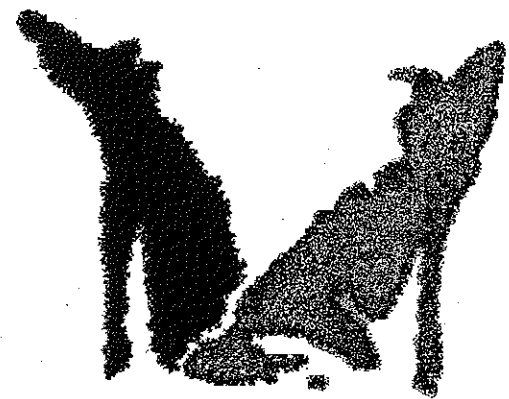


**One
Good Story,
That One**



Alright.
You know, I hear this story up north. Maybe Yellowknife, that one, somewhere. I hear it maybe a long time. Old story this one. One hundred years, maybe more. Maybe not so long either, this story.

So.

You know, they come to my place. Summer place, pretty good place, that one. Those ones, they come with Napiao, my friend. Cool. On the river. Indians call him Ka-sin-ta, that river, like if you did nothing but stand in one place all day and maybe longer. Ka-sin-ta also call Na-po. Napiao knows that one, my friend. Whiteman call him Saint Merry, but I don't know what that mean. Maybe like Ka-sin-ta. Maybe not.

Napiao comes with those three. Whiteman, those.

No Indianman.

No Chinaman.

No Frenchman.

Too bad, those.

Sometimes the wind come along say hello. Pretty fast, that

4 ~ Thomas King

one. Blow some things down on the river, that Ka-sin-ta. Sometimes he comes up too, pretty high. Moves things around, that Ka-sin-ta.

Three men come to my summer place, also my friend Napiao. Pretty loud talkers, those ones. One is big. I tell him maybe looks like Big Joe. Maybe not.

Anyway.

They come and Napiao, too. Bring greetings, how are you, many nice things they bring to says. Three.

All white.

Too bad, those.

Ho, my friend says, real nice day. Here is some tobacco.

All those smile. Good teeth.

Your friend Napiao, they says, that one says you tell a good story, you tell us your good story.

They says, those ones.

I tell Napiao, sit down, rest, eat something. Those three like to stand. Stand still. I think of Ka-sin-ta, as I told you. So I says to Napiao, Ka-sin-ta, in our language and he laugh. Those three laugh, too. Good teeth. Whiteman, white teeth.

I says to them, those ones stand pretty good. Napiao, my friend, says tell these a good story. Maybe not too long, he says. Those ones pretty young, go to sleep pretty quick. Anthropologist, you know. That one has a camera. Maybe.

Okay, I says, sit down.

These are good men, my friend says, those come a long ways from past Ta-pe-loo-za. Call him Blind Man Coulee, too. Ta-pe-loo-za means like a quiet place where the fish can rest, deep quiet place. Blind man maybe comes there later. To that place. Maybe fish.

Alright.

One Good Story, That One ~ 5

How about a story, that one says.

Sure, I says. Maybe about Jimmy runs the store near Two Bridges. His brother become dead and give Jimmy his car. But Jimmy never drives.

Napiao hold his hand up pretty soft. My friend says that good story, Jimmy and his car. These ones don't know Jimmy.

Okay, I says. Tell about Billy Frank and the dead-river pig. Funny story, that one, Billy Frank and the dead-river pig. Pretty big pig. Billy is real small, like Napiao, my friend. Hurt his back. Lost his truck.

Those ones like old stories, says my friend, maybe how the world was put together. Good Indian story like that, Napiao says. Those ones have tape recorders, he says.

Okay, I says.

Have some tea.

Stay awake.

Once upon a time.

Those stories start like that, pretty much, those ones, start on time. Anyway. There was nothing. Pretty hard to believe that, maybe.

You fellows keep listening, I says. Watch the floor. Be careful.

No water, no land, no stars, no moon. None of those things. Must have a sun someplace. Maybe not. Can't say. No Indians are there once upon a time. Lots of air. Only one person walk around. Call him god.

So.

They look around, and there is nothing. No grass. No fish. No trees. No mountains. No Indians, like I says. No whiteman, either. Those come later, maybe one hundred years. Maybe not. That one god walk around, but pretty soon they

6 ~ Thomas King

get tired. Maybe that one says, we will get some stars. So he does. And then he says, maybe we should get a moon. So, they get one of them, too.

Someone write all this down, I don't know. Lots of things left to get.

Me-a-loo, call her deer.

Pa-pe-po, call her elk.

Tsling-ta, call her Blue-flower-berry.

Ga-ling, call her moon.

So-see-ka, call her flint.

A-ma-po, call her dog.

Ba-ko-zao, call her grocery store.

Pe-to-pa-zasling, call her television.

Pretty long list of things to get, that. Too many, maybe those ones say, how many more that one needs for world. So. Pretty soon that one can fix up real nice place. Not too hot. Not too cold. Like here, we sit here. My summer place is like that one.

I call my summer place O-say-ta-he-to-peo-teh. Means cool sleeping place. Other place, they call her Evening's garden. Good time to fish, that. Evening. Cool, not so hot. That Evening's garden like here.

Two human beings that one puts there. Call the man Ah-damn. Call the woman, Evening. Same as garden.

Okay.

She looks around her garden. Pretty nice place, that one. Good tree. Good deer. Good rock. Good water. Good sky. Good wind. No grocery store, no television.

Ah-damn and Evening real happy, those ones. No clothes, those, you know. Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha. But they pretty dumb, then. New, you know.

One Good Story, That One ~ 7

Have some tea.

Stay awake.

Good part is soon here.

That woman, Evening, she is curious, nosy, that one. She walk around the garden and she look everywhere. Look under rock. Look in grass. Look in sky. Look in water. Look in tree.

So.

She find that tree, big one. Not like now, that tree. This one have lots of good things to eat. Have potato. Have pumpkin. Have corn. Have berries, all kind. Too many to say now.

This good tree also have some mee-so. Whiteman call them apples. This first woman look at the tree with the good things and she gets hungry. Make a meal in her head.

Leave that mee-so alone. Someone says that. Leave that mee-so alone. Leave that tree alone. The voice says that. Go away someplace else to eat!

That one, god. Hello, he's back.

Hey, says Evening, this is my garden.

You watch out, says that one, pretty loud voice. Sort of shout. Bad temper, that one. Maybe like Harley James. Bad temper, that one. Always shouting. Always with pulled-down mean look. Sometimes Harley come to town, drives his truck to town. Gets drunk. Drives back to that house. That one goes to town, get drunk, come home, that one, beat his wife. His wife leave. Goes back up north. Pretty mean one, that one. You boys know Harley James? Nobody there to beat up, now. Likes to shout, that one. Maybe you want to hear about Billy Frank and the dead-river pig?

Boy, my friend says, I can taste those mee-so. These boys pretty excited about those mee-so, I think.

Okay, I says.

Keep your eyes open, look around.

Evening, that one says, look pretty good, these. So she eat one, that mee-so. Boy, not bad, real juicy, that one. She is generous, Evening, good woman, that one. Brings mee-so to Ah-damn. I think he is busy then, writing things down. All the animals' names he writes somewhere, I don't know. Pretty boring that.

Deer come by, says Me-a-loo.

Elk come by, says Pa-pe-o.

Blue-flower-berry come by, says Tsling-ta.

Ah-damn not so smart like Evening, that one thinks Blue-flower-berry is animal, maybe.

Dog come by, says A-ma-po.

Raven come by, says Ne-co-tah.

Coyote come by, says Klee-qua.

Snail come by, says E-too.

Squirrel come by, says Qay-tha.

Owl come by, says Ba-tee-po-tah.

Weasel come by, says So-tha-nee-so.

Rabbit come by, says Klaaa-coo.

Flint come by, says So-see-ka.

Fish come by, says Laa-po.

Crayfish come by, says Tling.

Beaver come by, says Khan-yah-da.

Boy, all worn out. All those animals come by. Coyote come by maybe four, maybe eight times. Gets dressed up, fool around.

Says Piisto-pa.

Says Ho-ta-go.

Says Woho-i-kee.

Says Caw-ho-ha.

Ha, ha, ha, ha.

Tricky one, that coyote. Walks in circles. Sneaky.

That Ah-damn not so smart. Like Harley James, whiteman, those. Evening, she be Indian woman, I guess.

Evening come back. Hey, she says, what are all these coyote tracks come around in a circle. Not so smart, Ah-damn, pretty hungry though. Here, says Evening, mee-so, real juicy. So they do. Ah-damn, that one eat three mee-so. Ah-damn, says Evening, I better get some more mee-so.

Pretty soon that one, god, come by. He is pretty mad. You ate my mee-so, he says.

Don't be upset, says Evening, that one, first woman. Many more mee-so back there. Calm down, watch some television, she says.

But they are upset and that one says that Evening and Ah-damn better leave that good place, garden, Evening's garden, go somewhere else. Just like Indian today.

Evening says, okay, many good places around here. Ah-damn, that one wants to stay. But that fellow, god, whiteman I think, he says, you go too, you ate those mee-so, my mee-so.

Ah-damn is unhappy. He cry three times, ho, ho, ho. I only ate one, he says.

No, says that god fellow. I see everything. I see you eat three of my mee-so.

I only ate two, says Ah-damn but pretty quick that one throw him out.

Ha!

Throw him out on his back, right on those rocks. Ouch, ouch, ouch, that one says. Evening, she have to come back and fix him up before he is any good again. Alright.

There is also a Ju-poo-pea, whiteman call him snake. Don't

10 ~ Thomas King

know what kind. Big white one maybe, I hear, maybe black, something else. I forgot this part. He lives in tree with mee-so. That one try to get friendly with Evening so she stick a mee-so in his mouth, that one. Crawl back into tree. Have trouble talking, hissss, hissss, hissss, hissss. Maybe he is still there. Like that dead-river pig and Billy Frank lose his truck.

So.

Evening and Ah-damn leave. Everybody else leave, too. That tree leave, too. Just god and Ju-poo-pea together.

Ah-damn and Evening come out here. Have a bunch of kids.

So.

That's all. It is ended.

Boy, my friend says, better get some more tea. One good story, that one, my friend, Napiao says.

Those men push their tape recorders, fix their cameras. All of those ones smile. Nod their head around. Look out window. Shake my hand. Make happy noises. Say goodbyes, see you later. Leave pretty quick.

We watch them go. My friend, Napiao, put the pot on for some tea. I clean up all the coyote tracks on the floor.

Totem

