

CECILE GODING

*Arrow Rock*

Okay, I surrender. It's easy on a night like tonight when the darkness is like bruised eggplant and your vigilant heart under my hand ticks off the years. I can't follow you into sleep. You're drinking at the well, while I'm still out here with the camels, wondering how to pass through the needle's eye into the ancient city. Soon enough, I'll cry Uncle and sit up with Whitman. Why shouldn't the keen of a lone harmonica and a piney fire sweeten the day's tower of amputated arms and legs? At least Whitman will make himself useful come dawn, cleaning the dead for burial. I want only to throw in the towel, to believe in an afterlife without a single wheelbarrow full of corpses parked on a Saigon street. "Dead Journalists," the caption said, and stopped. What more was there to say, what chord of pity sound my latest nightmare, this Afghani child without limbs, smiling out at the Ones who blew away his family, then flew him to the States for reconstruction. Man, wake up and take me with you, please, the way you once drew me into a tent near Arrow Rock, Missouri, where we closed the book for one night, fucked on wet ground, rose at nine, and walked into town.