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## The Dunes, and: Cutbanks, and: Messengers

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## THE DUNES

Ask about the deviations  
to the curve  
scattered along  
the minimum of action,  
ask about the airborne  
sand arcing at their crests,  
their Hesperidian glow.

Though they say the ear grew  
from an outstretched gill,  
mine's a coastal dune.  
The rain skips over  
my lobes and channels,  
hits the pine forest further upslope.

My trust breaks like sugar  
under your festive well wishes.

Crabs climb from the piles  
we'd scooped into hills.

## CUTBANKS

I

Taller than my father  
in those boots,  
heels in, I knelt  
on his leather toes, blew  
spring water out my nose, ate prickly pear  
and xamües, beetles with a crunchy carapace.

Thought he might beat me to death  
when he led me away that night.

He stared into me,  
leaned into me, fists in his pockets.  
I could smell the tobacco on his breath when he said,  
Let's go to the riverbed.

2

He walked me through the chaparral.

He blew smoke down my collar, took  
ash from my hand,  
the snot on my sleeve shivered  
and rang with the pumice stones  
with the voices of the grass  
singing softly  
under our machetes.

3

I waded into the birdsong.

We stood by the river,  
climbed the escarpment.

We played as children do,  
carved a doll's cliff dwelling  
from the cutbanks.

Our hands walked together  
and embraced as puppets.

4

I lost my little bell  
talking last night through the window,  
the sash glowed purple under our hands,  
slid like satin into the stone walls.  
He grabbed my little charm and pulled.

The sand swallowed the bell,  
and then it swallowed the street,  
the patio, and then our voices,  
our window, our night.

5

His cousin had a party  
and he disappeared before midnight

I slept in the field with the scorpions.

My cheeks shimmered like lizards' bellies  
in the morning light.

He's from a place where it never rains.  
He's from a place:  
the last steppe of the pawn's campaign,  
an arid edge that turns you back.

He came to the valley,  
he stepped on me,  
now my tail rattles on his key ring.

## MESSENGERS

Angels make me make angels out of matchsticks.

They tell me to unroll their wax paper,  
glue them to foam board, they say  
that every side of the head has a face.

Their bodies spell out secret things,  
each unfurls a letter: many X's and M's and A's.

No S's, though, so what they're trying to tell  
me has nothing to do with Christmas—

something else,  
something about an embattled prince,  
riparian woods, martyrdom.

They're making me make more of them  
so we should soon know why they visit.