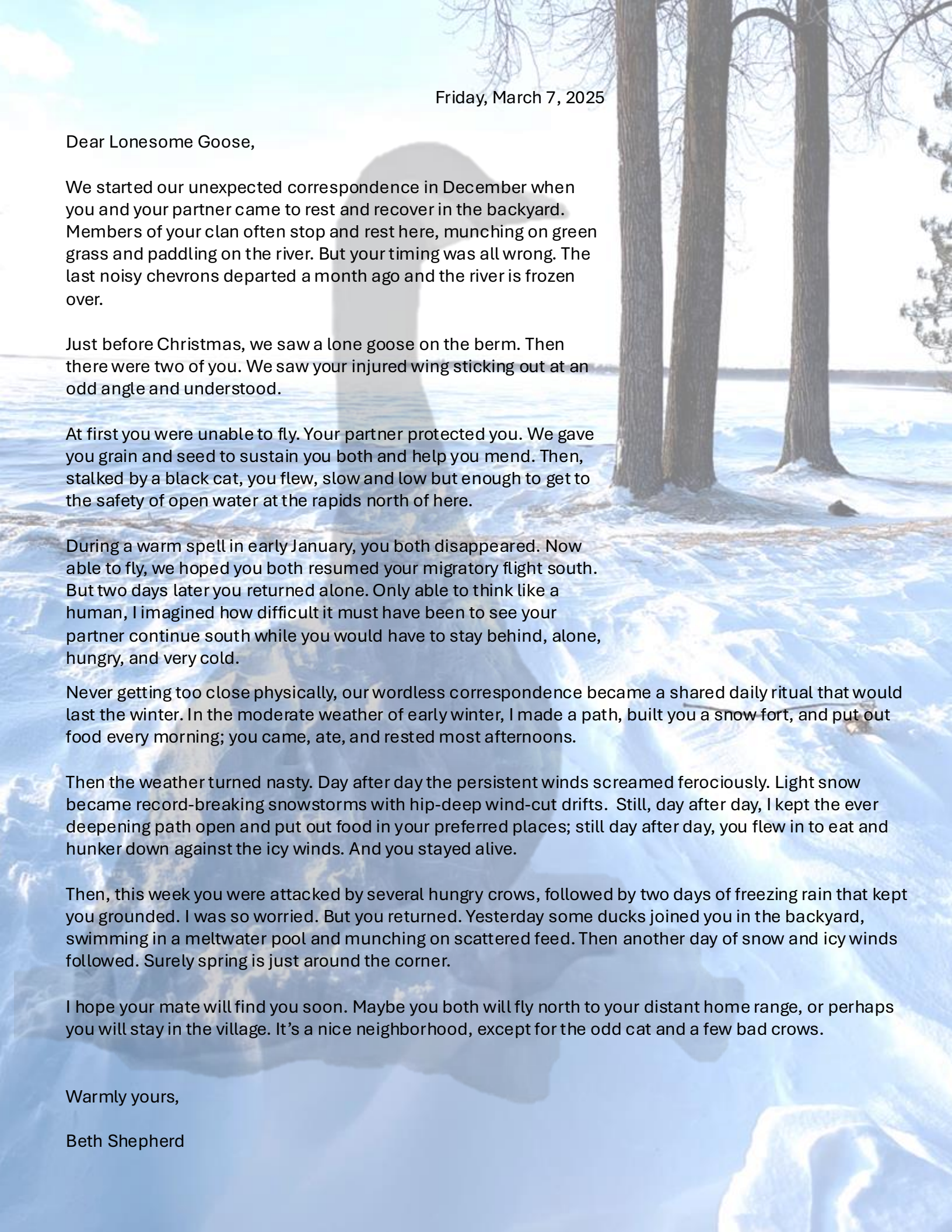




Friday, March 7, 2025

Dear Lonesome Goose,

We started our unexpected correspondence in December when you and your partner came to rest and recover in the backyard. Members of your clan often stop and rest here, munching on green grass and paddling on the river. But your timing was all wrong. The last noisy chevrons departed a month ago and the river is frozen over.

Just before Christmas, we saw a lone goose on the berm. Then there were two of you. We saw your injured wing sticking out at an odd angle and understood.

At first you were unable to fly. Your partner protected you. We gave you grain and seed to sustain you both and help you mend. Then, stalked by a black cat, you flew, slow and low but enough to get to the safety of open water at the rapids north of here.

During a warm spell in early January, you both disappeared. Now able to fly, we hoped you both resumed your migratory flight south. But two days later you returned alone. Only able to think like a human, I imagined how difficult it must have been to see your partner continue south while you would have to stay behind, alone, hungry, and very cold.

Never getting too close physically, our wordless correspondence became a shared daily ritual that would last the winter. In the moderate weather of early winter, I made a path, built you a snow fort, and put out food every morning; you came, ate, and rested most afternoons.

Then the weather turned nasty. Day after day the persistent winds screamed ferociously. Light snow became record-breaking snowstorms with hip-deep wind-cut drifts. Still, day after day, I kept the ever deepening path open and put out food in your preferred places; still day after day, you flew in to eat and hunker down against the icy winds. And you stayed alive.

Then, this week you were attacked by several hungry crows, followed by two days of freezing rain that kept you grounded. I was so worried. But you returned. Yesterday some ducks joined you in the backyard, swimming in a meltwater pool and munching on scattered feed. Then another day of snow and icy winds followed. Surely spring is just around the corner.

I hope your mate will find you soon. Maybe you both will fly north to your distant home range, or perhaps you will stay in the village. It's a nice neighborhood, except for the odd cat and a few bad crows.

Warmly yours,

Beth Shepherd