

Beyond the Power Lines

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Dear Power Lines,

How did we come to call you that, anyway?
Every neighborhood has a Spot with a capital “S”—
A place that can be found on no map
But has a definite name.
For upper-middle-class Southwest Reno kids, you were it.
Power lines framed the neighborhood trailhead,
dissecting clear blue skies in the summer and balancing thin shelves of snow in the winter
(Though there were many other beautiful things about you
that we could have used to name you).

Innocuously tucked between an electricity plant on one side and miles of hilly ecotone
Dry high desert and crisp Humboldt-Toiyabe forest land on another,
A wide-mouthed, washed up trailhead marked by a few boulders
(One of which was decorated by a dusty red car bumper, crunched like a tin can. Is it still
there? How classic. How sad.)
Those rocks were far enough apart to drive between
Up onto the dirt
And pull the parking brake
You were the perfect crime.

At night
You were the place where things came together.
Cigarettes to lighters
Lips to lips
Childhood to adolescence
Did you ever get tired of being used like that? Night after night?
I know I did.

In the morning, dog walkers would huff
At the flattened Trojan boxes
And shattered Corona bottles
That decorated you

And at the start of Sunday afternoon hikes their teenage kids would pretend not to notice.

Did you ever wish people knew you were more than the smudged mascara and wrinkled clothes?

One cloudy winter afternoon, walking the family dog in a pair of dirty Vans

Snow had melted into my socks

Within the first half mile.

Drowning in a dull young panic, cold air chapping my lips

I got lost in the desert land beyond your cracked doorway of disheveled gravel and dark teenaged memories

Found a hill whose crest was hidden by a rare Nevada fog

Hiked straight vertical until the dog and I were both panting

And found, at the top, a weathered picnic table.

I entered the mist and sat down

And felt unfindable.

You gave me that.

I've never found that table since.

How much of what I know about myself is real?

Who's to say what happened

behind foggy windows, some night when I was fifteen?

But you understand. We are both more than meets the eye.