The Arrival of My Mother

—New Mexico Territory, 1906

She got off, according to her diary, dressed in a lovely beaded gown, fresh from Washington with sixteen trunks of ballgowns chemises, blouses (4 Middie), shoes and assorted lingerie. She was at that time about 25, old for an unmarried woman. Her stiff mother was at her side, she also wildly overdressed for New Mexico sun and wind.

What must she have thought, seeing my uncle standing hat in hand in the dust of that lonely train station cracked yellow paint, faded letters of welcome for passengers who rarely come?

The buckboard was waiting and they rode out into the darkness of evening toward the tent and the half built frame homestead house, wind dying as the sun sank birdcries stilled.

I see her now outshooting my father and me, laughing at our pride and embarrassment. My sister, as good a shot, waiting her turn. Or that picture of her on horseback, in Eastern riding clothes beside the Pecos. A picnic when I was small and how my father lifted me up to her and she carefully walked the horse around rock and sand.
I suppose she finally arrived in New Mexico in the April of one year when my sister and I sat beside a rented bed, each holding one of her hands and watched her eyes go childlike, unmasked as a kachina entering the final kiva of this Dance. The graceful the slim laughing woman of my childhood. The old mother heavy with years slipped away and the woods of New England dimmed as these dry hills ripened and caught her last breath, drums, drums should have sounded for the arrival of my mother.