

December's Winner

By Vivian Olds

A search for the watershed of a native root,  
find the ghosts of genocide.  
Clarence tells me how his cousins  
were used for target practice  
how his mother chocked the cries of  
childbirth  
as shots rang overhead.  
How his father,  
a Sandpiper with a broken wing and  
heart distracted the ranchers and their families  
out to kill Indians on a Sunday afternoon.

Now all is pasteurized with sheep and cattle  
on picturesque lawns and Victorian facades  
that camouflage the racism.

A large lava stone bowl sits in the grass.  
An artifact of humanity.  
'It was buried up at Tule Lake, under one  
of them Jap houses. We tore it down  
took the wood over to Nevada  
to build our place.  
Under the house was this stone bowl.  
My mom saw just the top stickin' out  
of the dirt  
and dug it out with just her fingers.'

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