

For Nevada, the Hills

Dominique Kent

I never intended to return to your bone-dry,
high-pollen, sinus-destroying high desert air,
drawing cracks into the fragile skin of my hands
with your ridiculous lack of moisture.

I never thought I'd drive too fast again
around Reno's McCarren loop,
watch the mountains brush the sky
like old friends reunited at last.

I never thought I'd marvel at the first snowstorm
after a summer with no rain,
or hike across the Truckee River
and think about "water levels" and "childhood."

Once, I dreaded becoming mired in your dust,
I thought the great escape of my youth would be my last.
But I am still young and can pick out Mt. Rose's towering silhouette
at a glance, with a local's heartfelt pride.

This must be the only state where everyone knows
the state fossil is the Ichthyosaur, a small fondness to hold onto,
but sometimes I lift an Icky beer in his honor
on the shores of Pyramid lake where some say he swam.

I did not think I would put roots into Nevada soil,
live again in the shadow of the Peavine hills,
but there is no Pantone color sample that could quite capture
the sky as the sun sinks below the Sierra Nevada peaks.

My bones were formed from desert clay,
my first steps were supervised by the mountains,
my first words were carried by the river through the sage and to the pines.
I am desert-born and Truckee Meadow-raised.

My branches stretch upward toward that endless western sky,
my footsteps timed to the wind that rises from the desert grey.
I am a prodigal daughter of the golden west.
And home means Nevada to me.