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## Oklahoma Winter Morning

Lois Neely

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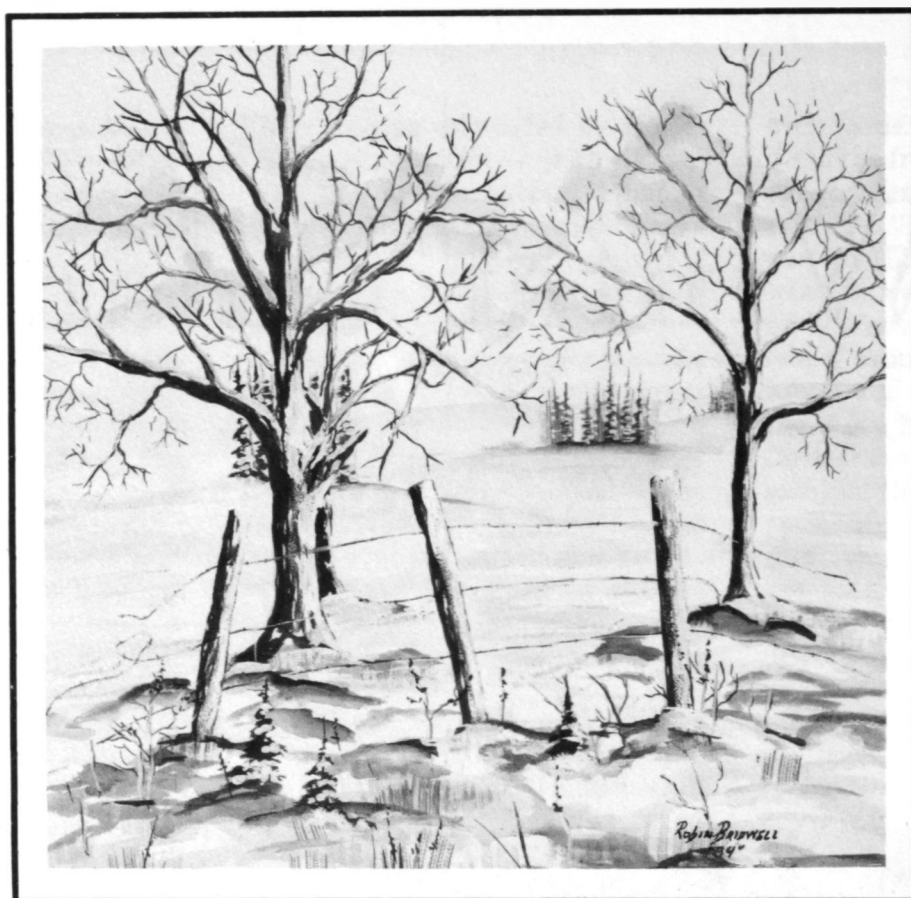
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— ILLUSTRATION BY ROBIN BRIDWELL

# Oklahoma Winter Morning

— by Lois Neely

The night is black before the dawn. The stars have extinguished their reassuring twinkling lights. Mother Earth lies sleeping under February skies, awaiting her daughter, Spring, who will bring warmth and life-giving rains. She is secure, for her Royal Guards, tall and stately oaks and elms, stand quietly on watch. At their feet not the scrubby cedars, in service as squires.

The winter Sun stirs in slumber, and, feeling benevolent, sends an emissary with a magic golden wand. He opens his eyes, yawns over the horizon, and smiles, for the emissary has been thorough.

Mother Earth has been wrapped in acres of ermine, embellished with an occasional emerald, the hardy yucca. Her Royal Guards, though bare of foliage, are glistening with uniforms of diamonds, some of which have fallen on the squires who stand in wonderment at their transformation. Miles and miles of once offensive barbed wire is now meticulously draped with millions of perfect, tiny chrystal icicles. The wooden fence posts proudly display transparent coats of sparkling white sapphire.

I look in awe. I want to stop and gather all the precious gems I can carry. I want to adorn myself so that I

might be as lovely as the lowly thistle which the North Wind has allowed to pause and share in Nature's benevolence. Yet I cannot stop. I am a prisoner in a box of steel and glass set in motion along a highway of ugly black asphalt. I feel resentment rising in my throat; then I look again, and Mother Earth smiles. I feel a voice whispering inside me; then, I, too, smile. I settle back in my seat of upholstered velvet, content in the knowledge that I am but a mortal and have been allowed a rare privilege as a spectator at one of Father Time's wondrous dramas.