

## BREATHE DEEPLY - THIS IS SUMMER

MEGHAN ROBINS

The breeze blows the sound of sharp metal ripping up concrete. It clashes with distant boat rumbles that to untrained ears sound like mountain wind. Acrid oil mixes with pine pollen then smooths over bumpy roads. Ladders don't budge atop idling trucks and men don't grumble as they sip the end of their coffee. There wouldn't be any point. We all knew this was coming. So we wait. All of us. Idling in traffic, watching the biker tiptoe around side-mirrors, cursing him for not using the bike path, which was swept of sand long before the roads.

Tomorrow I will take the side streets. Get my bike out, tune it up and I will not sit in this traffic. I won't have to read the misunderstood bumper sticker in front of me for I know it is your vacation that makes my life possible. And even then, I scrape by. Someone is confused about what makes Tahoe summers perfect. Yes, predictably sunny days, late evening BBQ's and mirrored still mornings. But most of all, the influx of money. This is our push. Work hard, play hard, make enough so we may survive winter, whether there is snow or not.

I wave at the peach-fuzzed hard-hat holding his sign. I always do because what kind of a job must that be? Hot, draining, boring. I wait for the sedan in front of me to find which right turn his blinker's been on so long for. I breathe deeply because this is summer. I park. I find my way into the mountains, into the quiet. I charge past families with kids and unrubbed sunscreen. I take two steps at a time past Eagle Falls so I don't have to hear their conversation. I leap, say excuse me and thank you and then I am free. The trail clears, the view opens, the roar of boats gives way to the breeze.

I am home. Desolate and wild. I am completely at ease in the alpine lakes with water so frigid it spikes my leg hair. I won't shower, won't complain, won't bother the mountains with mundane words. I sit, ramble, swim and read. I let go of the loud bustle that hovers over Tahoe, pushing it, fueling it, ruining it. I note which salmon color turns the mountains red tonight as I wrap all but my face in my sleeping bag.

Granite pushes through my Therm-a-rest and I smile at the familiar sores bruising my hip bones. Tomorrow I will return, back to work, back to crowded Tahoe. I will laugh at bad jokes, recommend good day hikes and I will be earnest as I thank customers for coming in.

John Muir wanted to make Tahoe a National Forest, to keep people like us from living here. Perhaps he should have. Perhaps a place that transforms from twenty foot snow caves to perfectly sunburnable days should be reserved only for tourists like you and me.