

CHRISTINE WEEBER

An Unladylike Journey

ON SUNDAY, I DRIVE AWAY FROM THE GREEN PASTURES OF MY MICHIGAN YOUTH. I wade through Chicago traffic and then roll through Illinois. Trees grow sparse as the plains of Iowa fill the space with long fields of corn and slow-paced cows. Here, the sky holds up the land. Trees and houses rest in a blue haze as if the heavens had melted and dripped onto them. I awaken.

I feel like Georgia O'Keefe, heading west alone in my car. Like her, I am desert-bound and in search of outlets for my passion. But I go with pen instead of paintbrush, and bound for Idaho, not New Mexico.

I lunch in the only restaurant in Brooklyn, Iowa. People stare as I walk in. I must look like a peacock wearing my breezy, multicolored skirt. I sit with my feet on the booth across from me and eat heartily. I bask in my aloneness. It's nice to have only a notebook and the twenty or so flies that cling to the window beside me. I feel as if I shouldn't be breaking so many rules at once. Will I be disqualified from the game of womanhood?

Feeling uncomfortable, I leave after my last bite. A single young woman alone on the road with windblown hair and Birkenstocks is an anomaly. The surprised and wary stares must have been what O'Keefe saw, too. Not much has changed in some parts since she stormed through the country in her car.

Large sun eaten by clouds. We got this land by force. I pass Montezuma.

I pay a middle-aged man for my first camping spot. While setting up my Eureka tent in the dark, I am nervous and scared. The quiet and