

the mountain lion's ephemeral midnight prowling.

I came back for your people, too. The way your craggy close-knit hills and small skies have bred and brought obstinacy, eccentricity, and goodness. Young hippies and old farmers. Old hippies and young farmers. The flinty eyes of the intrepid and the opaque eyes of the survivors and the breezy eyes of the believers.

Because, like all good lovers, it's the complicated ones that stick. I'm not after what's pretty or clear or easy; it's the strange and the secret, the pockmarked reverberations of the past, that keep me up at night, that make the daytime sing.

So, like I said, I came back, and stitched my life into your accommodating skin.

I planted seeds in your rock-studded, fertile earth and birthed a child. I feed her on your clear, spring water and ripe blackberries; I teach her the names of trees and the names of the dead. I teach her how to piss by the side of the road and how to tap a maple and how to catch a snowflake on her tongue.

Because it's not a slight thing, to know you like this. To know all the dappled contradictions of your borderland: the textures of old and new, of light and dark. It's a kind of knowing that follows us wherever we go. That tells us to look below the surface, to sniff around and to listen. That teaches us to be unafraid of what's eccentric, or broken, or wild. And maybe, if we're lucky, teaches us to care.

*Joanna E. S. Campbell*

## North Fork of the Flathead River, Montana

**I**'VE BEEN WORKING at RBM Lumber in Columbia Falls, Montana, for five days, and I've made an amazing discovery: I'm in love with grade 2 and 3 lumber. I am in love with wormholes, embedded bullets, rot. As I guide the imperfect wood into the press, I wonder if a sawyer at a



*Phillip Barron*

## Davis, California

**T**HE TEMPERATURE rarely drops below freezing in Davis, California, but winter settles in in the form of rain and tulle fog. Nearly as transformative as the first fallen snow in parts north, tulle fog makes new landscapes out of familiar terrain. Like a frosted glass wall at the edge of every farm field, the thick ground fog distorts as well as limits visibility, turning wind-curved brush into coyotes and hiding even the best-lit oncoming cars.

Tulle fog gets its name from a tall grass indigenous to the river delta, where the waters of the Sacramento and San Joaquin commingle. Tules grow in the wetlands throughout California's Central Valley, and on calm, clear winter nights, the humid air just above the

ground cools quickly, condensing water vapor into a kind of cloud. On fogged-in mornings, dawn breaks to a white cloak so thick that in some pockets it's tough to see across the street.

On these mornings, I leave the house to find that I have moved overnight. Or rather, I find that the town has moved around me. Trees stand taller, trains blast their horns from farther away, drivers take longer to get where they are going. Even the top floors of the admittedly small buildings seem to perch a little farther from the streets. The tulle's white veil enlarges the town for a few more hours before the sun burns off the thin, white blanket, setting right a familiar landscape.