At Craters of the Moon, I spent a long,
dry,
hot day in the desert,

searching for

footprints:

enough footprints to be a
trail, a
real trail,
a
path
home.

I didn't find them.

I did get home. The hard way. No
footprints.

Instead,

I broke my own trail,

literally pushing my legs through sagebrush,

carefully negotiating the deep fissures and ravines
of once-molten lava,
now, hard, broken, sharp, and jagged.

Scraped arm and legs.
Four-point contact.

I can't afford to fall.

I'm far off
the trail.

A broken leg
could,
over time,
be fatal.

I am hoping, but not knowing, that
I am going toward people and safety.

Here,

as the old maps say,

here there be dragons.

With all this focus on finding footsteps,
finding the trail,

finding any trail, an odd knowing came to me.

It floated in sideways.

It was

not about my hope of finding footsteps

in the rugged terrain of the butte

I was climbing. Although I surely wanted them.

The image, so clear in my mind, was about all of our plans,
especially mine.

Our fixed plans
create heavy boot prints.

We walk all over
the footsteps of the emerging future.

Obscuring them.

So fixed on our intent, we see only our projections,
only our planned footsteps,

not the riches

our world,
our ecosystem, are offering.

Not the footprints of the now-future.

Of course, we matter. Our footsteps belong.
Our trails, too.

But we are not the whole.

And, our world asks us,
asks me,

to walk with what is emerging,
joining all fellow travelers,

leaving soft and flexible footprints

on a trail that only comes into being,

as we move forward together,

open to all.

Here we can see

the footprints of the now-future.

—Mary Ann Allison, September 2026

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