The Desert

If you have never spent a night in the desert you will never know. How could you possibly understand? As you fall asleep in the crisp night air, the lizards bring you messages. Visions appear before your half-open eyes. The desert snakes wrap themselves around your naked body like a loosely woven blanket, offering you all the warmth their cold blood can give. They ask you with their curious hisses: why have you come? But before you can answer, your eyelids have closed. You are dead. Their question echoes through the night, from dune to dune, invading even your dreamless sleep. In the morning you are alive again and on your way, hot sand between your toes.

An earlier version of this story entitled "Desert Night" was published in *Dream International Quarterly* 13:53 (1990).