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AN EDUCATION

UNTIL I MOVED to Socorro, I did not know about sandhill cranes, about their migratory habits and flight paths, their winter homes and loud congregations. Named for the sand dunes near Platte River, Nebraska, the cranes fly south when the weather turns and the days become shorter. I learned that these tall gray birds with a crimson cap can have a wingspan of more than six feet. Throughout the fall, I saw flapping silhouettes of cranes high in the sky passing over our house. As someone curious about migratory birds for the first time, I wondered—where were the cranes coming from? How far were they going? I did not know until much later when I saw a migration map that the cranes might be coming from Alaska and as far as Siberia. Aided by the position of the sun, the earth's magnetic field, and an acute internal compass, these majestic creatures were making an ancient journey for their survival. Some were traveling this route for the first time in their fresh lives.

“She won't last a year in this place,” my mother said, not unkindly, a few days after she and my father helped me move to Socorro and into George's ranch-style home. We had driven our cars from San Diego after my sister married us; Ma in my car, Pappa with George. George and I had exchanged vows, rings, garlands, sweets, and now there were questions. What would it be like for two disabled people to live together? How would we fit our wheelchairs in all the domestic spaces of this house?

My sister and her husband were the first people from my family to meet George, but our marriage was not arranged in the way hers was. George and I had been together for almost three years before I shared the news about the possibility of a longer-term bond. I considered that our paraplegic bodies meant that perhaps we were embarking on something different. Yet, once the wedding was over, I quit my job and followed the tradition of every woman in my family. I moved to my husband's town. Ma and Pappa had traveled from Ahmednagar, India, to San Diego, USA, for our wedding and to support their eldest, as they had done for most of their lives. I think they were somewhat unsettled by George, a white man who, although he owned his home and was a professor of electrical engineering at New Mexico Tech in Socorro,

lived in a town that did not fit their image of a prosperous America.

In San Diego, I could tell that Ma had been mulling over my wedding and subsequent move and still had a lot of concerns that normally would be addressed, if not completely answered, before an arranged marriage. I was withdrawn and quiet and did not understand how to explain my decisions and actions. I had surprised myself by being ready to leave a well-paying software engineering job and a lovely apartment a few blocks from the Pacific Ocean, where I had been living as a single woman after finishing a graduate degree in computer science.

The day before the wedding, Ma said, to someone in the room where I was sitting, “She’s always been very stubborn.” I don’t remember anyone saying anything in response. Perhaps she wanted to know if George would move to San Diego if I asked. Perhaps she was unconvinced that our finances were sufficient for me to take some time off from steady corporate employment. And if I wasn’t using my education for money-making, what was I doing? What did I imagine for myself in Socorro?

It was late July when we drove into Socorro, and the summer heat was in the high nineties. I remember Ma getting out of the car in the driveway and racing inside the house to quickly survey it. I had been to the house before but only for a few days as a visitor. It needed work, and I knew that we did not have heaps of money to make big changes. George had hired our neighbor to build an elaborate wooden ramp to the front door, and we were happy to show it off to Pappa.

My context for marriage was formed first in growing up in an extended family and then watching my siblings, cousins, and friends one by one enter a space of sudden adulthood, familial obligations, and motherhood. I did not know anyone in Socorro besides George and at times had trouble saying the word husband while referring to him. Hhhhhhh-hussssb . . . I would say. I had not expected that would happen to me—first astonishment at being married, then the difficulty in believing the expanse of our partnership.

SOCORRO WAS a small town, smaller than any place I had lived in my dozen American years till then. My visa status had recently changed from nonresident alien to resident alien, which meant I could live in the country without an official reason (school, employment, marriage). I had wanted the change in my visa status before changing my marital status.

Our home was two blocks from the university, and many of our neighbors worked there. George had a full teaching workload that year and

was busy with undergraduates learning about circuits and electronics.

If I got in my car and drove south to the first big intersection from our house in Socorro, and then east for five minutes, I would be by the Rio Grande. I did not know then that the river began in a horseshoe valley two and a half miles above sea level in the San Juan mountains of Colorado. That I lived so close to this ancient lifeline in a dry and dusty landscape now gives me a place to begin thinking about where a part of me is rooted.

In 2000, the river flowed with what seemed to me a beautiful wildness; it was at times milk-chocolate brown, and I never saw it clear. It hurried past me glittering in the afternoon sun. I would sit in my wheelchair by my two-door Toyota in what I now know as the bosque—an oasis of trees on the river's floodplains in the arid southwestern United States—and watch the river.

Imagine a long and snaking art gallery open to the sky, full of cottonwood, mesquite, and willow trees alongside a flowing river. The cottonwood tree is the heart of the bosque. It is a deciduous tree, tall and broad, with a leaf shape that reminds me of the leaves of the banyan trees in Ahmednagar. Old cottonwood trees have large crowns, cracked barks, and dramatic branches that arch over the river. That summer, I saw cottonwood seeds covered with light and silky tuft scatter in the wind like little clouds. I saw piles of them spread at the bottom of the trees and collect at the edges of trails, roads, and parking lots. The invasive nonnative salt cedar tree must have been there as well, and if it was flowering, I must have noticed its pink flowers. Imagine cool breezes in the heat of the day, dappling shade, and the rainstick rustle of the cottonwood leaves rising and dissipating. Imagine the river's whoosh and surge, the rush of it a contrast to the leaves above swaying in place. Later, I would read that I was among the largest cottonwood bosque forests in the country. What I remember is that my afternoons by the river with some small quarrel in my heart were a kind of release into a dry landscape that was new yet reminded me of Ahmednagar.

When Ma first heard that George was white and paraplegic, she was curious about his family and then about his profession. She knew he would not be Hindu, but did he worship Christ? No, I said, he was a Quaker and believed that he did not need a priest or an image to have a relationship with God. Soon she learned that he was twenty-five years my senior, and that sent her imagination through a door she would have rather not encountered. Later, she pointed out that I would now have

the three closest people in my life grow old decades before me. I cannot remember what words she used, but I must have been thinking about it as well because I understood what she was alluding to. I know she was talking about death, although neither of us said the word. I might have even said, "I could die tomorrow!" She asked about his finances, and I did not have good answers. She asked about the possibility of children, and if I told her that there were already more than enough children in the world, that would have been typical of me.

I menstruated regularly but did not know if I could carry a child, had never explored this idea, never talked about it to my doctor or to anyone close to me, did not know if my body could physically survive giving birth. There is a long history of forced sterilization for women with disabilities all over the world. Even now, in the rare case women with disabilities are asked about their sexual capacity and child-bearing possibilities, it is framed in clinical terms. The emotion is absent, closed off. It's as if the blessing cannot sit beside a body that is deemed insufficient, broken. I lacked the language to turn that conversation. George has an adopted daughter from a previous marriage. She was a teenager and lived in Seattle when we married.

During a trip to Ahmednagar before our wedding, I showed everyone Socorro on the same paper map we had used more than a decade ago before I first moved to California. New Mexico? Someone asked. America is so vast, but California crowds the imagination. I remember assuring them that I would continue to be a resident of America, that I would continue to live in a country where I could get and keep a job.

I did not have a clue about how I would fit in a new place, nor did I know how to get my bearings. Birds of a feather flock together, but when two people with disabilities embark on a life together, this flocking is fraught with negotiations. In the aftermath of George's rock-climbing, back-breaking injury, he had resolved that he would not partner with a disabled woman; taking care of himself was hard enough. Now there would be two wheelchairs to maintain, two types of access needs, two bodies that would need different types of medical care, two bodies that did not add up to one fully functioning one. I mean, neither of us could climb up to the roof and check on the swamp cooler. Yet here we were, a cross-cultural community of two—our disabled bodies dancing around each other. We had a fierce bond guided by our physical needs, an understanding of what the other person had endured to believe in love.

Even so, I was a reluctant wife, jobless, balancing the checkbook to the penny. Some might say I was a carefree person, but I did not know how to take the word *care* and the word *free* and marry them to each other.

DRIVING TO SOCORRO from Albuquerque where we went for shopping and second-hand bookstores, George would often tell me that we were driving through a rift valley. “The earth’s crust is literally being torn apart,” he’d say, “but in geologic time.” I knew about rifts, about cracks and fissures and splits. Immediately my mind went to the presence of rifts in my life where there was once affection and belonging. If I could pull those rifts out of my mind where they grew and collapsed, and lay them out on top of this material rift, could its colossal proportions swallow my private ones? The Rio Grande rift is a break in the earth’s crust. Deep beneath the earth between Arizona and Texas, hot magma roils and sends seismic waves to the surface. Over millions of years, the crust tensed, stretched, and extended itself out and up. Mountains and valleys are formed; are still forming. Imagine a topographic basin where the crust is thinning from beneath. I did not know this then, but a series of long and wide connecting basins running north to south starts in Colorado, runs through the middle of New Mexico, and extends into the state of Chihuahua in Mexico.

This is called the Rio Grande Rift. And it was a wonder to me that I was in it.

Imagine this: we are driving down south over the Albuquerque basin to get home, but we are not in a hurry. I remember George never being in a hurry; he’d take me places by saying they were on the way. “On the way to what?” I’d ask, smiling to myself. The sky is bright and big in the late afternoon. We are in George’s Ford van because he cannot get into my small Toyota. He drives us everywhere we go together. The van has a lift our chairs swing on. I get in first, move to the passenger seat, and push my chair to the back where the seats have been taken out. Then George gets in, locks his chair in place behind the steering wheel. Sometimes I slide close to the window but don’t always like the chasm of the seat between us.

With our wheelchairs and in this beat-up van with big windows, we can drive through the basins as long as there is a paved road. We won’t get out and explore volcanic rocks, when they appear on the side of the freeway, or engage closely with the understory of the bosque trees.

The Rio Grande river is flowing to our left, but we can’t see it. There

are clumps of creosote and sage, sometimes dark green juniper or pinion pine in the landscape. Then we see the glimmer of the emerald frame of the tree gallery—the edge of the bosque. The river is there because of the rift. The basin is the low point in the landscape, and the river embraces it, creates a channel for itself, and surges past. From the San Juan mountains of Southern Colorado, the river runs through the rift valley of New Mexico, continues into Mexico, where it forms the border of Mexico and America, before it ends in a small delta in the Gulf of Mexico.

When I moved to Socorro and sat by the river on lonely afternoons, I did not think about the importance of the river to every ecosystem surrounding me. I did not consider how the river might have changed over millennia, how the basins held lakes that combined to make the river. There is not enough water in the river anymore. The river used to be 1,890 miles long from mountain to sea, but that is in the past. I want to say this now, so that when I talk about the river, the trees in the bosque, the people living along it, the cranes who winter in Socorro, the fact that the river is spliced, divided, and drying is not forgotten.

As the river flows, it cuts canyons between the basins. It collects and deposits sediment. There is lava, volcanic ash, sand, rocks, and gravel in the basin—mysteries to be uncovered. In places, this layer is more than five miles deep. Beyond the bosque that surrounds the ribbon of the river, there is dry land. The air is dry. My skin is dry. George is telling me about watching lightning storms in the Magdalena mountains beyond the land behind our home. “One lightning strike per second, right on the mark,” he says, his face lighting up. This man loves natural phenomena, I think. The Magdalena mountains form the west edge of the Rio Grande Rift. Atmospheric scientists from all over the world come to the Langmuir Laboratory situated on a high peak to study clouds, rain, hail, thunderstorms. Something about the altitude of the peaks and dry air combine to produce magnificent storms during the summer. In New Mexico, I will sometimes be in the warmth of the sun on a perfectly clear day and see a dark gray block of rain falling miles away. To see water descend from the sky with that velocity and agency is to be let into a theater where drama and submission reign.

Now, I think of all the water the storms bring to the mountains. This water flows downhill, searching for the river.

George drove us around New Mexico over long weekends. We once drove to visit the Taos Pueblo, which is one of the longest continuously

inhabited places in America. Pueblo is a Spanish word and means village or town, typically along a river bank, where people could farm and live for generations. Native Americans have lived in New Mexico for thousands of years, and there are many different pueblos in the state. Each has their traditional dresses and dances, their art and architecture, their cultural objects, their special ceremonies.

A multistory brown-red structure made of mud and wood greets us as we enter Taos Pueblo World Heritage Site. A mountain rises behind, and there are tourists milling about. I am struck by how layered the structure is, and how in some ways it mirrors the shape of the mountain. There are brightly painted doors and window frames. The work of the hand is everywhere. Seeing those outside walls and window openings where there is not a single sharp corner reminds me of women in Rajasthan applying mud to the walls of their homes with their hands. I am most attracted to the potters who are open for business, but I don't buy anything. I remember feeling like we were trespassing. These are people's ancestral homes that also contain their daily lives.

The Spanish were colonials who began to arrive in Mexico in the 1500s—like the British were colonials in India. The Europeans were a dominating and crushing force, hungry for local wealth and resources. As they did in California, Spanish soldiers and priests came to the New Mexico region from Mexico in search of land and labor, and to convert people to Catholicism. Native Americans were enslaved in the building of churches and communities. Unimaginable numbers of them died because they did not have immunity to smallpox and other contagious diseases, because they were hounded and captured, because they lost their homes, their fields, their water. In 1821, Mexico gained independence from the Spanish Empire. At the end of the Mexican-American war in 1848, Mexico ceded over 50 percent of its territory to America. New Mexico and the Rio Grande were now under a new imperialist flag.

Immigrants to America like me are constantly made aware of the ideals of liberty and equality. We are taught the pledge of allegiance and told about the pursuit of happiness. We are never informed that we are swearing allegiance to a country where the brutal history of conquest and slavery extends into the present day. We are never told how we become part of the violence in ways we don't understand and won't want to accept. Instead, we are encouraged to embrace the American dream, which thrives because of capitalism and consumerism.

EVEN THOUGH GEORGE had told me about the sandhill cranes, it took me several weeks to acknowledge that thousands of them were close by. Their winter home was the Bosque Del Apache Wildlife National Refuge located in Socorro County, a thirty-minute drive from our home. The refuge is made up of floodplains connected to the Rio Grande and provides thousands of acres of protected land for birds, both local and migratory. There are ducks, geese, pheasants, eagles, hawks, and hummingbirds among many others. Driving into the refuge, I once saw dozens of blackbirds on a bare tree, their shape not unlike dark and broad leaves on the branching silhouette.

I did not know that I would soon yearn to be interrupted by the rattling calls of the soaring cranes. I would be in my wheelchair in the backyard, hanging laundry or in the front carport hauling a bag full of groceries, and then look up to see a cluster of two or three cranes or the V formation of a group. I could not know what the atmosphere felt like up there but could imagine the leader employing the longest arc of its wing flap and displacing the most air to help buoy the one behind. I thought of the cranes at the end exchanging their place with the one in the center of the V, and it made me consider that perhaps the entire purpose of their lives was to take care of each other.

A dozen years before I moved from California to Socorro to be with George, I had left Ahmednagar and the protective bubble of our family to fly to America in a flying metal tube. I was twenty-two and had never traveled on my own before. I remember that several family members came to the airport in Mumbai to usher me onward with a fresh coconut and flowers for good luck. What I recall is a blur, a fog of emotion. What I do remember with some clarity is a moment when I wanted to turn around and go back to Ahmednagar and never talk of America again. What I knew without a doubt was that if I stayed, my reliance on Ma and Pappa would extend into every facet of my life. My family had made enormous sacrifices for me to forge my own narrative. But the shape of that narrative was far from obvious. In a way, I needed to leave because I could not locate my future as a single young disabled woman within the parameters of what was available to me.

In Gujarati, my mother tongue, we say આવજો in lieu of goodbye. Come again. But what would it even mean for me to come back home after I had completed my education? Would it mean that my time in America was a failure, a waste of my family's hard-earned money? Would it mean that I could not learn to enjoy the autonomy that accessible

America promised to offer?

So much about my body was awkward. Paralyzed by polio, I wore braces up to my chest and leaped with underarm crutches. My old Everest and Jennings wheelchair was usable around our house, but all of my school and college buildings had stairs and zero elevators. Did the official at the American Consulate regard me as a prime immigration candidate when I lurched up to the counter and handed him my papers? Ma might have murmured to me about finding a partner in a new country, but I don't remember what she said because I was too busy denying her tears of farewell. It was clear that there would be no arranged marriage for me; I was too disabled and too educated. I was eager to escape, even though most of what I knew about California was on that paper map Pappa spread out on the dining table a few weeks before I left.

I also needed a wheelchair upgrade.

Yet, in those first, tender years in America, I did not know how to roll toward what seemed like an inscrutable desire, or how to embody a feminist confidence. To say I was timid brings laughter because I cannot find the words to articulate how that initial transition of migration still reverberates in me. Unlike the cranes, my compass has been in the state of formation for a long time.

I had heard that the Spanish word *socorro* meant a cry for help. Later, I read that the exhausted and desperate Spanish wanderers had cried for help, and the Piro people living in what was then Socorro had given them food and shelter. Socorro—to give succor. I did not know that help could be found simply by asking. One evening when we were first in Socorro, Pappa noticed me struggling to move a pot of hot water from the stove top to the adjacent counter. He pointed out to George that if the counter were lowered, I might have a safer time in the kitchen. The next day, George hired our neighbor to remove the cabinets under the counter and lower the entire counter a few inches along with the stovetop. The same neighbor had also transformed a small bedroom into a beautiful roll-in closet for us before my arrival. When another neighbor brought me two small canvases, George built a wooden tabletop easel for me.

It was during my time as a new wife in Socorro that I began to realize that George's network of care included neighbors, colleagues, students, the machine shop where parts for a wheelchair could be fabricated or mended, the public library, the bicycle shop, the Quaker meeting. As George's wife, this became my network as well, even as I became a pri-

mary part of it. It reminded me of my own circles of care in Ahmednagar, which included parents, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, neighbors, servants, teachers, tailors, surgeons, prosthetics providers, and a friend of Pappa who helped build a hand-operated rickshaw for me in his workshop. I could not have done it then, but viewing these care circles through an anti-capitalist framework decades later allows me to accept care as an often unadorned, often uneven conversation. Care works organically when there is an exchange, when one is included in an ethos of reciprocity.

George and I understood that in our care networks, we were in a position where we would take more than we could give. Between us, however, we needed to allow space for things we could offer and things we could not. People with disabilities are defined by the care they need. We needed to not let that overwhelm our togetherness.

“WHAT WILL YOU do in Socorro?” Most people I knew in San Diego asked me this, before I married and left. They had not heard of Socorro, let alone ever visited. New Mexico is the Land of Enchantment, but, besides George, I had not met anyone in that before time who had been enchanted by the land where the oldest human footprints on the continent were found, in what is now White Sands National Park. Scientists now estimate these footprints to be between twenty-one and twenty-three thousand years old. They are preserved like relief sculptures and impressions in sand that used to be the shore of an ancient lake. I find it sweet that scientists found that most of the footprints are of teenagers and children. While the parents worked or slept, were these children playing and fetching water? Was the lake surrounded by forest?

I never counted the cranes I saw in the sky in Socorro, and I did not know then that there were scores of volunteers and bird lovers who were watching for the arrival of the cranes with better tools and sharper minds. There were farmers growing crops for the cranes, refuge staff flooding wetlands to create pockets of water for the birds, scholars devoted to the study of their habitats and patterns, teachers incorporating stories of cranes in their curriculum, lovers discussing how the cranes mate for life, artists trying to capture their song, their flight, their camaraderie, their beauty.

After the world-renowned, annual Festival of Cranes had come and gone and the refuge visitors had dwindled a bit, George drove us there late one afternoon in the middle of winter. It might have been a Saturday. There was a loop to drive on slowly, once we entered the refuge. Around

us were fields with golden stalks of seed crops in stages of demolition. There were birds in the air—tens of hundreds of them—finding their flocks and gliding down to a spot. Even though I had a faint idea of what to expect, I was not prepared for the sight of graceful gray sandhills descending on the marsh with a purple evening sky as the backdrop. The cranes were elegant and smooth, their landing clean and spare. Chattering and squawking, the fly-in filled the refuge with activity and a sense of family. In addition to the cranes, there were snow geese, ducks, a variety of songbirds, roadrunners, small mammals, and many others we could not see. Before I went to the refuge to watch the cranes, I had only ever seen pictures of large groups of birds. When I saw that stupendous gathering and heard their sounds tangled with each other's, I felt a boundless ocean open in front of me. I did not know until later that the scene also reminded me of the masses of pilgrims at the Kumbh Mela or the Hajj, the borders of their bodies dissolved in devotion to their gods. What were the cranes worshipping? Water? Boundless sky? Flight?

It is only in pictures and videos that I saw the crane's mating dance; wings stretching, necks arching, their bodies bowing, circling, leaping. When they reach their spring grounds in the North, they work together to build a ground nest in a marsh or a bog using twigs and grasses, cattails and bulrushes. Sometimes this is a young crane's first mating and often this is a rejoining, a reclaiming of a seasoned mate. The cranes share the task of raising and training their young, and they do this year after year, season after season.

Perhaps, while the humans were in an unadulterated awe of the cranes, the birds themselves were joined in awareness of their dependence on the Rio Grande. Perhaps they understood how their soaring was tied to the health of the river. Cranes are among the oldest birds in the universe, and the oldest fossil of a sandhill crane found in Florida is estimated to be 2.5 million years old. In other words, rivers and cranes have been in communication for a length of time that remains incomprehensible to me. As they fly south in their migration patterns, the river, its floodplains, and the fields brimming with seeds must signal to the cranes that their communities will thrive and be strengthened for a return to their spring homes.

What then is the signal from a collapsing river?

IN 2022, ALARMS regarding the rivers of the Southwest drying and disappearing began to appear so often in the news that they penetrated

the pandemic ache in my mind. George and I were on a video call with our old neighbors in Socorro when one of them mentioned that the Rio Grande had hardly any water in it. How could it be? I thought, from our home in San Diego. That summer, the river dried up all the way to Albuquerque, seventy miles north of Socorro. I was not surprised that several things working in combination for decades and introduced into the landscape because of continuous development and expansion were the reason for this frightening occurrence. Complex water distribution policies understood by few exist around most fresh water bodies.

Large dams built in the last century impound the river in several locations. The Elephant Butte Dam, completed in 1916, is located south of Socorro, but we never visited it. It creates the largest reservoir of water in New Mexico, filling a long artificial lake with the river water. Now, the river coming out of the dam, when it does, is a shadow of what it would be in its undammed state. On a USGS webcam, the river looks like a puddle. On maps and photographs, I see where the river used to be—the dry riverbed marks the landscape, and the trees along it have become more susceptible to fire.

An invasive tree called a salt cedar grows with abandon in the bosque. This tree was first introduced near rivers by the Soil Conservation Service for flood control and to restore the river bank—trees along a river hold the channel in place by stabilizing the soil. But this tree consumes much more water than the cottonwood trees and depletes the river. It outgrows and outcompetes the native trees; it multiplies and spreads. It releases salt in the soil, thus making the soil less nourishing for other trees.

Also, as our climate has gotten warmer, there is less snowfall in the mountains, and so the river beginning in the mountains has less force. As streams and springs dry up, the river has less tributaries, fewer sources that will join together as it flows.

During this time, I was looking at and reading the work of artist and writer Sunaura Taylor. I felt an immediate kinship with her. Taylor is a disabled woman because of arthrogryposis—a birth condition that affects her joints. She is a wheelchair user and grew up in a family where the children were given the responsibility of figuring out what they were interested in learning and then encouraged to pursue those interests. Her thoughtful work applies what she knows about her body toward understanding the precarity of our planet. I am drawn to her work unlike any other because of this framing. She is saying we need to figure

out how to live with each other on this changing earth. She is saying that perhaps bodies with disabilities can provide some instructive notions on how we can live with less.

Taylor uses the phrase “disabled ecologies” to propose that “new and generative understandings of disability and nature emerge when we follow the trails of disability that are created when ecosystems are contaminated, depleted, and profoundly altered.” In her essay “What Would Health Security Look Like?” Taylor writes:

For decades disabled communities have taught us that, while injury and sickness are fundamental to life, our response to injury and sickness is a societal issue. At this moment—as the vulnerability and dependency of our bodies is so undeniably entangled with the health of ecosystems and other species—it is time to recognize ourselves as an increasingly disabled people in increasingly disabled landscapes. How then should we respond to injury?

Many of us will have to enter new perspectives to comprehend what this kind of response looks like.

The Pueblo people inhabit a deep sensitivity to the health of the Rio Grande and of the bosque. Six miles of the Rio Grande flows through the Santa Ana Pueblo north of Albuquerque. For years, the tribe has developed and implemented various ways to restore the river’s channel and the bosque around it. Their circle of care includes the land and the water surrounding them; they know that silt from the mountains is a necessary part of the river, and that the native trees provide essential habitat for the birds, mammals, and insects in the riparian system. One of the main things they are doing is allowing the river to flood without hindering it with walls or embankments. When I let my mind wander and put myself in the river, I begin to have an inkling about how the land and river might negotiate this flow.

The flooding lets sediment in the river be carried and settle where it would find a natural place to be. When there is more water in the river, the river’s main channel widens and forms small pools and braided channels. Water spreads and slows down in the landscape. The sediment full of organic matter and drenching in water is carried further where it settles on drier land and invites seeds to sprout. This of course depends on how much sediment and flood water remains in the river after dams upstream from the pueblo impound it.

In addition, the Santa Ana Pueblo community is restoring the riparian wetland around the Rio Grande by removing the nonnative trees and

making space for the native cottonwood and willow trees to flourish. This opens up the canopy of the bosque and enables sunlight to reach the understory where grasses and seed-producing shrubs can grow again.

What I sense is that the river has an intelligence which when respected is enough to sustain everything living, including humans. What we don't see and need to trust are the underground and underwater relationships of the river to freshwater fish life, to microorganisms, to root structures, to mycelial networks, to aquifers, to the entire vulnerable body which relies on it.

What Taylor is saying is that people with disabilities understand networks of care in a way that can boggle the mind. We are intensely aware of the care, support, assistance, and cooperation we need from our delicate web of relationships and structures. We depend, as well, on devices and the numerous adjustments they require daily. We know who is suitable for what care, and we know when we have asked too much of one individual. If we extend this understanding beyond humans, we start to approach indigenous philosophies of care toward animals, rivers, the air we breathe, the soil that grows our food.

The winter I spent in Socorro as a new wife, there was a marvelous snowfall. I had been to snowy places before, but never had I gone to sleep in a dry cold and woken up to see a blanket of soft snow around the house and neighborhood. A friend who was visiting helped shovel the driveway. A day or two later the snow evaporated under a cloudless sky. How did the cranes survive as they stood in the freezing waters? Later, I read that cranes can constrict the blood vessels in their feet to reduce the amount of blood that needs to be warmed. In the weeks following the winter solstice, George and I began to track how the sunlight coming through a window in our bedroom appeared earlier each morning. I imagined this message as a call for movement, to get out of bed, to start the day, to fill the hours with fortitude. I imagined the cranes absorbing this message into their bodies, their cells, their hidden chambers. I imagined a call from one crane to another transforming the flock at the refuge and piercing the air, breeding grounds by familiar rivers and lakes appearing in their minds.

Years later, I came across a story about a single sandhill crane being spotted in Suffolk, UK. Blown off course by Hurricane Katia in September 2011, the crane was spotted along the eastern coast of England a few days later and quickly attracted the local birders. When I pictured the solitary crane being blown by hurricane winds and finding a marsh

to land in, I wondered at its capacity for listening to its body. In one photograph I found, the bird is on the ground with its wings pulled up ready for takeoff. In another set of photographs, the crane runs with wings stretched vertically above its body and starts to fly above a bare field. Separated from its flock, the crane might have folded into itself the idea that being in unfamiliar surroundings required resources it either had or did not. Either way, there was only tomorrow, there was a sun rising and a day waiting.

A flying group of cranes is called a kettle. A kettle can appear like a wisp in the sky, an irregular wavering line. Toned muscles, strong bones, sleek necks, loud vocalizations. I was still bundled in jackets and gloves when large groups of cranes began to move north. Along the Socorro Plaza, by the public library, or the post office, I would hear the cranes overhead as I was getting in or out of my car. The plaza was built by the Spanish in the 1800s over the ruins of the pueblos of the Piro people; a historic marker gave me that information. Soon, we would leave Socorro for jobs and a new home. I did not know if Ma had ever seen a sandhill crane, but I wrote about them in letters I sealed and sent with other news. Perhaps I made a quiet gesture to the birds there in the Plaza, over the gazebo and the budding cottonwood trees.

આવજો આવજો આવજો, I might have said. Come again. Come again. Come again.

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