The lighting, temperature and textures in this woodlands all seemed correct, pictorially balanced by existing conventions as if they were generated from an illustrated textbook on natural spaces; the one exception was that in this particular scene, Barry and I were being shot at by strangers from a late '50s pick-up truck.

To avoid being snagged by any rifle fire, Barry and I jumped into the bushes by the side of the road. This was the best that could have been done considering the conditions. We were obviously confused, and though we weren’t thinking straight, we were thinking. “How you doing... can you breathe?” Barry whispered as he kneeled,
half-bent over, panting like a dog to catch his breath.

"I don't know quite yet!" I paused. "Give me a second, okay?"

"Keep it down," Barry said as he threw his hands over my mouth. His weight pressed my back flat against the ground. "Do you want someone to hear you and figure out that we're in here?"

I moved my head from side to side. Barry slowly removed his hands from my face and sat up. I remained still for a minute or so before I pushed myself up and brushed the dirt and leaves from my jacket. "Of course they'll know where we are. Where else would we have gone?"

_Heading south, we were overwhelmed by thoughts of a dry and much warmer climate than Washington State had to offer. Unfortunately, we had miscalculated the weather in the higher altitudes of the Cascades._

A couple of nights ago, Barry and I crossed into Grant's Pass during a blizzard. Our ride politely asked us where we were going, and where we
hoped to stay for the night. We told him that we didn’t have plans, but were open to any suggestions he might have. As we approached the next exit, he suggested dropping us off at a Christian Hostel where we would be able to get some food and rest up.

Over there,” he said, pointing to a dimly lit building a few hundred feet away. “And its cheap, too.”

We knew by the tone in his voice that he would be taking us to the hostel whether we answered him directly or not. So Barry and I never said a word about it and enjoyed the ride. As we drove on, his apparent concern for our safety appeared unwavering. His familiarity with the road as well as his comfort with both of us made me wonder about this curious service of rescuing young boys from the highway. Never during the ride had he demanded anything from us in return for his assistance. We all sat silently as the truck hit the coarse gravel driveway and pulled up to the front of the hostel. Barry opened the truck door and got out. I followed. We removed our things from the cab, said our thanks and ran to the lighted door as the truck pulled away.

Upon entering the hostel, we brushed the rain and sleet off our lightweight jackets and pounded our feet to rid the slush from our boots.
A few minutes later we noticed an elderly lady sitting at the front desk, silently watching us.

"Good evening," I said. "Do you happen to have any vacancies for tonight?"

"How'd you find out about this place?" she asked, glancing down at the plaid covered guest book on the counter. "Well," she said again. "How'd you fellows get here?"

"An old guy in a truck dropped us off," I said.

She looked over her shoulder to the key box on the wall behind her.

"You boys are lucky tonight! Just sign the book and follow me," she exclaimed, as she placed a pencil on the counter and started down the hall.

At the end of the narrow hallway was a large double door that opened directly into a bunk-style sleeping room. The room contained about thirty twin-sized cots which were evenly distributed throughout the room. Each area was arranged meticulously. A small landscape print in a knotty pine frame hung over each bed. On each night table rested a bible with its red ribbon bookmark exposed and a standard institutional glass to hold dentures or water.
"Here we are. You should sleep here in this one," the old lady said, pointing to me. "And your friend should stay over there," gesturing with her arm across the room.

"There's coffee laid out in the small room by the front desk at six a.m. Goodnight."

"I'm wet. My knees, my back and everything else. I need my stuff!"

I turned. His Samoa-colored skin was much darker than the bleached out jeans and faded floral Hawaiian shirts he often wore. The absence of light allowed Barry's skin color to blend perfectly into the background. In the past, I readily admit having had problems adjusting to the dark. Periodically, I would notice myself impatiently standing minutes upon end, completely still and uncertain, waiting for my vision to acclimate itself to the surroundings. Any attempt that I now made to distinguish the expression on Barry's face was futile. As he stood in front of me, he was invisible. In time I would locate a tracing of him such as a faded glimpse
of clothing or a sound fitting a recognizable description. I have become accustomed by habit to tolerate blank, bland features and ghostly details.

And in this case, a description of a face was not needed. Seeing was unnecessary. An unwarranted detail. I trusted Barry without relying on my own sight. We had travelled this far together with rare disagreements.

As he approached closer, I felt reassured.

“What’ve you got there?” I asked.

Barry briefly held the two bags containing our clothing above his head, attempting to show them off as if they were some strange prey he had just caught in the brush. He then lowered the bags and tossed mine towards me.

Barry took his satchel and immediately began to rumble through it. Grabbing hold of his cheap down parka, he slid it on, snapping it up from bottom to top.

“Lay down here,” I said, patting the damp ground next to me, “and pull your bag a little closer.”

As he lowered himself next to me, he placed his shivering arms around me. I immediately reversed his hold, repositioning my body to shield him from the cold wind.