



riding a bus  
through the Oklahoma heat  
an old woman  
tells everything that matters  
to someone else's son

# Oklahoma Heat

Marc Thompson



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A Soffietto Edition

I hear everything . . .  
I am the crow  
I hear everything . . .  
I am the crow

Ghost Dance song,  
Southern Arapaho



ninety-two degrees  
at ten in the morning  
home

old saloon  
the sidewalk cracks filled  
with petunias

We were in Pawhuska a couple of weeks ago.  
It was my first visit in almost 10 years. It was  
the first in over 20 years that did not involve a  
funeral.

We pulled into town a little past noon: my father,  
two of my brothers, my sister, my wife,  
and myself. The Pullman Diner, my grandmother's  
favorite restaurant, was closed so we invaded the  
Bluestem Cafe for lunch.



the large table  
in the center of the room  
filled with strangers

homestead  
a Mississippi kite  
circles the sun

grandma's store  
smaller than I remember  
sun-warmed brick

a mockingbird sings  
from the cemetery fence  
empty summer sky

Sunday afternoon  
the neon diner sign  
unlit

Who lives in Oklahoma? It is a land of survivors.



The Cherokees who walked hundreds of miles at gunpoint along the Trail of Tears. The Okie farmers who held their families together during the Great Depression. Their monuments are their lives and the lives of their children; their failures and their accomplishments.

There are other survivors who have their names inscribed on a granite slab. They are the ones who were in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995. A secretary, a secret service agent, all of the rest. At 9:01 they were drinking coffee and talking about their kids with co-workers. At 9:02 they became survivors.



The name of the ones who called in sick or who  
were on vacation are not inscribed in granite. How  
do they face the terror of survival?

family reunion  
the cries of cicadas  
fill the night

I wish  
this never  
happen

child's message, Oklahoma  
City Memorial



Team 5  
4-19-95

We Search for the truth  
We seek Justice.  
The Courts Require it.  
The Victims Cry for it.  
And GOD Demands it!

spray paint, Oklahoma City memorial

a broken child  
in the firefighter's arms  
collateral damage

the heroism  
of staying alive . . .



We reached Bartlesville in the early evening. It is the home of Frank Phillips and Phillips 66. Frank was a typical Oklahoma oil man—he collected prehistoric artifacts, live giraffes, and Fredrick Remington art. He was the only white to be named an honorary chief of the Osage Nation.

Bartlesville has a cosmopolitan sheen to it these days. There are fewer cowboy hats than there used to be, and more buildings. The streets are clean and spacious. The city landmark, a Frank Lloyd Wright apartment building, is being restored instead of renovated.

As we passed the city park we saw that the temperature had finally dropped below 100. A sandwich board out front read “Baseball Tonight”.

a cattle truck  
rattles the small motel  
heat shimmer