

Whistle Stop

by Rich Haber

The one lane road I took into the mountains has been covered over with snow. There's no way to follow it as I drive so I have to feel the smoothness intuitively. I see train tracks off at an angle to the right where the tree line indicates the approximate way through.

Snow is everywhere. If my car dies, I die. I stop at the crossing of the road and the tracks, as the sound of a train drones above my engine noise but I don't see the train.

There is a small knoll to my left on which a young girl stands. She wears a forest green burka and holds a small sled. I don't meet her stare. She opens her mouth and her head falls back as snow from the trees falls down around her. There is a moment of silence, then the train I've been hearing bursts through the trees, crushes through my car, splattering me in oil and blood screaming death.

I awake to moans from my throat. The room is cold but I'm bathed in sweat. My heart pounds and blood hisses through my ears but I'm alive, I'm alive. I'm alive. Then I see her again. She is part of the wall alongside my bed. Her eyes blaze through the green burka as her veil drops, revealing skull where face should be. Her teeth form a death grin, words pour from within, hollow like a baby's rattle. She speaks Farsi but the meaning appears in my mind, the sound electric blue. "You must stop them. Go to capitol city. I will help you. Tell them everything."

I've peed myself and drool oozes down my chin onto my chest. The girl reaches with her cloth-covered hand to wipe my face. The red-orange flame in her eyes fades to incandescent depleted uranium green. Tears flow hot on my cheeks and I arise to face more American truth.

