

1942

Desert Road

Nancy Nickerson

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or sudden changing blasts of both,
 a broken cistern that can hold
 no water, for the tale is old:
 It happened on the night we supped
 that one rock vase did overturn
 and held moist-faced together,
 but another
 burst asunder and was lost.
 Go, then, into my vineyard, make it yield
 a perfect growth
 from buds to brook-filled bubbles, not a field
 of blood—this look to first.”

FRAY ANGELICO CHAVEZ

THREE POEMS

DESERT ROAD

The asphalt gleams in wet delusion
 Sharp across the level sand.
 The brindled sage dilates confusion
 Over coarse and graying land.
 Charred peaks reflect a weighted sky,
 And dust lifts white against the blue;
 A single chipmunk worries by,
 And the road cleaves through.

Unpainted boards in brown precision
 Combine to integrate the town.
 Faded signs disturb the vision—
 Each bragging one saloon's renown.
 Dark lanterns vibrate to a sound—
 A bird's light peck. His echoed cry
 Dies ringing on the empty ground
 Where the road sifts by.

MEDUSA

Old trees bristle lean
 To break upon the air—
 And suddenly are stilled.