

Harmony

Earth breathes with pendulum ease
or prizefighter violence.
We feel her pulse, but faintly.
She, our unutterable yearning.

We had navigated the blind beach approach, laden with towels, toys, life's worry.
Earth's caressing cadence carried me in, through neglected ways, until

constant cares spill into
wind and surf,
leaving exhilarating
peace.

Does the ocean do this for everyone? I grew up with her. She calmed tumultuous youth. With her, few barriers stand.

"More sand! Water's almost here!" they yell. I shovel faster. Four children, with innocent hope, mould walls against the advancing tide. Cool sun shines through late afternoon breeze. Multi-tiered kites crackle overhead. The sandcastle is almost complete. Nine-year-old Brayden shapes sand oblivious to the surrounding rhythm. I remember other waves.

We once visited the prairie and my grandmother, both part of life's foundation. I lived with them as a child. Grandma's phone number was the first I learned. I called her often, as a toddler to complain of parental injustice; and later to ask for other help. There was nothing she could not do, but much she would not.

The prairie speaks peace,
but is never still.
It breaks the weak,
the unstable.
Nothing imperfect lasts.
So, nothing does.

They say wind causes depression,
suicide.
People don't like change.
Its purifying force
frightens.

While visiting at Grandma's, my friend Ron took us up to the Ridge, high above the prairie floor, with his young son. As a teenager, with Ron as my guide, I shot my only deer there. The memory sickens me. Ron, who was to be a physician, traced the bullet's path through ribs, liver, lungs.

On the Ridge, Brayden wanted to shoot – at cans, bottles, fence posts, signs, and particularly gophers. Their death dance strangely excited and disturbed him. He liked guns. He needed to learn respect for death.

Ron was soon Uncle Ron, a patient teacher who let Brayden use his semi-automatic rifle. My wide-eyed boy absorbed everything. We saw antelope. Brayden asked Ron if we could shoot them. He replied that such graceful animals were not like gophers – they harmed nothing, were beautiful, scarce, and hence should to be enjoyed and protected. We could, however, see how close we could get to them just for fun. Ron's Jeep turned from the road.

We bucked across the prairie. Ron explained that we must approach the antelope by driving into the wind so that it would carry our smell and noise away from them. "We also have to stay out of sight. Antelope have great eyesight, hearing and a finely tuned sense of smell. However", he continued in a conspiratorial tone, "we can get close to them by doing what the Indians used to do." Brayden drank it all in.

Ron told my believing son that an old Indian friend told him how to do this. Back when the grass on the Ridge was belly high, hunters would crawl as near to the antelope as they could and then lay on their backs, kicking their feet in the air. The antelope could see only feet moving, not recognize that sight and gingerly approach to investigate. Antelope run faster than anything on the prairie, and so had become confident in their ability to play with danger and then run away. When the antelope were as close as they would come, the hunters would jump up and shoot at them with bow and arrow. Often an antelope would go home to the stew pot.

We left the Jeep and commando-crawled up a dusty, prickle covered rise. Finally, we lay silently on our backs near the top, moving our legs in the air.

Prairie breeze blows constantly.
Grass swells roll over us.
Cloud horses become castles,
disappear.

Unnoticed, time departs.
Solitude opens my soul,
while worry empties herself
to be scattered,
carried away.

I feel for the ocean but find
wind whispering through
sky, land, cloud.

My reverie was interrupted as, unexpectedly, the antelope saw us and cautiously came. At their closest, a good bow shot would have caught them. Our sons' impatience told them who we were. They ran, even babies flying across broken land. Only then did we notice the ants. Everywhere. On the ground. In our hair. Under our clothes.

After ridding ourselves of unwelcome passengers we bounced over the prairie as the antelope flew self-confidently ahead, their seeming invincibility confirmed.

Screams bring me back to the beach. The waves are upon the castle. The children double their efforts to bolster sagging walls. At last understanding, they stop, quietly watching with me.

Caressing rhythm
cleanses, melts
our walls.

Earth's tempo
surrounds us,
taking our flotsam and scars,
creating the pristine.

We are
earth's breath and pulse when
silence, an open heart,
a view of the big canvass
attune,
atone.

The Psalmist might better have said:
"Be Still, and Know God."

By bob mccue
for
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