

## In the Dawn's Early Light

in the dawn's early light  
this year's buck emerges from sage brush  
like an apparition in morning mist  
he is a child of last year's buck and the buck before that  
his antlers young yet experienced  
his gait gentle

he turns to face me  
his gaze breaks me open  
we mirror each other in our eyes  
breathe the same steady breath  
in this wilderness of mountains and desert

he tells me things  
that every day is survival  
yet he walks to the mountain  
and as the seasons change  
returns to these springs  
to find another mate  
to keep the herd going  
he says

he scratches his antlers against the dead elm  
there is no wind this morning yet the leaves fall  
they drift onto his back like birds then drop at his feet

he turns to face me again  
antlers pointed to the hills then to sky  
we engaged in this moment for an eternity it seemed  
all I felt was oneness and love for this buck for his herd  
for the pregnant doe readying for winter  
for this land  
for the waters of the earth  
for the sky  
for my partner  
for my animals and for our lives

the buck turned  
ready to disappear into the tall grasses  
not an apparition nor an aberration  
but a salve for healing today

