

Real People Live in Cities

Mike Corrao

A countryman walked out of his house and wound up in a desert.

It was inevitable that it'd happen sometime or another. He wasn't prepared so he wore a flannel and bare feet. The sand burned his soles until they bubbled and popped. He drank out of cacti and wore the leftovers as sunhats. Every time he saw a camel, it was a mirage.

The countryman walked down south because the direction was familiar. He realized that the desert was everywhere and thought it'd be best to take a better grasp of it. He built a shop out of mirages where he sold other mirages to strangers—who themselves were likely mirages.

The business went on for years and years. Someone might walk in and he'd say, "How do you do?" and then they would silently point to what they wanted. He would grab it and they paid him. Returning customers weren't real because he wouldn't return home.

He slept on the sand and when he woke he was covered in the popped bubbles of his skin. By the time a decade rolled around he lost his flannel. When a real person finally stumbled across him, he was naked and scarred. His body was curled up. The real person prodded him with their foot. He opened up and said: "A naked person is a poem."

The real person nodded and set a small potted cactus next to the countryman. He sat up, tore it open, drank its water, and wore the top as a cap. "A naked person is a poem," he repeated to himself. "I'm not sure what a poem was before I showed up around here, but that's what I think it is now." The real person patted his head and walked away, taking the remains of the potted plant with them. Porcelain chips dripped as they walked away.

"Where do I go, where do I go, where do I go from here," the countryman whispered to himself, looking around the desert and its dunes. Wind quickly pulled the sand across the landscape, covering the pot shards. The countryman lay back down and took breaths in

as they came to him and when they stopped coming, he let things
fade away.

