

*Bullhead City, Arizona
August 27, 2008*

*(What is the meaning of the Native American expression,
"a good day to die"? Does anyone really
know? Seems like a longshot in the wrong places.
In the desert there are a couple of ways to go. But
pick the wrong place and the day can never be
"good." Here's what I think I know.)*

HOW TO DIE IN THE DESERT

Sundark and beer happy,
Hide a small book of poetry
 In your old Navajo shirt.

Wear a turquoise necklace

*(although you don't have one,
 I always see you wearing one,
 and I know how good you would
 look if you did wear one).*

Lie down in a comfortable spot,
Preferably by a wilderness landmark
 You have learned to love.

Smoke the little smoke.

Breathe deeply until you feel sleepy

*(best when the desert smells like rain
 and wildflowers are spilling their
 perfume in a race to root the soil
 and reach the sky).*

Make the last earthly colors you see
 Come to you as
 Yellow and rose
 In the sunset,

*(burnt orange and gray
can also be soothing)*

And something pink
In your mind

*(this can be something
you have always admired).*

Close your eyes and start traveling

*(someone's waiting for you
at the painted springs of origins,
just past the Needle's peaks,
where the rocks and spirits
all have brand new colors).*

Let the sun, wind,
And mysteries of night
Dessicate your body.

Let it become
An Irish-Indian mummy
In the sand.

Brown to a fault, perhaps,
But beautiful nonetheless.

....

UNLESS you are in Bullhead City.

Realizing that life here is more difficult
Than in the open desert,
And therefore so is finding a peaceful
And unencumbered death,
You should
Stop hitchhiking,

Throw your boots on the tarmac,
Smash your compass,
Drain your whiskey flask,
Break the glass,
And leave

Before the owner of the furniture store
Behind you
Calls the cops.

Cross the road to McDonald's.
Order a hamburger,
Plain, no cheese.

Eat it quickly, tossing the wrapper
On the floor.

Proclaim to the patrons that fast food
Is worth dying for.

They will smile and think they understand
But wonder why you couldn't wait
To throw your litter outside,
Like everyone else.

Bow to them and walk backwards
Through the door.

Keep going until you reach the highway
And the oncoming traffic.

Drop your wallet
And pretend not to know.

Straddling the white line,
Lose your shorts and socks,

Wait for horns to honk,

Arms to wave.

Then jump as quickly as you can
Into the fast lane,

And let the accident begin.

....

“Sir, you’re going to be all right!”

Tell the ambulance attendants
To let you be.

Say you want to be roadkill,

A dead lizard,
A dead tortoise,
A dead hawk,
A Precolumbian culture,

Not highway paint,
Or a tin can in sagebrush,
Or an urban tumbleweed
A plastic sack caught
On a creosote bush.

Not things that define the desert
For the criss-cross
Of daily commuters

On the road paved over Indian graves,
The hot tongue of asphalt that splits

The reservation,
Strip malls, hotels,
Check-cashing stores,
Pawn shops and parking lots,
And real estate offices.

Then say you've changed your mind about roadkill.

You just want to slip away

In peace

Bathed in memories of

Shaman songs

Only sung,

Unprinted,

Turquoise

Only found,

Unsilvered,

And Gods

Only honored,

Uncrucified.

Among other things.

Say you want to be anything but

An injured human being

On a hot desert highway

Dying a stone's throw away

From the cool relief

Of unbottled river water

And shade plants

Older than Jesus.

Say you want to crawl

Over

The curb

Through the dirt,

To the Colorado River,

Bypassing

Cookie-cutter homes,

Manicured grass,
Lawn jockeys,
River docks,
Fences,

And signs:

NO LOITERING!

THIS IS A CLEAN NEIGHBORHOOD!

DO NOT FUCKING DIE HERE!

VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED!

Or something like that.

Warned not to drink the water,
Say you are willing to drift away,

Eyes closed
Eardrums broken

Oblivious to

Wildfowl with split beaks
And plastic can holder collars,

Fish that glow in the dark
From urban dumpings upstream,

Deadly ground water
Gating the Mohave spirit maze.

“Just take me to the river.”

If they hesitate, tell them where you buried the treasure,

Not in the Superstitions.

No! Too much gold there already.

You buried it *under*
Twenty stores along the highway.

They should find the gold.
Buy more real estate.

Hamburgers.
Boats.
Cars.
Tires.
Gasoline.
Deodorant.
Preservatives.
Plastics.

They should start digging *immediately*.

Now stare at the sun and repeat your mantra:

You must die in the desert,

Alone,
Naked,
Thirsty,

And underwater.

By this time no one will be listening.

You will be free to drag yourself to the river,
Boat launch of broken dreams,

The troubled but still ancient path
To becoming
Your own desert fossil.