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Spiritual Memoir

The Snow That Remembered Me

When the Soul Remembers What the Mind Has Forgotten

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There is a particular kind of silence that belongs only to snowstorms.

Not the silence of an empty room, or the silence of a held breath — but something older, something that presses gently against the world like a hand laid flat on a table, asking it to be still. I did not know this kind of silence before December of 2018. I had spent years beneath the wide, indifferent sun of Los Angeles, where the sky is always performing, always burning in shades of amber and rose, where silence is something you have to chase. I had lived in Australia before that, and before that, in other versions of myself I was still learning to name. I had crossed oceans and time zones the way some people cross rooms — half-aware, pulled by something unnamed, following a thread I could not see but could somehow feel between my fingers.

And then, somehow, I was in Albany.

Upstate New York in December is not a place that eases you in gently. It does not introduce itself with small talk. It arrives all at once — raw and grey and heavy with the promise of something ancient. The Hudson River runs through the region like an old scar, and the city itself feels layered, as though every era of its existence is still somehow present beneath the surface, breathing quietly under the modern streets. I had no particular reason to be in Albany, no neat explanation I could offer at dinner tables or in quiet conversations with people who asked. I had come from Manhattan. Before Manhattan, California. Before California, Australia. The logic of my movement was not the logic of career or love or opportunity — it was the logic of something older, something that does not show up on maps.

I arrived in December, and December arrived with snow.



On the morning everything changed, I woke to a world that had been repainted overnight.

I remember standing at the window before I was fully awake, before my mind had assembled itself into its usual shape, and thinking that the world outside looked like a photograph that had been developed in the wrong chemicals — everything white, everything soft, the edges of buildings blurred into the edges of sky. Snow was falling the way it falls in dreams: slowly, deliberately, as though each flake had somewhere specific it needed to be.

I was supposed to drive to work. I always drove. I had learned, in those early Albany weeks, to keep myself inside the metal shell of a car, sealed away from a winter I did not yet understand. But that morning, looking out at the white-swallowed street, something in me resisted the car. The weather was shifting. The snow was getting heavier by the minute, and there was something almost aggressive in its beauty — the kind of beauty that asks you to stop moving and pay attention. I decided to take the bus.

This was not, in itself, a remarkable decision. People take buses every day. People make small, practical choices every day that redirect the course of their lives, and they never know it. They never feel the weight of the pivot until long after the moment has passed, if they feel it at all.

I felt it immediately.



The bus stop was at the corner of a road I had never stood on before. I always drove a different way to work — the bus route took me through streets I had only ever seen from the car window, peripherally, the way you see things you are not yet meant to look at directly. When I arrived at the stop, I was completely alone.

Not alone in the way cities make you feel alone, surrounded by strangers who orbit without touching. Alone in the truest sense — there was no one else on the road. No cars. No pedestrians. No dogs being walked, no delivery trucks idling. Just me, and the snow, and the particular quality of stillness that only arrives when a city holds its breath.

The snow was getting heavier. I stood at the edge of the footpath and watched it fall, and I felt something happening inside me that I did not have a word for. Not happiness, exactly, though it was close to happiness. Not peace, though it was close to that too. It was something beneath both of those things, something more fundamental — a sense of rightness, of landing, of arriving somewhere after a long journey, even though I was only standing at a bus stop on a Tuesday morning in December.

And then, without planning it, without meaning to, I heard my own voice say the words out loud.

This feels like home.

I remember the surprise of hearing myself say it. I had not thought the words first — they arrived fully formed in my throat, bypassing whatever part of the mind usually curates what we say. They were not a statement. They were more like a recognition. The kind of thing you say when you walk into a room and realize you have been looking for it your whole life.

And then the world split open.



I do not know how to explain what happened next in any language that will do it justice.

One moment I was standing at the bus stop in December 2018, dressed in my winter coat, the modern street stretching out around me in white silence. And then — in less than a heartbeat, in the space between one thought and the next — something shifted. Not in the world around me, exactly. Something shifted in the layer beneath the world, in the foundation of the moment itself.

I looked down.

I was wearing a corset. Heavy fabric, stiff and structured, pressing against my ribs with a weight that felt familiar in a way that made no sense. A gown fell around me in layers — full, elaborate, layered over petticoats that held their shape against the cold. There was something on my head, a cap or a bonnet of some kind, and when I touched it with my fingers it felt as real as anything I had ever touched. The fabric of the gown was substantial, beautiful — the kind of beauty that requires patience to wear, that assumes a different relationship with time.

I looked up.

The street was full of people.

They moved the way people move when they do not know they are being watched — purposefully, naturally, without performance. Women in long gowns and cloaks walked along the footpath, some with children whose small hands were folded inside theirs. Men in long coats and tricorne hats crossed the road with measured dignity. The buildings behind them were older — the same bones as the street I knew, but unworn, sharper, belonging to a century I had only ever read about. A horse-drawn carriage moved through the scene with the casual authority of something that had never been replaced by engines. The air smelled different — woodsmoke and cold and something I could not name, something that belonged to a world before exhaust and electricity.

It was not snowing.

But it was cold. The same cold. The deep, particular cold of Albany in winter, the kind that presses against your skin like a hand pressing you gently toward something important.

And then I saw it — the one detail that anchored everything.

One building. Standing at the corner of that same intersection, wearing a different skin but the same structure, the same proportions, the same relationship to the space around it. I knew that building. I would know it again when I came back. It was the proof that I had not moved — that I was standing in the same place, only the place was standing in a different time. Or I was. Or both things were true simultaneously, and the distinction did not matter as much as I had always assumed.

My mind said the same words again.

This feels like home.



The memory lasted a split second. And it lasted a lifetime.

I know this sounds like a contradiction, and I cannot resolve it for you because I could not resolve it for myself. In the world of clocks and calendars, the vision was over almost before it began. But inside whatever space the mind opens when it encounters something it cannot categorize, I was there for a long time. Long enough to notice the way the mothers held their children's hands — firmly, with the particular grip of a parent navigating a cold and unpredictable world. Long enough to watch the carriage wheels leave shallow grooves in the road. Long enough to feel, with absolute certainty, that I was not a tourist in that moment. I was not watching from outside. I belonged to that street the way the buildings belonged to it, the way the cold belonged to it, the way the snow would belong to it when it came.

The place did not feel like somewhere I had read about or imagined. It felt like somewhere I had been. Or somewhere I would be. Or somewhere that existed outside the sequence of before and after, in a dimension where all the versions of a place — all the centuries of its existence — are present at once, stacked on top of each other like transparencies, and occasionally, under the right conditions, one layer bleeds through another.

I stood very still after it passed. The modern street reassembled itself around me. The snow continued to fall. I was wearing my winter coat again, my boots, my ordinary clothes. The carriage was gone. The women in their gowns were gone. The building remained, as it always had — as it had for centuries — standing at that corner with the patience of something that has outlived many versions of the world.

I waited a few minutes. I did not take the bus. I walked home.



I have spent years turning that morning over in my hands, examining it from different angles, trying to find the seam where it stops being experience and starts being explanation.

Was it a hallucination — a trick of cold and exhaustion and sensory deprivation, the isolated quiet of an empty street tricking a tired brain into manufacturing meaning? Perhaps. I cannot rule it out. Extreme cold does things to perception. Isolation does things to perception. The sudden, complete whiteness of a heavy snowstorm removes so many of the usual visual anchors that the mind, untethered from its normal reference points, might reach for something older.

Or was it something else?

I think about reincarnation — not as a religious certainty, but as a question I am willing to take seriously. The idea that consciousness is not produced by a single body and extinguished with it, but that it persists, accumulates, carries something forward through iterations of existence. If that is true, then certain places might function as memory — not our personal memory, but the memory of the soul, the deeper archive that a single lifetime does not have access to until something cracks the ordinary surface of experience. A familiar building at a corner you have never stood on. A quality of cold that matches a quality of cold you do not consciously remember. Your own voice, saying words you did not choose:

This feels like home.

The soul remembering through the body. The body recognizing what the mind has forgotten.

And there is something significant, I think, about the specific trigger. Not the place alone. Not the cold alone. But the words. The sentence I spoke aloud before the vision began. As though the act of naming the feeling — of giving it voice, of claiming it — opened something. As though the past was waiting for me to acknowledge it before it would show itself.



Two weeks later, I left Albany.

I went back to Australia. And I want to try to describe what it felt like, because it was unlike any leaving I had experienced before. It did not feel like leaving. It felt like completion. Like a sentence that has reached its period — not cut short, not interrupted, but finished. My soul, if I can use that word without apology, was quiet in a way it had not been before I went to Albany, before I stood at that bus stop alone in the heavy snow, before I said the words that split the morning open and showed me something I was apparently meant to see.

I did not understand, when I left Los Angeles for Albany, why I was going. The logic was thin, the reasons real but not fully mine — they belonged to circumstance more than to choice. The pull toward Albany was more feeling than reason — the same pull that had brought me from Australia to California in the first place, the same thread I had been following my whole life without knowing what I was following it toward.

Now I think I know. I was following it toward that corner. Toward that morning. Toward the snow and the silence and the moment when a place remembered me, or I remembered it, or both of those things happened at once in a way that the English language does not have adequate grammar to describe.

I saw what I was meant to see in America. And then I left.



There is one more thing I need to tell you.

There are two kinds of longing in this world. The first is the longing we can name — for a person, a place, a version of ourselves we once were or hoped to become. This kind of longing has an address. It lives in memory, in photographs, in the ache of a specific absence. We understand it because we understand its origin.

The second kind has no address. It arrives without explanation, without history, without any evidence that what it is reaching for even exists in this lifetime. It does not ask permission. It does not respond to logic. It simply persists — quietly, stubbornly, with the patience of something that has been waiting far longer than one life allows. Philosophers have debated for centuries whether the soul is a vessel or a traveller. I do not know the answer. But I know that for years — long before Albany, and far more insistently after — something in the deepest and most unargued part of me has been orienting itself toward Switzerland.

Not curiosity. Not wanderlust. Not the kind of interest that can be satisfied by reading a book or watching a documentary. Something older than interest. Something that does not live in the mind at all, but in that wordless interior place where the body knows things before the brain is asked. Carl Jung, who was himself Swiss, once wrote that the most important questions of life can never be fully answered — they can only be lived. I have come to believe that the most important *callings* of a life are the same. They cannot be reasoned with. They can only be followed.

And this is what I want you to understand, you who are reading this and perhaps recognizing something in your own chest as you do — when something rises from that deep place and will not leave, when it has been present for years not as a thought but as a *knowing*, when your heart has quietly decided long before your mind caught up: that is not fantasy. That is not wishfulness dressed up as destiny. That is the soul exercising the only language it has ever truly spoken — the language of pull, of recognition, of an alignment so fundamental it bypasses every reasonable objection you have ever raised against it.

We spend so much of our lives honouring the things we can explain. The decisions with justifications. The loves with clear origins. The paths with visible destinations. But the things that come from the core — from that still, deep, entirely ungovernable place beneath personality and preference and practical consideration — those are the things that tend to matter most in the end. Not because they make sense. Because they are true.

I do not know what is in Switzerland. I do not know which city, which corner, which particular quality of winter light on which specific morning. I do not know if I will arrive and recognise it immediately, or if I will only understand what I found long after I have left — the way you sometimes only understand a conversation years after it happened, when something else occurs that suddenly gives it meaning. I do not know if what waits there is something I need to see, or feel, or simply be present for. I do not know if it is a place that will remember me, or a memory I have been carrying that finally needs somewhere to land.

But I have learned — slowly, and only through the kind of experience that cannot be taught — to trust the feeling. Not because I can prove it. Because every time I have followed it, I have arrived somewhere I was meant to be. And every time I have ignored it, I have felt the particular hollowness of a life that has chosen safety over truth.

The pull toward Switzerland is not a whim. It has survived years of practical life. It has survived doubt, and distance, and every reasonable argument I have made against it. It is still here. It is, if anything, louder than it was when it first arrived. And I have come to understand that when something persists that long — when

it outlasts every attempt to explain it away — it is no longer a question worth debating. It is simply a direction.

I will go. I do not know when. But I will stand somewhere in that country, in whatever season finds me there, and I will be very still, and I will listen the way I have learned to listen — with the whole body, not just the mind. And perhaps the place will speak in the way Albany spoke. Perhaps something will shift in the layer beneath the visible world. Perhaps I will look around and feel, without warning and without explanation, the oldest and most inexplicable sense of recognition a human being can feel.

Or perhaps I will simply stand there and be quiet, and that will be enough.

The soul does not always need a vision. Sometimes it only needs to arrive.

I will know it when I say the words.

I always do.



The snow keeps its own kind of record. The cold remembers everything.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claudia Rezai is a Kurdish–Iranian–Australian author and fashion designer whose work explores themes of love, identity, and the narratives we carry within us. Her writing weaves together philosophy, fashion, and deeply human emotion, creating a distinctive voice that bridges the personal and the universal. She is based in Australia.

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