

Southern California Wants to Be Western New York

Dar Williams

There's a part of the country
Could drop off tomorrow in an earthquake
Yeah, it's out there on the cutting edge
The people move, the sidewalks shake
And there's another part of the country
With a land that gently creaks and thuds
Where the heavy snows make faucets leak
In bathrooms with free-standing tubs
They're in houses that are haunted
With the kids who lie awake and think about
All the generations past
Who used to use that dripping sink
Sometimes one place wants
To slip into the other just to see
What it's like to trade its demons
For the restless ghost of Mrs. Ogilvy
Used to pick the mint from her front yard
To dress the Sunday pork
Sometimes southern California wants
To be western New York
Wants to have a family business
In sheet metal or power tools
And it wants to have a diner
Where the coffee tastes like diesel fuel
And it wants to find the glory of a town
They say has hit the skids
And it wants to have a snow day
That will turn its parents into kids
And it's embarrassed, but it's lusting
After a sunny student with mousy brown hair who is
Taking out the compost
Making coffee in long underwear
And southern California says
To save a place, I'll meet you there
And it tried to pack up its miata
All it could fit was a prayer
Sometimes the stakes are bogus
Sometimes the fast lane hits a fork
Sometimes southern California wants
To be western New York
Tempe, Arizona thinks the Everglades
Are greener and wetter
And Washington D.C. thinks
That Atlanta integrated better
But I think that southern California
Has more pain that we can say
'Cause it wants to travel back in time
But it just can't leave L.A.
But now I hear they've got a theme park planned
Designed to make you gasp and say
Bet that crumbling mill town

Was a booming mill town in its day
Old investors scoff at this, but the young ones
Hope they'll take a chance
And they promise it will make more dough
Than Mickey Mouse in northern France
And the planners got an opening day
A town historian will host
And the waitresses look like waitresses
Who want to leave for the West Coast
And they'll have pattering on rainy weekends
Autumn days that make you feel sad
They'll have hundred year old plumbing
And the family you never had
And a Hudson River clean-up concert
And a bundle-bearing stork
And I hear they've got a menu planned
It's tres western New York, western New York

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