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That When the Bones

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see the buffalo coat, no longer a coat, no longer recognizable—for it has been reduced to strips, like varas of land in a New Mexican will, and it adorns the shivering nakedness of at least three nephews of the fifth man who owned the coat; who found it one Christmas morning under an overdecorated evergreen; and who never wore it.

THAT WHEN THE BONES . . .

Take
 what you can get
 from the bright circle
 Suck
 nectar
 from the fattest mortal teat
 Plunge
 through fathomless color
 and all trite song
 Climb
 from the pedestrian dusk
 from the gloomy gossip of time
 to reach a while
 that street of padlocked glory
 That
 when the bones are stiff
 and blood moves slow
 and cold shadows envelop the mind
 You
 may tightrope the foreboding cliff
 Until
 the kite falls
 the fool's allowance is spent
 Then
 explore the empty shell
 Chase
 down your rattlecap soul
 to its last echo
 and die

WILLIAM PETERSON