

~~W. B. B.~~
The End of the Road

It was

On the eve of that week in July, my husband and I realized we would be entertaining guests at our beach on the Alapaha River without a watermelon and living thirty miles from ~~the nearest produce market~~ in Valdosta, Ga. we opted not to spoil our peaches with anticipation by taking an ~~hourly~~ trolley, ~~to be~~ teaming ~~around~~ ~~the~~ ~~road~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~river~~. The weather evening was too pleasant, the sun ~~settling~~ ~~into~~ a light dusky calm on the second full moon of June by which ~~the~~ ~~yellow~~ pines of the ~~flats~~ ~~are~~ ~~seen~~.

In farm country, one does have alterations.

~~Getting off~~ ~~of~~ ~~one~~ ~~major~~ ~~highway~~ ~~leads~~ ~~to~~ ~~Valdosta~~ ~~corde~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~interstate~~ ~~95~~ ~~of~~ ~~dirt~~ ~~roads~~ ~~through~~ ~~the~~ ~~woods~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~minor~~ ~~highways~~. Light traffic, a tractor or two, was there from hamlet to hamlet, all drawn toward Valdosta, forest to civility, many of the ~~are~~ ~~own~~, are abandoned ~~temporarily~~ ~~camp~~ ~~is~~ ~~scattered~~ ~~about~~ ~~the~~ ~~farm~~ ~~families~~. ~~people~~ ~~are~~ ~~scarce~~ ~~in~~ ~~Collier~~ ~~County~~. ~~interest~~ ~~like~~ ~~the~~ ~~many~~ ~~poor~~ ~~roads~~. If your last name is Ziegler, chances are you know ~~your~~ ~~Rufus~~ ~~camp~~ ~~lies~~ ~~just~~ ~~off~~ ~~one~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~winding~~ ~~roads~~ ~~intersecting~~ ~~with~~ ~~mine~~. And you had not even thought about it.

The dirt road we ~~felt~~ ~~that~~ ~~was~~ ~~named~~ ~~after~~ ~~my~~ ~~father~~ just happens to be called Ziegler road, ~~named~~ ~~for~~ ~~one~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~families~~ ~~who~~ ~~used~~ ~~to~~ ~~farm~~ ~~the~~ ~~land~~ ~~where~~ ~~the~~ ~~road~~ ~~is~~ ~~now~~. ~~the~~ ~~road~~ ~~is~~ ~~perpendicular~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~Alapaha~~ ~~River~~.

You can't see the road ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~road~~ ~~but~~ ~~you~~ ~~know~~ ~~it~~ ~~is~~ ~~there~~ ~~if~~ ~~you~~ ~~know~~ ~~the~~ ~~road~~ ~~near~~ ~~its~~ ~~end~~.

Usually, we could find a melon patch. But the drought of '86 had claimed most of the crops and ^{for} many of the farmers, like us, had been forced to seek more gainful employment ^{while} struggling to hang onto the land bequeathed us by our ^{farmed out} fathers: a gift and a burden. The drought of '88 would bring the ~~struggle~~ ^{around us to auction the valley of beauty.} We would find ^{one} my husband ^{assured me} at

once resourceful and ^{adaptable} chipper, still in a playful mood from the leisure day we'd stolen from our busy hectic ^{years like rest at the halfway mark point.} schedules. Short days found us mired in surviving: he ^{trudging} out sustenance from ^{our parched} the plain, while I, a fledgling novelist ^{lost in the} ~~the~~ ^{highway} ~~the~~ ^{read} ~~read~~ ^{wrote}, taking ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{highway} into town for recreation once a week. A step ahead, circumventing the ~~clasp~~ ^{clasp} of time, I ^{had} ~~had~~ ^{hope} ~~hope~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{sell} ~~sell~~ ^a ~~a~~ ^{book} ~~book~~ and ^{earn} ~~earn~~ ^{enough} ~~enough~~ ^{money} to buy back ~~the~~ ^{my} ~~land~~ ^{land} — ^{when} ~~of~~ ^{auctioned}.

²
^{urgent}
 almost, smell the ~~light~~ ^{light} tart breeze from the
 willow and the ^{green of the} cool damp ^{dalen} in between.
 coarse sandy ^{like sandstone} beaches ^{at intervals} along the
^{shallow} water. Shallow ^{water} ^{shallow} resemble
 weak tea; darker spots ^{under} ^{water}
 black, edging ^{along} ^{below} steep banks where ^{scalloped and}
~~and black~~ ^{from} arch over. The dappled
^{of the} ^{at} ^{midday} ^{and} ^{chamber} ^{along}
^{of} ^{the} ^{water}, shallow spots taking on a
 semblance of ⁱⁿ ^{depth} where ^{for} ^{feet}
 deep the water ^{is} ^{shallow}. The flow produces
 a ^{trilling} ^{like} ^{the} ^{gull} ^{and} ^{entirely}. ^{someone}
^{leaked} ^{near} ^a ^{fine} ^{beach} ^{near} ^{our}
 house ^{at} ^{Mayday} ^{and} ^{as} ^{many} ^{as} ^{twenty} ^{people}
 a day in summer ^{block} ^{there} ^{of} ^{Hecky}
 sand and ^{tumbling}, ^{breaking} ^{the} ^{surface}
 current, they ^{carry} ^{on} ^{gravel} ^{to} ^{the} ^{sea}
 our neighbor ^{man} ^{set} ^{up} ^a ^{store} ⁱⁿ ^{Mayday} ^{to}
 accommodate ^{the} ^{business}. The sheriff of Echols County ^{treated}
^{the} ^{business} ^{out} ^{and} ⁱⁿ ^{because} ^{of} ^{the} ^{gravel} ^{and} ^{concrete}
^{at} ^{the} ^{great} ^{disturbance} ^{one} ^{affair} ^{concerning} ^{the} ^{old} ^{concrete}
^{bridge}. ^{As} ^{the} ^{water} ^{cut} ^{the} ^{down} ^{of} ^{the} ^{four}
 county commissioners ^{claimed} ^{to} ^{have} ^{heard} ^{of} ^{the} ^{four}
^{gangs} ^{of} ^{men} ^{digging} ^{up} ^{the} ^{bridge} ^{at} ^{the} ^{place}
^{where} ^{the} ^{they} ^{had} ^{troughed} ^{through} ^{bamboo} ^{and}
 fox grape ^{vine}. ^{No} ^{longer} ^{there} ^{is} ^{any} ^{outlet}
^{for} ^{the} ^{water} ^{at} ^{the} ^{place} ^{for} ^{baptism}, they scatter
^{the} ^{midday} ^{at} ^{midday}.
 Like the ponds of oblivion, ^{locust} ^{leaves} ⁱⁿ ^{the}
^{river} ^{and} ^{the} ^{desert} ^{road}. ^{At} ^{the} ^{extreme} ^{being} ^{just} ^{drowned} ^{over} ^{the}
 river bridge, ^{an} ^{erect} ^{beak} ^{was} ^{the} ^{only}

industry ^{so far} allowed or desired in Echols Co. a ^{new} sand
mine ^{The iron road: SANDHOLE} in black ^{payed} ^{like a}
~~white sand~~ ^{white sand} ~~differs~~ ^{differs} ~~above~~ ^{above}

Lake of ~~crystal~~ ^{crystal} water
shed ^{by} the darkening sky. Evidence of
quadrant ^{by} ~~gray~~ ^{gray} ~~note~~ ^{note} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~road~~ ^{road} ~~track~~ ^{track}

~~the~~ ~~road~~ ~~track~~ ~~eastern~~ ~~shore~~ ~~railroad~~
track on the north, into the quadrant, and the
lake, removed to be ¹⁰⁰ ^{of} ^{at} ^{least} in

places ^{of} ^{the} ^{quadrant} ^{white} ^{mobile} ^{home} ^{squats}
on ^{the} ^{island} where ^{three} ^{small} ^{children}
~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~light~~ ~~bug~~ ~~chase~~ ~~light~~ ~~bug~~

the twilight ^{is} ^{than} ^{of} ^{my} ^{dark} ^{mother}
darts after them. ~~It~~ ~~can~~ ~~be~~ ~~seen~~ ~~that~~ ~~rest~~ ~~free~~ ~~the~~
roads. After the ~~the~~ ~~drum~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mine~~ ~~reflected~~

at sundown and the last train careers past at
11:30 p.m. she can rest. She can ~~be~~ ~~seen~~ ~~there~~ ~~rest~~ ~~free~~
they say, it is hard times all over ^{now} ^{by} ^{word}

Quadrant ^{is} ^{the} ^{side} ^{of} ^{the} ^{old} ^{road}, ^{blanched}
home ^{at} ^{the} ^{side} ^{of} ^{the} ^{old} ^{road}, ^{blanched}
now by moonlight, and several ranks of planted ^{black}
pines flank the ^{road} where the sun has ^{set} ^{behind} ^(phantom)

The ^{are} ^{small} ^{juniper} ^{and} ^{willow} ^{and} ^{the} ^{cool} ^{green} ^{dah}
~~the~~ ~~quadrant~~ ~~where~~ ~~the~~ ~~katy~~ ~~dids~~ ~~and~~ ~~crickets~~ ~~concentrate~~

A yellow flag ^{is} ^{seen} ^{over} ^{hunting} ^{the} ^{pickup} ^{among} ^{the} ^{huckleberry}
season. We can ^{see} ^{the} ^{flag} ^{almost} ^{to} ^{take} ^{them}, ^{plump} ^{and}
juicy, tart.

We stopped ^{over} ^{to} ^{pass} ^a ^{jug} ^{of} ^{cool} ^{water} ^{we} ^{had}
collected from a spring at the river that ^{flows} ^{with}
a ^{hard} ^{fall} ^{of} ^{rocks} ^{for} ^{skipping} ^{over} ^{the} ^{water}. (My husband

~~was~~ ~~he~~ ~~usually~~ ~~does~~ ~~and~~ ~~it~~ ~~does~~ ~~him~~ ~~mind~~ ~~He~~ ~~is~~ ~~at~~
~~the~~ ~~river~~ ~~if~~ ~~an~~ ~~not~~ ~~so ^{slow} ^{moving} ^{more} ^{aware}
of ^{that} ^{the} ^{river} ^{flows} ^{through} ^{the} ^{perch}. He knows it
is there, ^{apparently} ^{it} ^{because} ^I ^{do}. ~~It~~ ~~is~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~river~~~~

than cabin-bound, ^{writing} ^{my} ^{time} ^{He} ^{is} ^{at} ^{the} ^{river}, ^{looking} ^{for} ^{holes} ^{of} ^{us}.

Yet we make one ^{thing out} of one ^{two} square ^{two}, mathematically. ^{of mathematics, it's} ^{of a speciality.} I ask, laughing,
 "Where's ^{the} that melon patch?" I look, ^{causing}
 looking out over a ^{green} pasture ^{where} the weeds ^{are}
 are still ^{green} ⁱⁿ winter ^{the} yellow.
 I ^{prop} ^{my} ^{feet} on the bumper of the truck,
 staring, ^{causing} the ^{green} ^{yellow} ^{orange} ^{red} ^{purple} ^{pink} ^{black} on my face.

"What patch?" he ~~ask~~ asks. ~~you~~
 "You think you can just hop out and steal
 a watermelon anywhere?"

He is joking, I know. Seventy five years
 busy with his art ^{has made me sharp}. But I
 do it in some ^{hidden} ^{mechanism} ⁱⁿ ^{my} ^{mind} ^{that}
~~work~~ ~~that~~ ~~I~~ ~~might~~ ~~trip~~ ~~up~~ ~~through~~ ~~a~~ ~~usual~~ ~~dango~~
 yellow patch, ⁱⁿ ^{case} ^{of} ^{the} ^{white} ^{trunk} ^{of}
 dirt road, and clutch a cool ^{pink} ^{orange} ^{red} ^{purple} ^{pink} ^{black}
 dehydrated.

~~I~~ ~~was~~ ~~watching~~
 "You promised me a watermelon," I ^{was}
^{say} ^{watching} ^{the} ^{ferocious} ^{points} ^{searching} ^{along} ^{the}
^{edge} ^{of} ^{the} ^{pasture} ^{to} ^{find} ^{it} ^{where} ^{he} ^{kept} ^{it}.
^{the} ^{hand} ^{of} ^{the} ^{man} ^{with} ^{the} ^{gun} ^{was} ^{pointing} ^{towards} ^{me}.
 my blown hair. "Come on," he ^{was} ^{saying} ^{to} ^{me}, ^{to} ^{bring}
 back into the truck, ^{his} ^{eyes} ^{glowing} ^{under} ^{the} ^{moonlight}.
~~the~~ ~~blown~~ ~~hair~~ ^{of} ^{his} ^{luminescent}
 forehead.

I'd noticed earlier, while swimming on the
 river, that his ^{blown} ^{hair} ^{was} ^{different}. I'd never
 say that, but he would's and if I did,
 that thing is just ^{known} ^{to} ^{the} ^{others}
^{of} ^{the} ^{intelligency} ^{of} ^{the} ^{men} ^{of} ^{the} ^{reservation}. I was
 showing comfortably pliant.
 I ^{was} ^{walking} ^{along} ^{the} ^{bank} ^{and} ^{found} ^a ^{small} ^{the} ^{dried} ^{up} ^{branch} ^{bed}
 where he'd scampered down & picked wild ^{flowers} ^{there}
 blue ^{spring} ^{the} ^{purple} ^{into} ^{yellow}
 to ^{see} ^{if} ^{the} ^{black} ^{seems} ^{to} ^{the} ^{knives}

The branch, ~~then~~ ^{when} swollen with rain, is no more than a mere stream on a hole. ~~Confluent with~~ ^{at} the confluence with the river, it cuts across the open field and under the ^{dirt} road through joints of pipe.

and had presented me with a bouquet of wild & passionate
purple or he'd been in his prime. Now he
was mellowing.

The air had been initially the pungent scent of crushed dog fennel & green
The Cambridge ^{is a} ^{not far} ^{from} ^{the} ^{road} ^{where} ^{he} ^{had} ^{been} ^{planted} ^{it}
one of the trees had been planted in

in my backyard near the ~~the~~ ^{the} ^{water} ^{seeped} ^{the} ^{road} ^{where} ^{the}
the working machine water seeped. It would
blow by my + spring, with or without rain.

The car ^{was} ^{small} ^{the} ^{prominence} ^{of} ^{the} ^{pear} ^{tree}
at the next curve of the road. ~~It was~~
On each side the blackberry bushes - frequently
opened ^{to} ^{the} ^{road} ^{where} ^{the} ^{ditch} ^{lead} ^{to} ^{the} ^{woods} ^{the} ^{distance} ^{of} ^{the} ^{woods} ^{was} ^{needed} ^{to} ^{reach} ^{the} ^{woods}
road where the ditch lead ^{to} ^{the} ^{woods} ^{the} ^{distance} ^{of} ^{the} ^{woods} ^{was} ^{needed} ^{to} ^{reach} ^{the} ^{woods}
Graded properly, my husband ^{explained} ^{on} ^{the} ^{drive}

road should ^{gradually} ^{slope} ^{to} ^{planned} ^{ditches} ^{to} ^{prevent}
erosion ^{will} ^{the} ^{heavy} ^{spring} ^{rains}. We haven't
had the rains since '55. Not on abundance but
we ^{are} ^{grateful} ^{for} ^{the} ^{inch} ^{and} ^{half} ^{of} ^{rain}
~~The first I had read from the newspaper of one of the stone quitters~~
~~"in bond"~~ ^{last} ^{drought}

The last time the Wash had dried up ^{my}
husband had ^{planned} ^{one} ^{three} ^{times} ^{to} ^{help} ^{you} ^{reach} ^{the} ^{woods}
go beam & board ⁱⁿ ³ ^{days} ^{to} ^{pick} ^{up} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{has} ^{edible}
because ^{of} ^{the} ^{poor} ^{quality} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{poor} ^{quality} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{poor} ^{quality} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish}
I had ^{planned} ^{to} ^{reach} ^{the} ^{woods} ⁱⁿ ³ ^{days} ^{to} ^{pick} ^{up} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{has} ^{edible}

in the swamp, sucking mud & ferns. On the
banked by ^{zander} ^{waited} ^{for} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{packed} ^{and} ^{bank}
dry ^{taken} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{packed} ^{and} ^{bank}
Bleed ^{the} ^{road} ^{with} ^{the} ^{hole} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish}
The ^{fish} ^{the} ^{packed} ^{and} ^{bank} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{packed} ^{and} ^{bank}
as on the ^{shaking} ^{team} ^{to} ^{the} ^{road} ^{with} ^{the} ^{hole} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish}
muddy ^{at} ^{the} ^{edge} ^{of} ^{the} ^{bank} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{packed} ^{and} ^{bank}

of the pickup, ^{only} ^{last} ^{fish} ^{reared} ^{he} ^d
drawn ^{to} ^{our} ^{farm} ^{pond} ^{to} ^{bring} ^{them}
brushing his ^{back} ^{on} ^{the} ^{bank} ^{of} ^{the} ^{fish} ^{the} ^{packed} ^{and} ^{bank}
seems ^{to} ^{be} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{middle} ^{of} ^{the} ^{act} ^{of} ^{the} ^{act}
repeated ^{with} ^{the} ^{same} ^{and} ^{egg} ^{with} ^{remained} ^{breasts} ^{to} ^{make}

up for the breakfast frequently ~~skipped~~ because
 all ~~eyes~~ ~~are~~ ~~turned~~ ~~to~~ ~~me~~ ~~and~~ ~~my~~ ~~wife~~ ~~and~~ ~~children~~ ~~are~~ ~~still~~ ~~refer~~ ~~that~~
~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~muggy~~ ~~summer~~ ~~day~~ ~~was~~ ~~longer~~ ~~and~~ ~~longer~~
~~pleasant~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~country~~
~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~country~~
 Our eldest daughter is
 studying ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~a~~ ~~marine~~ ~~biologist~~ ~~and~~ ~~she~~ ~~has~~
 father's "Dad you know?" He knows, & he's
 never studied ~~with~~ ~~me~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~microscope~~ ~~of~~ ~~marine~~ ~~life~~
 "We're almost there," he says, ~~rounding~~ ~~the~~
~~corner~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~road~~, one hand on the steering wheel,
~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~other~~ ~~arm~~ ~~flung~~ ~~across~~ ~~the~~ ~~back~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~seat~~.

Udon ~~is~~ ~~my~~ ~~uncle~~ ~~because~~ ~~I~~ ~~know~~ ~~him~~: ~~he~~ ~~will~~ ~~get~~ ~~more~~
 When passed the fields where the melon ~~might~~ ~~have~~
 been and we are approaching ~~the~~ ~~entrance~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~farm~~
 of the dirt road. The monitor our truck is set ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~right~~
 now, ~~unflattering~~ ~~shadows~~ ~~falling~~ ~~upon~~ ~~the~~ ~~dash~~ ~~of~~
 the dark truck. Still the ~~room~~ ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~yet~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~entrance~~
~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~dirt~~ ~~road~~, we see the yellow lights of
 cabin on ~~the~~ ~~high~~ ~~back~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~truck~~ ~~beckons~~. ~~It~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~last~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~produce~~
 farm in the county.

The modest square clapboard cabin, ~~front~~ ~~white~~
 paint peeling like dead skin, takes on shape. The ~~small~~
 yard, framed by fields where the melon vines have
 been freshly plowed, in ground, ~~pedged~~ ~~by~~
 old stony ~~columns~~ ~~of~~ ~~larch~~ ~~hydrogen~~.

At the front porch a tall, large boned
 woman sits in the porch swing, fanning with
 cardboard fan. I know her and I don't
 I've heard her name, ~~know~~ ~~she~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~
 farmer's wife, more farmer than her.

As we stop the truck I my husband ~~steps~~ ~~into~~ ~~the~~
 near, ~~frank~~ ~~and~~ ~~robust~~, ducking under the ~~low~~ ~~porch~~
~~from~~ ~~an~~ ~~she~~ ~~is~~ ~~called~~ ~~out~~ ~~the~~ ~~door~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~porch~~ ~~to~~ ~~carry~~ ~~the~~ ~~post~~.

Not idly so much as a caution, and yet more
~~was~~ alert than ~~that~~.

"Get out," he ~~shouts~~ through the open window.

^{part to} I hesitantly open the door and start around
back, spying on a ground ~~of~~ ^{staggered} green on
from water ~~along~~ ~~the~~ ~~ground~~ ~~at~~ a conspicuous
spot ~~beneath~~ ~~the~~ ~~tree~~ ~~at~~ a giant chin berry tree
that light from the front ~~room~~ plays across the
ground. I am beneath, ~~in~~ a chorus of crickets
I had ~~decided~~ ~~to~~ ~~make~~ ~~the~~ ~~ground~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~edge~~
on the middle of the ~~yard~~.

I can smell the fresh ~~green~~ ~~grass~~
~~and~~ ~~steam~~ to the base of the shrub around
the cabin.

"How you doing?" she says in a husky
voice, her bright ~~and~~ face blooming with
smiles as her keen ~~expression~~

~~the~~ ~~lips~~ ~~about~~ ~~secretly~~

registers ~~my~~ ~~intention~~. ~~A~~ ~~flat~~ ~~green~~ ~~her~~
eyes ~~shift~~ from one ~~eye~~ to the
other, down and away to the water and
pile.

"I bet you'll out-shoot a good ~~many~~
watermelon," she says, ~~clenching~~ her words ~~with~~ ~~clenched~~ teeth.
How ~~immediately~~ ~~checked~~ ~~by~~ ~~her~~ ~~words~~ ~~about~~ ~~the~~ ~~melon~~ ~~and~~ ~~her~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~and~~ ~~expression~~
"Yep, that's about it," says my husband.

"Looks like you got what we come after."

"We got a few left," she says ~~and~~
~~nodding~~ toward the melon. "Dick & amount
to much this year," she adds with ~~modest~~

I speak but find my self ~~dreaming~~ inwardly,

~~resent~~ ~~my~~ ~~own~~ ~~in~~ ~~my~~ ~~mind~~ ~~and~~ ~~my~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~and~~ ~~expression~~ ~~and~~ ~~my~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~and~~ ~~expression~~
I always ~~delist~~ ~~know~~ ~~where~~ ~~my~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~and~~ ~~expression~~ ~~and~~ ~~my~~ ~~eyes~~ ~~and~~ ~~expression~~
and never ~~being~~ ~~not~~ ~~then~~. I'm lost and

alone without ^(connection) ~~connection~~ of fact and names.
 She makes no pretense of my presence!
 I am a customer — neighbor,
 significant but insignificant. She puts me
 in my proper place with a glance, a
 busy look about the place, pruned and
 purposeful.

"What you say, the take two of 'em?" my
 husband says to me.

I nod, speak again, something seemingly
 appropriate.

"Pick 'em out," she says ^(word middle of) with pride.

She is barefooted, ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ a big ~~blue~~
 for scrubbed foot on one of ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~feet~~. She
 wears cut off polyester knit shorts, her

clean and redolent ^{with soap}
 weather and wind, that ~~about~~ ^{about} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~place~~ ^{place}

of which I know ^{was}
 was tails in the sky last

rooming which means ^{rain} ~~rain~~ ^{There's a} ~~There's a~~ ^{front} ~~front~~ ^{making up an} ~~making up an~~
 will have rain in three days, she declares ^{about} ~~about~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{hair} ~~hair~~ ^{over} ~~over~~~~

I clutch one of the round ball melons to
 my middle and amble off to the ~~back~~ ^{back}

the truck and wait, ^{feeling} ~~feeling~~ ^{it} ~~it~~ ^{quite} ~~quite
 get it over the side without drawing attention~~

to myself. I get back ^{(a} ~~(a ^{surprise} ~~surprise ^{to} ~~to
 get cradle another ^{back} ~~back~~ ^{place} ~~place~~ ^{it} ~~it~~~~~~~~

on the ground alongside the other, making a
 great fuss over wiping sand from stepping

She prefers growing Crimson Sweet to Congo, she says, going on in a sing-song ^{cadence} ~~tone~~ about the blessings of the Bible, the Lord, the Bible's ^{revelations} ~~revelations~~ ^{presence} ~~presence~~, the almanac's ^{revelation} ~~revelation~~ ^{presence} ~~presence~~. "We had a hearing ^{got a letter from our} Tommy in Germany last week," she says, glaring at my husband taking on a softer tone, "You don't say?" he says, "Yes, he's got a plumb drowed you know now," she adds, "be blyuzh, look here to raise Americans! Farming," she adds ~~over~~.

The ~~women~~ ^{admirer} I've read about in Seers Magazine seems futile, wasted, full of complaint. I feel like an imitator of them, plundering about in the midst of insignificance for significance for an excuse for what I've not become, what I can't become because I've missed the point.

I've missed the ~~point~~ ^{simple} point, the simple point of survival, of celebrating a day at a time, by peddling ^{peddling} melons on a dirt road because that's what I have to ^{peddle} that day, that hour, that minute. And tomorrow casting about for ^{another simple} ~~another~~ ^{task} ~~task~~ I know words, not people, real people like ^{like} ~~like~~ ^{Watsch} ~~Watsch~~.

I feel jealous of her, proud of her, her stanch ^{and} caddy simplicity. I am vain, set apart, ruminating, like those women in Seers, begging to be different in being the same.

Hopeless ^{who could survive a nuclear war with her steady industry like an ant.} ~~sympathant~~ ^{ant.} against this rugged agraria, No ^{sandmine} ~~industry~~ would mine her sand of watermelons would grow there. If it needed mining, she'd mine it herself and ^{put} ~~keep~~ the profits, thank you. I could imagine her lugging buckets of water from the crumbly mortar ^{well} ~~well~~ beside the house to each ^{prime} ~~prime~~, launching her hands at the end of the round ^{hanging} ~~hanging~~ the bucket where it would see it on the post near the well. She her bath. Sweat, then the bath. She needed ^{no} ~~no~~ ^{arabics} ~~arabics~~ to keep fit, she could write, I know, and better, keeping reality in focus because she ^{knows} ~~knows~~ reality. No story about a story of a story. She has experience.

I did never quit

from my ^{white} ~~white~~ ^{white} shirt.

"Seventy five cents apiece" she says
The says, "I'll give you a dollar
apiece," shelly at of. "If they ain't worth
that, they ain't worth growing."

"Shore 'prechate it," she says. "And
yall come back? Hea?"

[Faint, mostly illegible handwriting covering the lower half of the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.]

put outside
of barrel (mid-drift)

Sturdy
food

a fledgling
is noble
taking by highway
a woman of reason
no comment
the

Don't make up in Peter's mouth
the day. We would have rain in
three days time, she declared