

YOUNG COYOTE

She lies on the center line of rt. 28 heading west to Phoenicia.

I pull over, put my flashers on, grab my gloves from behind the seat and as I walk back, am glancing at the body and see that it looks like she was moving from south to north toward the river.

Once there's a lull in either direction, I walk to the center of the road and survey her a bit. She looks young, her legs rust colored, her tail, back and muzzle have flecks of black peppered through the tawny tan but her face, oh, her face is wild like the mountains.

Coyote pup.

To the north are railroad tracks and the rushing Esopus and I wonder if her pack is nearby.

Usually, I attempt to place animals in the direction they were heading but I don't want her next to the train tracks so I cradle her limp body in my arms, still warm and lithe and walk to the south side of the road.

Once there, we ease down a bit further where the land slopes, so she can lie undetected in the weeds before they slip into forest. I want her unseen by passersby as death is an exquisite and private thing.

I sit next to her and begin to rearrange her crooked form.

Her hindquarters red with blood, her chest smeared, her left eye bulged out while the right is closed and sleeping, her mouth pulled back in a grimace.

I'm wearing my gloves but her fur is sticking to them and suddenly I cannot wear them any longer, so slip them off and toss them into the grass.

I slide my hand over her young, sleek fur, mottled in blood, her beautiful wild body, crickets already leaping onto her.

I stroke her ears, her back, fuss over her like a doting mom and I want to lie down next to her, hold her close all the while becoming invisible in the grass.

I, who am so awkward in human conversation and ensconced in this pale furless skin, feel completely at ease in this den of sacred passage.

When the moon appears tonight and her clan comes to reclaim their fallen daughter, the hand of compassion will have touched her.

It's so hard to leave now but her wild soul is speaking and there is movement in the mountains.