

Category: Novel

## DELIVERANCE DAY

Winter sun the color of a dirty tennis ball lobbed over the Fresno horizon as Joe Shoe opened the side door of Real Fresh Market. Or tried to. He rattled the handle. Locked at 7:05 in the damn morning. Joe's ticker skipped a beat, then another. He coughed to make it right, releasing a cloud of his own breath. Damned cold—even for the San Joaquin in January.

Earl, his sorry excuse for an assistant, was probably sleeping one off of in the back room. No skin off Joe's hide. Tomorrow was Deliverance Day, when he'd retire as produce manager and head to Sundance Utah. Sundance and the film festival started by that actor—what's his name? Oh yeah, Redford.

Joe loved films the way a wino loves Thunderbird. He wished Janie could be in the co-pilot's seat when he steered the old camper north on 99. She'd hooked him on films with her Sandra Dee looks and her Photoplays piled on the floorboard of his '57 Bel Air.

Forty years later, she was gone and Joe had a beef with God. They'd made a pact, him and the Big Guy; Joe would stay sober if Janie stayed well. Didn't happen.

*More like this up to 250 words, not including category and title, but not more than 1 page total.*