

just one damn thing after another

for Susanna, Playa del Este March 2010

Laughed at everyone today, couldn't stop. Sometimes they laughed back. But I couldn't tell them why I was laughing, except to point to their feet, their tusks, their shoes. All too simple to explain, like showing a little one how to step in the snow so it doesn't get on top of the mesh of her shoes. One *two* three four *one* two three four *one* two *three four*, obviously. And when you teach a little one how to get dressed, and they trumpet in frustration. I can remember from when I was little. You put the shoes on, all four feet, one two three four tighten one two one two three four tighten, with the heels really tight so the snow mesh sticks out firmly, and then you work them into the legs of your suit wiggling them down with that pattern of pushes we all learned as calves. Three four one two three one two four one two. Remember when we were a little older and our tusks would catch the front legs; I still can't figure exactly how I've learned to time it so this doesn't happen. And some days it is colder so you do it all again with another suit, and when you're not a calf, with bigger shoes if the snow is softer. Sometimes you just stop and moan for a while, then start again. But that's life, everyone has always done it every morning and it couldn't be any other way; sets you up for the day and the cold, as they say.

I had slept so well, dreamed. Something about marching in snow so soft and warm it was like tears and you could sort of float, and move around without touching the ground. So the grey morning made me

want to fold my ears right up over my head again. But you've got to do it, so I stuck my legs out. One two three four into the suit, and there I was. But oops, that is not the way it is supposed to go; something was wrong. The shoes of course, so I groped around for them. My left hind foot found one under the bed, then the others. The foot was in the toe strap so I just pulled it with my trunk while I tusked the others into place, like anyone would. A warm drink now, before starting all over. So I set the microwave, had the drink, cleared my head and looked down. I had tightened all four without thinking, so I went to take them all off. A knock on the door, my friends from the trudging band, ready to make the path for the old and young. I was going to tell them my stupid mistake, suit first shoes forgotten, and then it hit me. So I just went out.

I chuckled all morning, tramping the path down, catching the unusual number of stray drifts from the north wind. The band stopped for the mid-morning wail, trunks up, imitating the wind. And I did join in, but a distracted happy wail, wondering how it had happened. It seemed so simple, and I still had my dream of snow you could drink and a sky that kissed you, not chased away by the concentration and the struggle. So simple, shoes last, if only I could say exactly how. That's when I began to laugh, spluttering out of my lips and blubbing out of my trunk. We went back to tramping, and it was all so easy, sort of fun.

Mid-day, after the meal, time to re-dress with the clocks and the bugles. No one ever wants to, but that is what you have to do when you're full grown with a job to do. It's getting the clocks and the bugles down the sleeves then round the laces and up the legs again

that takes half the afternoon and full concentration. I took off my shoes and put the clock on the right front and the bugles on the other three, then put the shoes on again. So simple, a knack of not doing. I went out before the others and bugled, so happily. Some smiled, some frowned, but I was getting my job done. All afternoon, and then home again.

Some laughed back, some scowled. Perhaps even a couple knew. I could sleep that night, just shake off the shoes then the suit and fall into bed. Perhaps the same dream. And nothing to fear the next morning. So simple, so funny.