



DEER IN THE SUMMER DUSK

by Norbert Kovacs

On a clear, summer evening one July, I decided to go see fireflies in the meadow along the irrigation dike in West Hartford, a town near where I live in Connecticut. I walked up from the street to the head of the long, grassy hill that forms the dike and took a slow walk about a hundred feet along the earthen path there. I soon reached the widest part of the meadow. As I scanned the field on my left, I spotted a pair of long, tannish ears just above the tall grass. The deer to which they belonged showed the side of her triangle-like head for a moment, then turned and moved, nearly hidden by the grass blades, toward the heart of the meadow. I waited patiently to see if she would return.

Soon, I spied two pairs of shorter but equally tan ears that peeked above the middle of the grass. It was two fawns moving through the sweet-scented meadow. As I watched, one of them bounded from the field toward the woods. He was lean and compact, his legs finely framed. He leapt and jumped as he went, snowy bottom lifting and dropping, so that his back seemed to kick. His brother, the second fawn, paced slowly behind him. He had all the composure that his sibling lacked, I sensed.

In short order, their mother, the doe I had glimpsed earlier, emerged from the meadow. She was a fine, tan, slender creature. She walked, raising her knees neatly through the field, to a patch of waist-high, dark green plants ten feet from the woods. The two fawns came toward the spot and stepped into its greenery, their small bodies hidden, then reemerging from the plants' dark leaves as they drew near their mother. The two disappeared after awhile, and I assumed they laid down to rest since the light was fading. In looking on them, I lost sight of their mother, who, I suppose, let herself down in the greenery, too.

I was left without any deer to be admiring, so went to looking idly around me, waiting for the dark. Soon, I caught sight of the sky over the road from where I'd come. A huge, cumulonimbus cloud had risen over the dark forest that lined the road's far side. Light like red fire flashed among its billows and convinced me a storm was coming. I waited for it to rain. The air seemed to grow more humid the longer I did. However, no more lightning cut from the cloud; there were no drops from the sky. Glad I'd not be rained out, I turned once more to the meadow left of the dike.

Down the hill, I saw the doe. She had come alone from the place with the dark plants and was stalking through the meadow toward the road. She lifted and bent her thin, tannish legs carefully as she went among the grass heads and many summer flowers. As I looked, she stopped. Her large, dark eyes held on mine, waiting for me to turn away, it seemed. She took an extra couple of quiet steps and looked at me again. However, she quit turning my way and passed into the now rather dark woods near the road. Why she went there, I do not know; she may have gone seeking a third fawn of hers I hadn't seen.

The meadow grew dim in the dusk. The white asters and bright yellow trefoil by the path became less distinct to my eye. The two fawns I had seen earlier reemerged from the patch of dark plants about this time. Neither the falling dusk nor the absence of their mother deterred them as they went exploring the meadow. They played and ambled as they might at some bright, sunny noon, their heads slipping in and out of the high grass tops. Then, the pair moved toward the woods that lay beside the path ahead of me. The bolder fawn leapt up the small rise of land that led there; his bottom lifted, and his back hitched in jumping. His calm and collected brother trotted after him, and, just like that, the two vanished into the night.

Again alone, I fell to observing the quiet meadow. Fireflies blinked on and off like greasy candle flames in the darkening grass. The doe returned alone from the woods nearer the road after awhile. She walked through the meadow delicately as if not to harm its grass. When she came almost abreast the part of the dike where I stood, she lifted her wedge-like head and stared at me. She seemed to wonder why I should be there still, studying her eagerly as at first. She stopped to look on me twice more as she passed, then walked on toward the far woods where her two fawns had sped. I suppose she knew they would be there rather than among the dark plants where they had been earlier.

Alone once more, I watched the fireflies I had come to the meadow for blink their quick yellow, red, and even purple in the dimming field. Their light moved in an attractive, dancing pattern. However, I felt the deer were the night's more wonderful attraction. One doesn't meet a family of them in the summer dusk every time he goes out to enjoy nature.

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