

A letter to Santa Cruz from Reno

Cadie Peters

I woke up today and there was smoke in my lungs.
Coughing doesn't help, it just wakes up the dog.
Outside, the smoke swirls through the pine trees and paints them with ash
and all I can do is watch.
And smell it.
I smell it everywhere;
in my hair,
on my clothes,
waiting for me in my car.
It reminds me of what I wanted to escape.

But home means Nevada now,
according to my Driver's license.
Home means Nevada,
according to the stickers on my car.
Home means Nevada and cowboys and deserts and wild horses and sagebrush and--
Nevada goes on.
Home used to mean California, but a house doesn't make a home anymore.
Home used to mean California, but I belong to the dusty hills and the letters painted on mountain
sides now.
I belong to the rich silver history bustling with art, and culture, and life.
The more fun half of Lake Tahoe,
and the perfect place to test atomic bombs.
One area code for Vegas, and one for the rest of the state.
I belong to more than just cowboys and horses and dirt.

As I listen and watch as Nevada calls out to me,
sometimes I can feel my old home looking back at me.

When I hear the coyotes cry with jubilee as they find some innocent housecat.

When I look out away from the city and see sprawling hills,
trees shooting up despite their roots going dry.

When I watch the fluffy clouds give way to the pink sunsets.

When I smell the smoke before I can even see it.

I am reminded of what I came from,

and that home can mean anywhere,

as long as there's smoke and a couple of people willing to help you hide from it.

A Love Note to Nevada

The sunsets and the trees.

It might sound cliché, but I love Nevada.

They bloom high over the city.

I try to bottle it up and mail it in an envelope.

I've only been here a year.

The Joshua trees waved back as I drove by.

A year full of Go Wolfpack and UNLV sucks.

The tumbleweeds needed to greet me, too.

Every hillside bears a rocky white letter.

The sun glances down upon me.

The streets direct me 'one way'.

The moon brings frost and playful icicles.