

How the Fawn Got Its Spots

Illustrated by Cory Fontaine



Long ago, when the world was new, Wakan Tanka, The Great Mystery, was walking around. And as he walked, he spoke to himself of the many things he had done to help the four-legged ones and the birds survive.



"It is good," Wakan Tanka said.

"I have given Mountain Lion sharp claws and Grizzly Bear great Strength.

It is much easier now for them to survive.



**I have given Wolf sharp teeth and I have given his little brother, Coyote, quick wits.
It is much easier now for them to survive.**



I have given Beaver a flat tail and webbed feet to swim beneath the water and teeth which can cut down the trees. I have given slow-moving porcupine quills to protect itself. Now it is easier for them to survive.



I have given the birds their feathers and the ability to fly so that they may escape their enemies.



I have given speed to the deer and the rabbit so that it will be hard for their enemies to catch them.

Truly it is now much easier for them to survive.

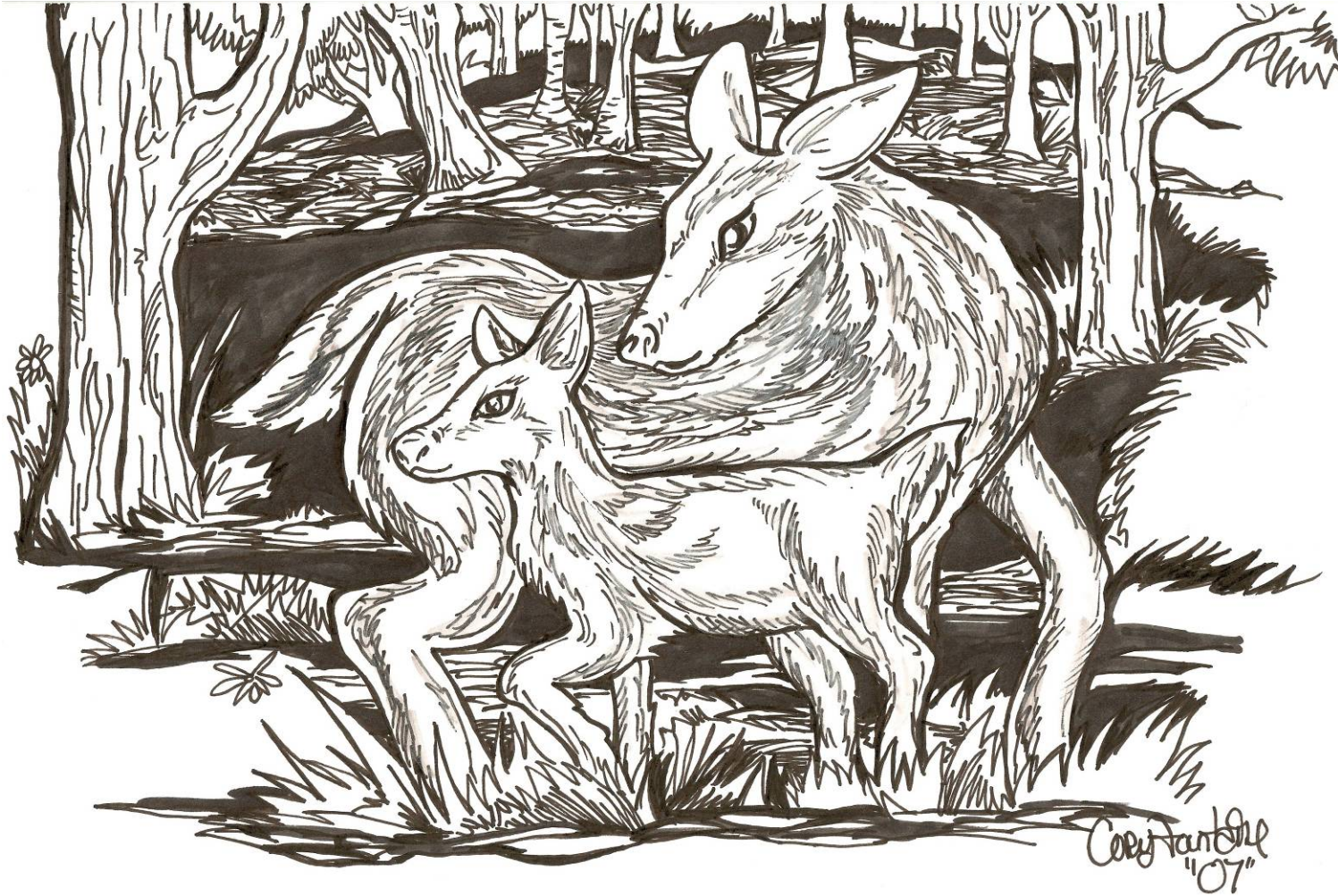


However, as Wakan Tanka spoke, a mother deer came up to him. Behind her was her small fawn, wobbling on weak new legs.

“Great One,” she said. “It is true that you have given many gifts to the four-leggeds and the winged ones to help them survive.

It is true that you gave me great speed and now my enemies find it hard to catch me. My speed is a great protection, indeed.

But what of my little one here? She does not yet have speed. It is easy for our enemies, with their sharp teeth and their claws, to catch her. If your children do not survive, how can my people live?"



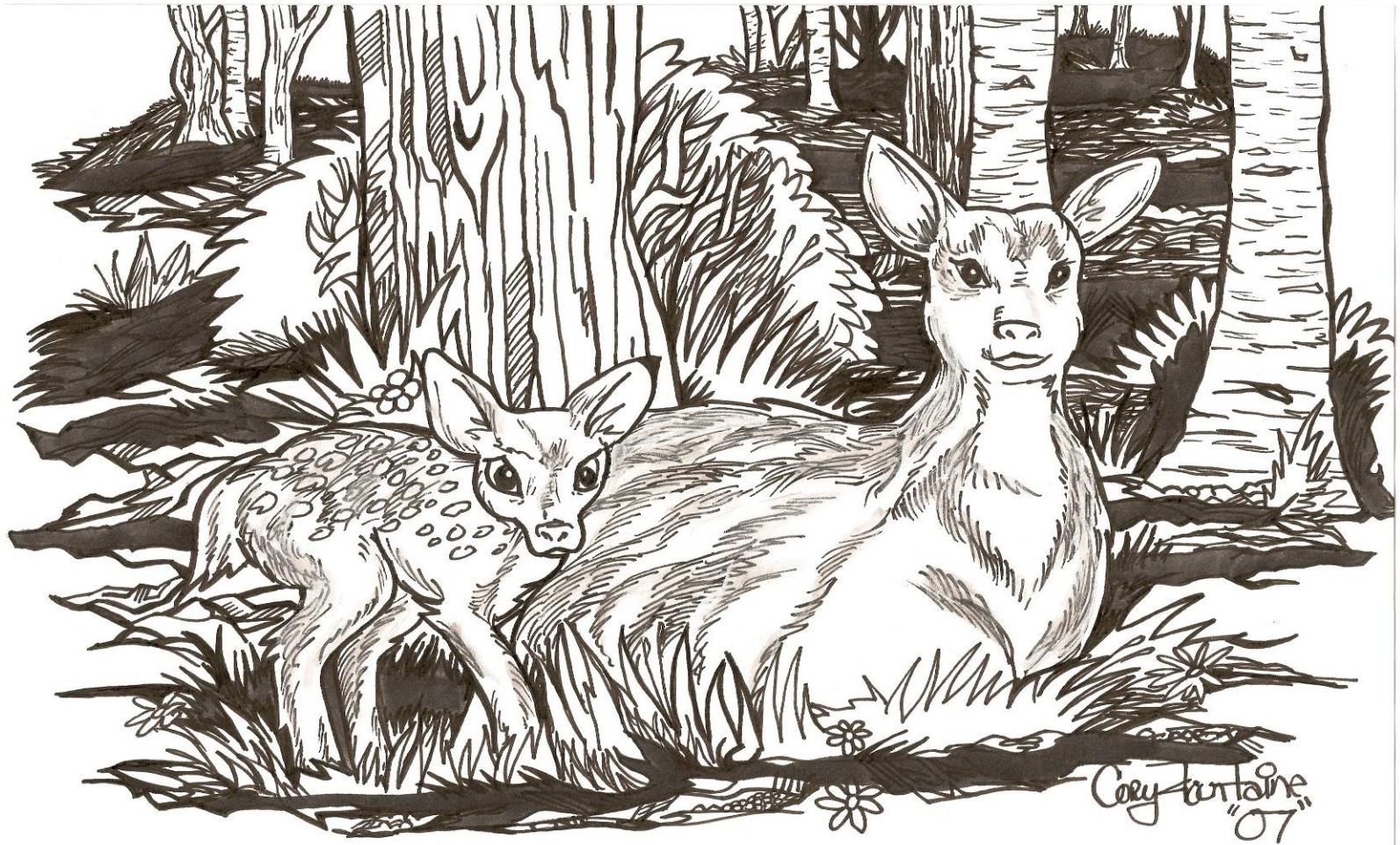
"Wica Yaka Pelo!" said Wakan Tanka. "You have spoken truly; you are right. Have your little one come here and I will help her."



Then Wakan Tanka made paint from the earth and the plants. He painted spots upon the fawn's body so that, when she lay still, her color blended in with the earth and she could not be seen. Then Wakan Tanka breathed upon her, taking away her scent.

"Now," Wakan Tanka said, "your little ones will always be safe if they only remain still when they are away from your side.

None of your enemies will see your little ones or be able to catch their scent."



So it has been from that day on. When a young deer is too small and weak to run swiftly, it is covered with spots that blend in with the earth. It has no scent and it remains very still and close to the earth when its mother is not by its side.

And when it has grown enough to have the speed Wakan Tanka gave its people, then it loses those spots it once needed to survive.