



Coast Range Chronicles 33: “Air/Water”

by

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Dawn. Frigid offshore wind gusts through the coastal canyons. We shiver violently during the hellish transition from clothing to wetsuit. We grab our surfboards, paddle out, and sit in the lineup, hands stuffed in armpits.

The wind knifes through our wetsuits. We own the best neoprene but it’s no match for the wind, a tough dry continental air mass, a taste of high desert: juniper and sagebrush and frozen ground and long clear nights. We’re accustomed to the buffered flow of maritime air, soft and moist. Forgiving.

Our bodies ache, our faces grow numb. We snort and grumble and scan the horizon for waves that don’t come.

We slide from our boards into the water. Usually we curse the fifty-degree winter ocean, but with the wind chill in the thirties, it feels oddly toasty. Like we’re in a hot tub. Beneath the cold we feel the heat of summer lingering in the water molecules.

For a few minutes, at least. Then the Pacific surpasses the design limits of our neoprene and seeps into our bones. We're freezing again. The car heater beckons.

We oblige.