

Weaselsong

I cried because I had no gloves – until I met a man with a weasel on his hand.

Movement I

So. Weasels. Until about a week ago, I'll admit I didn't know very much about weasels. If you had asked me about weasels? "Weasels are small... and furry... and probably brown (because lots of other animals are brown). But I wouldn't rule out black, or possibly white, or some combination of the three. They eat eggs... or maybe it was snakes, or mice, or something else suitably smaller than they are. When I picture a weasel, I picture the pointy masked head of a ferret combined with the sleek, lithe body of a ferret and the thin, furry tail of a ferret."

Well, I probably wouldn't have said all that, actually. But it's the best I can do at pretending I don't know anything about weasels. Because sometimes, you have the sort of experience that just changes you, and you can't go back to the way you were before. And if it involves weasels, well, you will then be a weasel-knowledgeable person, and there's very little you can do about it.

Picture in your head, if you will, a forest. Now take all the trees out of it and replace them with large constructs built of steel and bricks and other such things, and you can see where I'm coming from. Now clear out a small space in the center of this bustling city and put back the trees, and you will have Lincoln Park.

It's a pleasant place, the park, good for getting away from it all. It's quite large, too, large enough that you can wander around in it and get away from people when that's your wish. I enjoy taking walks in the park during my lunch break. In the warmer months, you can sit on the old bridge that spans part of the pond, your feet dangling down towards the water, and watch the ducks and geese swim lazy circles across the surface of the water.

Once, I thought it might be a good idea to give them some bread from my lunchtime sandwich. But when I threw the crumbs of bread into the water, suddenly waterfowl came charging at the food from every direction. I had, in my kindness and wisdom, thrown it to a poor, scraggly-looking little baby goose who was bobbing around in the water, looking dejected and huggable. Suddenly, he was engulfed in a flurry of feathers and honking, the sort of display that would put hyenas to shame.

When the spray cleared, I could see that nihilistic little goose, bobbing in the water. He hadn't even moved, as though he'd known he wasn't fast or strong enough. I couldn't help but wonder where his parents were.

The Bridge

It was early May, and we were just starting to get some nice, warm, almost-summery days. I had just finished my sandwich and was preparing for my imminent return to civilization, standing up, putting the crumpled Handi-wrap in my pocket, and dusting off my pants. As I stepped off the bridge and onto the path, I noticed a shiny blue feather on the ground near the path. It didn't look like it had come from any bird I'd seen before; it ranged from rich, royal blue to near black. As I squatted down to look at it more closely, I also looked a little bit beyond it, and you can imagine my surprise to see two small, black eyes looking back at me.

It was, as I am sure you have already guessed, a weasel. I knew that the moment I saw it – although I couldn't tell you how; I'd never seen a weasel before. There was just something indescribably *weasel* about it. Or possibly *ferret*, I will admit. They're quite similar.

Anyway, there it was. It was crouching close to the ground, looking up at me with what seemed to be a fair bit of apprehension. Every muscle in its body seemed pulled tight, ready to fling it in any direction circumstances dictated necessary.

There was something in me, too, that froze me. I don't think I've ever been so still in my life as I was that first second after I saw the weasel and before my brain caught up with my instincts. We must have looked quite strange, I think, staring at each other silently, that single feather between us.

Of course, this strange feeling was gone within a few seconds, and my brain started rapidly going through its files for any references to weasels that might come to bear on the current situation. Weasels... bad managers... tricky people... jokes including Gilligan and axes... there wasn't much there to go on, so I fell back on references to things that were small and furry, like rabbits and cats and pet ferrets.

I slowly reached forwards toward the weasel, stretching my hand out towards it, and it turned its head slightly. I couldn't tell where it was looking, my eyes or my hand or somewhere behind the back of my skull. And as I stretched out my hand and looked into its eyes, I began to feel somehow connected to it, that we weren't so different, the weasel and I. And then it lunged at me. As it sank its tiny teeth firmly into my outstretched hand, I finally knew how it felt to be one with the world around me. And then I screamed.

Movement II

It takes some getting used to, having a weasel attached to your hand. I mean, obviously, physically, it has a tendency to get in the way. But I have developed my left-handed skills far beyond what I ever would have otherwise.

I was on the subway the other day when a man came up to me, curious about what was on my arm. From a distance, it sometimes looks like I'm wearing a huge, furry glove, or carrying a stuffed animal, or something like that. So I told him my weasel story. He just looked down at my hand, paused, and said, "You should really get that looked at, you know...."

But I know this weasel is never coming off my hand. It's been a week, and he's still firmly attached. You would think that he would let go, eventually, or get thirsty or hungry or tired, but despite his getting thinner, he doesn't seem to have lost his strength or his will.

People ask me if it hurts. Well, I think the answer is pretty obvious... I have many small, pointy objects embedded in my hand. Of course it hurts. But there are some things more important than pain, you know? And if it is this weasel's necessity to be locked onto my hand, who am I to argue with his nature?

Coda

And what would you do if you beheld the hand of God stretched out before you? Surely you, too, would grab hold of it and never let go.