook of yours I grabbed thinking to use for starting fires but was not thinking straight. I can have no fires. I should have been as prepared in my head as I was in my hands. Let that be a lesson to you boy. Anyways how to take a sheet of this paper with my instructions for you all the way to you? Fold an airplane and fly it there? A boy should be able always to hear his father. Know always his father's mind.

That is not so. I am all the way out here and you and your mother are in the trailer. The feds between us.

Goddamn them.

A man cannot even lie for the night next to his woman. A man cannot even give his voice to his son. I think of them now closer to your bodies than me and see red. I pick up my rifle and figure to sneak up on them and end it. But that is what they want goddamn them I cannot think on that.

How will I get this to you? How will you know me?

Later

I mean to tell you boy I am still thinking on how to get this to you for it is yours and I am yours and I found where you had written your name on the back cover of this notebook. Your name. The name I gave you. The name your granddaddy carried. I tell you it fired me. I felt it in my tired bones and was not tired and got up and walked a mile along the dark ridgetop not fearing to be found or to slip or anything. Just your name boy.

And now I stop here in the night and write this to you by starlight.

Day Twelve

Saw the frost come down this morning. That was a thing to see. Was walking to warm myself through the early mountain light when the sky seemed to lift. As if a man shrugged a stone from his shoulders. The wind came a notch warmer then and like that the grass crystallized all about me. Broke under my boots.

Day Thirteen

I am liking this. To write. They are not even close. I have taken to sleeping in the afternoons when the sun is round and warm. Traveling in the night and early morning when it is cold and that way my fat heart thumps and thumps and keeps me warm. This afternoon I have snoozed like a big old bear or something only rolling over to get the sun on the other side of me. Are there bears here in the Bulls anymore? I do not think so. Those like my old granddaddy. They killed the wolves and tried for the bears though the bears got away up into the Rockies. I believe I am the only old bear up in these mountains now.

The eastern sky this evening blue and dark as your mother's eyes. On one side of me there is that nightward blue. On the other the far mountains red and gold in the setting sun. Did you know there is a box of colors between red and gold? I never knew. Or maybe I knew but forgot. Anyways I see now some dozen shades between the two.

Later

I am thinking of things. Here in the night. It was seeing the sun set like that over the Rockies which I know are real mountains. Not just twisted hills like these Bulls. But these here are where I am. These I call mine. How does a body come into country? Sure these Bulls are mine because there is just no other way things are there's only this way. But what I am after is would I have chosen this country? I am thinking for example if I was a homesteader on a train or even earlier some fur trapper. If I come strolling through would I say yes this is for me. Would I choose this country? That is what I am wondering. Things are a sight prettier once you get farther west

nearer the mountains. And it is goddamn dry hereabouts. Windy and hot in the summer. Windy and cold in the winter. Mightn't I have spat and gone on? West of here they put up three cuttings of hay without a drop of irrigation for that is where the mountains snag the rain. Would I have passed through? What I am wondering is maybe I have just gone and gotten used to this country?

No. I tried it for a spell but that kind of thinking does not sit right with me. I do not like to think like that. Do not like to think this country I call mine is just a crapshoot chance. This is the way it is and was meant to be. There is a country for each of us we might in our bones call home. The shape of the land what fits us to ourselves. These plains and hills. That snarl of chokecherries down the draw from the house where we pick until our fingers go stone blue. Meadowlarks singing because they are lonesome and scared and the god that is the sun is about to burn down. Does some bear up in the Rockies remember he walked these hills and plains and pine for them? Yes I say yes. They are all a part of it. Like me. Like you boy. Like your granddaddy my daddy and our granddaddies down the line. The country is us. We know it from time before. Like a hand we would miss and feel ghosting us if it was gone.

Or maybe that is backwards. Maybe we are but an organ of it. Us the ghosts. The country mourning us. Is that right? Does the country grieve my old granddaddy? The gone grizzly bears?

Does it sorrow the both of them?

Fourteen

I should have slept more this past afternoon. I should not have thought so much and wrote all evening and set my mind to racing. I wake in the dark now and it is godawful cold. I would get up and go but I need sleep. I do not want to make mistakes. I say the sky is a bowl but that puts the bottom at the top. What is it like? The sky? The sickle moon like this wolf's tooth. The cold stars not salt or sugar but torn holes. Wolf torn holes.

Later

Not even that much below freezing and still so cold. Goddamn. How I would like a fire. They are still after me.

Instead of fire here is what I do boy. I dig down in the soil as far as I can. Which is not too deep for soon there are roots and rocks and I burrow in there like an old bear and heap sand and leaves and needles over me. It helps. Some. The rocks are hard beneath me and give me back some portion of my heat. I only wish against the wind. The trees in this dry country are scrawny as mutt dogs and the nightwind scrapes along the top of me a dull knife down my bones.

I am sorry to go on like this. I should not complain. It is my

own goddamn doing. I should have brung more clothes. I took this wolf tooth like it mattered.

To hell with sleep. This night I will go farther into the mountains.

Sixteen

You would not believe it boy eating hamburgers and hotcakes your mother fries but this very day your old dad licked the inside of a pear cactus for dinner. It was pulpy and green and a little sweet. I would not say it was bad but a sure sonofabitch to get at. I don't know how much energy and vitamins and things I took from it. Your mother would know. She watches those daytime doctor shows and would know. Anyways I walked the night and holed up most of the day and drew pictures of this country about me. Off in the distance is Bald Knob which you know how it is with that lean fist of rock up top and before me a space of grass and sage. It sweeps out. As if blown. As if there is a wind rushing across it even when there is not a wind. I tried to get at that in the pictures. That feeling of wind. I think the likeness is not bad. I would like to show you someday.

Only drawing like this all day I guess I do not need much in the way of calories and vitamins anyways. And I will tell you this. To eat cactus meat and chew only a handful of dry jerky is a sight better than welfare or that disability. I tell you what. I damn myself to hell before I take any of that again. I know your mother feels another way. Feels she was owed what came to her as she worked hard and that janitor work bunged up her back. Still. We must live how we say we live. She signed on. Was paid for the work she did. Yes I know she will say they signed on too. But who is they? I mean your mother is on one side that's clear as a summer sky but it's not even the same boss that hired her on the other side and is the new boss to blame or the oven company that works the both of them and what the hell is a company? Who is a company? These are things I don't know I know about me I will live a free man by his own hands.

Day 19?

How many days now? Moving in the dark has me missing days I think. I get confused. I must stop and reckon the sun in the sky to place myself and figure my direction. I have eaten the last snickers bar. I gnashed only a little jerky today. It tasted so good I held it a long time in my mouth. To keep tasting it there in my mouth. There is not much left.

Later

How are you boy? How is school? Are you into your basketball season now? Tell me about your days boy. God but I would like that. To hear about your days. To step out of my own. I walk and walk and my breath is easy that is true but I tell you my old heart still charges off with whatever I am thinking. I thought for a time

I might somehow send you these notes. I thought on it hard but know now I would have to send them in the wind. Or if they would ride the light. Goddamn but there are things I want to tell you boy like remember the colder it gets to chop the ice for the heifers in the morning like I wear this wolf's tooth at my throat but goddamn I can tell you nothing now you will have to wait for

Later

I went nowhere today. I sat with my back against a rock. I am thinking of why it is I am out here. I will tell you. Listen to me boy. I had been saying one thing with my mouth and another with my two hands. I had been cashing your mother's disability checks and buying feed and gas and whatall. I had been collecting CRP on that pasture we have. I had been hoping they put some new kind of debt relief in the farm bill. I had been lying to myself. It is easy to do. Here is a hint boy. When things are easy they are most often wrong. Most often dishonest and cowardly. That is why I am out here. Because I would not lie anymore. Would not be a coward anymore. Would not accommodate the cowards and fuckers those fuckers.

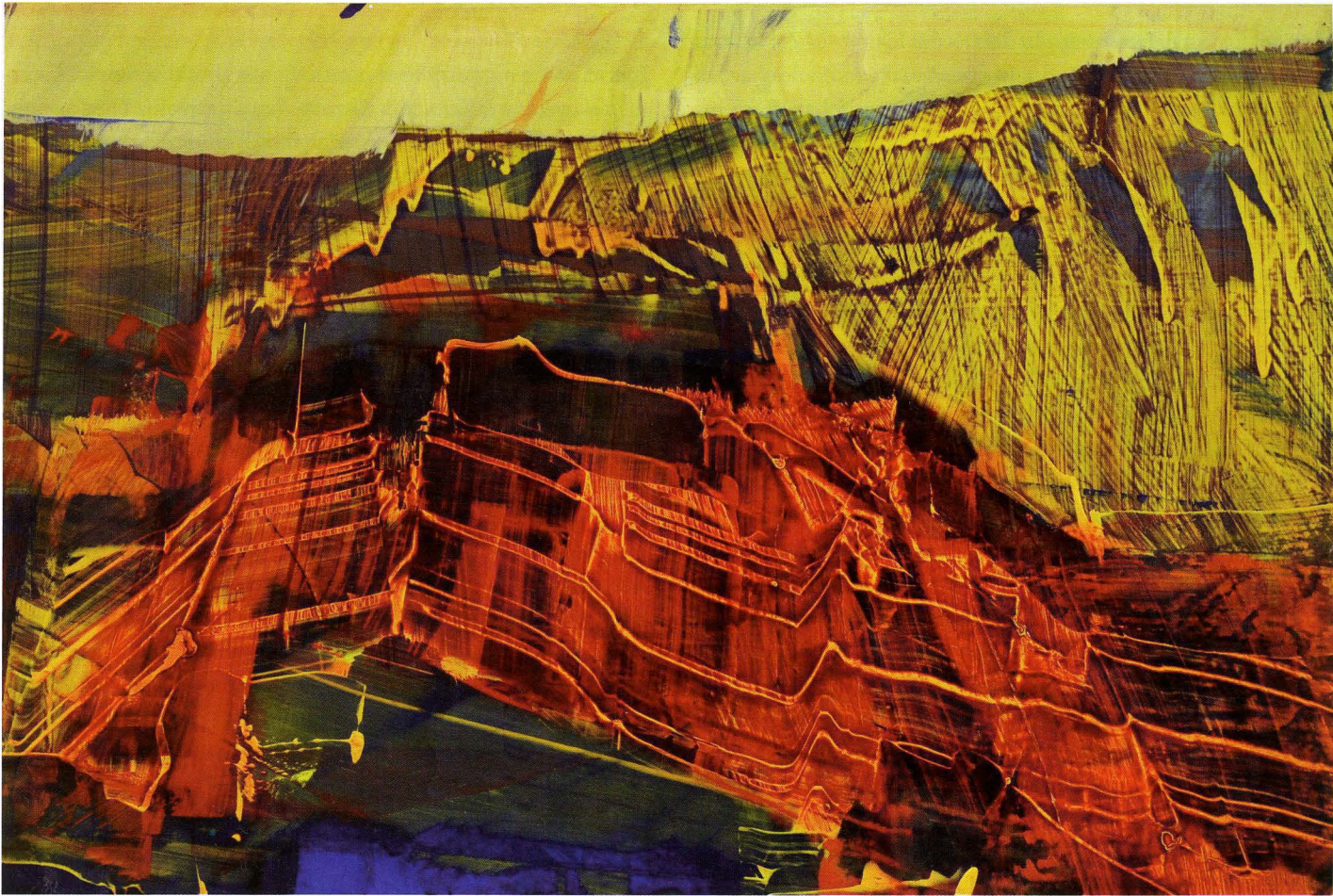
I imagine you are hearing all kinds of lies and should hear the truth of it from your old dad who made you. It's true I killed a wolf. I do not deny that. Don't do me boy like Peter did Jesus. When a friend asks. You tell him. I am not ashamed. There was a wolf on my land. Our land. A wolf will thin a lamb crop down to nothing. A wolf would thin us down to nothing. There are reasons and there are reasons. I spotted it down by the hayfield where the elk and mulie deer come to munch alfalfa nubs in the morning and shot her through the heart. I saw later by the blue of her teats she was a she-wolf.

To kneel down by her there. That was something.

We speak of wolves. You hear about them in the news and everyone jawing at the café and who has ever seen one? Not me. Until then anyways. I was shaking. I remember I was shaking.

Was it because I had done a thing they could jail me for? No I have done more than a few of those in my years. I am telling you boy a wolf is a thing to look at. (I think now if I only had fur thick as a wolf I'd live out here and not be cold when the sun goes down. Maybe that is silly and useless to think on. Do you think it is silly and useless boy?) Anyways the wolf was on my land. That is the beginning and the end. That she-wolf may as well as have come up and ate a hole in my heart.

And that is enough. But that is not all. I am not talking about the she-wolf only. The wolf is more than the wolf. One thing the wolf is is laws. What I do not care about and have much hate toward are laws that make a man a slave on his own land. If I wanted to let that wolf champ and slaver fine. If not. Fine. But that is not what the law says. The law says I have no choice. The law marks me ignorant. Makes me like them a coward. The



law is a goddamn crime. This land is mine. God give it to me through my old dad and his old dad through him and before that I guess I don't know maybe it was just here waiting for us from time before this land here was ours.

Kevin ought to have goddamn known. He may be the government's man but he is a man. Before he is a game warden he is a man. Anyways some few days after I killed the world the wolf and took only two claws and a tooth which I have on this loop of fishing line about my neck and buried the rest of her in the junk ravine and hauled an old frigidaire up over the turned dirt Kevin came by knocking on our door and scared your mother half to death. When I come home that evening I swore Kevin a blue streak up and down but she said it wasn't Kevin's fault. Why'd you have to do it she asks me. Why don't you and for once do what's best for your family. Verl what in the hell will we do if they haul you in. All this she asks me. Then she up and starts to cry.

I imagine you heard. Those trailer walls are thin. There was a time when you were just a little greennutter I did not think on what you heard. When I come home drunk. When your mother comes home drunk. When she sits on the couch and for days

says not a thing to either one of us and I cook and clean and don't know why she's sitting there. I imagine you know. I knew about my folks. I did.

Anyways I had thought to argue but answered her nothing. What kind of an answer could I give to all that? How can she say what is best for me isn't best for my family? I answered her nothing. I only opened a can of beer and sat down and watched what it was they had on the television.

The next morning I go out to pump water for the heifers and here comes Kevin in his green government pickup and out he gets and plucks a length of grass and commences to chewing like I don't know what he's come for. Can you believe it? Maybe that was when I decided. When he didn't have but cowardice in him. Anyways once I finished watering I set myself to loading bales when finally Kevin walks over and says I found the wolf. Says I don't want to do it but you been reported. Says Verl I got to take you in.

And the whole time he was saying these things he was acting like he was real sorry hanging his fat old head. And I almost believe him am almost a fool. But I am not a fool. I looked at Kevin who I have known years and years and wanted to tell him you

ain't got to do a damn thing you don't want to do because in your heart you are a free man Kevin. In your heart you do not have to turn against one that has been your brother and balled up his fists with you on the recess yard. That's what I was thinking but I only stood there. I said nothing. I shot him.

It was easy. My .270 leaning against the truck cab.

I pick it up. Kevin flaps his mouth like a fish says Verl what the hell. Verl it's my job. Verl I knew your daddy. First I shoot him not really aiming and hit him in the guts. Then shoulder and aim and shoot and Kevin's jaw sort of splashes off his skull.

There was about ten gallons of blood in the grass. I hope you did not have to see it. Or your mother. It was not a good thing to see though I did it and am telling you I did it. (I don't know how to square that.) Anyways I know I am a man who will not be pushed one inch farther. They have pushed and pushed on me. They are trying to take our land boy. That is the real thing here. I have kept it from you and your mother thinking I could figure it on my own but I will just go ahead and say it. They are trying to take our land.

That goddamn bank. I wish Daddy had never mortgaged for machinery. Goddamn. We lost your uncle's section in the '80s and that was almost too much. To see that sonofabitch from California with his brown loafer shoes move in and pull out the fences and not graze even a single goddamn sheep or cow or anything and say around town he is letting the land heal itself. What does some long-haired dough-faced sunfucker from California know about this land? We are in this together. The land and us. If you take one from the other. That is when we hurt. I do not know what will happen now with the bankruptcy but they just can't keep taking it away. Someday there won't be any left. What then? What of us? What of the land? Where is it all going? It seems like it would stay where it is. It does not. Of a sudden it's gone. The bank says a word and it's gone. Goddamn goddamn goddamn I do not understand a goddman thing about any of this.

22?

I have had hard times lately boy. I was angry that day. Just writing the story out for you I saw red and up and went and shot a mulie deer just to show them I was not afraid. You have probably heard about it in the papers. Them almost catching me. Goddamn. I ran for three days. Or I think it was three days. Ran in the night and through the night. Slept only minutes here. Minutes there.

I am a long ways into the mountains now. Am probably half-way or more to Billings. Up over the divide. I do not even know where. I do not know this country. It is rockier. Rougher. High ridges and box canyons and badlands. I am still traveling hard. I have only a moment to write. I am walking now from the trees into a sloping field of grass.

Later

I have found a great pile of bones. Bones shot through with cactus and yellow grass and wild rose. I can't explain. They are not exactly white but the color of old light. All kinds of bones. Coyote. Skunk. Horse. Some I don't know. Some wider than a man's big leg bones. This is a strange sight before me boy. A wonder.

Later

I will not stay here with these bones. I will keep on into the mountains.

24?

I have slept some and feel better. Sleep is hard. I wake every few minutes to listen for engines. Those helicopter blades. For the last many hours I have heard nothing but the wind. Still. I guess I should tell you boy. I am okay. Hungry but okay. I ate only a few small bites of that mulie deer. Even as I pulled the trigger. Even then I knew it was a bad idea. Knew someone would hear and say something and soon the fuckers would be crawling all over. I hurried. Butchered out a back leg and cooked some in the ground like I told you and will admit while I ran I ate some blood raw like a wolf. It tasted good. I sit and rest now and wish for some. I had heard hunger stories from my old granddaddy but did not know hunger. Nothing but a howl in the belly.

Later

I think now we would get along. The wolf and me. It would be nice to hear her howl at a fat moon when I am holed up too beneath the moon in the night my belly howling.

Later

Her tooth at my throat. The lengths of her claws.

Later

It is hard to sleep. It is like dreams no matter if my eyes are open or closed. I have traveled a long way. I have holed up here with a high ridge at my back. I do not know this country.

Wonders

It is a season of wonders. I see now by moonlight there are men carved in the stone above me. One has killed what looks to be a bear. He is the smaller of the two and the other is a long ways off but bigger and behind them both there are the triangles of mountain peaks. Between them nothing but a far space of rock. They were put on the stone together. Why so far apart? Why this stone? Was this where they killed the bear? This where they slept on their way home with packs of fatty meat? This near where the bear killed one of them? Where the other came cowering the

screams in his ears? It is a mystery and a wonder and it puts me in mind of how daddy my daddy used to steal things just little things a neighbor's shovel or a tank of gas when old Jake was asleep at the station I would catch him at it now and again but never said a thing. One time your mother brought it up and that is the only time I put a hand to her popped her across the mouth and could feel her jaw bone beneath the flat of my hand I need to tell you boy I feel it still if I were to pick up a rock or stone out here and call it mine it would only fall back down when I died.

Mountains

Fuck it. None of this makes any goddamn sense. I do not need any sleep. I rested all day I did nothing all day but lay in the grass and now it is dark I will even now get up. Go deeper into the mountains. This is the best time to go.

Mountains

I am greasy haired and lean. I am lunging. This moonlight road into the mountains. The spine of the mountains now.

Remember

I look back at what I've written and don't remember when. When did I taste meat? Why this field of wind? What color are your mother's eyes? Was this the night I dreamed the wolf? The day before the night? I don't know what day it is. I don't know where I am. I don't remember.

Remember

I remember when me and Kevin were just little greennutters we one day packed our wire snares and steel traps and went out to live in the mountains. Made camp in the foothills above the river and nicked our thumbs with jackknives and held hands and swore we'd never leave not for a million dollars we'd live on rabbit stew and dress in furs and live the good way the old pioneers and mountain men and settlers lived that night we ate tomato sandwiches his mother packed for us and fell asleep right there by the fire and though of course we didn't stay I don't remember how we got back home.

Remember Wendell Newman who is the Boy of Verl Newman who is in the Mountains

Is it a month now? Two? I found the furry shit of an owl today. There were bones in it. I ate it. The first thing I have eaten in some days. My head

cleared a few hours. I remembered my name. Remembered your name. Remember your name boy


Remember

Here it is on the back cover of this notebook I am writing to you boy walking beneath

Remember

The sky wide and dark and cut by stars what claws tear the holes of the stars I dream

Wolves

A loping she-wolf beside me can you imagine boy the barrel of a wolf's body kneeling there I thought to take her in my arms she was as perfect as anything I have known that time last summer we went down to the river to swim after a long day bucking bales and you stripped out of your jeans and I looked up from the river where I was already shaking my wet head and saw you were a man boy the arc of you above me as if the light itself had some flesh and heft light is all that's left the wash of light or the wash of night the night your mother turned fifteen she slid her panties down her hips and I choked on the breath in my mouth we lay down in a field of grass and the moon a fool I mean a full moon that night over us and the hard earth beneath us we held one another and the land held us as if the land cannot hold us anymore as if the line of earth and sky has fouled we are falling through boy the wolfholes of stars 

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