

From Smoky Valley, 1978

Jeanmarie Simpson

for Shirley and her daughters

When the bottom fell out of copper and gold blew the roof off, our family moved to Nevada and swapped out Saguaro, prickly pear, and jumping cactus for Joshua, Virginia Creeper, and any of various shrubby species of the genus *Artemisia* of the aster family, more commonly known as sagebrush, not to be confused with sage, a member of the mint family.

Our parents and the little brothers settled out by Round Mountain where one bright Sunday afternoon, we drove up the canyon and split a herd of bighorn sheep. They darted up the hill in a flash, except for one ewe who stayed close to the truck. Her gaze was fixed beyond us. We turned to see her baby on the other side. We climbed out and took pictures of the frightened lamb and his panicked mother until the littlest of us said, "This is mean. We should go." We piled back into the truck bed, Daddy hit the gas and moved us up the road a hundred feet or so. The baby and her mother went up the hill and over the ridge.

We bounced up to the rusty ghost town, where we picked up trash, roasted marshmallows over an abandoned wood stove, and praised the Lord who made simple things.