

## Walking the Dog

My "dog" (with 2 legs) and I marched out across the bajada in the cooler air of winter. The normally rubble-covered, concrete-hard slopes held the moisture of recent rains and so, pleasantly yielded to our weight. We left deep prints where we wandered. Descending into a wash bottom, we immersed ourselves in the chill of cold, phantom water. As we moved forward, we suddenly walked into a surprising flannel blanket of warm, spring air made of the springtime yet to come or leftover from last summer.

The dog trotted heavily away, destroying any chance that I might see birds and rabbits, now scattered in energized panic. The dog trotted away and back again and



past me and behind me. The dog's red shirt proclaimed loudly in the sunshine that dog was not a deer. But I wore earth tones, and I spotted a hunter's truck not too far off.

We turned back, dog continually ranging at a heavy trot all around me. Somehow catching sight of the hunter's truck set something sinister in me in motion. I felt the edge of depression as it scraped by with the squeal of metal on gravel. Voices of despair, sadness and powerlessness fluttered against my eardrums and reached into my chest, feeling around for a plug to pull to drain out the joy. Depression slowed as it scraped by me, inching out a sniffing tentacle. I froze to the ground and began to worry that I was doomed to be captured.

Suddenly, dog in red shirt appeared and began to chatter about dinner and what was left in the refrigerator for dinner. I felt the crushing daze lift from me, freeing me, and we walked on. Red Shirt Dog had had enough of a run and walked along with me, and we discussed how the air had been laid out this morning in stripes, alternating cold winter with warm spring. We looked at the mystery of animal tracks in sand and enjoyed amazing desert views.