

The Lighthouse Bookstore

Michael Noble

Halfway between here and Oregon, the Lighthouse Bookstore opens along some residential street we browse unwittingly when reading after dark, where the words and road signs blur and the sky clouds up and thunders.

Well-versed in coincidence, we peruse the reference works for the books you know we stashed somewhere between children's lit and cultural literacy, saving for winter anything which requires cross-referencing or commitment.

Up a flight, the antiquarian works lean with arthritis on the shoulders of old friends. On wet afternoons, we smell their dusty parables and wrinkled leather odes—mossy, traditional, the gilded edges bright despite recent water damage.

The proprietor roosts omnipotent in the window, bare knees doubled up, his well-darned socks peering over the incoming tide, a ledger cradled in arms; he never sleeps, though at times, he let the lids eclipse his concentration and his judgment.

Cats drape the banisters and ladders, curling up on footstools, slinging themselves across counters. The newest hardback hides beneath the belly of a tabby tom, who reluctantly obliges us and relocates to the comfort of an unabridged dictionary.

In the past somewhere, we hear waves, feel the wind mount its siege. The walls papered with history and literature rupture in the storm—the tempest rending the pulpy cocoon, the breach birthing the hysterical infant brother.