

THE SILENCE
By Diane Hess

It was the silence that bothered me the most. The silence, after he took the dog and went hunting, was maddening. Yes, we certainly had more land out here in South Dakota, but what good was land? Oh, it yielded some crops which we could sell, I guess that was good. It was the lack of family and friends that made my heart ache. Oh, it's starting to snow, I noticed. Another day the wash wouldn't dry outside on the line between the inside. Why couldn't I be like Martha Hopper, two miles down the road? It wasn't quiet in her cabin with four small children under foot. That's why the silence really bothered me. Why can't I have a baby? Why can't I give my husband a son to hunt with, to farm with? I'm a failure. We moved here to give our family lots of room to grow. What family? Why does it have to be just Henry and I and our dog? The other women look at me strangely when we walk into church. I feel their eyes on my stomach and I know what they are thinking. My parents in Pennsylvania are still waiting for a letter from us announcing my pregnancy. I don't even like to write to them anymore. Oh, the wash on the line. I was going to take it down since it is snowing now. Maybe the snow, cool as it touches my burning cheeks, will cover my tears. Tears because of the silence.