

Resident

by DeMisty Bellinger

You won't know what it's like living in a small town until you do:
here you are, population just a little over two thousand.
And you get tired of waving at everyone you pass by.
And you get tired of hearing the sibilance of whispers
behind closed hands.

You can't tell the loneliness of living in a big city until you do.
You'll look out your window and see people you could never know.
They all seem to know something, have direction.
But there you are--
 looking out the window.

You are ignorant to love, and forever will be. Do not ask about it.

You will know the ghetto by the simultaneous air of despair and hope.
You will know the country for fences, for feces, for cows, or,
You will know the country for the smell of hay and manure blowing over the hills to you. You will know you are near the ocean when thirst overwhelms you, even though you feel hydrated.
And you will know the desert for being dry, hot, and tolerable in spite of everything.

When you are home,
you may know it by the neutral smell,
the comfortable place to sit,
a kitchen with food you've chosen,
and sometimes,
by the people who are obliged to love you.

