

On my run this morning the mist made normal places magical. I noticed a glade off the trail to the right, up a little hill, its still-bare trees stark against the creamy gray. Too close for anything to happen there; thick with branches. But still a sense of interrupted occasion, as if a great convening of woodland creatures and unseen denizens had just adjourned. I had run by there a dozen or more time this month. I had never thought to turn my head to see what lay to be discovered outside my usual path.

The run is where I most feel the world. This winter I got myself all set up at the gym, stashed some stuff in a locker, against the coming tough mornings -- and have not wanted to go. Have much preferred bundling up and feeling the cold and wind and rain on my face. Felt the world around me going through its winter as surely as I was going through mine. And getting that good oxygen, the outside kind I didn't have to worry about in this second year of thinking about what I was breathing in every moment.

Last week was an amazing morning where the warm breeze and the cold ground were dancing with each other, trying to figure out what kind of a day it was going to be. I felt every two-step as I tried to slide in-between them on my way through. And everywhere now is the almost of pre-spring on the mountain. The daffodils came up just this week, and a couple of crocuses are trying, but the rest of the ground is still raw from the cold, bed sore from resting so many weeks. But rest is part of growth, as nature knows better than I ever will. The beauty is in the feeling where you are on the great wheel, where everything is. Taking comfort in the cycles within and without us and finding our place there.

This place never lets you forget it is winter, even as the planet warms and gives us each year it seems more weird warm breakthrough days I feel guilty enjoying. I wonder what it was like to be cold here a hundred years ago, when warm coats weren't that warm and if you had wool you wore it but when it got wet it stayed wet for days and days. I wonder what it was to do all your necessities outdoors; to feel the kitchen warm as the fire for cooking took. To know the darkness so much better because it was just how things were for so long, until you lit a match or turned up the gas. How much brighter town must have felt on Saturday after a week in the quiet darkness of your home two miles west. How the colors and sounds of the department store on the cinema were that much brighter and louder against the dark quiet of the week. Parents would drop their kids off at the movie house for the whole day while they shopped and socialized. Double feature, plus news reel and cartoons. Screen time concerns took a back seat, obviously. We all do what we have to to get through the winter.

It won't be much longer now -- even though this weekend the time shift will plunge my favorite hour of the day back into darkness. That is okay. Whatever else has changed here, what will never change is that spring is coming, and then another summer. I will breathe into the quiet spaces that still wait for me to discover them and be still and listen for their secrets. They might tell, me if I abide with them for a while.