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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 In celebration of spring

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 It's springtime in the meadow, where you are never alone

####END SUBHED####

3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 THAT FINAL, white furry haze of winter frost has come and  
5 gone. The meadow grasses, cool and damp against the soles of  
6 your feet, rise in springy clumps before the first mowing.

7 Early dawn, in her silk skirt and blouse, wipes sleep from  
8 her eyes and wraps her long arms around you, her soft embrace a  
9 blessing. She is a wisp, an apparition who disappears almost as  
10 soon as she arrives.

11            Now he appears, that emperor named Sun, low on the  
12 horizon between black tree trunks. What a show he puts on,  
13 dressed in his scarlet pajamas! You can scarcely believe the  
14 magnificence of it all, wish it would last all day. But as he rises  
15 slowly upward he sheds his sleep clothes, leaving them to fall to  
16 the forest floor then disappear in a faint peach-colored haze.

17            A doe is giving birth to her fawn in the thicket just  
18 beyond the edge of the meadow. Innumerable invisible beings  
19 crawl along the damp earth between blades of field grass; a  
20 moth's small white wings do a fluttering waltz around your ankle.

21            A fat bumblebee appears out of nowhere in search of  
22 clover that hasn't yet imagined its bloom. The odor of a skunk  
23 finds its way to you and refuses to depart. You are never alone.

24            No, you are never alone: Back at the cottage the dishes  
25 are standing at attention in the dish rack awaiting your return. The  
26 apron is hanging from its hook. Warmth from the woodstove  
27 travels to the corners of the room; the curtains sigh. Perhaps your  
28 unmade bed, in your absence, is savoring the feel of cool, light  
29 air filling the space where the weight of your warm body slept.

30            \* \* \*

31            YOU ARRIVE AT the small pond where winter's ice has  
32 thawed and peepers will serenade you this evening. A fringe of  
33 irises has begun to propel new fronds upward out of the murk at  
34 pond's edge. In two weeks' time they will unfurl their bright  
35 yellow headscarves, inviting the turtles to sunbathe on the nearby  
36 log that is lodged in the mud.

37            Small, dark fish dart here and there with no apparent  
38 destination. Dormant frogs will soon awaken from their  
39 gelatinous sleep and swim to the surface, belching their arrival.  
40 Good fortune will bring a blue heron in the afternoon.

41            The sun, rising higher now, is playing a game with you,  
42 depositing a faint freckle on the bridge of your nose before  
43 ducking behind a cloud.

44            The first turkey vulture of the season sails into the bowl  
45 of meadow from behind the tall trees, floating on currents

46 warmed by beams of yellow light. Its widespread wings, serrated  
47 as a kitchen knife, tilt this way and that like a small plane at an  
48 airshow.

49 Two chickadees call from tree to tree. The newborn fawn  
50 has just risen on shaky legs and taken her first step. Her mother  
51 studies her with wide eyes and licks her clean. Without needing a  
52 lesson, the fawn latches on and suckles her first meal of warm  
53 velvet milk.

54 When her belly is full, mother and daughter will lie  
55 down on a nearby bed of thick moss. The fawn will nestle herself  
56 snugly against her mother's belly and dream new dreams.

57 \* \* \*

58 DUSK WILL COME, followed by dark.

59 But all you have witnessed this morning at dawn — all  
60 you have sensed and smelled and felt — will not abandon you.  
61 Darkness will bring its own gifts: starlight, moonlight, candlelight;  
62 tea and a book beside the fire. Grief might arise, or fear; you  
63 might awaken, startled, in the middle of the night and feel the  
64 terror of solitude.

65 But now, this morning, awake in this meadow, nowhere  
66 to be found are the threadbare overcoat of unspeakable Anguish,  
67 or the tightly wound springboard of Fear, or that nagging  
68 houseguest called Doubt. Too far away to hear are the discordant  
69 notes of resentment and regret.

70 This morning, you are free of them. Free!

71 An owl in the lower branches of a nearby hemlock hoots  
72 in celebration of your freedom. Do you see her?

73 There she is, just beyond your shoulder, hooting and  
74 hooting, letting you know that springtime has come to the  
75 meadow, and you are never alone.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

76 MURIEL WOLF, a fiction writer, serves as spiritual  
77 companion at Brattleboro Area Hospice.

78 Â

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

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####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

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####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

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####END LOGLINE####