

Winter 1995

## mostly it echoes in manhattan, montana

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RANDE MACK

**mostly it echoes in manhattan, montana**

sacajawea holds a t-bone steak bone like a dowsing rod  
she points it at every out of state plate on main street  
buy her a drink and she'll remember this town for  
you —

without houses, without streets, without a whisper

she'll pull history around by its leash  
and uncork some vintage weather  
and if the moon is right she might  
howl profanely in a distant language

her face is the map most men begin with  
her eyes are flickering back porch lights  
her smile is swizzled into a neon cocktail  
her nostrils flare at the mention of motion

her laughter skips down alleys past  
the lurching limos of buffalo shadows  
she winks at the squinting cowboys  
washing the color right off their trucks

she's seen the smudges auctions leave on a soul  
she hoards memories others would pay to forget  
the sound of the only payphone in town  
ringing can bring tears to her eyes

sacajawea is devoted to lottery tickets and tulips  
and sky speckling redtails circling the minimart  
she can spot a hardass in a room full of hallelujahs

and has yet to meet a god she wouldn't trade for green  
potatoes

she has picked strawberries with every minister's son  
but the furry undertaste of huckleberries  
clings like a jumper to her taste buds  
vague satisfactions nibble away at the night

she sings allegiance to the shaggy breeze  
as it gargles the coals of her cooking fire  
her voice is a sidewalk heaved with roots and frost  
her words rollerskate up and down the block

she cuts through groomed dark yards  
past tall backboards and short windmills  
under clothes lines and out of focus  
on her way from one hiatus to another

the urgent scent of her smoky hair  
wakes volunteer firemen nestled in craters of sleep  
they sniff their clocks before turning back  
to dream the old blue worship of lips and hips

under the flagpole sacajawea empties mice from her  
pockets  
for the unblinking owls scarecrowed on the school  
rooftops  
they were once warrior uncles vanishing in and out  
of the bulging morning light, revenge grim in their  
eyes

in front of the auto garage in the splotchy dawn she fills  
her canteen from the fountain and follows the road to  
the river

she bathes in bridge shadow and studies  
the faces on a page she tore from a book

each day a different page where once  
any face might have twisted the silence shut—  
sacajawea screams at every west bound train that doesn't  
stop here  
a boxcar could cure her insomnia on its way to the sea