

GITTERMANGALLERY

Wanda + Johnny Secaters, Indian Wells, Arizona, 1979



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Johnny won 4 prizes for his paintings at the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial. He's riding high, been drunk for 3 weeks. But today he's tired, wants to get home + back to work. I drive around town with him + Wanda, to the traders who handle his paintings. He's trying to collect his prize money, getting the men around. No one knows where the checks are. Joe Tanner, a Mormon art dealer, gives him no money + a lecture about his drinking. He comes up dry at two other dealers, finally borrows \$25 from Johnny Porter, a trader from Texas.

Hollysue + I drive Johnny + Wanda to Indian Wells, where his mother has a sheep camp. We agree to spend the night. Johnny's on his fourth quart of Garden Deluxe, + starting to get really drunk. He talks about Vietnam, being point man on night patrols. He begins to hallucinate about snipers, eating dogs + monkey steaks in the jungle, rivers running with blood, but on fire. Anger rises in his throat.

I'm holding his hand in the darkness, upright as hell. He senses it, + starts squeezing hard. I can feel my snake ring biting into the edges of my middle + little fingers. His whole body condenses into enormous rage. I at squeezing hand that paints Shalako dancers with exquisite detail, all finesse gone. I feel trapped, can't remember where I put my glasses, can't see anyway in this gathered darkness. I can only absorb his rage, + try to let go. I imagine I hear coyotes howling outside. Maybe I do. My hand goes slack. Johnny loosens his grip. I hear him slump to the floor. "That's better," he says. "Sit up + drink with me a while, little brother, I'm troubled." A little while later, I hear him mumbling in his sleep, something about New Orleans, + the good times on Bourbon Street.

The next day, Johnny is sly + hung over. He + Wanda load our car with cans of government surplus food, way too much. His mother gives Hollysue a juniper berry necklace + some pieces of petrified wood. I take some pictures of the roosters + goats. It's time to go. Johnny shakes hands, smiles. I want to say something, but don't, about last night. On the night before, in Gallup, in his room at the Harvey Hotel, Wanda asleep on the broken-backed bed, Johnny in the middle of the room with his arms around me, saying "Tell your people that you have been embraced by a stinking Navajo wind in Gallup, New Mexico. Tell your people that, will you?"

Roswell Angier, Johnny and Wanda Secatero, Indian Wells, Arizona, 1979

Vintage gelatin silver print, 9 11/16 x 12 3/16 in. (24.6 x 31 cm)

2793, \$4,500