

From there we came outside and saw the stars

— Dante, *Inferno*

Walking directly into the sun sounded like the only viable option. I was not going to let a man with an American traditional crocodile tattoo tell me what to do; I wasn't going to let him point a gun towards the Nevada sky and shoot, I was never going to just sit there crisscrossed applesauce and wait for my life to begin. So I began my walk. At first it hurt, having no fireproof footwear, but then I remembered our car stuck on the playa in Gerlach and the man on his way to Burning Man, who was our only savior. He gave Liz a ride into town so she could ask a bartender how to get the Prius unstuck from the thick mud. Rick and I waited for the rain with chewing gum in our mouths. I was 21 and what did I know about Nevada, or luck, or how to be in relationship with others in a way that was less hurtful and more helpful. The sun is very hot. I know this, and yet it could burn tattoos right off my skin, and I could look down on all the people I wouldn't miss, and feel like their God—he's never even wrestled a crocodile, what's that about? Does he even donate to preservation of the tropical and subtropical regions? Probably not. I left all my furniture on the curb near the Kia with the bumper sticker: *Jesus is my copilot*, crushed strawberries—the interstate rodents were pennies I trampled with my tires. I drove past the welcome sign for Utah, the hills looking like Mars. I've only seen Mars in NASA photographs, I only see Liz smile on the house sitter website: *23, experienced with cats, will not smoke indoors*. It's difficult to rectify lies with more lies. What does it say about a pilot that he needs a copilot? This Kia can't possibly warrant divine intervention. Where are all of the trees in Arches National Park? Only orange stone and more stone. Our argument was something about who was the driver and who was Jesus, and I'm all out of crosses to bear, so I'll be the pilot now, I'll drive us straight and fast into more stone.