

## *The Vessel of Us*

The Vessel of Us is this Great Basin  
cradle of a nascent railroad town  
predated by its native peoples  
the silver-slaked savior of a nation  
with stories past and stories yet untold:

From waves of Tahoe flow contemplation  
the undulation of current waters  
sediment layers tell stories of time  
before the intervention of mankind

From the Black Rock Desert where people play  
to the abandoned mines of the old west  
ghost towns tell of what is past or to come  
impermanent people carved in the land

encroaching footprints of development  
teasing outward in hurried expansion,  
hold sacred that azure orange horizon  
in perfect form and not in abstraction.

The high desert's shape is rugged edges  
and with rugged nature coalesces  
its imperfect geometries belie  
truer aspects of the land's perfection

between light and shadow, sunset and dawn  
desert majesty rewards the patient  
revealing to those who wait its vibrant  
hues of beauty and untouched perfection

Sunbaked basin hills, snow capped mountainscapes  
the subtle shades of browns and grays  
their muted grandeur understated  
an expanse of rock and ocean of soil.

The contours of the canyon hills reveal  
a softness to the harsh desert landscape—  
the sea of sagebrush teems with fertile life,  
community of possibilities,

inhospitable, wind-whipped and arid,  
life here adopts a gentler kind of being—  
delicate beauty, stubborn persistence  
defying the improbabilities

desert bouquets so vibrant and small  
under the majesty of basin skies  
pops of color, radiant survival  
a welcome visage to all who behold

fuel of fire, cycle of renewal  
destruction, rebirth - engine of progress  
wild untamed nature reclaims itself  
from the ash sprout seedlings of the future.

Ancient pines keep memory alive  
so do the Paiute, Washoe, Shoshone  
first stewards of land, now of history  
record the glory of this native land

beneath the eye of the night's darkened sky  
the cosmos flicker for us dim and bright  
their luster beckons us to consider  
the passing of a million years of light,

rare desert rain carries the smell of sage  
held first by westward homesteaders, now shared  
as if by an unending thread through time,  
joy in that sweet house which the soul calls home.

Between earth sky, our past and future  
the Great Basin rich in its potential  
shares its worldly wealth with each living being  
a single humanity with purpose  
a gift given to us and those who come next.

**Dustin Howard**

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Dustin Howard is a professional grant writer with a decade of dedication to nonprofit organizations, especially those that serve homeless and at-risk youth.

He is the author of *Engrams*, a collection of poetry, and a supernatural thriller novel, *Breakvale*. When he isn't writing, Dustin likes to fill his time with arts and crafts, amateur carpentry, and watching Star Trek.

A native of the Ozarks, Dustin moved to Nevada after falling in love with the mountains and the wonderful people of Reno. He served as the City of Reno Poet Laureate, July 2021 through June 2023. You can learn more about his works and connect with him on social media by visiting his website.