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## Vignettes of a Strange October

Horace Gardner

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## Vignettes of a Strange October

By HORACE GARDNER

Now in this warm October, black, sweet grapes  
Hang heavily in the sun and all the land  
Lies hushed. The Rio Grande curves through  
The yielding earth, still warm and brown as flesh  
Feeding the harshness of the desert, starved  
Within itself by sand, and dry, dry wind  
Painting it with cottonwood and grass  
And singing softly through the timeless days  
To the old men sleeping in the sun, who dream  
Of long dead things, mumbling with their loosened mouths  
And feeling the thrust of earth into their bones;  
Singing to the brown skinned boys who feel  
The sting of fire run over them—Prelude  
To summer of the flesh—feeling the world  
Awakening in this last outburst of sun  
And splashing in the warm brown flow  
Of water round their bodies, feeling strange, sweet  
Resurgent voices in their blood.

### Intense

In their upbeat of blue the mountains watch  
This strange long summer on the land below  
Wrapped in their haze, imperiously proud  
A symphony of frozen notes, stretched out  
Upon the cadence of the clearer sky.  
This world is old, and voices whisper here  
Alive and clear in this October's air.  
What matter now the other days, the years  
That ride the dust, when all that is, is here  
And will be here again? The mountains stand  
Aloof, knowing their days are short and pass  
As swiftly as does the wind. They are content.

\* \* \* \* \*

Old Angelina Maria Ortiz

Looks out her window at the road, looks long

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At white dust stirring, moving in the sun,  
Sees the haze move slowly, undulating  
In the heat.

                    Here she has been for thirty years  
Here at her window, marking the days  
Pass in procession toward the dark, the end  
Of all her days.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

At San Felipe, Josephine Jiron  
Slants her basket off her head, the chaff  
Flies off into the wind, the yellow grain  
Falls to her blanket spread upon the earth.  
How long ago at Pu-ye women stood  
And winnowed, with their baskets slanting down  
Their long black hair!

                    Josephine Jiron  
Lets fall the yellow grain and sings  
Softly, in her breath, the winnowing song.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

At Bernalillo, Brother Charles picks grapes  
Sweats in the sun, and thinks of Languedoc

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Hilda Wilson, Kansas born, is tired  
Of mending overalls. She cannot sit  
And smoke the afternoon away, or watch  
The afternoon pass slowly down the road.  
Too much of Kansas pushes her to work.  
Her stifled brain, if asked, would push out this  
"These lazy natives never do a thing!"  
And they, good souls, would slyly laugh at her  
And know her crudeness not her fault. They know  
Their own inborn gentility, and smile.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

This all will pass. Another thousand years  
The mountains will look down again  
At warm October's passing, mark it strange  
And smile and be content that they endure.