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

So I'm learning the culture

and a settling into routine

that I'm staying.

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.

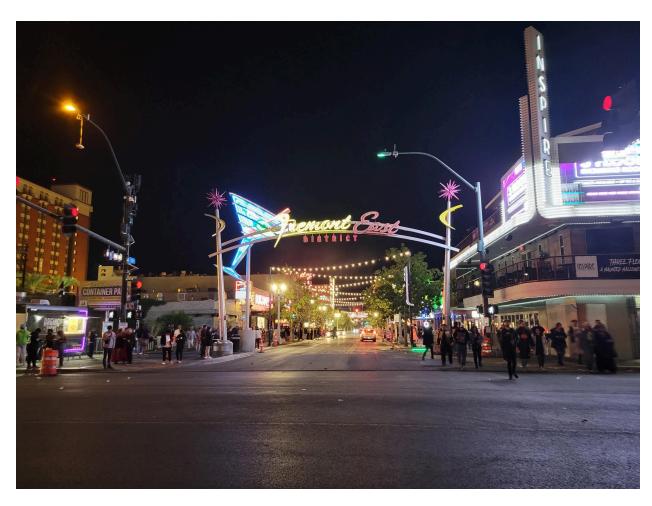
And with each step down the rocky trail

grill full of raw brisket

I learn what it means to be

night lost to an open bar

from here.



Photograph by Camille Morris