

4 poems

Franci Louann



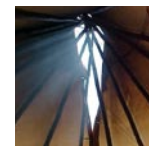
portrait of a cowboy



on meeting tom jackson



eye over strathcona



prairie fantasies



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[click mouse to begin]

portrait of a cowboy

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who is this cowboy
getting on a plane in Edmonton?
wide brown brim
long oilskin coat of chocolate

is he an Aussie?
an outbacker?
a “mate”?
(she wonders)

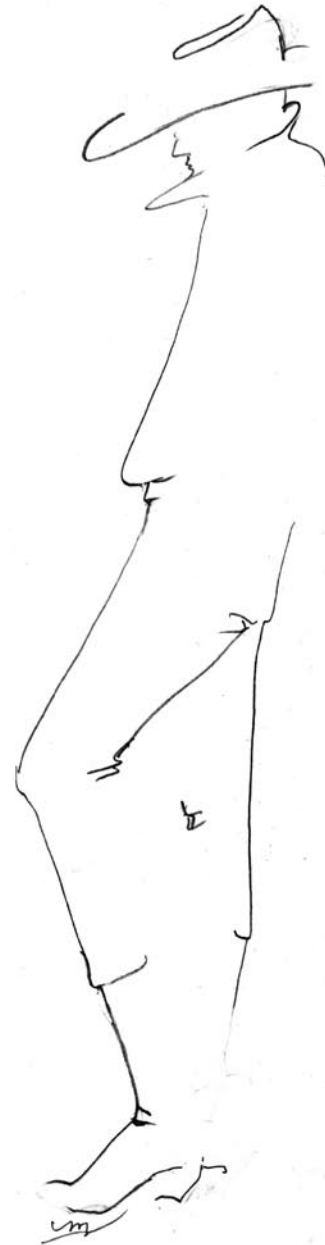
(she says)
I could use some of your gear
for Saturday night
our Western Night in Saskatoon

is he a rodeo dude?
a bronc buster?
a bull rider?
(she wonders)

(she says)
cowboy boots
I need black cowboy boots
is black OK in June in Saskatoon?

is he an entertainer?
a country singer?
a heart-acher?
(she wonders)

(he says)
try Broncho’s – try Claypool’s
how much do you want spend?
take your VISA!



(he says)
nine weeks on, three weeks off
I’m just back from “the territories”
the DEW line!

(she thinks)
Distant Early Warning
just learned that last night
it’s obsolete – “landscape garbage”

(she asks)
doesn’t that have a new name?

(he says)
North Warning System

(she asks)
when was it all started?

(he says)
in the mid-fifties

(she wonders)
was that the McCarthy era?

(she SEES)
his eyes are
bedroom blue
his fingers
nicotine brown



Marion said
YOU MET TOM JACKSON?!
and said if she had met Tom Jackson
POEMS would be dripping from her
fingertips

on meeting Tom Jackson

© Franci Louann

sure I regret not taking him
and maybe his wife too
around the corner
not introducing him
to a dozen dental hygienists
at our conference
at the Westin Hotel
in Calgary
in nineteen ninety-six
I'd just been on the phone
turned around
and they were there
coming from a darkened dining-room
Tom was tall, very tall
very broad-shouldered
very "tall, dark, and handsome"
in black jeans
and a bright red golf shirt
Alison acquiesced
let me seize the moment
I wish I had acknowledged her
I know he spoke with me
I'm sure we shook hands
I probably said why I was there
maybe they were both amused
with my obvious
star-struck behaviour
as I stood shyly, short in my cowboy boots
my pant suit with the ruffled jacket
chosen for Calgary

in my dreams I have more courage
I take them both to the lounge
introduce them to my friends
explain how Tom is the star of "North of 60"
I say: he's a great actor
I watch every week
he can sing too!
"That Side of the Window"
is my favourite
Tom is a philanthropist
I tell them about The Huron Carole
the annual cross-Canada concert tour
Alison "wanted to make a million"
Tom suggested charity
their work is for the Food Banks
Tom is a great Canadian
together they are the best that they can be
they inspire me
I don't collect autographs
maybe someone would have taken our photograph!
Tom Jackson, thanks for the memory!

after all
Marion said
if she had met Tom Jackson
poems would be dripping
from her
fingertips



I remember
the small neat pile of papers
on the chair beside your kitchen table
no desk
no drawers necessary
I voiced envy of such simple living

Yet you despaired
feared the pile might grow
and fall

On the bathroom counter
your things were hidden
in a wicker case
your neatness a habit
not just an effort
for my four-day visit

eye over strathcona

© Franci Louann

Now
two months later
I watch the news from Edmonton

See how a twister
has spun through lovely old Strathcona
where you walk to work
the unedited tape is a collage
a crisscross of red, blue and yellow
an abstract mosaic, ironic beauty

Shreds of homes, of lives
are piled like pick-up sticks
poked and pulled at by stunned survivors

Twenty-five dead
hundreds injured
don't try to phone they say
helpless I focus
my mind's eye
on your small pile of papers.



prairie fantasies

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teepee? wigwam?
darkness

on furs and skins
stretched over branches

smoke stinging nostrils
hearing voices outside

I welcome you
my lover

later
on a travois

furs and skins again
stretched between poles

behind a horse
a rough road

we meet again
my lover



Franci Louann

Franci Louann has been writing poetry since age twelve. Nee Fran Workman, she'd like to prove a connection with Dr. Joseph. Some of her early poems, included in Dorothy Livesay's last anthology, are now in the permanent collection of the Vancouver Public Library.

Franci edits a poetry column for the Canadian Unitarian, and she hosts spontaneous poetry events "downstairs" at the Javanet in Vancouver. Franci has a pink python (polyurethane) cowgirl hat, drives a Pony, and says she could live in Calgary. Her partner, José, is a gaucho from Portugal, Argentina and Calgary.

About one-half of Franci's poems are very short. She is fashioning these into a manuscript entitled: **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FRAN WORKMAN –Ten Lines or Less**, a mini-auto-bio by Franci Louann.



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