

DAWN

The day opened from the doorway of the east...sunlight before the sun...purple and deep red, the aged pine tree where the crows mob the Red-tailed hawk is silhouetted like filigree, and the sky with deepening darkness crossing the sky into the west...dark yet to see the celestial canopy above.

The dogs explode down the hill as I open the gate, running ahead with frenzied excitement after a long night behind the fence...Conan stopping by a bush to sniff, raising a hind leg to squirt, Ellis squatting sedately...Hoo, hoo, hoo the call of the Great Horned Owls that nest nearby and patrol the canyon nightly, still dark enough for the owls to hoot.

I walk by the faint light of the last darkness of night, the earth of the trail lighter by a shade, I can see enough to walk without tripping. I like this exact moment...the first moment of transition from dark to light, and as I walk I experience the dawning...the clouds picking up first the dark colors, and brightening as the sun seeks the horizon.

I come to the locked gate and climb over; the dogs have already slipped through. The path along the Santa Ana River passes the pond where the birds winter and some, who believe they are local, build nests in the reeds to breed. The pond is fed from a natural spring...the native people lived along the river...salmon ran in spring, deer, bear, even buffalo...until the coming of their demise.

As I walk I pick up the trash of those who walk in nature but who do not feel her. And the homeless...some are angry and they trash nature because they know that it is safe to strike out at nature like small children, and they are her lost children and they are right, she won't hurt them. They come into the willows and camp and they bathe in the pond, and eat by the shore, and when they leave there are the Carl's Jr. bags and cups for Carl's is the only fast food location nearby. Bad publicity for Carl's though. Anger of the homeless and who blames them. The County doesn't recognize them and the Cities view the homeless as vermin to be chased out across the border to another city to be chased on and on and on. The County won't put out portable toilettes for their use, so what are they supposed to do but dump where ever, to wipe with toilet paper or newspapers or bags left to blow in the afternoon wind. Yet nature accepts all, even their droppings and left behinds ...they make homes of a sort, and they eat, sleep, and other things at night, and often they gather to drink and smoke and some who are addicted to shoot up. They live in the willows because it is safer, safer from the police and the derision of the citizens, the homeowners who have all the privileges and feel no shame in their arrogance of superiority and forget that there but for the grace of G-d, go I. And I pick up the homeless trash. I see nature. I dance within her arms. I drink in her beauty. I pick up the trash and the hawks fly around me, and the rabbits play chase with Conan and Ellis. The fish wave to me with their tails as they leap in the pond. The egrets and great blue herons duck their heads in acknowledgment. It is enough. It is more than enough. It is such a gift to pick up the trash and to feel that nature is our home that I honor and share with all my relations.