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## **Texiana**

### **The Feminine Ideal**

'F I had my druthers, I'd marry a rich gal  
Somewheres around eighty-eight years of an age,  
Real purty, of course, but a little tad faded,  
Like yonder old buckboard beneath the osage,  
What's like to provide me a few yet of ridings  
Down to the saloon for a nip and a smoke  
But not to wear out past its pleasance of usage  
Before it consents to politely just croak.

If I had my druthers, I'd marry a female  
Well stocked with enchantments to lure any lad  
But truly antique in the way of fine ladies  
And antimacassars on armchairs gone bad,  
And frayed at the elbows and collar and bloomers,  
So thin in the threads she'd collapse at a sneeze,  
Translucent as if from neglect and full living  
But once just as fancy as anyone'd please.

If I had my druthers, I'd marry a widder  
What's already had her fair share of good life  
And knows how to please an ol' husband completely  
Wit'out being someone's high-maintenance wife,  
And as a result has amassed a small fortune  
Of some fine old gentleman's largish estate,  
And mostly, my druthers would see me well married  
To said gal a moment *afore* it's too late.

### **This Trailer Ain't Big Enough for the Two of Us Anymore**

I once was your sweetheart  
I once was your Queen

Our love was the greatest  
The county had seen

How handsome you were  
In your glorious youth

With your monogrammed shirt  
And your shiny gold tooth

But it led you astray  
And I'm no longer fooled

When Arlene comes to have  
Her car's engine retooled

I don't have to hire a  
Snoop in-vest-i-gator

To know that stain ain't  
From some trashed carburetor

Say goodbye to my big hair  
And ay-crylic nails

You're about to find out  
What comeuppance entails

You'll discover a pain  
That time cannot erase

As you pine for my assets:  
My spackled-on face

My implants and spray tan  
And thigh-baring flounce

And the ee-nor-mous size  
Of my linked bank accounts

Don't let the screen door  
Snap at you as you pass

For I'd rather my pointy-  
Toed boot hit your grass-

Stained and coverall-ed

Seat with such force

That your cheating would pointed-  
ly feels some remorse

And we'll see if Arlene  
Will still rev for that fool

The mechanic who made  
A mistake with his Tool.

### **Little Beasties' Escapade**

Raccoon, Armadillo and Possum set sail  
In a galvanized bucket, the teeth of a gale,  
On the reservoir lake in the midst of the night,  
Under cloud-obscured stars and without the moon's light,  
For they were on a mission requiring the dark,  
At imperative speed, wildly searching the spark  
Of a glimmer ashore on the lake's farther side,  
Where they'd scramble the banks and find somewhere to hide—  
And what was their mission, to act like scared squirrels?  
Escaping, of course, from the amorous girls  
Of the possum, raccoon and the 'dillo persuasions.  
Run and hide's all one *can* do on just such occasions.

### **Who's Running this Herd Anyway?**

I'd tell the ranch hands what to do,  
But I don't know that stuff—do you?  
I cannot rope, I cannot ride;  
I tend to quail and dash inside  
When lightning, thunder, wind, or rain  
Makes an appearance on the plain;  
As little ranch skills as I know,  
The hands will tell *me* where to go.

### **Old Hands**

Been out in weeds, in the way-back forty,  
Tumbling along by the dry mesquite,  
Rambling and ambling the afternoon by  
With nary a stop to rest or eat  
This is the way the daytime passes,  
Angus at left, longhorns to the right,  
A couple of dogs at our heels to steer them  
Until we whistle them in at night

Some things change on the range with passing  
Time and tide and the phase of moon,  
With years and advances and techno-wonders,  
But none of this here's like to change so soon,  
And why should it do? We still will mosey  
And saunter our way through the rolling plain  
As long as the longhorns and the Angus  
And we need to too, we'll all remain

### **Prickly Pear**

To the uninitiated, it's unappealing to think of cooling the desert air  
by slurping at something named for its prickles  
But after slaking fiery thirst with it, one finds the Prickly Pear  
just as fine and dandy as ice cream and popsicles.

### **Horsepower**

It never mattered much to me  
If power were concrete, but then,  
They're still attracted to its pull,  
In fact, become intractable  
When any wanting to compete  
Should test their horsepower on the street,  
In offices, in men themselves—  
No need for psychic skill that delves  
Beyond the obvious, because  
It's simply as it always was:  
Men love their strength and need to test  
And prove that theirs is still the best

### **Downtown Manners**

I put on my bolo,  
My best wide-brimmed hat  
And my shirt made of finest chambray,  
And stroll down the avenue, sleek as a cat,  
For a Saturday morning sashay,  
Which, here in North Texas,  
We do in high style  
As we do everything anyhow,  
And even the horses that pass on the mile  
Also roll up and give us a bow,  
And that's how we saunter  
Our slow do-si-do  
Through the Fort on a Saturday morn,  
All tipping our ten-gallon hats to and fro,

And bowing like great stalks of corn  
Awash in the breeze of a  
North Texas squall,  
Our silver a-twinkling and bright  
On collar and saddle, belt buckle and all,  
Till we walk again Saturday night.

### **How Beauty Contributes to Survival of the Species**

A longhorn with a handsome set of horns as curly as they get  
Was slightly cowed by what he saw when shown the Long Arm of the Law;  
He'd had some hope he was exempt from need to keep his long horns kempt  
And polished to a shiny sheen like pearl, his hooves polished to keen,  
Dark, perfect handsomeness, the ring hooked in his nose, and everything  
In fashion, grand in every way; turns out, he'd missed his class the day  
The rules were set out in his youth, and so he lacked this simple truth.  
So he was startled when the fuzz pulled him aside and said because  
He'd failed to keep in such fine style, he'd have to go to jail awhile.  
You, also, may not know these rules, if you too missed time in your school's  
Important seminars, so here I share them with you; do not fear  
That cops will catch you; do not dread, but spiff your hooves and horns instead,  
And you'll be free to roam and graze in any pasture, all your days.  
Why do I share this? Cattle, kine, or beeves all ought to look as fine  
As stud bulls, just in case they meet random policemen on the street,  
For at the least—or, maybe, most—they won't then end up as a roast.

### **Dangers Just out of View**

Do not pursue the missing sock,  
The partner to your single shoe;  
Though losing either one may rock  
Your sense of balance, don't pursue,  
Unduly, missing treasures: wide  
Their unwed wanderings may flee,  
And you might quite unsettled be  
To see on capture what's inside.  
Remember as you, hunting, run,  
That warmth and dark like boot or sock  
Is favored as a sun-baked rock  
By spider, snake or scorpion.

### **Tombstone, Parts I & II**

**I**

A heavy pall hung over the brush  
And the sagebrush rolled with a whispery hush  
*Beware! Beware!*, the townsfolk cried:

*The killer's coming! Take cover! Hide!  
Call in your children, rescue your wife;  
Tether the horse if you value your life!  
Your grave is marked, man—hold your breath—  
For your desktop bears  
The Blue Screen of Death.*

## II

Well, it's lonesome, lonesome, lonesome beneath the broad blue sky  
If he weren't way too manly, a poor cowpoke could cry-yi-yi  
The Ethernet's gone silent and left me all alone  
My email has been down for days; no voicemail on my phone  
Yes, it's lonesome, lonesome, lonesome beneath the empty sky  
I know my days are numbered and I'll soon curl up and die-ie-ie  
As I slump down o'er the keyboard and draw my terminal breath,  
I look up one last time to see  
The cold Blue Screen of Death—  
Yes, I look up one last time to see  
The cold  
Blue Screen of Death!

### **Butt Out or Beware**

Here I lie on a bale of hay,  
Hoping the pains will go away  
Before the goat returns whose mind  
Was set on smacking my behind  
When I had so innocently bent  
To pitch the hay—and away he went,  
And with an impulsive rush and heave,  
And not so much as a by-your-leave,  
He butted me with speed and force  
(Upon, in fact, my butt, of course)  
Sending me up in an arc so high  
I couldn't help letting out the cry,  
"Hey! I can see my house from here!"  
But then, as the ground again drew near,  
A sense of gloom overcame my heart  
And I landed quite firmly, saved, in part,  
Only by the coincidental fact  
That I fell on my head, which remains intact  
In tribute to my *own* stubbornness—  
As great as the fabled goat's, I guess—  
So I'm lying here in my aching state,  
With a thought in my recently hammered pate  
That a goat shan't get the best of me,

And when he comes back he will quickly see  
That, though he had thought revenge remote,  
He will learn the truth: I can get *his* goat.

### **Well Worn**

There is a dignity  
And elegance to being worn  
Beyond recognition as  
The thing-that-was:  
Once pretty, fully functional,  
Well designed—It's by  
The fineness of this apropos  
Well-suitedness for use  
That things that might  
Have been quite simple and  
Quite plain become  
The hard-used favorites  
That by this aging then  
As Beautiful  
Become defined

### **Favorite Boots**

Hard to imagine how much wear  
It takes to soften down  
The tough old boots I loved the best  
And burnish their deep brown  
Thick skin until it's almost black  
In places by the heel  
And worn by stirrups near the shank—  
But I know how they feel

### **Those Big Death Scenes in Westerns**

The slinger slung his monstrous gun  
out of its well-oiled holster—  
she tried to dart from the couch and run,  
but he shot her through the bolster.  
She tried to duck his second shot  
and they got into a tussle—  
it didn't help her cause a lot:  
he shot her in the bustle.  
She staggered around; began to totter;  
still the gunslinger came  
relentlessly on and at last he got her—  
right in the final frame.

### **Something's Afoot at the Fort**

A Texas Ranger lost his boot  
And all of us can feel  
His pain at losing shaft and spur  
And being down-at-heel  
Without the custom stitching and  
Tooled silver on the toe,  
The steel shank inset and the vamp—  
Where is a man to go  
To get re-shod so perfectly  
In style with stuff that wears  
Like his cast-iron skillet, by  
A boot-maker who cares  
As deeply as the Ranger does  
For quality and class?  
I only hope the Ranger knows  
That this pain, too, shall pass,  
For down the street the Ponder shop  
Has crocodile skin  
And hand-tooled leather of all kinds  
To tuck his tired hooves in,  
And like a human's farrier,  
Will shoe him with perfection  
In custom boots as soon as he  
Gallops in that direction,  
So go on, Texas Ranger, sir,  
Get in and order boots  
To save your poor hooves from their loss  
In any style that suits,  
From ostrich up to diamondback,  
From white to black as soot,  
And classy as a Cadillac  
You wear upon your foot

### **The Blue Lacy**

He's of a faithful breed, my dog, a hunting hound, a clever beast,  
a lean and hungry Cassius, but faithful all the same—  
He races me to the rotting log and runs to ground the boar at feast  
who'll soon be *ours*—Alas for us, the boar knows his Wild Game!  
He lunges up in fear and rage: his tusks are aiming for my throat,  
and I have tripped into my grave on roots as strong as sin—  
But Blue has taken center stage, leaps on the boar's mad, bristly coat,  
gives me the breath my knife to save, hangs on as it plunges in—

The boar falls back with a bloody scream but turns on me his fiery glare,  
and then, in an instant, strikes once more, for he means my dog to die—  
I yank the roots, trip him into the stream! and Blue and I tear away from there—  
and we relish our supper of beans—no boar—my faithful hound and I.

### **Stratospheric Eventualities**

Calm and measureless heights of azure Texas sky  
Rise streaked with silent foaming white,  
The broad hot blue patterned with these delicate  
Ambling clouds that stretch to cover great distance at  
A leisurely, attenuated speed, always slipping noiselessly  
Across branch-tops, over the brazen sun, and into  
The realms of seeming outer space, asleep  
Though it should be at lazy midday  
Suddenly this easy traffic is crossed  
By a soaring, circling pair of  
Dark metallic wings, the steely black of one  
Great vulture passing through to catch  
The updrafts and to cycle down, surveying  
His kingdom plat by plat—he's joined, soon enough,  
By would-be kings, the other buzzard princes of  
The wide blue air, who comb the same  
Field of clouds with their own  
Gunmetal-dark brace of wings  
And after a time, these too are scattered abroad at the dash  
Of two, then three, sharp triangles of louder, faster, sterner steel,  
As fighter jets flash by in succession,  
Pull together into a tight  
Formation from their first sharp linear slash, and make  
A single force with which they will unzip  
The sometime quiet of that great wide sky

### **I May be Texan 2**

I never thought to come to Texas, even for a visit,  
But serendipity is not predictable, now, is it?  
And if I might not so have planned—don't have a longhorn cow—  
Turns out it was a fine surprise to land here anyhow.

### **I've No Beef with Your Cultural Identity**

Being a female or male Croatian  
Is no more determined by your location  
Than eye-color, height or weight, or sex is  
By where you were born in the state of Texas—  
But I will admit Texan regions do

Determine the skew of your barbecue,  
And can also say, since it ain't no tattle,  
That many are mighty fond of cattle.

### **Oh, Take Me to Texas**

Oh, for the lure  
of the cattle drive!  
There's nothing  
that makes me  
more alive—  
I long for the dust  
and the smoke and sweat  
and the cactus tall  
as a man can get—  
and most of all,  
when I'm back at home,  
I miss  
the wide space  
where the  
buffalo roam  
and the sun sits high  
in the mesquite thorns,  
and Oh, do I miss  
the wild longhorns!

### **Show of Fireworks**

Across this piece of Texas sky,  
Local alchemists and  
Magisterial teenagers are casting  
New and sparkling stars, comets,  
Blazing suns shot out of  
The hands of these earthbound gods  
Into the deepening blue-black night  
And turning the sky of the  
Lone Star State into great  
Galaxies of momentary stars

### **Cowboy Poetry**

I've heard the tales of cowboy bards,  
Those troubadours whose songs  
Lit up the starry western skies  
With cattle's git-alongs  
And gunfights on the old main street  
And woeful, wistful loves

Lost on the trail along the way;  
So many deerhide gloves  
Worn through with saddled-up hard work;  
I've heard the stories told  
In grizzled campfire-smoky tones  
By cowboys young and old—  
But not a legend, not a tune  
Carries the simple power  
Of one true tale from one true heart  
Who's lived it, every hour.

### **Enough**

What if the coffee pot is all  
The consolation left  
Upon the whole  
Broad prairie's plain,  
From flats to rocky cleft,  
From lidless sky to riverbed,  
Mesquite to tumbleweeds?  
What if that's all? It may be all  
A lonesome cowboy needs,  
For when the buzzards circle low  
And wolves howl at his heels,  
There's nothing still so passionate  
As what the cowboy feels  
At being free out on the range,  
His horse and boots at hand,  
A pot of coffee on the fire,  
In sight of endless land.