

1973

Desert News

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*"We're combing the town to see if
we have anything left in the way
of an Indian."*

Sheriff Ernest Pepin

DESERT NEWS

Luck brings you
to a mound
the size of a man.
So, you dig.
You hope to find
the grave of a chief.

Instead, the grave
is empty. You
will never know
who was buried.
All that is left
is printed
on the earth
like a leaf.

Perfectly,
bone-threads
mark their way
to the heart's cage
like veins.
You can see
what survived,
an arrow head
where the heart
should be,

without shaft
or target,

the stone
worn smooth
as a bullet.

You leave.
Designs of centuries
close up
behind you
with the first wind.

You will never know,
or if you do
it will be later,
on the way home
with the evening news
rolled in your hand
like a totem.

RETURN TO ST. CROIX

The customs officer
studies my photograph,
my signature.
Am I the same person?
He looks at my face
and sees
I have cried recently.
There are scars.
He asks, "Have you cried recently?"
I stare at him
through eyes which
no longer bear
resemblance to mine.
And I show him my hands
where nothing has been added
and he folds my passport
into my palm
as if nothing has changed.