

# CutBank

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## Two Poems

Herbert Scott

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## THE SONG OF THE ASSASSIN

The knife is a prayer  
the flesh answers.

Kneel, an old woman  
planting tulips:  
I come to bless you.

The isolation  
is so beautiful.

To live outside,  
to be an alien  
in this skin,

to be perfect  
beyond your belief.

If there were some other  
god I would know him.

## OLD WOMAN IN THE DESERT

Her arms are dead rainbows  
holding neither light  
nor dreams. The sun  
is no child of hers.  
Her hands stiff as antlers,  
her breasts dry washes.  
Drunk, on your way home  
from dying,  
you would not sleep with her.  
You would pass her by  
like the dead mother of your dreams  
who sulks in a stone chimney  
somewhere in Oklahoma.  
But you will remember her eyes.  
Petrified fish in an ancient  
ocean. You will carry them  
in your pocket. An atonement.  
A last rite.