

"My Father, My Son"

Rhapsody

As a child my father would tell me about his father and of things they shared and did together.

They go to ballgames look at the stars and worked side by side.
And later on when my son is old enough we'll go to the ballgames and sit up and look at the stars and work side by side.
And I will tell him about what my father told me and what we shared and did together...
But now my father is no more
And now I think of the things my father and I shared and the things I plan to share with my son.
Like ballgames and sitting up to look up at the stars and working side by side.

E. C. Palacios

"A Ranch Day"

"Now You See Me, Now You Don't"

Who am I, you ask as I
Come knocking on your friendship
And I mean someday to tell you
But I won't.

I am wise and old and foolish
Young and gay and sad and lonely
I stand here at your doorway
Now you see me, now you don't.

What do I want, you now inquire-
Funny, but the question
Is the same one that I wanted so
To ask you, but I wouldn't.

What I wanted
Was your friendship
And to give me
But I couldn't ... and I won't.

But I'm trying to speak to you
Beyond the truth and lying
And I'm laughing and I'm crying
Now you see me...now you don't.

Jo Crisp

"Seasons"

In the summer of my spring
I brimmed with life's hopes and dares
exempt from forethought or care.

Laughing with each taken breath
Spring my favorite time of year
without hatred, rage, or fear
unashamed to shed a tear.

In the spring of my summer
less resolute and naive
blind to the changes in me.

Emotions were just a game
for the cold harsh world I trained
soon my true feelings became
deeply guarded; silent pains.

In the fall of my summer
as I watched the grass turn brown
I wondered where life had gone.

Had I changed so drastically?
I gave up my dreams from spring
and called it fixed destiny.
Instead of living, surviving.

In the summer of my fall
the flowers where once we played
have turned to dust and blown away.

Remember the spring we shared?
When we were without a care?
How we made a loving pair
since you've gone, still grief I bare
as winter nears I'll join you there.

Julia Singer

I wake in the morning to the distant calls of yelping coyotes echoing throughout the valley. Slowly a golden glow raises, silhouetting the western ridge, burning through the muffling fog that has blanketed the ground since the night before. The sunlight strengthens, dispersing the misty water droplets in the air, and, acting as a prism, magically illuminates the millions of sparkling crystals left by the early dew. The birds chirp their songs, and the ground animals stir, the brilliant colors that autumn has delicately draped like ribbons across the hillsides come alive and warm the cold air. It is the beginning of a new day.

The grumbling of wranglers as they tumble for their boots, with slamming of the hollow bathroom door and endless rushing of water in the toilet bowl, can be heard throughout the house. Still half asleep our ranch family stumbles for their seats at the breakfast table as a salty aroma of bacon and eggs, and faint charcoal smoke from the overdone toast, fills the room. Stomachs growl as plates, stacked high with food, are hastily passed around until every belly has had its fill. When satisfied tummies are nearly bursting, like a practiced dance step, the wranglers' chairs scoot back, scraping loudly on the linoleum, and we stand, rinse our dishes, and bundle up to go outside.

Quickly the cool air numbs every finger and toe, burning a rosey glow into our cheeks, while the brisk wind brings stinging tears to our eyes as it whips across our faces. We hobble to the barn on the already frozen stubs we used to call feet, waving our arms yelling "Yah yep yip," herding the 56 horses into feed. The animals move slowly against the wind, eyes shut and heads down attempting to fight the miserable gusts that cut through their long downey winter coats. As we tie up the horses our stiff joints are unable to open the metal clips and frustration builds as the cold takes our coordination and usual speed away. With the cutting of each bale, however, more warmth and feeling return to our bodies and continues to increase as we spread the hay. The steamy breath and body heat of the horses, combined with our constant movement and the thick protective walls help raise the temperature inside the barn by a few comforting degrees.

Loud, greedy screams of the hungry animals echo against the tin roof, while vicious pounds and squeals often catch wranglers by surprise as the horses fight for each others' feed. Struggling to meet a deadline, the wranglers squeeze their bodies between hundreds of pounds of power, working to accurately finish the brushing and tacking up of every fit horse. As the riders arrive and prepare horses, are assigned and introduced, we trudge from one scout to the next fitting their saddle to them while giving brief instructions on how to control their particular horse. After successfully mounting up every giggling and crying rider a call for silence is repeated with eventual results, and with a verbal attempt at good humor the few, but strictly enforced, rules are given. The horses gradually flow into single file naturally as the line weaves through the gate and out on range.

Seven long hours later, after repeated dismounts by the wranglers, who were retrieving an abundance of dropped lunches, hats, and an occasional rider, the trail ends as we enter the barn meadow. Courteous handshakes and thank you's are exchanged with the working staff as the scouts and their masters head back to their camp sites, cold, tired, and ready for a hot meal and cozy sleeping bag. For the wranglers, however, the working day is not yet done.

With the darkening of the sky the water falls, politely waiting until the end of the day. The rain comes down hard thundering on the sheets of metal over our heads, shattering the silence as though we were standing beneath a railway. Without a word the wranglers wearily carry every saddle, each heavier than the one before, to the dark gravel floored rooms where they are hung. The animals push into the sheltered warmth of the dirt and web covered walls, eating and resting after their long day.

Our muscles sore and frames tired we lock up the barn doors and walk together out from under the echoing darkness onto the wet grass of the pasture. The sun peacefully sets beyond the eastern ridge streaking bright pink and orange throughout the grey-blue clouds that empty upon us.

The day ends with a glorious sunset of colors and a satisfied feeling within each of us. We eat, laugh, and enjoy the comfort of our friends around us. Then our heads rest contently in the softness of our pillows. As the crickets chirp in distant darkness, our minds drift to thoughts of the day to come when we will again make our walks to the barn.

Beth Coffey

