

A Letter to My Family in Vallejo: I Won't Be Moving Back

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The company I moved here for just let me go,
but I've decided I'm staying in Reno.
I can't blame them for the pink slip,
I haven't been the same since dad died.

I can't keep working in a frigid cubicle
doing accounts receivable in a gray office
with people who don't really like me.
I'd have quit on my own had they not dismissed me.
I need to be outside, roasting in the desert heat.
I need to be free to watch the skies turn pink at dusk,
to feel warm evening air wrap around me
like a sage scented baby's fleece.

I don't have many friends, but I don't feel alone.
Sometimes in the evenings I cry with a pack of coyotes
as they yip and yelp for dusk across vacant fields.
I don't think they'd mind me joining in.

I'd have more friends if I was still drinking,
people love me when I'm *being fun*,
even when I'm slurring, and tying a flannel
around my waist to cover up the reeking wet spot.
You know we drink well in our family.
I once got so drunk at a pub crawl that I fell and broke my leg.
I crawled from a white cab into an ER wheelchair. I needed surgery.
When I hobbled out, I was 52k in debt. Don't worry.

There are a lot of drunks here but none of them are my parents.
Some of them have gotten sober too. In that way I've got a community.
I've moved closer to the river. In the summer, I watch people float
by on inner tubes from under shady trees at Wingfield Park.

That's the thing about Reno, there's always something to do,
but the best thing to do here is nothing. I try to do as much of nothing
as I can get away with while still getting my bills paid.
Living near the water makes me feel closer to home, but still far enough
that I can take deep breaths and not visit if I don't want to.
I went from the *itty-bitty city by the water* to the *biggest little city*,
and I'm staying. Now that it's autumn I can feel
everything winding down with changing leaves.
We get all four seasons here; did I mention that?

The biting cold of winter would swallow you whole.
To me it's worth it to witness silent winter mornings.
The mountain pass gets slick in the winter, I shouldn't risk the drive.
I'll spend the holidays here, where the neon looks like Christmas lights.