

# Under The Midnight Sun

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I Am Without Horse And That Devil Sun,  
She Will Rise Again

William Lenard



“Leave my name in stone.”

His father’s dying words were left for the vultures.

He headed north, out of the small basin. The wild mustang was still tied to the tree. Its eyes flared as he neared and grabbed the reins.

They were over the hill and he saw the flats approaching. The horse reared up and back.

In front of them was a kill from the previous night. A deer with the skin pulled over its eyes, a skull bore with dried blood. He bent down for a closer look. A pack of coyotes killed the stag and left it as a monument of what the land promised.

Deserts are an American fantasy and all the horses are dead.

I am under concrete with broken bones.

Skin my flesh like a deer and wear my eyes for diamonds.

I’ll never be a cowboy.

He woke with the setting sun and a cool night air sinking in. He stood to see if the mustang was near, by chance. There was no horse in sight. A few paces ahead laid the saddle tossed to the ground, covered thick in dust and dirt.

He craned his head back and forth and felt a lump of thirst in his throat. He swallowed in attempt to ease the irritation to no success. Sand itched his eyes as he blinked in the dimming light.

He hobbled a short distance to collect brush for a fire. He moved the saddle near the light and leaned against it. He ached for water and knew by day, it would be worse. He threw a handful of sand into the fire. The light flickered. In the distance, the horse wandered further away. There was no use to search.

“I am without horse and that devil sun, she will rise again.”

“There are two bodies in my mind. I see them pushing  
through concrete walls.”

He took his father’s gun and ran into the desert.  
With dried eyes and cracked lips, he laughs at all the dying  
buzzards.  
He’ll take a horse and give himself a new name.

Ghost in my head  
tell me if I’m dead.

Take me to the midnight sun,  
I wanna go dancing with all my guns.  
Pour gunmetal down my throat.  
And leave my body for the vultures.

A vulture sat perched on a tree branch, its head tilted. Feathers ruffled. The bird moved down a branch. A dry breeze pushed sand into his eyes. He blinked in unison with the bird. The vulture fumbled down to another branch.

“I ain’t dead.”

The vulture lifted its wings and raised a head towards the sun. The wings blocked the sun from his eye. Light glowed through the feathered body. He saw glazed eyes staring into his, waiting.

“You’re no God. You can’t say when I’m dead.”

The vulture flew off the branch and landed near him.

“I said I ain’t dead.”

He kicked the vulture in the chest, sending the bird into the air. It flew to a nearby tree. Perched in a branch, watching from a distance.

He stood and walked further into the dust and sand, hoping to find water.

The horizon vanished between the lines on my forehead.  
With dirt in teeth and toes, I walk until there are no steps left.  
Forgotten how to pray to my Father, a grip tightens around my  
throat.  
Where there's no water flow, the moments move so slow.

I need to feel your grace in my reflection.  
With no place to rest, I rise into the sun to be yours.

Call me a murderer. Call me a cowboy.  
I will take your wife. I will take your name.

Cowboy Andy paints a teardrop on the face of a wild horse.  
He says he has nothing to lose, so he pulls off the skin of a  
coyote.  
Watch him dance with a gun in the midnight sun.

Your blood is in my body, you're in my head. On the trail,  
you see clearly. All the fallen steps will tell your name.  
I want to learn it on my own. Does your name rhyme with  
Dandy?

Adobe and wooden buildings sat under the desert sun. He moved through the abandoned town. His steps echoed. The only other sound was the beating wings of a hawk, in search for some rodent. Next to one of the adobe homes, he found a well. Dried mud rested on the floor of the pit. The anticipation of water left his thirst even greater.

At the center of the town stood a saguaro. Its arms rose upwards, almost breaching the clouds. He thought to tear it down for the possible water resting inside the trunk. He decided the cactus was too grand to mutilate. He left the town and followed the sanded trail north.

We stand in rows of dried flowers, looking between the colors  
of grey and brown.

You hold a glass vase, filled with crushed petals of a chicory  
plant.

With thin lips and closing hands, you pray for thicker bones  
while I snip roots. In pair, we wander a land without bees.

Paint an eye of a hawk on my palm.

Give me his sight so I can see through  
wind and sand.

Watch me turn into a cowboy.

Find me in the shower.  
I am watering my plants.  
Too hot outside. Too hot inside.  
It's not good for spirits.

Cowboy Andy wears a mask made of cowhide with holes  
cut for eyes.

Father gave it to him and called him a true cowboy.

In the dark, he runs under the moon with his cowboy face.  
He fires pretend bullets from the tips of his fingers into the  
bellies of coyotes.

And he laughs as they yowl with their yellow diamond eyes.

The rattlesnake bites a rodent and I  
watch it die. I look up at the sky  
and feel the coldness from the falling  
light, wishing it would never be night.

I count the little mice who never saw  
the full moon.

Cowboy Andy said to give him the victims who lost their  
sight to the sun.

In the desert, he knows how to make new eyes from  
dried mud.

With dirt on his hands, he fitted muddy ovals into empty  
sockets.

The blind only saw the color brown, but at least they had  
something to see.

He pulled his teeth out when Father and God weren't looking.

And took each tooth to a hole dug on top a hill.

It is with hope that the teeth will sprout trees made of calcium.

Dreaming of a full harvest, he'd sell the branches of bone.

Father and God would celebrate his new fortune and name him

The King of Calcium.

No longer would he live in shame of his brother's wheat wealth.

Past the town stood a house built on dirt. In the midday light, the house threw a heavy shadow to the ground. Cracked paint dripped off of the wooden walls, beaten by the heat and sun.

He pushed the front door open. He entered and smelt an old meal of beans and venison. Opened windows with drawn shades to the left and right allowed brief moments of sunlight.

In a chair sat a young boy at a table. His hair grown long.

“Do you have water?”

“Yes.”

The boy pointed to the kitchen in the corner of the house. He drank from a pitcher.

The boy stared at him.

“My mother died two days ago.”

“How did she die?”

“I don’t know. I came through that door and found her on the floor.”

He drank more.

“I took her body out back. Would you like to pay respect?”

They walked out through the door in the kitchen. The back of the house was the same as the front. The house stood at the edge of dirt and sand. He looked to the mountains in the horizon.

“Out there, I bet God would forget His name.”

“Where’s your mothers grave.”

“She ain’t got a grave, yet. I brought her out here and left. It looks like vultures got at her.”

A few feet away from the boy laid a body with a stained sheet as a cover. He looked at the boy. A crooked grin flinched on his face in embarrassment or shame.

“Go find me a shovel.”

Cowboy Andy searched for a King in the desert.  
He made a crown from white branches with thorns.

A King needs a crown. Without one,  
few will know he is King of the desert.

His brother watched from the top of the barn.  
He played with a young lamb in the brown grass. Between  
passing clouds, the sun drew moisture from the lamb's wool.  
It began to baa for water but he knew not the language.

His brother threw a rock from on top the barn, striking the  
lamb's mother in the head.  
He began to weep for the death of the mother sheep. And the  
lamb drank his sodium tears with an open mouth.

I'm on my horse and it turned its head and said,  
"Nothing is a mistake, you're feeling great."

Dirt and sand turned to field grass. He bent down to feel the brittle turf. He stayed to the trail in fear of losing his way again. The mountains held his gaze. Within two nights, he would be at their base. And beyond the mountains were home and his mother, waiting to hear the death of his father.

The sound of a rattle broke his step. The forewarning vibrations rose higher. He heard, but could not see the snake. He pulled a knife from his pocket as he stepped a foot back. His eyes raced across the ground, trying to find the venomous striker. He found two eyes, cold and black. The serpent raised its head, the rattle shaking to no end.

He threw the knife into the head of the rattlesnake, pinning its jaw to the ground. Blood soaked the grass.

He daydreams of kissing girls while he rides wild mustangs.  
When the horses can run no more, he names the clouds  
Matilda and Bethany.

Sleeping through cold nights, he misses the embrace of a full  
bosom and gentle hands.  
It's hard to be a man married to the desert land.

“Hello vanity, I see your pretty eyes.”

In front of me you hold a bundle of cut  
Milkweed.

“Follow me. In the desert we will  
forget the names of those who are  
inside walls.”

I would only follow bouquets of Blue  
Thistle.

The eyes of the rattlesnake were dead. He held them  
between his fingers. Painted venom dripped to the ground,  
leaving puddles of ink. With a stick, he dipped into the blood  
and wrote words to honor the death of the rattlesnake.

I bite the heads of rattlesnakes to show my dominance.  
Their poison is nothing.

My sunstroke fever dream feels like an angel's kiss. In this  
moment, I defy the land and sky and bury my body in the  
clouds. But what's a funeral without my horse?

I should have confessions.

Kneeling on sand,  
I say a pray for all the cowboys  
still locked in towers of concrete.

That is what Mother would want.

The coyote takes my arm and pulls me to my knees.

“Diamond eyes never break and tear drops fall like pearls.  
Don’t ever leave or you’ll be the poorest man alive.”

He came to a line, separating the plains from the rising hills. On top of the hills were large fields of wheat. Beyond that, mountains made of limestone stood above the horizon.

The wheat swayed with the wind, creating choreographed shadows under the late sun. The brass colored grass mimicked the eyes of the mustang he lost.

He walked through the wheat, his hands glided above the tips of the stock. The cool wind from the mountains pushed against his chest. Light hit his eyes. He fell to rest.

In my head, I see you on a horse.  
There's a gun on the saddle and a cigarette  
between your lips.

You turn your head towards me  
and wink. The sun begins to fall and you  
ride into the empty desert. And I keep yelling

“*Shane, Come Back*” but your name is

Cowboy Andy

Dear Andrew,

I hope you love your new life as a cowboy.  
It's for the best that you're out west.

Run with the wolves and race a horse in the desert sand.  
Enjoy the land I'll never see.

Love,

Brother Will

