

Dreams

I do miss Oklahoma. I really do.

Despair

All I know is that if you die, you're dead, that's all. And I guess there isn't anything more than that.

Piece of Pipe

Just one more piece of pipe and we'll have water.

Long Memory

And you know, I can see Mama's face sometimes on these mornins. Singin' right along with me. She would have been proud.

Pretending

It's one of the best pretends I think I've ever had. It's best because it always starts out bad. But it always ends up good. 'Cause I escape.

Dreams

Right now is my favorite time of day. The sun is way up in the sky. Hot. Sweat's dripping down my back. I've been working all morning. I need a drink. I should be headin back to make some lunch for everybody. But I just stop for a minute. It's my time. Two minutes of quiet to look around.

I never owned a dress in my life. Don't feel comfortable in one. Give me a pair of dungarees, a work shirt, and an old hat and I'm just as happy as I can be.

(she picks up a clump of dirt) See this? Rich and black. Farm soil. I love the feel of it. (she pulls out a worm from the dirt) Worms do too.

Despair

I'm not much good at talkin. And I don't ever talk about myself, really. What's there to say? I

don't know...(she thinks) I'm a wife. A mother. (definitively) A farmer. Max is my husband and we have two children -- Emma and Andrew. (a pause) We used to have three children. Liza died when she was just a baby. She was, oh, just three months old, I guess. (she remembers) That was back in, uh, February of '38. Right after we came to the Panhandle. Durin' the worst winter I can remember. Terrible cold and dust storms. We was livin in a one room shack. (she is picturing it) Dirt floor. Two cots along one wall. A stove in the corner.

One night a storm comes in from the west. It was freezin in the shack, and we kep fillin the stove with anything we could find to burn. Liza been cryin all night with a fever. Cryin and cryin and cryin.

### Piece of Pipe

Just one more piece of pipe and we'll have water. (she laughs) It's hard to believe -- it's taken us almost two years to lay the pipe from the irrigation ditch to our place ever since we came in '35. And this is it. Finally.

'Course, I don't know when we'll get to layin the pipe. Sometimes I don't think I can wait, we're so close. It's hard work, diggin that trench, the earth is so hard. And pipe in't cheap. We don't have much time to do it. Joe's out in the fields, six days a week, picking peas. And I got the children here, so I'm not much use. We got three of 'em. Anna and little Joe. And the baby, Paul. We do most of the work on the pipe on Sundays when Joe doesn't have to go out into the field. After morning prayers, we go out and work till the sun goes down. Side-by-side. Without saying a word. I'm tired and sweaty and my bones ache but I don't care. All I can think about is day when the work is all done, the day when I don't have to walk a half a mile and back twice a day to draw water from the ditch. When I can just turn it on here, right by our place, whenever I want. So I dig and dig and dig.

### Long Memory

In 1865, I was just twelve years old. A scrawny thing too, with two nobbs for knees and a head full of braids. That was the year mah life changed forevuh. We slaves was set free. Free. I remember standing in the doorway of our house in a gingham dress that was too big and just watchin. Evuhbody on the plantation was packin up the few things they owned and settin out to make new lives. Callin goodbyes to each othuh. Singin. You never seen so many Negroes happy in one place at one time. It was somethin.

### Pretending

Mama doesn't like me to go far. She tells me to play inside the fence so she can keep her eye on me while she works. I do what she tells me. 'Cause I'm good.

I play all day by myself until it gets dark. I play pretend. I have a pretend family. I'm the mommy. I'm really pretty and I wear dresses all the time and shoes with bows on them. And lipstick. I've got rings on all my fingers. And I smell good. There's a daddy too. He's handsome and rich. His name is Robert, though sometimes it's Thomas. He drives a car. I don't know what kind. But it's big. And it's got a seat in the back on the outside.

The pretend house we live in is purple. That's my favorite color. And it's got lots and lots of flowers in the front. And a tree for climbing. I don't climb the tree though, 'cause I'm the mommy.

### Dreams

Worms do too. (she smiles) My daddy was a farmer. And his daddy before him. I guess you could say it was in my blood. And for my money, there's nothing better than farmin. It's a little bit o'heaven, really -- gettin up before the sun, havin a big breakfast, pullin on a pair of work boots and heading out to the fields. I can't quite imagine doin anything else. The only time I wasn't farmin was when I was havin the boys. Three of 'em right in a row. Boom, boom, boom. Big strappin boys now. They're goin to be farmers too. Like their mama. (she is proud) Look at my hands. The dirt is so far in them that all the washin in the world won't make 'em clean again. I kinda like that.

We're not from here. No siree. We're Okies and proud of it. Henry and me and our boys moved out here, oh, three years ago. Like everyone else. That was after we lost our farm. After the dust storms, a couple of bad crop years, and the Crash.

California in't bad. It's not Oklahoma but it in't bad. The sun is always shining. It's warm. And there's work. We're glad about that. We don't live too bad here, either. 'Course it's different than before. We have a two room shack now. And we don't own any of the land. But I can't complain 'cause we're better off than most -- we can work hard and we ain't starvin. The way I see it is: Oklahoma was the ole days and California is the new. Don't look back.