

# Dear Las Vegas Transplants

Camille Morris

Red Rock

Freemont

Spring Mountain

when you ask

what Vegas has to offer outside of The Strip

my responses vary but these landmarks stay consistent

I used to joke “you aren’t from here

until you’ve visited these spots”

Being from here is a pseudo identity

Born and raised fifteen minutes from a steadily growing collection of tourist traps

I’ve knighted myself a true Las Vegas local

with the power to designate others

I met a man who moved to Vegas at eighteen in the Summer of ‘96

two months after I was born

Not from here.

I knew a girl born in Valley Hospital

shipped off with her dad at the age of five

only to return in her adulthood

Not from here.

My mother

growing up in Inglewood but following her parents to Demona Drive

where she grew roots

and relationships

and me, eventually  
Not from here.

Being from Vegas is murky  
He's not from here.  
She's not from here.  
I'm...not from here.

Raised on YA fiction and teen movies about outcasts  
finally able to escape  
finally able to exist honestly.  
I made this endless expanse  
of dirt and concrete  
a waypoint to truly living.

I wasted whole years between library shelves  
roaming my neighborhood streets  
counting down the hours  
until I got to appreciate my time.  
Two story brick buildings  
painted more shades of gray than I thought possible  
the setting to a bulk of my adolescent years  
nothing more than prisons keeping me from my truth.

I strung together whole realities  
in faraway places  
where I was the many manifested versions of myself  
the creative  
the leader  
the seductress

the entrepreneur

Everything.

But as roadblocks to escape kept appearing:

expensive higher education

a shoddy job market

listless confusion about what I actually wanted from life

a global pandemic

I stayed in this city and it grew around me

until I accepted

with the purchase of a condo

and a settling into routine

that I'm staying.

So I'm learning the culture

Getting caught up in strobing lights, air cannons, pumping beats at night clubs

Snapping through hours of poetry performance on restaurant rooftops

Learning just how much heartbreak, excitement, and new experience

can be hidden in a cactus

constantly blooming.

And with each

step down the rocky trail

night lost to an open bar

grill full of raw brisket

I learn what it means to be

from here.



Photograph by Camille Morris