

## **Coda for a Desert Constellation**

### **I**

On the scree of Candelario Peak, he spreads  
a sky chart at his late-pitched camp, and merges,  
for the sake of stars, into the towering quiet.

Ravens climb through a blade of final light.  
As if halted by moonrise, numberless rail cars  
stitch a silenced vector through the desertscape.

Twilight brushes far-off cordillera in a fading  
caress of incandescence. The Braille of untaken  
switchbacks inhale the starlight without him.

### **II**

Farther north, at a Tonopah hotel window,  
a young boy swishes his hand through a galaxy  
of dust motes airborne in a beam of truckstop light.

Down the hall, a man touches a woman's shoulder  
for the last time. She pours a bourbon, spares the ice.  
Her dry rage is a ship with a fire below decks.

Peering out the window, the boy watches the paper  
plate held by a homeless woman vibrate in her grip,  
as if wind were only interested in her hands tonight.

**Jeffrey C. Alfier**