

RiverBender Blog: Fear the Deer

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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The other night, I hit a deer.

Technically, the deer hit me.

It was a bad night, but not as bad for me as it probably was for the deer. I'm guessing she had a headache.

We made eye contact as she crashed into the side of the car, both of us horrified, with the same thought running through our heads: betrayal. *How could you?* Mine was more incredulous than angry — *How did that happen?* — but that deer was furious. I could tell.

I stared, open-mouthed, as she shook her head as if to clear it and ran off into the black night.

This was bad enough. I was rattled by the collision and guilty about the deer's potential concussion. But the ultimate kicker was when I pulled over to check the damage and found a deer-shaped dent.

Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how you view it), I was driving my brother's car at the time. The dent was undeniable; no hiding that one or playing it off as something he simply hadn't noticed before. I went to bed in a sour mood, still nerved up and guilty and now also liable for a pretty penny's worth of damage.

But as much as I would prefer to simply never drive again, that's not realistic. The next night, I found myself an intrepid traveler once more. When it was time to choose my exit off the interstate, I hesitated. It was as dark as ever. Should I really take the same road that had led me smack into a deer, or should I try the road more traveled by and hopefully avoid wildlife altogether?

I found myself on the highway, well-lighted with several other cars beside me, breathing a sigh of relief. But I knew I couldn't avoid the other road forever. This was a road I've driven countless times before — in fact, countless times in a week. I'm constantly on Deer Road, which was newly nicknamed and freshly feared.

It became a lesson in courage as, the next night, I was once again faced with a choice. I realized if I didn't brave Deer Road now, I would avoid it forever. As impractical as that would be, I could absolutely see myself doing it. Avoidance has always been my favorite method of conflict resolution, after all. In a fight, flight or freeze scenario, I'm a statue every time.

But not this time! I would not be held back by a road or a misplaced deer. I had something to prove and nothing to lose, other than my insurance deductible. I flicked on my blinker and turned down the scary street.

Staring out into the dark night, I was as vigilant as ever, on the lookout for any overconfident deer that might try to sprint across the road. The night was filled with hazards. I saw scuttling possums, a rabbit, even a cat that blinked at me with flashing yellow eyes as I drove past.

But the real challenge was ahead. I squinted — was that...? No way — an entire herd of deer!

I slowed to a crawl. Now driving at a cool five miles an hour, I counted the deer as they stood on the side of the road, at least five of them, all staring with their glassy deer eyes and stock-still bodies. These traitors. These track star wannabes. I had heard back from the insurance company earlier that day and I was looking at four digits' worth of damage. I felt a lot less benevolent now. A single thought ran through my head: *Don't you dare.*

And then I was past the deer, and then I turned off Deer Road, and then it was over.

Well, almost over. I still have to call my brother up at school to tell him about the car. But that's a challenge for another day. I can only brave so many scary things at once.