My Coyote

by Gary Hardaway

I saw her first, mid-morning, first Monday of May, two hundred yards away, walking the undeveloped building site adjacent to the place I work.

Tawny, slender, built like an attenuated wolf, she sniffed the shrubs and grasses at the outer edge of the green crescent- fertile crescent- of creek bank curving south to south-southeast at the rear edge of the vacant lot. I say her- it might be himbut from a distance I supply the details I prefer.

She was there, mid-morning, the next day, lying in the short grass, and seemed to stare at me as I stared at her, her head still and steady. I smoked and watched her, then waved, as if to say good morning, let's be friends. She looked away, distracted, perhaps, by the crow's caw. My cigarette done, I returned to my office and its dull routine.

Mid mornings for the rest of the work-week, she was there, enjoying the sun and breezes, sniffing for breakfast, walking the green edge of the creek bank, accepting my wave with a momentary calm stare in my direction. Again, on the second Monday of this mild May, she arrived to take the sun and stare towards me. Again, on Tuesday, she was there and we met the other's look. Wednesday was a day of rain and she did not appear, staying in whatever shelter she arranged for herself. Despite the sun on Thursday, she stayed away.

On Friday, the mowers came for the tall grass and wildflowers. A murder of crows gleaned the cut grass and stubble, seeds and insects easier to find and, maybe, a special treat of newly born cottontails exposed and shredded by the blades. I wondered if she was hiding or had moved on, up or down stream, looking for feral cats, squirrels, other unfortunate cottontails, or a mate.

On a mid-morning in June, I saw a coyote less tawny, more gray-brown, and utterly
indifferent to me. I imagined my coyote
safely nursing a litter of two or three,
untouched by poison laid by some
belligerent suburbanite along his creek bank,
untouched by a drunken driver's bumper at midnight,
untouched by bone-snapping traps set to protect
a Doberman, Golden Retriever, or Samoyed.
I imagine her well-fed and happy in her wild life
amid the "Custom" houses erupting along the stream.