

Each morning she rises high above the plain, remembering. The disturbance at her door, the pleas, the sense that nothing scheduled for erasure seemed much to matter. Safely away, she remembers turning around to see a fire raining from the sky, and a pillar of smoke as wide as the world, and the sulfurous face of someone else's god. Everything they knew had become an obliteration. Her impatient, un-lingering daughters moved on, away from her, faded in a haze of heat. But she wanted to stay a while, keeping watch, and for a time her husband did too. At midday, the animals come in packs. Jerboa then hare. Shrew then hyena. Oryx, ibex, leopard, gazelle, ox. They lick at her feet, her shins, her knees. Each in turn, lapping away the very essence of her. She wonders if the fertile plain she remembers so well was this place or another. She wonders if a reservoir emptied is still a reservoir. She remembers the sound of her husband's voice, the names he called. His *fleur de sel*, his briny one, his salary. She was, he said, the cause of his too-fast beating heart. His covenant and cure. But then, after a time, he called no more. One day he was simply gone. He must have had somewhere to be, and she feels that she can forgive him that. The animals lick until they have reduced her to a savorless puddle. It's always this way at dusk, and every morning she rises again, the tallest thing in the lowest place on earth.