

Death of a Three-Legged Calf

We sat on the wet leaves, breathing in the cold, dry air of a November midnight.

The sky was clear. For the past few days or maybe weeks it had been fogged up, so it was a relief to see the stars as they were meant to be seen, unobscured. I tilted my head back and looked up. Venus glowed like a distant sun.

I looked up, also, because I was scared to look directly at you. Although I had seen you hobble onto the road timidly, heard the *crack* when you were struck, watched you stagger off the side of the road and into the woods, and collapsed alongside you, once we were both on the ground, I couldn't bring myself to look at you. You were somehow safer in my periphery.

When I finally did look at you, I was filled with a strange peace. I was shattered, too, don't think for a moment I wasn't, but I was also at peace, because you were at peace. And you were shattered. They often accompany each other, the shattering and the peace.

You were not yet dead, only bloody and battered. Your chest rose, sputtered, fell, sputtered. I wanted to pet you, but I knew that was unwise, so we sat together and I watched you die.

We sat there for a long time. On the wet leaves, we sat, both of us growing colder, the feeling draining from each of our limbs, yours more than mine. I knew I would have to make a call, I knew that first I would have to look up who to call, was it animal control or the police I didn't know, but I also knew that you needed to rest. I knew that you would let me know when it was time to go.

When the moon rose directly overhead, its white light pouring down through a patch in the foliage, it was like a flying saucer watching over us. Like it was time to go.