

## Simple Gifts

If you listen carefully, you can hear the slow turtle make his way along a path. You'd have to employ care and know of what to listen, as it was unquestionably a surprise when I realized there was this little creature making movement in the world. He was creeping along a log and I was creeping along a path around the lake's edge. Willows, smells, expectations and other assorted things seemed to be rising from the lake. I paused to identify the painful pebble in my sandal and the obligatory urge to see who was making the noise ahead of me. Sounds like the pace of an athlete. It was. She's toned, energetic and keeping a gait I'd be envious to have. My small steps are sufficient. My stopping them at present was required. The pebble is now gone. The water bottle is raised and it was then, I saw the log and the turtle.

A duck, a bug and a turtle walk onto a log. Is this a joke I'm telling myself? I start to find something amusing about creatures just hanging on this smallest of the lake rafts. The duck seems ready for food. The fly isn't long for the log and the turtle looks like he's exploring something on the edge. I wonder if the turtle looks at the fly like I looked at the jogging athlete who passed me. Does he get inspired by the fly's ability to soar? Does the turtle wonder why the duck gets so confident he stretches his neck out and only covers when he sleeps? Do they see me with the same fascination I see them?

I move to the bench facing the lake. It is one of many that are positioned around the lake's perimeter. A small little spot in the world, much like the next, but each seated at a different theater for nature. Some get more sun and some get more foot traffic. Some see the turtles and some see the joggers. I'd want mine to see the water. I'd want mine to be much like the bench I'm sitting on. Strange I stopped and noticed this bench.

The benches all have memorial plaques to commemorate someone who has lived. I've read a few. Some tell a story and some tell just a name and age. Some express an emotion and some just the facts. I think some are turtles and some are flies. This bench I'm on could be a duck. The plaque indicates a woman who had many roles. I didn't dwell on the years or if mother came after or before wife. I didn't notice if the plaque labeled roles in ascending order of importance. Sensibly, mother should come before survivor and teacher would be after child. I think this is right, but I stopped reading after the first few words. "Simple Gifts" was eloquently engraved, followed by "extraordinary"... the impression on my heart is enough; I stop reading what roles were extra pronounced: it was enough this person did the simple things extraordinary well and her loved ones honor her for it. I go back to honor the lake: man's lake by man's bench. The turtle, by the fly, by the pebble... near the jogger...is pausing. I pause. The woman of the bench gives pause. What a gift this moment has been. A simple gift for me. I ponder and move, slowly like the turtle and yet, tempted with impatience like the fly. What gift would my bench proclaim? What will I do extraordinarily well? What simple gifts do I leave? I'll defer to someone else, the one who listens carefully and sees me move slowly along my path.