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Stockton, CA

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Stockton, CA

Jennifer Joy Pierson

I know you want to hear about the grandeur that gave birth to my port city
I want to give that to you—
but the broken windows have blighted Her elegance
I know you want to learn about how the Delta's veins nourish our young
I want to give that to you—
but the churning murky water whisked their purity out to sea
I know you want to hear about butterflies and bees frolicking above acres
of asparagus shoots under the rainbow sky
I want to give them to you—
but the monarchs are disappearing, and the bees are dying, and there are no
prismatic raindrops in the cloudless sky
I know you want me to describe the life perched outside my window—
I want to share it with you—
but my landlord dismembered the two trees on my front lawn cutting
away every limb
now they stand, two 10-foot-tall skeletal bone stumps, leaving no refuge
for the birds
I know you want to know about how my neighborhood glows
I want to share it with you—
but I can't see my neighbors light through my closed blinds
I know you want to hear about how I let in the light
I want to tell you it's true—
but I keep them closed all through the day and night because I live alone and
am afraid
I know you want to hear about how the red fox claims Swenson Oaks
at night
I want to give that to you—
but all I can hear are her hungry cries as she searches for scraps to take back to
her den
I know you want to picture her adorable cubs waiting for her—
I want to share that with you—
but the predators came and snatched their innocence away
I know you want to hear that their father is near watching over them
while their mother trades her dignity for a mouthful of processed food
I want to give that to you—
but their father got trapped in a steel cage never to return
I know you want to hear that there must be some good souls to be found
I want to tell you it's true—
but there are so many to save and we can only reach but a few as we stand on
the levee helplessly watching the rest sink like heavy stones to the bottom of
the channel

I know you want to hear about the beautiful water hyacinth violet blooms
blanketing the Delta

I want to share them with you—
but they're choking the life from our children

I wish a Great Blue Heron would pluck them up and carry them North
along the Sacramento River
until their mother's veins run clear
until their fathers are waiting for them
at the base of Mount Shasta
with outstretched arms
ready to heal their wounds

I know you want that too