Shadows of Starkness
(Africa 1986)

The afternoon sun hit the mountains face on today, illuminating the upthrust three-quarters of their bulk lifeless as a moon landscape. Implacable black angles dissect grey rock and skull shapes stand sentry above while we live our valley life in a fable of endless green our gardens, our wildflowers, our streams all in the shadow of starkness.

Last night I dreamed my husband’s family died and this morning I gave him the tender deference due the bereaved, playing at being a survivor without losing faith in this valley life of mine death as distant as the mountain peaks and as looming.

I remember seeing a town in South Africa nestled at the foot of a red-cliffed gorge, jagged shadows reached across the vineyards toward the train station where a sign read not "Ravenscrag" but "Orchard." There, white men emerge from houses cool beneath red tile roofs, they treat their blacks well and live with as little guilt as you or I in the shadow of their country’s starkness.

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