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### Making Tracks

He held the polished wood handle of the 1860 model Spencer Carbine of his father's firm against his shoulders, as if the boy, himself, belonged to the Army of Northern Virginia. The butt was slipping. It must have weighed fifty pounds. The carbine had seven metallic cartridges that could be fired with more accuracy and precision than a Colt, but to a boy a gun is a gun. It bore a case-hardened frame, blued-barrel, with walnut stock. His countenance was one neither of hope or defeat when he first spied the shifting shadows in the basting September sun.

She stood about two or three feet at the shoulder, the height at which the boy gauged the shot atop his own. He had read about the species of *odocoileus virginianus*, who is protective of her young, bearing no tines, no crown or crest; she had shed her reddish-brown coat for a gray-brown coat and appeared invincible in the green ring of melting snow-capped willows.

The doe was only a blot of sun visible beneath his tousled hair, flattened by his father's stenciled CSA cap. When she took two or three steps forward he could see the white pocks around her eyes, throat, and nose that made her virginal; pure. He was a boy afraid to kiss a girl, the reincarnation of his father, afraid to kiss his mother.

“Go’n!” He could hear his mother call to his father, as he choked back tears, afraid to shoot a doe protective of her young, for fear of vengeance; of God.

He held the white-tail doe within range. Once he heard his mother’s voice, it would take a lot more than gunpowder to pierce his yokel heart, or the animal’s. The ammunition rattled like lead, as she stared him down with her feral eyes, somehow aware and unaware of his existence, as if she was as human as himself. It wasn’t long before she heard the buckle of the gun, audible only to herself and a gaggle of maddened geese; the blast, quickening like thunder against the sky.