

Liii: driven apart

Obsidian mornings on the mountain, when I had to roll to open the little grocery store that employed us all. Cold, and dark, and so alone that early, as I weaved my way west along the precipice from Running Springs, towering cedars and white firs and pines looming like sable specters in the cold darkness, ghostly sleeves of hardened snow on the upside of their limbs. I often dreaded the morning back then, still being a kid, and I emerged from the dreamworld groggy, somewhat resentful yet somehow allured, still seemingly drifting in that dangerous netherworld where all was possible. Sisters of Mercy's "Driven Like the Snow" flowed softly through my truck's speakers, expressing perfectly my somnambulance, the frosted twilight trees, the expansiveness in that time before domestication's time. My own little sliver of time, still in that natural light, however dim, that vestige energy from the last day somehow still bouncing around and sparkling the snow, and me, and me, the only person alive.

Then into the bleaching, staring light of the grocery store, where I cinched up my tie on my starched-white button-up shirt and plastered a smile on my groggy, entangled visage for the early patrons. Dawn rose, bluing the scene, and then nice, local mountain people came occasionally into the store while I straightened wares on shelves, bagged a few groceries. And outside, the snow glowed with a calming, pristine hue, giant old second-growth firs and pines shading with violet. Then after nine hours in the static, robot light of the grocery store, I drove back home, an exhalation, quaffing a giant plate of cheap macaroni and cheese, snow on the deck softly glittering like little stars in dusk's twilight, and me, paradoxically fearing and pining for the following obsidian morning when I'd once again be rolling on that lonely mountain road in my own ancient sliver of time.