Letter From a Nevadan Transplant
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First time I crash landed in the desert
blue sagebrush nipped at my ankles,
cold elbows darted in and out of spotty moonlight,
and squat mountaintops— those strange
pedestals to solidity’s final absence—
peered at me out of some indifferent forever.

By the time I finally stumbled into town
there were lichen-covered gravestones to decode
and Civil War horses to contend with.
There were scrappy grouse
who deftly avoided dancing hooves
in the city square and, I swear,
tried to warn me of the storm to come.

The clouds swelled, hummed deep electric.
Instead of smart shelter I climbed
the highest point I could find,
steeled my body and bared my teeth
until lightning filled the basin to tie
me up with low hills and power lines.

When I got back west over the Sierras
all of my compasses spun silly as the wind.
So here I find myself, again:
pockets full of the rusty nails
I’d hoped to avoid all along,
bare trees glittering pink at dawn.