



Metaphoria

By David F. Dozier, Jr., MD

ARE THERE REALLY SNOW ELK in the cold storm light? Or are they instead a magnificent metaphor for powerful, unlooked-for, and transcendental elements of strength, persistence and resilience?

A lovely, tranquil Sunday afternoon was shattered when my wife, Krystin, slipped on a hillside trail behind our home, while carrying a beloved 40-pound granddaughter, Gretchen, and in protecting the child, fell hard. The child was fine, but my wife's right knee encountered a sharp embedded rock and dusty gravel. She sustained a 4-inch inverted chevron of a laceration, which bled profusely over leg and clothing.

My 6 year-old grandson, Davey, who had been right there, came running back to the house, saying Grandma was hurt. My daughter, Rachel, and I had remained behind to do some office organizing.

I ran out, carrying a box of varied Band-Aids, which turned out to be ridiculously too small, even in largest sizes. Leaning on my arm, Krystin limped back to our house. Rachel immediately conjured up a clean diaper, a gel-pack from the freezer, and an Ace bandage, and was soon nicely cleaning up the blood-drenched right leg, sandal and clothing.

Even though I'm a retired MD, emergency care was never my strong suit. I called the urgent care center closest to us, to say we were coming in (to which they curtly replied, "Well. It's first come, first served").

While Krystin and I spent 2½ hours at the center for meticulous cleaning and suturing, with lots of wincing and shivering, Rachel found all the food we'd prepared. With my son-in-law Scott's help they served all four grandchildren, checked on us several times by cell phone, and even took the kids back out for the promised (and, this time, uneventful) nature walk.

Kristin, from her initial reaction, constantly reassured Gretchen that she was all right, that it was just a little cut, and Gretchen, who appeared a little whimpery at first, was soon smiling.

When I recall Rachel's sensible care, reassurance and aplomb, Scott's kind help, and my wife's cheerfulness and stoicism, I think I've seen some snow elk.

In Cold Storm Light

In cold storm light
I watch the sandrock
canyon rim.

The wind is wet
with the smell of piñon.

The wind is cold
with the sound of juniper.

And then

out of the thick ice sky
running swiftly

pounding

swirling above the treetops.

The snow elk come,

Moving, moving

white song

storm wind in the branches.

And when the elk have passed
behind them

a crystal train of snowflakes

strands of mist

tangled in rocks

and leaves.

Leslie Marmon Silko (b. 1948)

