

## Trying to talk with a man

By Adrienne Rich

Out in this desert we are testing bombs,

that's why we came here.

Sometimes I feel an underground river  
forcing its way between deformed cliffs  
an acute angle of understanding  
moving itself like a locus of the sun  
into this condemned scenery.

What we've had to give up to get here –  
whole LP collections, films we starred in  
playing in the neighborhoods, bakery windows  
full of dry, chocolate-filled Jewish cookies,  
the language of love-letters, of suicide notes,  
afternoons on the riverbank  
pretending to be children

Coming out to this desert  
we meant to change the face of  
driving among dull green succulents  
walking at noon in the ghost town  
surrounded by a silence

that sounds like the silence of the place  
except that it came with us  
and is familiar  
and everything we were saying until now  
was an effort to blot it out –  
coming out here we are up against it

Out here I feel more helpless  
with you than without you  
You mention the danger  
and list the equipment

we talk of people caring for each other  
in emergencies - laceration, thirst -  
but you look at me like an emergency

Your dry heat feels like power  
your eyes are stars of a different magnitude  
they reflect lights that spell out: EXIT  
when you get up and pace the floor

talking of the danger  
as if it were not ourselves  
as if we were testing anything else.