

My Coyote

by Gary Hardaway

I saw her first, mid-morning, first Monday of May,
two hundred yards away, walking the undeveloped
building site adjacent to the place I work.
Tawny, slender, built like an attenuated wolf,
she sniffed the shrubs and grasses at the outer edge
of the green crescent- fertile crescent- of creek bank
curving south to south-southeast at the rear edge
of the vacant lot. I say her- it might be him-
but from a distance I supply the details I prefer.

She was there, mid-morning, the next day,
lying in the short grass, and seemed to stare at me
as I stared at her, her head still and steady.
I smoked and watched her, then waved,
as if to say good morning, let's be friends.
She looked away, distracted, perhaps,
by the crow's caw. My cigarette done,
I returned to my office and its dull routine.

Mid mornings for the rest of the work-week,
she was there, enjoying the sun and breezes,
sniffing for breakfast, walking
the green edge of the creek bank, accepting
my wave with a momentary calm stare
in my direction. Again, on the second Monday
of this mild May, she arrived to take the sun
and stare towards me. Again, on Tuesday,
she was there and we met the other's look.
Wednesday was a day of rain and she
did not appear, staying in whatever shelter
she arranged for herself. Despite the sun
on Thursday, she stayed away.

On Friday, the mowers came for the tall grass
and wildflowers. A murder of crows
gleaned the cut grass and stubble, seeds
and insects easier to find and, maybe, a special treat
of newly born cottontails exposed and shredded
by the blades. I wondered if she was hiding
or had moved on, up or down stream,
looking for feral cats, squirrels, other
unfortunate cottontails, or a mate.

On a mid-morning in June, I saw a coyote -
less tawny, more gray-brown, and utterly
indifferent to me. I imagined my coyote
safely nursing a litter of two or three,
untouched by poison laid by some
belligerent suburbanite along his creek bank,
untouched by a drunken driver's bumper at midnight,
untouched by bone-snapping traps set to protect
a Doberman, Golden Retriever, or Samoyed.
I imagine her well-fed and happy in her wild life
amid the "Custom" houses erupting along the stream.

