

## **The Hunter-Gatherer**

I am walking through a light desert brush. The yellow grass stretches out before me. In the distance the hills look soft and golden but up close they're just brown and prickly as they should be, given the nature of the things which transpires here, in a desert. The grass is dying. Everything in this land hangs in limbo, perpetually suspended between life and death, like a giant, solitary, grassy fish scale floating in the deep stillness of an ocean abyss. And thus we are just germs crawling around on it. The brush grows thicker ahead. Even the desert carries pockets of fertility, speckling the pure landscape like cancerous sores or, for the faint-hearted, like Pollock's first brush stroke on a big white canvas. It is at one of these oases that I now find myself. There are creatures waiting in the bushes. Wild dogs with red fur and black eyes waiting to intrude upon the peace I try to keep with this landscape, to tear away my limbs, strip me of my agency and leave me lying in the sand to ponder the stars. They have been following me for days. I walk through the bushes along a narrow trail, my feet feeling the contours of the earth just as they are mapped out before me by my eyes, my hands reaching out to touch every leaf and sorry dried branch in my path. I am filled with fear. I can feel it bursting outward against my skin, against the backs of my eyes, against the nails on my fingers. I can hardly keep from crying out I feel so alive. I become suddenly aware of all the challenges I've ever had to face, as well as those which I'll have to face in the future. In simultaneity I become aware of how, specifically, I've overcome each of those challenges. Then I am struck by the vivid image of jaws clamped around by bicep and long teeth sinking into my muscles while they spasm out of control. I round a corner with the dull crunch of dry earth underfoot and the quiet panting of the dogs around me. The do not care that I know. Their confidence has been growing steadily. Now I am simply waiting. I am not so much walking through a desert brush as I am wading through a swamp of anticipation. I am simply waiting for the popping of teeth, for a snarl and a pounce to set me free. You see, I enjoy the taste of dog.