

pickup truck with my dogs sleeping on the seat and the windows rolled down to let in a hot breeze. I want to see the Colorado River again and to listen to Emily Lou Harris singing "Red Dirt Girl" as the hills cloaked with aspen fly past behind my tires' roiling dust. I want to be with my husband on the road together again before those days are gone.

There is a big doe here at Hawks' Inlet, (big by Sitka Deer standards). She's at least as big as a malamute and bigger than her buck counterparts. She likes to walk through the open core barn. The doe walks in one end and out the other with delicate deliberation. This way is not any shorter than the route around the building and there is no obvious reason for her diversion. It seems as though she likes to feel the hard, dry floor beneath her feet in contrast to the deep, spongy tundra of the rain forest. Perhaps she likes the sound of her own footsteps on boardwalk in the tall building, *click, click click...*

If someone is in the barn, she waits. She'll look inside from around the corner and ask in very plain language:

"I want to come in, but I can't because you're in here."

Even a stupid human can understand her. The geo-technicians step out of her way. They let the errant deer pass through and watch her gingerly looking here and there in the dark places for danger. This animal is not sensible, but her communication provides an example of trust on both sides of the *genus* barrier.

This same fat deer has been snoozing on the melting snow behind the barn through all the gray morning throughout a drizzle of warm, nearly constant rain. I stepped outside the office to flex my stiff back and refresh my cramped spirit from the confines of entering geologic observations into the computer database. I stopped short to see her staring with radar-like ears cupped toward me. Our eyes locked, then I blinked and averted my eyes because prey animals feel uncomfortable under a predator's stare. She exaggerated an attempt to rise, communicating:

"Must I REALLY get up?"

I stepped back and she halted her motion. I realized she must be pregnant. She waited for me to leave with only one of her legs pulled out from under her planted belly. I left slowly. Twice today, I returned and snuck a peak at her around the corner. She tilted her face sideways to focus on my head.

Hmmm, if I tilt my head sideways I can see better, she might have thought.

I retreated to my computer not to bother her anymore. *I'll find ANOTHER area to stretch,* I thought to myself, *so as not to disturb the Great Supine One for the rest of the day.*

I may be biased, but I think she likes the bassoon. I've been practicing my bassoon off and on all morning while waiting for the printer to regurgitate digital maps of sub terrain stratas. I am alone in the office on weekends, which allows me the freedom to practice my bassoon in the shed. My bassoon is lying like a cat across a pile of colorful geologic interpretations penciled on large sheets of paper. My reeds, metronome, etudes, and little tools make a new stratigraphic horizon over the ore deposits. I think the doe likes to listen to the sound of my deep woodwind from her nest in the melting snow: a chubby ungulate with a taste for Mozart!

The warm Spring rain has melted the Winter's snow to the point that the handles of our trusty wheelbarrow are exposed for the first time this year. It's been buried under six feet of snow since last Christmas when someone left it in the wrong place (under the roof's eave) for a slough of the first blizzard's snow. Mel ('Little General' as in Napoleon) swore he was, "Gonna find out who done it," (as in left the equipment there—I think I did.) We've been carrying and dragging core boxes by hand since the wheelbarrow became ensconced for the winter. Sometimes, when we are working particularly hard at moving frozen pallets of core boxes, we look to the icy mound that holds our reliable equipment captive to see if we might see some evidence of its emergence. Today is the first sign.

I think I saw the North Wind stalking me when I left. When my brother died, I had been in such a hurry to leave, that I had absentmindedly left the wheelbarrow under the roof eave. It was the

coldest, darkest, stark part of an Alaska winter's night when I rode the shuttle bus through the forest to catch the ferry that would take me from the island. I saw It in the woods: Winnedago—the Spirit of the North Wind to the Ancient Ones. Winnedago hasn't left the World because the Ancient Ones have changed or died or gone away. Winnedago haunts Admiralty Island, especially during the winter months when the bears are asleep. The fat doe knows Winnedago and soon the bears will wake up, too. Everything seems to fall into their place with Time, and if you wait long enough, you won't be lost anymore. Even the wheelbarrow will surely turn up with the passing of winter. For me, it is now Time to return home.

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