

Letter to An Unexpected Home

Dana Perich

After 10 years,
it's only fair that I'm honest.
I'd met you just once before
in passing.
I was young, 15 or 16.
Nothing too memorable;
just a drive by.
So much time had elapsed since that first encounter
that I couldn't recall any details.
Maybe you felt the same;
perhaps you didn't remember me at all.
So when the possibility of seeing you came up again,
nearly a decade later,
I had little expectation.
I'd heard rumors:
the nightlife,
the drinking,
the parties,
a life of "sin,"
but I had no interest in any of those things.
I thought of this as potential,
as temporary,
merely an escape,
at best, an adventure.

I came at you all storm,
ready for something different,
the unknown,
a stark contrast to anything I knew before,
only marked with hints of familiarly,
minor attachments:
just a suitcase.
and a husband.

You returned the favor.
July skies filled with storm clouds,
bolts of lightning,
flash floods;

long days in oppressive heat
passed by warm evenings
in the community pool,
waves crashing around,
stillness in the air,
open and vast skies,
making me feel small,
but grateful to be apart of this
new world,
a new apartment.
a new job,
new friends.
So different from the dense Pennsylvania forests,
cornfields
and humid air.
You proved yourself as a great escape,
moving quickly,
providing that great adventure
I so desperately needed.

But it only took a few months.
The oppressive heat waned,
and instead,
I was met with drought.
You took away my one friendly face,
the only familiarity I had,
my only sense of home;
you did so quickly and unexpectedly,
leaving me shattered and broken,
left alone to face high speed winds with no cover,
unprotected and unknown.
I despised you,
didn't understand you,
left wondering if I'd survive you,
if there was an escape to the escape.

4 months I felt like I was drowning,
only to find no water around me.
4 months of choking on dry, stale air.
4 months I went between,
back and forth,
at times giving into those very rumors I abhorred,

the vices everyone knew about you,
but I wanted nothing to do with:
 drinking,
 promiscuity,
 sin,
Or searching for something
 greater,
 life-giving,
 something that would make
me
 STRONGER.

Those 4 months were not just filled with
deprivation; even though you were relentless,
at times you could be giving.
In the stillness and in the quiet,
looking down from some of your highest peaks, you
taught me a lot about myself.
I am broken,
 but I deserve healing.
I am hurt,
 but only I can choose to move forward.
I may be alone,
 but I do not need anyone else.
I have lost,
 but I am never lacking.
My healing is something greater that lies
within. I am:
 Resilient,
 Strong,
 Important.
I have purpose.

In loss,
in desperation,
in loneliness,
in need,
you taught me these things.

And as a result of that desert drought,
those dangerous high speed winds,
those quiet moments on the peak,

staring out at your vastness,
I was able to start again,
start healing,
start transforming,
start recognizing my worth.

It didn't happen overnight.
It took time.

Sometimes I experienced relapses,
questioning
like any relationship,
blaming you for the bad
and the good.
But mostly, I leaned in.
I learned.

It's only fitting that now,
10 years since we really became acquainted
that I remember our first meeting,
the one that became more than just a drive by,
more than just a passing through.
Driving in on the 95 northbound, turning the bend,
the rearview mirror filled with the brown of the mountains
sandwiched between the blue of the sky and the blue of the lake.
In front of me, speeding full force ahead,
The horizon with skyscrapers, blue skies, white clouds, and great immensity.

What I thought would be temporary became more and more permanent.
It was still a great adventure, but nothing I could have ever anticipated.
The rumors, the reputation, never really settled with me.
I only saw vast skies, bright lights, and mountains in every
direction; endless possibilities,
that were far from an escape, but rather,
a Home.



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June 1, 2018 by Dana Perich



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