Linda and the Cowboy

Jim Peterson
LINDA AND THE COWBOY

Your old green cap is on the table. The sun is finally breaking through. Good old Cowboy Billy, solid as a phone pole and half as tall, through the screen door just a dark shape with a white grin standing in the front yard, says the weather is good for something and you'd better come on out and collect what he owes you. I tell him you're usually under that green cap this time of the day but he doesn't laugh just grins, just grins, and says he'd hate to hurt a woman on such a nice day but I know he's all talk, and the wind blows through and picks up your cap and sets it on the chair. I figure you're down at the creek for a swim or walked into town for a beer and you sure picked a fine time because old Bill's leaning on the screen like a bear in heat and grinning twice as big and says he's done run you out of town, put you in the trunk of an old Cadillac bound for Texas, and I say sure, sure, and his hand hits the screen big as a hat, a black hat, and I tell him how hard we've worked to save this place to keep it alive and his hand comes through and hangs in the air, it seems, like some fleshy thing in an old horror show that sucks all the air out of my space and I can't breathe and I've worked so hard just look at the blood in these walls and I say just look at these hands just look at them
He sits down in your old chair, props his feet in the flowers, lays his gun on the table, and sails his big white hat, the wide brim tipping like wings, across the room.