

# The Prairie Light Review

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Volume 13  
Number 1 *The Dreaming Tree*

Article 32

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Winter 3-1-1994

## C.O.D. Prairie, July 1993

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### Recommended Citation

Keir, Patricia (1994) "C.O.D. Prairie, July 1993," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 13 : No. 1 , Article 32.  
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol13/iss1/32>

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## C.O.D. Prairie, July 1993

by Patricia Keir

Only seconds after I feel a damp gust  
part the hair on the back of my head,  
the probing tips of tall, spindly compass plants  
Sway and rustle above it all, roaming oblong paths.

The buttery petals spread out,  
probing the fading sunshine,  
but some are closed tight like clenched fists  
and some have gone burnt umber  
dried and shriveled, paralyzed by the hot sun.  
Hard edged clusters of pale green rattlesnake master's  
stand splayed, and the tough white clumped balls  
of the wild quinine  
move rigidly against the breeze.

Acorn-like centers of coneflower assert themselves,  
push defiantly forward from yellow petals which  
bend back even when the wind drops.

Short ice-green grasses pile up then flatten.

As the muggy winds rise once again,  
a tuft of wild grass rubs my ankle like a cat.

The blonde tips of the compass flowers  
bend politely to each other

to me  
to the beauty of the pure and the alien  
in a small, cramped patch of prairie  
on this late midsummer afternoon.

