



ROADKILL

IT'S WHAT'S
FOR DINNER

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH DECKER

I killed a buck on Halloween night two years ago. It was late, almost midnight and I was driving home from a night of watching movies and eating pizza. I'm a notoriously slow driver, so I wasn't going very fast as I approached a curve on Cloverdale Road south of Eugene.

I never saw the buck before I hit him. I never hit the brakes. He leapt out of a ditch and in front of my Jeep Patriot, and all hell broke loose.

I sat there stunned, as the smoke from the airbags and my smashed engine cleared, before getting out to assess the damage.

The buck was dead. So was my Jeep.

Oil was pooling under the car and trickling toward the muddy ditch where the buck lay sprawled. I called my friend Leslie to come pick me up, then my insurance company and a tow truck.

Leslie looked at the mess and declared me an honorary Republican for a day. I'd killed a deer, caused an oil spill and potentially contaminated a waterway (all of which I pointed

out to the nice deputy sheriff who pulled over to ensure no one smashed into us as we waited for a tow).

The next day I got three main questions: "Are you OK?" Followed by: "I'm sure you must feel terrible that you killed that deer," from my Eugene friends. And: "Did you take him home to butcher and eat him?" from the rural Lane County crowd.

In answer to the first, I was sore and whiplashed and wound up with a couple months of chiropractic. Did I feel bad? A little. I'm an animal lover, but there's no way I could have avoided hitting him. As for eating the deer, I'm a vegetarian and that precludes me from wanting to eat Bambi, let alone a Bambi soaked in oil and ditch water.

Also, it's not legal to eat roadkill in Oregon.

Or at least it hasn't been. But as of Jan. 1, it will be legal to butcher and eat your roadkill deer in the Beaver State, and that's good to know, because you might have noticed that there's an awful lot of them careening into the roads right about now.

Before you whip out a knife and start skinning your buck, there are some details you need to be filled in on.