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These Is My
Words

Nancy E. Turner

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The Diary of Sarah Agnes Prine, 1881-1901

ARIZONA TERRITORIES

A Novel

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For everyone who has ever stood alone on a hill in a storm

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July 22, 1881

A storm is rolling in, and that always makes me a little sad and wistful so I got it in my head to set to paper all these things that have got us this far on our way through this heathen land. Its been a sorrowful journey so far and hard and so if we dont get to San Angelo or even as far as Fort Hancock I am saving this little theme in my cigar box for some wandering travelers to find and know whose bones these is.

When they were young Mama and Papa went the Oregon Trail with their folks, and when they married they came from Oregon and started up a little farm near a road by Cottonwood Springs, in the west end of New Mexico Territory. We always ran a fine string of horses, as long as I can remember. My favorite is a little roan with a white nose and I call her Rose. In 1881 we had stuck out a wet winter and a plum pleasant spring. Then Papa and the big boys, that's Ernest and Albert and Jimmy Reed, drove a few of them with the MacIntosh's cattle down to a place called Phoenix and to a place higher up on one end of the valley called Hayden's Ferry. They were gone nearly six weeks, all totaled.

Ernest and Albert is my big brothers, of which I got too young-ern's, Harland and Clover. Had a baby sister who went with the angels before she was a year old, so my folks calls her Harriet Jane but on the inside I calls her my Angel Sister. I always thinks of her in my prayers and berried one of my dolls in her little grave so she could grow up and we'd play together. In my mind Angel Sister watches over me. I used to pretend tea parties and jump

rope with her. I always wished I had a sister more than any other thing there is. It is good to have these brothers here but its not the same as having a girl you can talk to and play with, and besides, they can be an ornery bunch and tease me to no end. I am purely outnumbered.

Harland was nine years old and Clover was six when Papa and the boys come back with their pockets running over in cash, and Papa says that there Phoenix was hotter than the devil's frying pan. So he's getting fed up with the Territory and the farm house in need of fixing and all, he 'spects to point the front end of our wagon towards the Rio Grande and head for greener pastures by way of Texas.

Jimmy Reed got in a quandry about all this talk, 'cause he been living with us like family since his people all died of cholera in Ute territory and that's most of five years. Jimmy Reed couldn't make up his mind should he pull up stakes with us or stay and marry Miss Ruthanne MacIntosh, whose papa owned a good spread and some groves of peach trees and a couple of purebred bulls—I can't recollect what kind.

Well, Papa said stay or go, but we are pulling out come July 4th and he figured Jimmy was nineteen and too young a pup to go serious sparking a girl even if she is seventeen. I was seventeen too, but I guess he didn't figure I minded cause there isn't no other boys around and I'd as soon kiss a pig as Jimmy Reed. Ernest and Albert took to teasing him until he jumped on a bare backed pony and rode off mad. He come back and say he's about to marry Miss Ruthanne and her pa says he can live in their bunkhouse for a year and earn the right.

Papa and the boys rounded horses and even took some mustangs until we had most all our herd we knew of. I wanted to break Rose to the bit before we took off, but Papa said there'd be time along the way and I could saddle break her by the time we hit San Angelo which was where he 'spected to settle. Mama asked him once what was there in San Angelo and he couldn't say, and she just laughed and said Henry Arthur your feet is just itchin'. Mama don't mind moving on, she says. All she has done all her life is move. First as a little girl to Oregon, and then around