“Pale Horse”

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*Motifs*: Six Flags of Texas, six embedded stories, life stages of Texas and its people, varied culture and landscape, horses of the Apocalypse

*Poetical Devices:* form – six six-line stanzas, alliteration, extended metaphor

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Pale Horse

They came to take the hills, the plains, the rivers, the desert -

the land would not be tamed.

It watched them leave, their flags no longer proud.

There were those who understood its wildness

but war drank their blood. The canyons moaned.

Tall grass whispered to the yuccas as silence crept over all.

In Texas red berry cedar and prickly pear fleck the hill

holding a girl on a white horse.

The sun casts dawn light over the canyon below.

Dappled yellow clay covers those who came before.

It swathes the European settlers,

the Kiowa and Comanche it used to know.

A creek dammed long ago stands deep and dark.

Mesquite trees stretch their crooked fingers

over a glistening chestnut horse. It sighs and leans

into the back of a green-eyed man.

He bears the weight and drives a nail

through the hoof made hard by drought.

Cold gray envelops the Panhandle;

a boy unsaddles a black horse.

In spring buffalo grass will blanket the bones of one.

The merciless sun blazes above a tall man

who follows the sprawling rattlesnake pattern of the Brazos.

Large prints are left behind him in the sandy loam.

The chronicle of Texas is written on six flags -

a rider carries hers on a white horse.

Two dozen hooves turn up red dirt as the sun

meets the moon over rolling plains.

A mottled pheasant settles in the grass; dusk drapes

around an old man’s shoulders.

They came to take what they shouldn’t,

yet a dark boy emerges into the green.

Blood memory binds him to the old spirits

as they gather round to watch a woman.

“Behold the pale horse,” they murmur – but Texas pulls her close.

The land is rich with story, and hers is told through the six.