

Trickle Down

Ani DiFranco

You cease to smell the steel plant
after you've lived there for a while
smoke is snow is ash are leaves that blow
through the air aloft
all our houses dim their sliding
to the same soot gray style
and we hang our laundry out on sundays
when they turn the furnaces off

Everybody's daddy works up on the line
the stienbrenners and the wilczewskis
have been there the longest time
everybody's mommy squints into the sun
sunday afternoon after all the laundry's done

Sometimes a distant siren
can set a dog to barking late at night
then it dominos on down
til every dog is joining in
the first rumours of the layoffs
sang like a distant siren might
and we all perked up our ears
and paced the fence
of the ensuing din

Every night, we were glued to the tv news
at six o'clock
cuz it was hard to tell what was real
and what was talk
they explained about the cutbacks
all the earnest frowns
but what they didn't say was that the plant
was slowly shutting down

This town is not the kind of place
that money people go
they make their jokes up on the tv
about all the snow
and they're building condos downriver
from where the plant had been
but nobody really lives here
now that the air is clean

The president assured us
it was all gonna trickle down
like it'd be raining so much money
that we'd be sad to see the sun
mr. wilczewski's brother had some business
out in denver
so they left denver
and everybody knows they were the lucky ones

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