



Glorious Chaos

*From the Personal Journal of Deveron Long
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Brambles, thorns, and thickets stand in patient attention, wading up to their knees in slow-moving water. This is glorious chaos—from the eyes of the human. The sluggish Stanislaus River knows better; the chaos is but a canopy of organic lace, lovingly draped over the landscape to conceal the river's lovers—heron, egret, bass, finch. Large guardian oaks and river willows stand naked in winter except for clusters of fanciful mistletoe. What at first seems to be a scene in monochrome, after careful discernment becomes a study in color, hundreds of hues flavored by light, shadow, and texture.

This morning I am the silent witness of this river love, the silver splash, concentric rings from an unseen bass breaking her fast, only to disappear into the murky depths. A snowy egret wades along muddy banks and without warning erupts in noisy flight. (This sound reminds me of how my grandmother used to shake out damp bed sheets before clipping them to the clothesline.) Somewhere be-

tween dusk and dawn, the moist air birthed giant dew drops that now hang expectantly on the undersides of all creation. I sense their mindful waiting—but for what—sun or gravity?

As I breathe in my location, I am filled with molecules of damp earth, heavy river, scent of greens, grays, and browns. The chaos enters me, and I am full and joyous. The tips of the trees echo chirps, trills, cascades, hoops, hollers, and screeches. A lone woodpecker punctuates this masterpiece with his bark drumming. The river entwines all in the synchronous melody. These rhythmic chants of spirit become the morning meditation. They remind me who I am, who I long to be. I long for this glorious chaos.

In the near distance, measured man and his machine (an Army Corps of Engineer worker and his sanctioned weed-whacker) move unrelentingly across the landscape, manicuring brambles, thorns, and thickets—as if he can improve upon perfection!