

I.v: trying

As autumn's beams separated and rayed out in my bedroom while I dozed in the crisp air, I thought of autumn's Green Valley during my late teens. High up, little Green Valley, about 7,000 feet, and after Labor Day, with fewer attractions than Arrowhead and Big Bear, abandoned. Had the lake all to myself, had the trout all to myself. Man, those 'bows - too many looked too fucking good to be hatchery fish, intimating a Wild vestige persisting among the truck-trout throng. No missing fins, no bent fins, picky, they didn't behave like hatchery fish - PowerBait would yield you nothin'. I never explored the feeder stream, little Green Valley Creek, but rainbows don't need much, just some gravel and a little flow and water not too hot, and they can do it. In falling light, stalking the shore, alone, with a lone little tackle bag, pines and firs enshrouding, out went my streamers on the only rod I owned, and in sprang so many magnificent 'bows, often a foot and a half, and I turned nearly all loose. When too dark to see my casts, my flies, I was frozen, numb - cold those autumn dusks, and I didn't know how to layer up to stay warm outdoors given the suburban flatland upbringing that defiled my childhood. I always cranked the heater to blazin' after getting back into my truck.

Then the slow, sinuous drive back down to Running Springs, to the little studio apartment I rented for a paltry \$100 from Judy - she was very kind to me. Alone on that abandoned road, auburn leaves of black oaks shading the spectrum of the pine and fir verdure. Raw, simple punk rock was normally the soundtrack - Bad Religion's *How Can Hell Be Any Worse* frequently rolled through the tape deck. Back down to the little apartment, sparsely furnished - a couch, a small kitchen, and a tiny pile of clothes and a handful of vinyl records and a turntable and my little fishing bag and lone rod in an alcove to the right of the kitchen. A fridge. It was Spartan relative to the wholly domesticated, consumerist America I'd been raised in, but it was totally enough, it all *fit*, it all seemed harmonious - my living space, the music stomping out the speakers, the gear I used to romance the rainbows. I recall a few moments, breathtaking, slivered moments, of seeming transcendence, when the cacophonous voices in my head evaporated, and that *something* enveloped me, that deep-time echo, that greater vitality of life, somehow facilitated by the way I was living hazily resembling a more resonant life with Nature. Sure, I still couldn't cook fish properly and so chowed fuckin' overly processed food such as Cocoa Puffs and boxed macaroni and cheese, the punk rock I blasted devoured gobs of electricity, and I only fished waterways where a low-clearance jalopy could roll right up to shore, but, still, the simplicity with which I tried surrounding my life, it echoed, albeit distantly, it echoed the forms of a more elegant life with the greater world than I'd ever experienced as a child in Lancaster. We were trying.