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Millie Mae Wicklund

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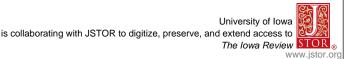
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#### MILLIE MAE WICKLUND

#### The Last Buffalo Roaming Iowa City

A buffalo lying down in a heap like a great crushed automobile In a wide-open prairie of long, wavy grass. Is this my car that I abandoned in 1965-----my Nervous exhaustion, my car's? My taut body, Its accompanying furtive eyes and spasmodic stomach, Roamed in that wavy prairie once too and Humankind Stalked my wounded belly full of vomit and fear. Lying down now, buffalo, in a heap of bone, We have the Fate that determined our adapting instinct. We began the prairie, the first grasses parted only By us and winds. Sunlight made movement a destiny Each summer and our long shadows took distorted shapes As if in watery depths washing over our bodies in mid ocean. Again and again, the light ebbed and emptied like a Coastal tide and sounded watery, oceanic, the prairie Winds ebbing and emptying too. In Winter, the constant Cold air stung our lungs, eyes and we breathed a remembered Summer's warmth, but our lungs still burned in nude landscapes. Later, when the prairie's grasses became scarred and trodden Down by heavy, wheeled animals, we braced our shoulders And heads against the nearing sky. We were no longer alone And in dangerous landscapes, haunted by instinct's movements, Hooves falling again and again in rutted grasses. Metal sticks exploded and our lungs burned once again. But we breathed only gasps of dying air, A last nervous ripple of skin (neck, shoulders and back legs), In wave after wave of falling buffalo bloodied the land.



Blanca, when you shot me twice in the back with your Illegal pistol's blank bullets in Iowa City in 1968, I was the Last buffalo in Iowa City roaming its prairie streets. Instinctively, I stuck my head and shoulders up against The sky..... Christ! How near everything was then, ..... here in Rhode Island, where in a night's instinct, I've Seen the buffalo lying down in a heap of long grass, I can't Begin to tell you how much fear is in me and how in light Ebbing and emptying, I am the memory of that last buffalo And I will never die. Word after word explains you..... Blank, metal face, you suffer this poet's honesty, Cowardice and craziness. Cold, crushed heap of metal That was once my car, you will never be an assassin's gun... ...you are the last buffalo roaming Iowa City: The poem taught there!