

38. Where I'm From *

I am from the home place, alone in a red dirt field,
proud, a little run-down
but once tall in the Oklahoma wind.

I am from the Chinese elms, guarding the old place,
chopping cotton in the summer,
green tomato pickles in the fall,
and sorghum popcorn balls for Christmas.

I am from paring knives and pyracantha bushes,
from Jell-O salads and raisin cookies,
from rocking chairs and the razor strap.

I am from do-it-yourself
and stand-your-ground,
from never-start-a-fight
but finish-them-all,
from pick-your-own-switch
and take-your-punishment.

I'm from Carter, Oklahoma,
the Preskitts, the McIntyres, the Stowers,
from homemade quilts a hundred years old,
from hand-cranked homemade ice cream,
from Granny Zem's hand-carved moon,
its stair steps filled with angels,
from Grandpa Bert whittling big sticks into little twigs,
from Great Grandma Preskitt,
blind eyes seeking the lightning.

I am from the "Amen Brother"
of Southern Baptist Churches
and the "Amazing Grace" of country choirs.
I am from the open-air sleeping porch,
from bedtime stories under the stars,
from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
in King Nebuchadnezzar's Fiery Furnace,
from Jonah in the Whale's Belly and
Joshua at the Battle of Jericho.

* Derived from the original by George Ella Lyons