

The Miner's Daughter¹

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1.

The miner's daughter sits next to her father in the back of a '67 Mercedes-Benz 300.

The driver advances at a middling pace, both hands on the steering wheel.

The road is gray and creaks under the tires.

An aerial shot captures the winding road, the Australian desert's red expanse.

The camera moves in to record the closeness of the conversation.

The miner's hand on the back of the little girl's neck, his mouth approaching her ear to whisper:

[inaudible].

2.

The miner's daughter stands on the edge of the unknown highway.

The driver has turned off the engine and is resting by the hood, smoking a cigarette.

Wind gently combs the dirt clods.

¹ "The Miner's Daughter" is a poem from Santiago Acosta's *The Coming Desert / El próximo desierto*. The book was translated from Spanish in a collective workshop which included poet and translator Tiffany Troy, the Women in Translation Project (WIT) at University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the author.

cinnabar | quartz | fluorite

Minerals do not remain hidden beneath the earth. They float in the air, accumulating on the skin and in the nostrils, frolicking in the blood and lungs.

galena | erionite | silica

Now, the camera zooms out, revealing the open earth, large spaces where water used to abound.

3.

We should have left the mainland a long time ago, but the miner was in love with this place.

At night he wandered around the steel plant. He could be seen entrenched behind mining crushers, muttering the same phrase to himself:

"All of us are ruins now."

He was the last to escape when the dust cloud reached the blast furnace.

Before saying goodbye publicly, he noted in his log:

[illegible].

4.

Beauty is an iron mine in Australia.

Beauty is a Chinese titan defeating all the Jewish princes of the West.

Beauty is a young market opening itself to mystery.

Beauty is the red dust that covers the city at sunset.

Beauty is the figure written with our bones on an inherited land.

Beauty is what remains.

These scraps.

This stillness.

5.

The backseat starts to burn under the Pilbara sun as the Mercedes glides along the unknown highway.

The camera flies low, grazing fat, dark lizards, iron and diamonds, fifteen million cubic meters of earth that tomorrow will have vanished without a trace.

"We are the bosses of this sandy wasteland, no one can take us down."

Don't you forget it.

ah, incorruptible nickel | serene cadmium

Your bauxite breath. Your amosite arms.