**Monsoon Season in the Sandia Mountains**

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How unlikely it seems that the parched clay of high desert

belongs to the same Mother Earth as ocean and jungle,

as the sumptuous loamy soil of deciduous meadow.

This land, seemingly barren, energy yang,

riverbeds long since dried and powdered

with the crush of alkaline dust,

embedded with mica and turquoise,

appear at once so rich and yet infertile.

The arid air steals the water on my breath

before I can finish the phrase: *the desert takes*.

It takes like a trickster coyote,

leaving behind only bones,

shapeshifting into hoodoo rock sculptures hard as caliche,

embodying humanoid shapes of life, lithified in time.

A topography as unchanging and primordial

as the crust of a dusty moonscape.

Until the August rains come.

Suddenly the foothills burst with sagebrush and Chamisa,

rainbows appearing in the thin sky to soften the iron oxide

that creates the ochres and burnt umbers of watermelon mountains,

the air filling with the fragrant blood of boulders, *petrichor*

as, even here, ruby-throated hummingbirds search for

the nectar of trumpet-shaped flowers hidden

somewhere among endless acres of hoof-stamped pasture.

Water collects in the acequias

floods the cracked earth, letting in life,

as it filters down through the sand searching for roots,

before evaporating back up slowly

in the fading light of afternoon

floating away like hot air balloons over the mesa.

Goldweed abounds in living bouquets dazzling

the arroyos that run giddy with crawfish

and the toads unbury themselves from hiding.

All in the span of one night.

I see it now.

This feminine softness,

the exuberance of life that exists everywhere, even here.

The way the sword-leaves of aloe can also nurture and heal,

how the cool caves can be wombs,

where squash seeds collected by a mystery

are kept shaded and sheltered,

their fertility safeguarded for millennia

laying patiently dormant all this time.