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BRANDED

*To that typical plainsman, L. S.*

The spell of the desert is on me—it's got me fast and sure,  
And I must leave the easy trail to follow the desert's lure;  
I'm marked with the signs of its branding—wild eye, black  
lip, raw skin;  
Through hunger, thirst, through hell I'll go to follow the  
curséd thing!

What is the spell of the desert?—how can a fellow say?  
Is it the sun on the drifting sands of a blinding, burning day?  
Perhaps the hiss of a rattler coiled in a clump of mesquite?  
Or maybe the little dust-devils running on twisted feet?

You say it's the blaze of colors that come when daylight goes,  
Colors that never had a name and only the desert knows;  
And then the sudden drop of night, so still you can hear the  
tread  
Of a coyote nosing the water-hole, or the turn of your  
broncho's head.  
I tell you, the spell is none of these: it's something a man  
can't see;  
But what it is that haunts the place you will never learn  
from me.  
I only know it's branded me—this much I can understand.  
And I must leave the easy trail to wander that burning land.

*Branded*

The spell of the desert is on me—it's got me fast and sure,  
And I must leave the easy trail to follow the desert's lure.  
I'm marked with the signs of its branding—wild eye, black  
lip, raw skin.  
Through hunger, thirst, through hell I'll go to follow the  
curséd thing!

*Amy Sebree-Smith*

## QUATRAINS

### THE WOLF AT THE DOOR

The Russian traveler in the story, lest  
The wolf attack, casts out his precious store.  
So we surrender all that we hold best,  
To drive back him who clamors at the door.

### THE ANNIVERSARY

With no observance is my birthday set  
From other times aside.  
But once each year—would God I could forget!—  
Comes back the night I died.

*Ruth Hall*