

To Heaven, or to Las Vegas

Megha Malik

When I tell people I'm from Vegas,
I'm often asked,
"Did you grow up in a casino?"

I say yes,
But those spaces, those walls,
That harbored my childhood,
My loneliness, my joy, my cravings,
My family, my friends,
They are being torn down now,
Re-branded, re-labeled,
For fancier, glossier spaces,
For people who don't even live here.

When I think of "home,"
I imagine those bright and colorful lights
That drowned me, row after row,
As I walked on carpet stained with
Liquor and cigarette ash (and sometimes blood),
My little 11-year-old feet
Would get lost in
The large medallions and gold vines
Floating through the padded sea beneath my feet.

Remember when a boy held your hand for the first time-
Ice skating at Fiesta in 7th grade?
And remember when you, mom, and dad
Would go to the buffet at Texas Station?
That was the first place where you ever indulged in gluttony,
4-tiered racks of finger cakes.
Sin city indeed.

Both demolished,
last year.



Photography by Bizuayehu Tesfaye of Las Vegas Review-Journal