

## Shiloh

There's a dog around our place, a good looking dog, some kind of patch together job between a pointer and whatever. Good muscle tone, bright eyes and a healthy coat make him appear to be everything you'd want in a dog, except for the pedigree. His teeth are perfect and very white which makes me think he's only a couple of years old unless he has a dentist in the family. Someone told us his name is Shiloh, as in the Civil War battle Shiloh, which was a terrible bloody affair and makes you wonder why such a nice dog would be named after such an awful event. He stands about knee high to a grown up and sports a mostly white short hair finish with a few brown and black markings to distinguish him from ice cream. Handsome lad.

So here's the thing about Shiloh. He seems to live all over the valley. We usually find him around sunrise taking his rest on our east-facing deck. It's warm and quiet there in the morning and the matt that Veronica put down for him seems to suit him just fine. He waits for us to take our coffee with him, watching birds and counting blueberries. He'll sit for a few minutes nuzzling and then he'll fall in a lump, turn over on his back and give you those big brown eyes which require further petting and happy dog talk. He never asks for food and always seems content with whatever affection we show him. An extremely well adjusted lad.

He sleeps for an hour our two moving in and out of the sun as his body temperature dictates and then he rises, stretches long and hard and looks out over the fields and woods. He's got his nose up and his ears perked. You can just see that brain of his working out the sensory information that is now flowing in. What scent, which direction, how loud, how far? Then he starts off across the prairie on one of the many pre-set paths he has worn through the year. His tail remains visible until the ground falls away not to be seen again until we spy him climbing the other side of the valley to some spot he picked out before he left. Maybe he lives there, on that farm with the big white house.

We hear him on most nights either close or not so close but it's him alright. You can't mistake that voice. He has the bark of a Disney Dog Hero. It's persistent. There's no telling what he's chasing down or scaring off or reading the riot act to or at which constellation he may be speaking. But speak he does. It's comforting to know that out in the black night Shiloh is on the job. I still don't know what that job

might be but on the job he is. I guess that's why he's so tired in the morning. Anyone who has worked the night shift knows the feeling.

I was driving home the other day and turned into the road that eventually gets to our place, about a mile and half from here. There was a roofer just climbing down from a shingling job on the corner house. Tools here and there, materials strewn about, his work van open to the world and showing the paraphernalia of his trade. Just as I was turning my attention back to the road I noticed the fella's foreman standing off to the side eyeing the work he had done. He seemed to approve. At least that's what I think his bark meant. Yup, the roofer's boss was Shiloh, standing squarely in the middle of the job site and looking side to side, as foremen do. He looked good doing it. He looked like he enjoyed it. I admire that in a dog. I like it when a being seems content wherever he might be.

A day or so later I was at the other end of that same road passing a house a good distance away from the home with the new roof when I spied that ubiquitous dog stretched out on the front patio facing west, taking the sun and vaguely napping. His ease was comforted by large blue beach towel spread by another human whom Shiloh has charmed. As I rolled past he lifted his head a little, looked at me and went back to his nap. Before he let his head drop he did this...he winked. The dog winked. Gotta like a dog that winks.

This morning as Veronica and I took our coffee outside there he was, his sunny self, waiting and gently panting. He had the contented look of a man after Sunday dinner.

"Good to see you, Shiloh" said my wife. "Good to see you, lady." nodded the dog. And then she noticed something and started to giggle. "Look, his nails are painted in Pearly Pink nail polish!" I kid you not. Shiloh was sporting the results of a pedicure. All his nails were done, every nail on each paw, done nicely too. Somewhere at one of his resting places I think there must be a young girl who thinks it the height of fashion to do a dog's nails pink. I think she might be right.

And I think Shiloh knows that you do whatever it takes to keep a life like his going along that contented trail and onto the next welcoming porch.