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Portrait

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CLIMBING MT. BALDY AT THE DUNES

There’s always a boom in sand—a business you might have to enter some day if the river dries up, unless, by the way, you already own a toll booth or a business selling portraits done in clay.

And that’s how we came to be on the dune. It shone like ore, a hill of gold pristine before plains flowers and old Indian trails. It was more than just dune. It was how things come to be untold.

Our feet felt the value of time slipping: As we went up, what we were going up on was coming down. "Icon," it said, "eon." "Hourglass," we answered, gripping our way up. "Broken," it said, and, "C’mon."

PORTRAIT

1
Without the lightness of the sponge, without the armor of the clam, without a look about a ship at rest on the bottom, without so much in the sight of eternity, of which these pictures are but samples.

2
With bare knuckles, with many trees felled, with many times in the bottom of the rowboat pressing my hands equally toward port and starboard as the great cruisers swamped us.
3
With the flickering of stars,
with melodies improvised
on a framework of space,
with intervals, with distances to run,
with a God who is the breeze
around my fire.

4
And a bruise in the water,
and swift current,
and half a loaf,
and the zero of the sun,
and a skewed body
and an iron kiss.

5
Among shards of gourds.
In the roar of the pine sap.
With the carcass of a sparrow
and the banner of the dew.
In a smear of history.
In the thrill of a green flash.