

To Me, from Here

Dani Putney

I awake through the sagebrush
with dust on my nose. Yes,
I was buried alive here years ago,
mycorrhizae tender under fingertips.
I see a body inside the coyotes' howl,
mine at last. They say the desert
transforms you, rat tail & all. Call me
dweller, but I prefer rust, as in
the color of mountainous twilight
atop forestless sand. I fell leeward
into myself here, dry like a blade
against aged skin. Did I mention,
upon collapse, you become winter's
pogonip? Some haunt the silver
mines hoping for a legacy. But these
hills lie. Here, we say the past
dissipates, nothing between us
& the gravel engraving our toes,
as if *valley* were a synonym
for *rebirth*. I, like us all, am a liar.
Only the sage-grouse know. Little
deaths bloom in the slag's shadow.