

Sextolet

Each partnership in the series is named from musical terminology:

1. PRELUDE: When Demetri's romance is truncated by a forced move back east, he proves his love for Cher by hitch-hiking over the great plains and forsaking all others at the age of seventeen.
2. RONDO: Like the ageless desert wind, the ongoing love between a gold miner and his wife is viewed through the hologram of compressed time, revealing beauty inside tragedy.
3. OSTINATO: Tillie is a faithful woman, faithful unto death whether her husband deserves it or not.
4. RHAPSODY: Two musical-theater men find each other and beat the odds, staying married longer than some states permit and longer than their heterosexual counterparts.
5. DESCANT: When Hannah meets the love of her life, she figures out a way to stay married to her children's father in spite of society's limiting monogamous attitude.
6. CODA: Like seaglass, over time unhappiness is transformed and even appreciated the older Gladys and George's marriage becomes.

Excerpt from RONDO

RONDO

*musical form in which a certain section returns repeatedly,
interspersed with other sections*



Hell. He's off at the mine and now I'm all alone with a major catastrophe. Can't reach the gun. It's in the corner by the window. Can't very well leave the toddler there with the snake and go fetch the gun. What if I was to yank the rug? Real careful? Slide it across the dirt floor? The baby would land on her fanny and once I pulled it back, I could grab her. Or nab the gun. Or both. Could I manage both? Damn snake. Damn window. Damn desert.

The heat looms so thick, Addie mindlessly tries to pull it back like a drape— part the dense dry with her petite hand but all she does is wave the molecules and fire 'em up hotter—even hotter. There's no wind today to sweep through the house—no wind to push through her window and sing so as to remind her that even though they are in the middle of nowhere, they are not alone. Oh, welcome the wind even though it blows dust all over her rug. Dust under her rug and dust over her rug. Dust on her hands and dust between all forty toes that press ...dust from the endless Mojave, mother of all destitution. When wind blows, a mother stops her humming. Wind sends its own song, it does. The way it comes in and rattles things. The joshuas don't feel the need to move. They stand there all day; they never tire. The wind ignores the likes of the joshuas. Not so much as a branch waving or bristle rustling. Addie's curtains wave. They wave in the kitchen and in the bedroom. Only two rooms with sheers. She likes when they wave,

friendly most of the time, only sometimes is it treacherous. She boards up the bedroom window on those nights. How can the babies sleep in that much wind?

Some things you can't know beforehand. Like how fifty-eight years of matrimony softens you as it strengthens you or what it will be like to hold your own dead baby or that senility is more like skinny-dipping in moonlight than a bad dream. Or like snakes coming in where there are no shutters. She has wondered why on earth there were no shutters when they moved in a few months back. They made sure this place was tucked away, alright. Fifteen miles off the main highway on a dirt road; you had to drive a pick-up to get there. Probably, folks rode on a horse's back when this adobe house was a brothel. And most likely, no one was fixing to actually sleep. Maybe the shutters blew off during each treacherous wind, naturally, over the course of months and years.