

## losing moose



Written by bubba



5:59am

In the mountains with Henry. It's dark and dusty and there isn't a lot of visibility beyond what can be illuminated by a flashlight. We've got Maggie and are driving leisurely in a golf cart while she follows us close beyond, often running to play or explore something but coming back quickly. There are other labs too, all black, all look nearly identical to Maggie. I watch them play. One bursts out of a pond, like a fountain or a whale spouting; she swims to the edge and continues to play with the

rest. Henry and I sit in the golf cart watching, without talking.

A thin man in outdated casual clothes approaches me and says he's a friend of my father's. 'Whatcha got going this year?' he asks me, and I know he is talking about campaigns and elections. I don't feel like talking and say pleasantly that all I am focused on is a local zoning ordinance north of Fort Collins. 'It will help lessen the restrictions on the amphitheater there, in that little town whose name I forget. Where John Cougar Mellencamp played.' He goes on to tell me about several school levies he is running and I realize he is a consultant and feel that he is acting competitive with me. I whisper to Henry that we should get out of there and look for Maggie...who seems to have disappeared.

Henry (joking) turns the wrong way and heads down the mountain towards a house in the distance. I become troubled that Maggie isn't with us and demand that he turn around. He does so in the driveway of the only house around for miles and we begin to head up the dark trail again, which seems to be getting steeper. The only light is a flashlight dangling from the top of the cart. It becomes obvious that the cart's battery is dying and that we won't make it back. Visibility is increasingly limited. My anxiety soars as I think about Maggie. Henry becomes uncomfortable, perhaps faulting himself for my concern and rightfully so. I get out of the cart and begin sprinting up the trail. He heads back to find another cart insisting he'll meet me within minutes.



The trail is too steep for me. I'm winded, worrying about my inhaler and growing increasingly incapable of masking my panic. I burst into tears when I hear a dog crying in the distance and I start to call Maggie by her nickname. 'Moose!' 'Moose!' She sounds behind me now and I wonder if she made it to the base of the mountain and if she is looking for me. The decision of whether to continue struggling with the climb in front of me and looking for her where I saw her last or whether to follow the crying in the distance leaves me paralyzed and sobbing. (I wake).

*It seems I am again having nightly dreams about loss. This pregnancy has been emotionally easier than the last. Yet dreams like this cause me to wonder if I am having deeper experiences than I am realizing and if I'd be benefited by tapping in to them. In my waking hours I am hypersensitive to the moments when Ava doesn't listen, when she's capable enough to walk throughout a room without looking back for reassurance. The other night we were at an outdoor concert and she walked away. Rhonda or I was right above her the entire time, even if she didn't realize it. But I counted the times she looked back and there weren't that many. I was a beaming father on the outside while being panicked mess over her fearlessness on the inside. Then I started to think about someone taking her and became very depressed. Her development, it seems, may be having a mixed emotional impact on me; I am proud of her independence yet I already miss the days when she relied on me for everything.*



*It's worth noting that this is the second dream I've had about losing Maggie this week. Two nights ago I dreamt I was living in a huge waterway, an area that looked like a planned community except all the streets weren't paved, they were water...maybe six feet deep but clear like a pool, not like a river. I was swimming somewhere for recreation, feeling oddly without any pressure and paying attention to the things immediately around me, including Avalena. That's when I saw that beneath me and on the floor of the waterway was Maggie, writhing and gasping while drowning to death. I plunged down to the bottom and wrestled to carry her heavy and limp body to the surface. The dream became so troubling for me that I awoke and couldn't get back to sleep.*

*Maggie was Rhonda's and my first baby. I think I may be worrying about things out of my control again. Much about loss*

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