

Fall 1980

Letter to Major George Thompson from Jenny

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Recommended Citation

Witt, Sandra (1980) "Letter to Major George Thompson from Jenny," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 15 , Article 36.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss15/36>

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LETTER TO MAJOR GEORGE THOMSON FROM
JENNY

I have given up seeing you this winter.
By the bay window a sunny morning
I saw the names of Oscar Parker and Major Corbett
in the Tribune. Your name was not.
All night lying under our blue quilt
I remembered your hair
blown against your throat,
the steady draw of the buggy.

Snow thickens the roof of the barn
as I walk to the Central House. Our room
was fourteen. In the parlor I listen
to the tread of men's boots. The pine door
opens and I imagine I hear you singing
as you used to lying on the bed.
The amber lamp remains and through the window
the prairies reach out under snow.

I dreamt you came home. Father and I
were scooping oats for the Bay and the brown mare.
You lounged against the barn door in blue
with epaulets and so many gold buttons.
I did not recognize you until you had gone.
Ann Butler said the horses are dying from long marches
and when I watch the snow fall
I feel a bird break from the sky
inside my skull and plunge.

Since the last battle I close my eyes
but can't control myself. I can hear nothing
by telegraph. The government claims the wires.
Years pass between the days, each morning
disjointed, a bird startled from the grass,
no pattern for flight. Lately I don't know

if the brown grass is a new spring
or a spring we knew together.

It is small comfort to know that nothing
is ever finished, that each touch
we carry with us to feel again
some unsuspecting morning,
wheat against our thighs.
Lately I have felt a lameness
between my shoulders.
Where is your heart?