

STONE

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

Every day Man shuffles through Land of Stones hunched over his stick. Bright-Eyes chitters loud and scrambles down Oak. My tail twitches, alert. Hungry. Sun scared away Rainclouds and the acorns are small and hard. Bright-Eyes hides them in our secret nooks anyway, for the kits who will come after Snow.

Bright-Eyes looks thin perched on top of Stone. Man hobbles slowly. He looks thin, too. When he arrives, Bright-Eyes scampers behind the tree, waiting. Man stops, leans on his stick, and sighs. He stares at Stone. He waters Earth with his eyes.

“Carol,” he says. “I miss you.”

His hand plunges into his skin, grey like Sky. Seeds shower the yellowed grass. Bright-Eyes dashes out, filling his cheeks with corn and nuts. Blue Jay swoops down from the branch for his share. Man watches with sad eyes, then leaves.

Every morning Man sprinkles his Water and Seed before Stone. Bright-Eyes lines our nest with fallen leaves. Sky turns black and blows cold. Bright-Eyes brings me acorns but does not eat. My belly swells.

White arrives. Man does not visit. We wait and wait. Still Man does not come. White piles higher than Stone. Bright-Eyes returns with the last acorn. He gives it to me.

One morning, White goes away. Yellow Bird rumbles beside Oak and digs through White and Earth with his beak. Men circle around the hole, but not our Man. They fill the hole and right another Stone.

White returns. Bright-Eyes does not wake. I wait.

