

Abinadi Meza

**Manual for a future desert:  
surrounded by colors we could  
no longer see**

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1. Our stinking teeth. Our muscles cramped from vehicles. The pain of transport
2. Long knives. Desert knives
3. Leather smells more in heat. It is skin
4. The desert is full of leather. It makes no sense
5. Hair brush. Beer can. Snake scrap
6. The grease of your skin. Protective
7. Heat. Ripples
8. Why go into the desert, really?
9. Mistakes. Salt
10. It's not sand like cartoons and movies; it's dust
11. Insect scrap. Foil scrap
12. Plastic scrap
13. Barking dogs; so many dogs
14. A sky sharp as miraculous glass. We keep our eyes down, to see. We can't really see, anyway
15. Seashells. CDs
16. Otherworldly? No, not really
17. Check your tanks. Check your water. Check your battery
18. Check your cables. Check your signal
19. Check the temperature. Check the meters. Check the air
20. Make sure you're carrying your manual
21. Trees like lizards hardening in heat. Thorns that make any blood-thing shudder
22. Hard as bone; bone of plant. The predator inside the plant
23. It usually takes two to repair punctures
24. We knew they would injure us but there was no other way; it was the road
25. Border Patrol getting hot dogs. Stripes
26. They stopped us, but she was white and she did the talking
27. Beer is a dollar cheaper in Alpine and they are open an hour later. Just stop, you're already passing through
28. We drove through here when I was little, to Mexico. A shimmering car window film. I barfed on Long John Silver's in the motel room
29. It's nice to cook the hot sauce right into the eggs; they turn orange and absorb the fragrant oil of the chiles. The tortillas stick to the burner but you can scrape it later
30. We don't have that. That is all we have
31. The distant light of gas stations
32. Machine scrap. Railroad scrap
33. Empty sardine can
34. Already ablaze, when we awoke
35. We forget to drink water. We don't feel our water anymore. It's just a memory now
36. Dark fields full of antennas. Dead channels
37. Look at those stars; so many fucking stars
38. Light year is what they call it. A year's worth of light all rolled up into a thing
39. See, it's still here
40. Pieces of blue. Pieces of gray. Pieces of brown and pink
41. Pieces of white. Pieces of yellow and black. Pieces of green
42. Pieces of blue again
43. It hailed so hard, a sky of collapsing ice
44. Pieces of other things
45. Almost seen
46. Their edges don't meet
47. Yes, crazy

48. There's always something farther
49. "Sushi in the fucking desert?"
50. Hotels. People fucking in the desert
51. We got lucky
52. When you reach a certain speed it feels wrong to stop
53. At night you'll feel like company. Go down the dusty street to the bar with the sign that says "beer"
54. There's a place by the motel
55. Don't get into deep conversations. Don't get into trucks
56. Night brings in the distant channels. In the light of the day they disintegrate, but as the sun sets they come drifting back in again. You feel the fullness in the dark
57. One night we heard Morocco
58. Desert in desert
59. There are people who are no longer surprised by the desert
60. They don't live in it anymore
61. "Who is it?" a voice asks
62. Suddenly in the evening you feel yourself open and you can breathe again. You feel your fluid; your body. You want to drink and eat and laugh again in relief
63. People emerge out of nowhere and the cold comes
64. I didn't say border. Border of what

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