

eight of  
the best

**Buffalo Lights  
+ Taos Soul**

Zoo Pilot Publishing  
Sampler (8 Chapters)



JOHN HAMILTON FARR

**BUFFALO  
LIGHTS**  
and  
**TAOS SOUL**

Eight of the Best

by

**JOHN HAMILTON FARR**

Zoo Pilot  Publishing

TAOS, NEW MEXICO, U.S.A.

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TAOS, NEW MEXICO, U.S.A.

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# Introduction

THIS EBOOK features eight of the best stories from *BUFFALO LIGHTS: Revised Edition*, and *TAOS SOUL: Love Stories, Heroes, and Wild Adventure*, available from the Amazon Kindle bookstore for \$2.99 each. (Except for the one below, the photos included here are from the latter.)



Most of you reading this have probably never been to northern New Mexico. Life in Taos sometimes comes very close to living on the frontier, however, or even in another world. (If we're both lucky, these books will take you there.) Please visit my [blog](#) for synopses, order options, and much more writing about New Mexico, the universe, and my own path through it. Living here makes you think about these things, it really does.

Most free ebook samples only give you the first few chapters, but what's included here are eight of the best. Naturally, it's my hope that these selections will arouse your curiosity in the full versions. Even if they don't, once you've read them, you won't be quite the same.

I know because I've lived them, and I'm not.

- John Hamilton Farr  
Taos, New Mexico  
January, 2011



# New Mexico Slow

From *BUFFALO LIGHTS*, \$2.99  
(42 stories & photos)

IT WAS EERILY QUIET, my first day at the dump.

A gust of wind chased a small piece of paper across the dusty ground as I climbed out of the truck. Hearing the creak of a door, I turned to see an older man emerging from a small shack twenty yards away.

“Howdy,” I said nervously, suddenly worried that my black cowboy hat and Maryland license plates were dangerously out of place.

“Hi fella, how you doin’?” said the smiling silver-haired man as he approached, carrying a clipboard. A pencil stub dangled from the clip, attached with a piece of string. Grasping the stub, his hand hovered over the printed form flapping in the breeze as he eyed the black-and-white plate on the rear bumper and inquired, “Where you from?”

“San Cristobal,” I replied. “I’ve got three bags. Where do I put ‘em?”

Gesturing with his pencil stub, he indicated the nearest dumpster. Without further ado, I opened the tailgate, grabbed all three bags at once, and heaved them over the side. “Thanks,” I yelled back in his direction as I slammed the gate shut and climbed back into the cab. He stood off to one side, holding his pencil stub slightly aloft, expectantly, like an orchestra conductor waiting to begin. I started the engine and buckled my shoulder belt, grateful to have successfully disposed of my load.

“OK, you have a good day!” he called out as I circled the dumpster and headed back out the way I had come. We both waved as I drove out of sight, but when I reached the highway I felt uneasy, like something was not quite right. I realized then that for all his good manners, I had disappointed the man somehow.

The next time I went to the dump, he was there again. But this time after I had disposed of the trash, I closed the back of the truck and lingered, taking in the view.

Relaxing a bit more, I adjusted my sunglasses and forgot about time. We stood comfortably across from each other in the bright

sunlight. He made a mark or two on his clipboard with the pencil stub and smiled, squinting slightly as he sized me up.

“I have a string,” he said.

“A string?” I echoed, suddenly clueless.

“For when it gets cold,” he said. “I have a string.”

I had entered another dimension. There was nothing to do but relax even further and let the encounter unfold. He watched me wait three or four beats, cock my head slightly, and lift my chin to meet his gaze. A gust of wind rattled the papers on his clipboard. An engaged, expectant look spread across his face as he smiled again and said, “I tie it to the little lever on the thermostat above my bed. When it gets cold at night, I give it a little pull so it gets warm.”

“Oho!” I exclaimed, “So you don’t have to get out of bed!”

“Yes,” he replied, grinning.

“But what do you do if it gets too hot?” I asked.

“I have a little stick,” he answered. “I just reach up with my stick and push the lever back. Then it gets cool again, so I can sleep.”

“Ah, a stick! A string and a little stick,” I acknowledged. We both laughed. “Very good, a string and a stick!” I repeated.

“Yes,” he said, satisfied, still grinning at me.

Sharing his contentment, I stood there, waiting for nothing, until I heard myself say, “Well, I guess I’d better be going.”

“All right,” he nodded. “You have a good day, fella!” and with that he turned and walked slowly back toward the little shack. I climbed into the truck and watched him in the side mirror as I fastened the shoulder belt and started the engine. By the time I turned the truck around, he had reached the door and stood gazing in my direction. We waved again as I headed for the highway, feeling much better this time.

The third time I went to the dump, a different, even older man was there. After I’d told him who I was and where I was from, I tossed my bags in the proper place and turned to receive my blessing for the week. He waited a moment or two, and then said in heavily accented English, “I hope we get some snow. We sure could use some now, you know?”

Thankfully dropping out of gringo gear, I offered: “They say we

might get some tonight.”

“Well, I don’t know,” he said with concern, looking up at the sky. “Them clouds is pretty high.”

And so they were. Glory hallelujah, so they were!

# Devil Dogs of San Cristobal

From *BUFFALO LIGHTS*, \$2.99  
(42 stories & photos)

MY HONEY GAVE A SHOUT as I was heading out: “Going to the post office? Don’t forget your stick!”

If you live up here and like to walk, you’d better pack a whacking big one. Back when I still drove to fetch the mail, I spied an older lady with a stick as tall as she was. She cast a wary eye in my direction as I drove slowly past, trying not to shower her with dust. At the time I figured she suspected my intentions from the fact I was actually obeying the speed limit, but now I know the truth: She probably thought I had my *dogs* with me.

I didn’t, of course. Lady the Wonder Dog, a white German shepherd mix, had gone to doggy heaven years before. My experience with her had taught me dogs were noble, loyal beasts possessed of wondrous joy and courage. The local variety is, well, different.

The first time I walked to the post office, I saw what surely seemed to be a dog—short-haired, whitish-tan, weighing maybe 30 pounds—except it lay beside the road all covered with dust and didn’t move or twitch, not even when the school bus lumbered past. I ambled closer, tensing for the stench and wondering why there were no flies. As I came within a foot or so, it raised a sullen snout up from the dirt and fixed me with a pinkish stare. “Hey, pooch!” I said with a smile, whereupon it slowly rose, paced nervously back and forth behind me once or twice, then scuttled off into the weeds.

Not a good sign, I reasoned. This was confirmed when I rounded a curve a hundred yards farther along and there she was. A sharp-eared, pointy-faced, black-and-white mutt with impossibly swollen tits, she shot out through a hole in the mangled fence surrounding a sad adobe and proceeded to bark insanely, making repeated runs at my ankles. I went into full dog-tamer mode, squatting down and saying, “Good dog, goood dog” in a low-pitched, reassuring voice, which only heightened her hysteria. In the bare dirt yard behind the fence, a small white curly-haired beast, cute in any other context, ricocheted back and forth on the end of a short, rusty chain, yipping furiously. The pointy-faced ringleader ran back and forth in front of me, eyes red with fear and pain, whipping her nipples through the dust and looking for

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