

A letter from a child born into a family that stayed

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Thunder cracked through the sky as the afternoon rainstorm made its way through the valley, washing down the 82° day, the antithesis of last week's snow burst.

Each droplet instantly evaporated as it hit the hot asphalt creating a thin fog whispering down the suburban roads. Children play up and down the streets, frolic in the weather with the other neighborhood kids, not processing the impending cold front on the horizon— it is April in Reno after all.

A group of teenagers walk along the river's edge after their viewing of the latest horror movie. Their laughter rings as they huddle around the liquor bottle they stole from their parents' cabinet earlier that evening.

I remember the day you told me you were leaving. Your parents had decided that you knew too much of the real world, that the littered streets of downtown had corrupted your childhood.

They could not validate the future they thought awaited you in this fast-life city. The drugs, liquor, and gambling became the perfect mixture of fear, pushed their decision to take you from us. They did not think you were strong enough to resist. *This town is a bad influence,* they would say over a glass of whiskey through the cracked door they didn't know we could hear through.

I hope your parents haven't perverted your view of our little city since they took you away. Do you remember our trips to Tahoe? Stomachs churning in anticipation as we reviewed the packing list for the third time in the last five minutes. We tore apart the linen closet looking for the perfect towel to match our brand new matching first bikinis.

The blanket of green pines

contrasted with the white tops of the Sierras
flooded the windows of your family's SUV
as we raced to see who could be the first one to spot the lake.

I'm sorry you never got to experience
adolescence in this town,
the balance of good and bad,
to make the decision on which side you'd focus.

To fall back in love with Reno.

Thankfully, when you're grown and ready to come back,
our little city will be here to welcome you home.