

Medicine Lodge

(for Roy)

"There were no traces of bison the first day out, but like the veterans of the ocean, we were determined, fearless, and declared that we would find buffalo, or go to—Medicine Lodge!"

from *The Hutchinson News*, Sept. 17, 1872

"Fortunately we were not called to place our precious scalps in jeopardy, by a near approach to the vicinity of the noble red man"

We rumble across the prairie. The shudder and strap-iron giggle of the crazy-dry wagon box, the limber wheels on axles wind-licked of grease speak illusion of movement here where the land has no horizon; the eyes just give out in the great blue lodge of the sky: weeks of heat-burned grass under stray cumuli, the god-awful noplacé of our journey. Then the bison.

"Mr. Holowell, Mr. Rosan, and Mr. Flick, accoutered for the fray, started off in a half run, while Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Whitelaw sat complacently upon their past laurels, as 'buffalo slayers' with a perfect big Indian indifference as to the exciting scenes."

J. H. D. Rosan fires the first shot, lumping the bull in the distance. He laughs about killing Cheyenne cattle in this empty place past Bone Springs, below his first county Ranch: Section 4/Township 22/Range 6/just west of the 98th.

"Drawing near the poor victim, it was impossible to repress a pang as its large soft eyes wandered beseechingly from face to face, seeming to ask,

'What comes next in this fulness of my agony?'"

Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Whitelaw sit it out, those perfect buffalo slayers, as it seems to me. They wait under the dry twitter of the Ninescah cottonwoods this dry September.

"A few moments and the glittering knives were flashing in and out in the quivering flesh, until the choicest bits were selected and placed in the wagons, partly as trophies, partly to add to our evening banquet."

Yes, Mr. Rosan shoots first and Mr. Flick slashes the bull of the Cheyenne north of the Medicine Lodge, leaving the great skull horned through the grass into roots, the echoing wind in our red-meated, nautilus skulls. Our horses lug the wagon across the prairie of the Cheyenne. We make no progress, as it seems to me, and the air turns flesh-pale and the pink-humped west bleeds out the Blue Lodge Sky, north of the Territory.

The dark tongue shudders, licks at the sweet red hump in the crazy-dry giggling wagon box, rattling away from the hunt like a load of teeth—away from the Medicine Lodge and the wind-licked, stinking carcass of the Cheyenne Bull. Mr. Whitelaw holds the reins.

—Steven Hind