

**Lane Devers**

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Category: Poetry

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**Hunter S. Thompson for Sheriff**

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1. Chad Abraham,  
(Contributing Editor for the Aspen Times  
and co writer of the article “Thompson Found Dead”)

What you have to understand is that Aspen then,  
wasn't the town you're picturing right now.  
Nobody was rich, everybody just wanted  
some heifers for spring and Nixon out of office.  
Even California was crops. From an airplane,  
Vegas looked like one of those  
Barbie play houses,  
something so small you could stick it  
in your breast pocket for later  
or lose it in the wash. But of course,  
it wasn't. It was enormous and looming,  
not a single one of us had to read  
the book to understand that. Still,  
I read it anyway at seventeen years old,  
kept it wedged between my bed frame and the wall,  
my mother practically begging me  
to turn out the lights and rest.  
So when they asked me to help break the news,  
even the part about his boy finding him at the kitchen table,  
his remaining body already the color of pearls,  
I thought *well everyone is going to lose their head now.*

2. Matthew Anderson,  
(Former follower of Hunter S. Thompson)

Of course we believed in him.  
Everything else  
was violence. The cops

hurt us everyday. A baton stick can't  
listen. Can't ask you how  
your daughters are or tell you

or tell you all, that the shit  
everyone's been sentenced to death  
over should be legal. In the bars

all across town we would hang  
the election posters. The ones with  
the big fist at the top, like we were ready

for whatever might be next. One night  
someone suggested we all get tattoos. Then  
a ranch hand I think, said

we should brand ourselves instead.  
Something simple, his initials *HST*.  
Which would have been fine,

but then it was decided  
the letters would be engraved  
on the handle of his own

pistol. We were so stupid. All of us.  
And now I've got a murder weapon  
running down my right thigh to prove it.

3. Sandra Conklin,  
(Ex-wife of Thompson)

On our first date he asked me, he said  
*you like fireworks don't you?* And I nodded  
because, well, who doesn't? Yes that was before  
all of it, when he was just a man. No army  
at all, just a tall skinny guy in a pair of jeans  
it looked like my mother might own. Yes,

he was always trying on different costumes,  
even in our own living room:  
*Sheriff* when he had lost *Dr.*  
when he wasn't one. *Jesus* worst of all.  
I learned to live in a kind of unending

silence. Each night I would unzip  
my nightgown as quietly as I could manage,  
inching my way down the line. I was always closest to him  
then. Afterwards.

4. Deputy Fredrick Yates,  
(Aspen Sheriff's department)

I swear to you he wasn't like the other hippies,  
wasn't all grateful dead and smoke.  
Hunter adored firearms, kept a serious pistol

on hand even when he'd bring the little ones  
to the tavern. I promise you when  
Bundy jumped out

that courthouse window  
he was all over it.  
Anything that made the officers look

like idiots, was a gift.  
I imagine all those days  
while everyone was out looking for Bundy

and for the girl plucked from  
her hotel room,  
he was home by the window,

drunkenly watching  
the helicopters spin  
in hopeless figure eights.

5. Jaun Thompson,  
(Son of Hunter S. Thompson)

It was early in the morning,  
around my twelfth birthday,

he wanted to play dress up. Yes,  
but calling the police would have

felt like a kind of betrayal.

He was washing the pile of dishes left  
from breakfast when he decided to take on

the role of my mother, laying a rag across  
his bald head in imitation of her knotted

curls. Yes, I waited. Yes, but he said,  
*Clean your damn room!* Laughing,

his body shook so hard  
he had to steady himself

with that same countertop.

It was later that same night,  
I had the dream—

him and his horse in the thick of a blizzard,  
my mother finally shouting back

*I don't sound like that.*