

COYOTE MAGIC

And Other
Enchantments



dave boles

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First printing August, 2021.

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Cover art: Coyote Speaks, by *Bodhi*

Back Cover Photograph of Author: *Alex Monroe*

Author Bio Photo: *Mrs America*

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ISBN: 978-1-7360812-7-3

Library Of Congress Control Number: 2021944773

A Lake House Publication

Cold River Press
15098 Lime Kiln Road
Grass Valley, CA 95949
www.coldriverpress.com

*For the grandchildren;
when all around you tell you
that magic is gone,
listen for coyote's howl
it will help you find your way.*

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dave boles

did you dance with the creator
while arranging words before you

watching life soar
upon the back of time
ascending to the light

there is a horizon
calling you

free your mind

dive right in

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coyote stopped by
for some mushroom tea

an excellent idea
for a mid-day repast

we poured the water carefully
letting the tea steep just right

we laughed the day away
with fanciful stories

amidst music
from the trees

COYOTE'S MAGIC

- I -

the great white egret that lives in the digger pine
greeted me as i sat drinking my morning coffee

"coyote sent me with an urgent message"

the egret practically shouted this at me
so much so that for a moment i nearly spilled my coffee

*"you are to join him by the waterfall at the river creek,
he says not to waste any time"*

with this, the large bird gracefully ascended to the heavens
swooping down on me to see if i was headed out

"tell coyote i will leave when my coffee is finished," i shouted to him

"tell him yourself," he replied indignantly
and soared off to the distant horizon

knowing the egret was always polite, as egrets are known to be
i took his message to heart and quickly finishing my cup,
i headed to the waterfall

coyote was lying near a small pool, lapping the clear water

"it is good to see you did not waste any time"

coyote had a more devilish grin than usual, which said a lot,
coupled with the forceful message from the egret
i knew something more than a morning meeting was taking place

“have you any plans for the next few days,” the trickster inquired,
“are you well enough for a journey”

“i will need time to pack,” i told him,
“i will need provisions”

the curious smile my coyote friend wore was adorned this time
with an air of urgency

“there is no time for that,” he replied,
“everything has been taken care of”

with that he darted off, his bushy tail swinging widely
creating a nice path in the tall grass

he stopped for a moment, turning to urge me on
and with that he darted off again

we proceeded in this manner for many miles
grass gave way to dirt, then to rocks

soon we were on top of the mountain
that overlooks our lake

coyote finally slowed a bit, allowing me to catch up
before he quickly jumped into a cave

“come on,” he cried out, *“they are waiting”*

the cave was dark, in fact it was pitch black only a few feet in,
but at the end of what seemed a long tunnel

there was a glimmer of light

coyote sped towards the light, his feet
lightly skipping across the ground

i had never visited this cave before,
much less knew of its existence

i stumbled along as best i could and found myself in a large room
brightly lit with fireflies and a strange, glowing algae

coyote sat with a submissive posture

three outlines were silhouetted against the far wall

*“allow me to introduce grandfather coyote,
grandfather bear and great-grandmother turtle”*

coyote rose and told me he would return
with mushrooms and greens

he was gone in an instance

~ II ~

coyote’s leaving brought to mind the true essence
of his trickster nature

a fine mist developed in the cave

the three silhouettes began emerging from the wall
their forms taking shape as the mist cleared

*“we asked coyote to bring you here so we might
better understand the man who speaks our language”*

they spoke this to me in unison
as their forms became solid

before me was a great bear,
a grey-haired coyote,
and a massive, aged turtle

*“we are known as ‘the ancients’,
there are many stories told of us”*

i remembered back to my youth when i would sit
at the fire, listening to stories my own ancestors told

stories of a time when animals could talk
and humans could listen

stories of a magical time when all life talked
to other lives, both visible and not

i called out to the turtle, *“i know the earth is upon your back”*

“you are partly correct,” she replied

*“the world rests upon the backs of four strong elephants
whom i in turn support”*

*“some people know me as Kurma, others Akupāra,
i am the one Nanapush sent to the bottom of the ocean
so that i would grow until i could
hold up the world”*

she brought her immense head fully out of her shell
to examine me

as she did the great bear spoke:

*“i am the one the creator sent to see
how far great-grandmother turtle had grown
and to protect her as she grew”*

the old, wise turtle silently nodded her agreement

*“i too, went to find the ends of great-grandmother turtle,”
the old, grey coyote spoke*

“i went further than the great-bear could travel”

he spoke in barely a whisper

*“when i reached the end of our great land i could only
howl back to bear what i had found”*

with this the old coyote let out a tremendous howl
reverberating throughout the cave with ferocious intensity

“it has been this way for coyote’s ever since,” he whispered

“we howl to let all know we are still monitoring our land”

i found myself sitting in a lotus position in front of the three
though i had no recollection of sitting before them

*“as i said, there was a time,” great-grandmother turtle continued,
“when men could talk to animals, and animals to men*

*“there was great magic in the land and we lived in
harmony with one another, taking only what was needed
to survive as the creator intended us to do”*

the aged turtle rested for a moment, gathering her breath

as she composed herself i took the moment to ask
why they had summoned me

“you are the beginning,” the great bear answered

“of a new time in men,” finished the grey coyote

great-grandmother turtle, having rested enough,
continued with her story

*“many ages ago men fought with each other
killing each other to gain more land,
more power for their tribes”*

*“they violated the rule of all living things
by taking more than they needed
to survive”*

the great turtle rested again as the bear continued,

*“the creator removed the ability for men to speak
with animals, and animals with men”*

the old coyote whispered,

*“animals continued
to honor the ancient ways*

*of spilling blood
only to survive,
only to provide nourishment”*

there was a far off sound that grew closer and closer

it was my friend, coyote, returning
with mushrooms and greens

“i see you have met the ancestors,” he joyfully shouted

he sat next to me, smiling and winking as he did so

“is it time,” he asked the ancestors

in unison they nodded their response as great-grandmother
turtle affirmed that it was

“we have told him enough for now,”

she spoke directly at coyote

“you may begin”

~ III ~

the cave suddenly grew dark

fireflies had stopped glowing
as had the algae

the three forms had gone back to being
silhouette's against the wall

a soft silence enveloped me

coyote pushed a mixture of fresh greens,
assorted mushrooms, and a handful
of peyote blooms, towards me

they were all gathered together on a large leaf,
mostly dry with just a tiny hint of water
mixed in for good measure

"you need to eat a bit more," coyote offered

"but, i have not eaten any at all," i responded

coyote chuckled and swished his bushy tail
pushing the leaf forward, *"as you wish, my friend,"*

i was famished, not having time to pack for our journey

it suddenly hit me that i had not eaten in a while

the greens were quite fine, and the dried mushrooms
added an excellent texture to the meal

the peyote blooms, while not what i would call tasty,
added outstanding color to the entire mixture

"where did the ancients go," i asked my trickster friend
"have they had anything to eat as well"

coyote let out a laugh which ended with a light howl

*"the ancients are fine, they send their regards and to tell you
they will return in a while to clarify"*

i thought, what was there to clarify
it all seemed pretty straight forward

"i am glad to see you are doing well, considering"

a sly smile returned to his lips as he enunciated
considering

"i must admit," i told my coyote friend
*"it was a bit strange having an enormous turtle
watching my every move"*

"she can be a bit unnerving at first," coyote offered
*"but you will soon get used to her.
she does not see as well as she once did"*

with that thought i watched fireflies light again
and the strange algae resuming its faint glow

a fine mist once again formed on the floor of the cave
as coyote offered me some water

"drink up, you look parched"

i did indeed feel parched and readily accepted the water
downing it in great gulps, feeling the water coursing
through my body, igniting an intense awareness within me

once more the silhouettes took on a solid form as
great-grandmother turtle began to speak

*“do you remember what we told you,” she asked,
“about animals talking to men and men listening”*

i nodded my head in affirmation

*“animals still talk with men,” the great bear offered,
“but only a rare few men can understand animals”*

*“it has been this way since the creator chose to
separate us,” grandfather coyote whispered*

*“none of us agreed with the creator,” the aged turtle continued,
“but who are we to argue with the creator”*

*“i still do not understand why the creator separated
men and animals from understanding each other,” i stated*

it felt as if i asked my question from a thousand miles away

*“animals followed the rule of no spill blood,” grandfather bear replied,
“only if it was needed for survival. man, on the other hand
would not follow the rule, killing others for no reason
other than to kill”*

*“surely,” i blurted out “you must know that in order to gain
power, you sometimes have to conquer your neighbors land”*

great-grandmother turtle stretched her neck out once more
and eyed me for a long while

*“you don’t believe this,” she scoffed,
“you are merely repeating what your ancestors taught you”*

a cleansing light filled me as i realized the great turtle
was right, i really did not believe what i said

i was mouthing the words i had been taught to say

the old, grey coyote came up to me and took a long sniff

“you’re right, there is promise here,” he replied to the others

“this human instinctively knows it is wrong to kill for power”

the three ancients talked softly with one another while
my coyote friend lept about in glee

*“didn’t i tell you,” he offered them,
“this one has promise”*

the great bear turned from his friends and looked directly at me

“perhaps,” he said, as he lifted his enormous paw above my head

there was absolute silence in the cave

i was still in a lotus position and smiled at the bear asking

“are you going to strike me, kill me”

*“he has no fear,” the old coyote spoke
“i do not smell any fear from him, at all”*

the great bear lowered his paw and leaned in close

“no, i do not smell fear either,” he confirmed

great-grandmother turtle spoke; *“then let us proceed”*

there was a sensation of falling, of dropping
deep into the earth

tens of thousands of fireflies exploded around me
 turning into stars, then distant galaxies
 as i fell deeper into the earth

after falling for what seemed forever,
 yet in an instant all the same,
 i found myself not looking at a cave
 but of all the universe

i could see the earth upon the backs of
 four elephants
 that stood upon
 great-grandmother turtle

i saw grandfather bear roaming the turtles back

i heard grandfather coyote's joyous calls
 from the edge of her immense shell

lights in the galaxies around me flashed with
 dizzying brilliance and captivating colors
 speaking to me in hundreds of languages

i could hear their message, but there was no sound
 their colors passing through me, leaving me with
 a keen awareness of communication

yet not a sound had been made

as i traveled past the sun it, in turn,
 yielded to an uncountable number of suns
 all surrounded by planets

the image of this extended in my mind
 forever

again i heard a message
 yet still, there was not a sound

the very fiber of my existence
 my soul
 felt in harmony
 with all i could see

as i looked back upon our planet
 great-grandmother turtle and her elephants,
 grandfather bear, grandfather coyote,
 the planet itself became one

"earth mother"

i felt the presence
 deep within me

"i am earth mother"

- IV -

a celestial voice resonated
 within the essence of my being

it was neither male nor female,
 but a mixture of both

i sensed a presence not only around me
 but surrounding the very core of what i called *"me"*

the voice opened a glorious sunrise offering me a ray of light
 in which to ride upon back to the cave

coyote was waiting at the cave entrance
eagerly greeting me

"i see you made it through just fine," he exuberantly cried out,
"the ancients are waiting"

he nudged me forward and we both entered the cave
though i noticed it was much brighter than before

"did you see earth mother," he eagerly asked,
"did she speak to you"

coyote could barely contain his excitement

we moved quickly through the cave

the ancients were waiting for me
though this time they were not apparitions
or shadows on the wall

this time, they found form

i was greeted by them with enthusiastic shouts of joy

even grandfather coyote looked
more lively and less grey

grandfather bear motioned for me to sit before them
as i did so, coyote sat next to me

"you have traveled far," great grandmother turtle stated,
"did you learn anything from your journey"

i told her i did, indeed, learn many things

"there is much to tell you," she continued
"so much to understand"

coyote offered me a small biscuit, and some water

"when earth mother spoke to you, what did she say,"
grandfather coyote inquired

"was the voice you heard that of a woman,"
grandfather bear asked,
"or was it a man's voice you heard"

the cave took on another appearance

i believed we were far underground but there were roots
large, tangled roots, all around us

when i spoke it was as if light coursed through my body
exiting my mouth with every sound i made

the large roots danced before me
rhythmically moving to the sound i made

coyote was no longer next to me
though i remained sitting in a lotus position
in front of the ancients

"we are earth mother," i stated

*"all of us, here and now, past and present
are earth mother"*

"that is correct," the aged turtle nodded with agreement

i could feel light coursing through me as i spoke

*“it does not matter if we are man, or woman,
human or beast, we are all earth mother”*

*“you have learned much,” the great bear roared,
“few come to this understanding”*

“did earth mother leave you with,” the old turtle began

“any other thoughts,” questioned grandfather coyote

i thought back to gliding back to the planet
on a sunbeam as sublime as any celestial god

instinctively i understood, with the core of my being,
there was more

a large root reached out to me

brilliant colors swirled before me

the dirt i sat upon felt fertile, rich

*“there have been countless generations of life
throughout the universe
living long, rich lives, before time began”*

“go on,” great grandmother turtle replied

*“all cultures, all races, all animals, plants,
men, women, minerals, dirt, sunrises, sunsets, the wind,
the rain, snow, heat, we are all earth mother, we are all one”*

grandfather coyote spoke to me,
*“i am known as a coyote, but in other lives
i was known as a jackal, or Anubis,
or even Wepwawet, the ancient Opener of the Ways”*

*“many civilizations from many planets have
come to this planet over the millennia,” said grandfather bear*

“all are interconnected,” i replied

*“that is correct,” the great bear shook his massive head
as he showed his agreement*

great grandmother turtle’s eyes appeared to water,
*“animals have retained this knowledge,
but it was forgotten by humans”*

she continued, *“it was forgotten because the creator
removed it from their being, from their soul”*

*“but why would the creator do such a thing,” i asked
“what would be the purpose”*

*“only the creator would know that,” grandfather coyote answered
“we do not question the creators’ wisdom”*

the light i felt coursing through me as i spoke
grew dimmer with each word

eventually, i spoke with an understanding that did not need
such illumination, as it occurred on a cellular level

i intuitively knew what was true, what was not

a fine mist began forming once again

the tangled roots before me faded away

the once fertile, rich ground beneath me
was now a simple chair

i found myself sitting in front of three oak stumps
that were burning, smoldering,
the smoke from them enveloping me

“are you alright,” a familiar voice called out,

it was coyote’s distinctive tone

“are you okay, my friend,”

he cautiously asked,

“i have looked everywhere for you”

i looked down at my feet at a large
clump of greens, mixed with mushrooms

“what’s this,” coyote cried out upon following my gaze

*“have you been eating salvia, sage of the diviners,
with mushrooms as well,”* he started to chuckle

“and are those peyote buttons from my private garden”

his chuckle now turned into full-on laughter as he rolled
on the ground, his great bushy tail flipping to and fro,
laughing so hard he could hardly breathe

*“it would appear you have had a most excellent journey,
my friend, tell me, what did you see”*

as i began to recount the tale all i could speak were two words

“earth mother”

“ahhh,” coyote smiled, *“you have had a
most excellent journey, indeed,
tell me, why does your kind make war”*

as soon as his question was asked
i immediately answered,

“because we do not understand”

coyote sat staring at me for quite some time
sizing me up as the oak stumps continued to smolder

*“you do realize, that i consider your raiding of my garden
a serious offense, those herbs are potent magic and not to be taken lightly.
next time, please ask first, i will gladly oblige”*

with that he turned and started to walk away

“wait,” i shouted out, *“egret said you wanted to see me”*

“that was three days ago,” he replied, *“i was merely going to ask if
you would like to accompany me on a journey.”*

BEFORE THE POLITICAL DISCUSSION

trickster coyote appeared on my dock offering
a fine wine and a sharp piece of cheddar

presenting a tidy slice of the cheese, he motioned me
to fill a cup and join him in his repast

“what brings you to my dock” i inquired

i took his offering and found it delightful

an exquisite flavor flooded my mouth
for a moment, i was completely absorbed
with its savor

“i came to check on the swan” he replied

*“it has been a while since i’ve visited here
i thought a light meal might serve well
to instruct us further”*

the swan had lost his mate the previous year,
some believing it a sign that significant change
was upon us

i took a more pragmatic approach, believing
the swan had lost his mate to a local lioness
feeding her starving children, filling their bellies
with the forbidden delicacy

“i am aware of your position on this” the
trickster slyly stated

“there are those here that believe bad fortune is upon them”

his tail quickly became a mesmerizing
metronome that i knew if i were to watch it
would hypnotize me...it was not my first
meal with his trickster self

“let others believe what they may,” i told him,
“i hold my own counsel”

he lifted his cup and saluted me

“spoken like a true independent,” he joyously decried

*“now tell me, my friend
what are your thoughts
on the new political regime?”*

we have all been here before

listening to coyote singing

songs to the gods

in the dead of the night

BLIND COYOTE DANCING

i was on my deck
one exquisitely fine
summer day

sitting in the shade
of a weathered umbrella

with a container of smoked trout

crackers that were
salted just right

and an ancient
silver fork

were my companions

from my perch on the raised deck
i could see out over the meadow
into the forest below

a markedly plump
piece of trout landed on
the perfectly formed cracker
i had selected

"delicious," i cried out
as i savored the delicate taste

"it smells divine," a familiar voice replied

though i could see
far into the forest
coyote had
somehow
arrived on my deck

he managed to astound me
yet again, with his stealth

“might you have enough to share,”
the wily coyote asked

“and perhaps some for my cousin, as well”

a beautiful coyote emerged
from behind my trickster friend

its silver-tipped tail
gleaming in the midday sun

“of course,” i replied
“always enough for guests”

it did not take us long
to devour the smoked trout

we sat under the shade
of the weathered umbrella
consuming large canning jars
of sweet tea

*“my cousin has paid me a visit
for the blood moon festival”*

coyote was nearly bursting with pride

“he is a dancer,” my friend continued
*“one from a long line
of dancers”*

with this coyote’s cousin silently
stared ahead

“do not take offense if he does not look at you,”
coyote told me, *“he is quite blind, you see”*

both coyotes erupted
into squeals of laughter

“do you get it,” my trickster friend asked

“he’s blind, you see”

they both resumed their delight
at his wordplay

coyote’s cousin eventually stopped laughing
resuming his far off gaze

naturally, i was curious about this
as i had never encountered
a blind coyote

“has your cousin been blind since birth,” i asked

“you can ask him directly,” coyote replied
“i told you he was blind, not deaf”

embarrassed, i apologized to his cousin
offering to, perhaps, set out more smoked trout

brushing aside my embarrassment
with a flip of their great tails
both coyotes sat smiling at me

*“you were right, cousin, your friend
is quite amusing”*

“i told you he was,” my coyote friend replied

he slyly gave me a wink, *“he means well”*

it became very hot under the umbrella,
as if the shade had turned into the sun itself

“i meant no offense,” i offered

“we know,” they replied in unison

“humans are a strange creature,” the blind coyote continued

*“they have great difficulty with anything they deem
different”*

i attempted to clear my throat,
a nervous habit coyote has noted, many times

“no need to be defensive,” his cousin stated
*“we are aware of your deficiencies. humans have
a great fear of anything that
they perceive as different”*

the blind coyote proceeded to tell me
he was from a long line of blind coyotes

their function in society was to reenact
great events from the past
through interpretive dance

*“we are taught, from birth
the succinct moves
our ancestors taught their
ancestors*

it is how we keep the memories alive”

they invited me to join them
deep in the forest

to witness directly
their blood moon dance

when the time arose i found my way
to a great clearing where animals,
birds, all manner of living things
had gathered

everyone was an active participant

the rhythm, the sound, was extraordinary

coyote’s cousin began dancing
with movements
that set me reeling

i could clearly see
his story unfold

there was no need
for interpretation

as he danced, long into the early morning light
i sat with rapt attention
to the story, he wove

with the sun beginning to rise
the animals, birds, all manner
of living things
disappeared back into the forest

“that was astounding,” i shouted to the coyotes

“beautiful, simply breathtaking,” i enthusiastically added

the blind coyote walked up to me
staring straight into my eyes

*“perhaps now you might begin to understand
the absurdity of qualifying another
before you’ve encountered
their gift”*

both thanked me for my hospitality
telling me the trout
and the tea
were delicious

they moved off into the forest
one behind the other

instinctively i assumed
coyote was leading his cousin
until a sunbeam landed upon
a gleaming silver-tipped tail
leading the way

“you have much to learn,”
my trickster friend cried out

“but we have faith,”
they both whooped with glee

“we have faith”

COYOTE DEATH

the old egret died

i could see her body lying in
the digger pine where she had birthed
many children

i knew all life was transient
still, it was sad to see her go

coyote came to me
as i gazed at the tree

“what do you find so intriguing,” he inquired

i pointed to the limp body of the egret

“ah, yes,” he sighed
“all the birds are singing of her passing”

he gazed upwards with me and for a moment
there were no sounds

“i suppose i should find a way up there,” i offered

“what in the world for,” coyote asked
an annoying sense of irritation was in his voice

“to give her a proper burial, of course”

sometimes, i often wondered how a creature
as wise as coyote could be so dense

“you mean with a sermon, and all that”

“yes, exactly that,” i shot back

“ashes to ashes, dust to dust
and all the other blather?”

i could not believe the rudeness
my friend was displaying

“what is wrong with you!” i shouted,
“have you no compassion?”

coyote swished his tail several times
cocking his head upwards as he did so
i could see he was staring at the egret
sizing up the situation, if you will

“is this about friend egret’s passing
or your own fears of death”

coyote’s words took me by surprise,
it took a few moments to gain composure

“are you suggesting,” i slowly asked
“that i have fears of death because
the egret has died?”

“ridiculous,” i told him
“utter nonsense”

coyote hopped onto a large boulder,
looking straight at me

*“i have noticed that you turn to religion,
to rituals, when one of the animals pass on”*

“what of it,” i blurted out

*“everything passes, everything dies
your religious beliefs cannot change that,”*
he moved even closer, until his nose
was next to mine

*“do you truly believe that performing
your death rituals, giving friend egret’s soul
to the care of your lord, being bathed
in the divine fire of your religion
will set her spirit free”*

once again, coyote had confronted a most
basic tenet of my upbringing

and once more, he challenged me to think
independent from what i had been taught

*“her spirit,” he continued,
“was always free, it was never captive”*

*“all creatures under earth mothers
watchful eye, are the same”*

he paused for a moment before continuing

*“there is no need for divine salvation
for they are never denied salvation to begin with”*

his gaze returned to the digger pine
and the limp body of the egret

*“she was free the moment she was born,
she remains free now”*

*“but what of her body,” i protested
“surely we cannot just leave her there”*

“why not,” the sly trickster replied

*“the vultures will feed on her
as will the insects feed on her
just as she fed on nature
to sustain her and her chicks”*

*“in time,” he sighed, “she will eventually
be removed from our memory”*

the simple eloquence of this explanation
brought with it a great warmth

i felt a tremendous solace
that i had never felt before

my views of death
were forever changed that day

over the years i found myself looking
up at the digger pine
less and less

though i still recall the lessons i learned
smiling greatly, whenever i see an egret.

COYOTE MEDICINE

coyote had an intriguing saying;

“never underestimate the healing power of hatred”

we would often spend countless hours
debating the veracity
of his claim

i have always maintained that an open mind
an honest heart
would never steer you wrong
but i must admit to encountering
forces of evil
that surpassed these noble intents

coyote lived a simple
and equally honest
life

though he killed for sustenance
he never killed for pleasure
taking only that which he needed
nothing more

so it came as a surprise to hear
his statement

one day, quite by accident,
i was attacked by a wild boar
his oversized canine’s digging deep
into my flesh

leaving large, gaping wounds

i managed to avert further attacks
and the beast eventually moved on

i stumbled home best i could

infection set into the wounds
and i developed a raging fever

coyote appeared at my bedside
inquiring if i held any hatred towards the boar

“of course i hate the bastard,” i roared
“look what he’s done”

*“you are delirious with fever
focus on your hatred
let it’s light burn bright
into your soul”*

coyote chanted this several times
until I drifted off
applying a poultice of salt water and herbs
to draw the infection out

when i woke, we would begin again
until the fever was gone

several days of this made harmless
the boars’ tremendous damage

weakened, i thanked coyote for his help
 asking his forgiveness
 for lashing out at him

*“the boar did not attack you out of
 a personal vendetta”* my wily friend stated,
*“nor a political vendetta, either. he felt threatened by you.
 his family was close by, unseen, but close by.
 he was protecting them”*

*“but you encouraged my hatred,
 you told me to focus on it,”* i replied

*“indeed i did. never underestimate
 the healing power of hatred,”* he joyfully stated

“and never forget the incredible lightness of forgiveness,”
 he continued, *“for they are both, in equal measure,
 what keeps us all alive.”*

COYOTE MUD

i happened upon coyote
 one excellent spring morning

the runoffs from the winter's snow
 had descended to our valley
 leaving our meadows drenched
 with a fine layer of mud

coyote was in the middle
 of such a meadow,
 to be precise he was in the middle
 of a glorious mud hole

his usually bushy and vibrant tail
 was now a thin wand of mud
 that he joyfully swung back and forth
 tossing large clumps of mud
 across the meadow

“what on earth are you doing,” i exclaimed

coyote did not stop
 not even for a moment

his entire body was encased in the mud

he rather looked like a large, wet rat

“hello,” i called out again

“hello,” coyote called in return
“it is a fine day, is it not”

he stood for a moment
giving a great shake that dispersed
a large quantity of mud
in my general direction

"have you gone mad," i shouted at him
dodging as many mud chunks as i could

"look at you, you are filthy"

my admonishments fell upon deaf ears

"this is a glorious mud hole indeed,"
my friend cried out

i had seldom seen the trickster
so filled with joy

though he was covered from nose to tail
in a great slathering of muck
his smile still shone through
declaring his great joy

"what, on earth, are you doing," i asked again

*"i am paying homage to Napioa,
the great Blackfoot Indian diety,"* he paused to look at me
"perhaps you might know him as 'the old man', or Napi"

i had not heard of this Napi, or 'old man'
though once again, coyote had gained my interest

"no," i told my filthy friend
"i do not believe i have encountered that name"

"we really need to work on your education," he proclaimed

*"Napioa created the earth from a turtles mouth
that he found while floating upon a great river"*

"so that is who created the earth," i asked in bewilderment

*"in this story he did, though there are many, many
stories as to how the earth was created"*

coyote stopped for a moment to watch a butterfly
attempting to land on his nose

*"he not only created the earth using the mud he found,
but he also created men and women and everything else
that is upon the earth"*

the butterfly never landed,
i assumed because there was entirely
too much muck and mud

butterflies are careful that way

*"so what does this have to do with why you are
rolling about in the muck"*

coyote was making little sense

*"i told you, i am paying homage to Napioa,
have you gone deaf"*

finding myself in the middle of a magnificent
though albeit, somewhat marshy meadow,
i realized coyote was immersed in a spiritual ritual

“i should go now, and leave you with your...”

“ritual,” my friend continued for me

“yes,” i stated
“your ritual”

*“there are indeed many myths, many legends
surrounding the creation of the earth, the creation
of men, women and all the animals,
most of them have been forgotten to time*

*those that survived are kept alive through these
‘rituals’ as you so indelicately call them”*

“i did not mean to offend,” i offered in defense

*“of course you didn’t mean to offend,
you are not educated enough to offend”*

with anyone else, i would have taken umbrage at this
coyote, however, was different

i had known him long enough to know he was about
to teach me a lesson i would not soon forget

*“every year there is a great runoff from the
melting snow high up on the mountains”*

“yes,” i nodded my agreement

*“in essence, the increased water flow
‘floods’ the lower lands,”* he circled his paws for emphasis

*“leaving not only massive water
but mud when that water recedes”*

it was true, each year the meadows flooded
and then, as the water receded, a layer
of silt, of mud, remained

*“my ancestors have remembered Napioa
for countless generations by reenacting
his creation and flood myths in the spring
when the runoffs are complete”*

absorbed in his story, i waited for him to continue

*“i told you about Napioa’s creation myth
but he also created a great flood after
creating the earth and all its creatures”*

coyote paused once more to watch the butterfly
land on a dandelion shoot

intrigued by the butterfly he stopped his explanation
until the butterfly took wing, flying out of view

“so there was a flood,” i attempted to regain his attention

“yes,” he peered back at me, his focus returned

*“there was a great flood, and Napioa made
the waters differing colors,*

*he gathered the people on top of
the largest mountain in the land*

where he gave them the different colored waters”

i began to see where this was leading

*“the people drank the differing waters
and in doing so spoke unique and different
languages between them”*

*“and this is how we came to have
so many different languages,” i added*

“exactly so,” he replied

*“i had already reenacted the flood myth a
week or so ago, today it was time
for the creation myth”*

i stood looking at my friend
still covered in mud
but with an air about him
that was, in a word,
tranquil

*“come,” coyote called to me
“you can accompany me to the creek
where i can wash off this mud”*

he moved off across the meadow
in the direction of a creek that ran behind my house

*“perhaps next i will tell you,” he offered
“how Napioa created wind.”*

COYOTE PEACEFUL

the water in the lake
immediately around
my dock
was crystal clear

i could see to the bottom

viewing the large mouth bass
that frequented the cove
where my dock stood

well, floated, actually

a sunfish darted about,
two crayfish crawled along the shore

one of the koi that called
our lake home
swam out from under my dock

a gorgeous creature
it shimmered a brilliant gold
as it came to the surface
sunlight dancing off it’s aged scales

*“that is a beautiful fish,” a familiar voice called out
it was coyote, sitting on the shore*

*“you leave that koi alone,” i admonished coyote
with what severity i could muster*

*"i have known that koi, longer than you
have lived on this lake," coyote replied
"besides, why would i harm the koi"*

his question caught me unawares

my response was rather halted

"well, for one, you are a predator," i managed to respond

"and what, exactly, does that mean"

"i've seen you eat chickens, rabbits, a few geese," i shouted

the conversation was extremely uncomfortable for me

*"i get hungry and need to eat,
it is the nature of things, but i'm not violent,
i'm a rather peaceful creature"*

coyote's statement took a few moments to sink in
i had never thought of him as "peaceful," telling him as much

*"saying you are peaceful after i have seen the violent
manner in which you've killed your prey..."*

i could not continue

*"ah, so you believe i cannot be peaceful because
i am violent, is that it"*

coyote cocked his head to one side
and then the other
watching me closely, to see my response

*"something like that, yes," i stammered
"it doesn't mean i hate you for it"*

i let out a large sigh of relief
as this was indeed a trying conversation

*"the koi is a long time friend.
we have known each other for decades.
if not, do you think i would not have eaten him a long time ago?"*

as always, coyote had a knack
for stating the obvious

*"as for the issue of my being peaceful
or, rather, in your view
being violent..."*

i felt my face burning with shame
hearing my arrogant statement
returned to me in such a manner

*"how can you understand peace,
or how can you become peaceful,
if you do not know and understand
violence," the trickster calmly asked*

this concept had never occurred to me

*"but what then, are you if you are not violent," i asked
"would you not be peaceful?"*

it seemed rather simple to me and i
enjoyed the fact i might have finally
bested the wily trickster

*“no, you would not be peaceful,” he replied
“you would be harmless”*

*“you cannot understand peace
if you do not first understand
and experience it’s counterpart,
which is violence”*

coyote continued

*“a person who understands violence
is able to understand peace
because he knows violence
and what it can bring*

*but a person who does not understand violence
that person is merely a harmless individual
they’re not peaceful, simply harmless”*

*“you could argue,” coyote stated
“they would be peaceful,
but in reality, they are simply harmless,
not having the capacity to be violent”*

i was not remotely prepared for this reasoning
though truth be told, it was making a great deal of sense

*“to truly understand peace, to truly be peaceful
you must understand its opposite*

*it is in having an attainment of both sides of nature
that you are able to fully realize yourself”*

as i sat on my dock pondering coyote’s wisdom
the koi swam to the surface
eating a waterbug that was struggling with a leaf

coyote looked over at me
noting i had observed the koi eating the bug

*“see, my friend” coyote told me,
“the koi is peaceful, but as you can also see
at times he can be vicious.”*

we spend our lives
searching for the
right
words
when all along
they are within
us
struggling
to stay alive

COFFEE WITH GREAT WHITE EGRET CHICKS

prehistoric cries for food ebb and flow through the day
increasing to a frenzied pitch as soon as food appears

the cries abate as their bellies fill

as i drink my morning brew.
i tell them tales of their ancestors being bred
for their wondrous plumage

a Blue Heron glides past

geese are heard in the distance

the chicks are nearly grown

soon the mornings will be quiet

i revel in the cacophony of sound that is their life
knowing that soon, as they leave their nest
there will be silence

coffee is especially rich this morning.

COYOTE POETRY

i found coyote industriously
destroying a piece of paper
one grand morning

he had shredded it to pieces
with his sharp nails
and was now
biting it into even smaller
pieces

"what is this about," i called to him

"why such fervor over a piece of paper,"
i asked

coyote stopped for a moment
looking at me with a wary eye

"come no closer," he commanded

"i am not through creating"

with that he began throwing the tiny
pieces of paper into the air

a swift breeze caught them
and whisked them away

coyote sat watching the pieces
float into the sky

"finished," he cried out

"that poem was quite difficult," he smiled his
trickster smile at me and winked

"you're telling me that was a poem," i asked

"and a fine one at that," he replied

*"that piece of paper you tore to shreds
and sent into the wind just now,
that was a poem"*

"yes," he huffed a little indignantly

"is something wrong with your hearing," he asked with concern

*"when i write a poem i save it
to read later, or perhaps share it
with a friend,"* i told the wily trickster

"that is all fine and well," coyote stated

*"but i write to experience the act of creation,
when it is done, i set it free"*

i had never considered such a thing

all throughout my house were stacks of writing,
some finished, some not

“surely you keep some of your poetry,” i asked

“not a one,” he joyfully declared

*“i have set many of my poems free,
the winds have carried my creations
across the globe”*

“where is the sense in that,” i asked in rebuke

“this is utter nonsense!” i cried out

“is it,” the trickster asked

“is it really such nonsense?”

coyote grew quite serious as he approached me

“which would you rather have,” he asked

*“a collection of words written on paper
that will more than likely never see the light of day
once you secure them in your journals,”*

he began to laugh

*“or to be done with the act of creation and to
give them back to the creator
letting the creator distribute them
as the creator sees fit”*

with that coyote turned and began
examining a rather large leaf
that had fallen upon his head

i went back into my house
spying my journals
lying limp upon the mantle
and brewed a cup of tea.

COYOTE READS RIMBAUD

i found coyote on my dock
sitting under the large umbrella
that hides the sun

known for his keen sense of smell
and attention to his environment
i was puzzled when he did not return my greeting

i walked onto the gangway that led to the dock
causing the large barrels that kept them both afloat
to rock in unison, waking coyote from his slumber

“did you not hear me greet you,” i asked

he replied that he had heard my greetings but
was far too engrossed in his book
to return my hail

now noticing he held a book in his paws
i inquired as to the subject matter

*“it is Illuminations,
by Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud”*

the author’s name rolled off coyote’s long,
slender tongue and just hung there, for a second
as if his name was viewing me

“that is an interesting book,” i declared
as i sat in the chair next to him

*“it is even more interesting in french
the writer’s native tongue”* replied a deeply entrenched coyote

“did you know,” the trickster continued
“that he stopped writing at the age of twenty”

*“and that he had a torrid affair with Paul Verlaine,
consummating their love with absinthe, opium and hashish?”*

this was all new to me
though, of course, i had read Rimbaud, even so
coyote showed me how shallow my appreciation was

“he was even a bit of an arms dealer for a time,” coyote continued
*“and died of cancer at age thirty-seven
after having his leg amputated in Marseille”*

i was not aware coyote was such an ardent
admirer of French poetry, telling him this while
inquiring if the book was a translation, or original

*“it is in French, and in fact, it is a first-edition
a very rare work, one of my favorites”*

i called out to my friend exuberantly,
“i had no idea you could read French”

coyote put his book down and winked at me stating
*“i cannot, but the words still sing to me
and that is all that matters”.*

COYOTE REMEMBERS BUFFALO

the roof at Lake House
was in need of repair

it had withstood many years
of storms and sun
but it's age
was beginning to show

i was surveying the project
figuring the logistics
of a new roof

i had replaced
many roofs before but,
in a moment of honesty,
i stumbled to the conclusion
my youth had left me

replacing the roof
would be a chore i feared
i could no long tackle

"why are you on your roof," coyote's voice called out

"is it to gain a better view of the beaver pond"

while it was true i had a spectacular view of the beaver pond
my visit to the roof
was much more complicated
than viewing friend beavers pond

"i'm needing to replace the roof," i called down,
"i don't suppose you know a decent roofer"

the thought of coyote knowing a roofer
brought an odd chuckle

"the best builder i know," coyote shouted back
"is beaver, but he is terribly afraid of heights"

"besides," coyote continued, *"he's off building
another pond, two valleys over"*

the seriousness with which coyote
approached my task confused me

"i thank you for your suggestion," i called down
"but i question your knowledge of roofs"

i came down my ladder to find
a most indignant coyote

"you question," his great, bushy tail
twitching as he spoke... *"my knowledge of roofs?"*

immediately, i regretted my statement

*"my ancestors have been helping your kind
with their dwellings since your people lived in caves"*

his nostrils were flared

"since you lived in caves!" he repeated

i had deeply offended him

*"the first people, the race before yours,
would have never left their caves
without the help of animals"*

coyote went into a long discourse
as to how the animals banded together
at Earth Mother's request
to help mankind build structures

horses and oxen provided brute strength

beavers and egrets gave lessons on building,
showing how to intertwine reeds and twigs
mixing in mud for strength

ravens and eagles flew far and wide
searching for land
on which to build homes
finding fertile soil, water
everything needed to survive

as coyote described the evolutionary history
of shelters, i realized how reliant mankind was
on all of nature
how reliant we remained, to this day

*"now, as to your current predicament,"
coyote paused for a moment
"i once knew a great roofer, elk that dances"*

*"but he only worked with buffalo hide,
i don't suppose that would do"*

"i don't believe it would," i told the trickster

"just as well," he replied with a sad tone
*"not too many buffalo left as it is
and his light is nearly gone as well"*

i offered him a glass of iced tea
and what was left of a delicious
zucchini bread

he told me stories
of great herds of buffalo
stretching far past the horizon

how people used buffalo hides
to build their homes

how the buffalo sustained them
with their meat, with every part
of their bodies and their soul

"but now the buffalo have gone," he sighed
"replaced by homes with aging roofs"

i offered my friend
another glass of tea
but i could see he was lost,
back in a time i would never know.

COYOTE VIEWS DEGAS

coyote appears in the most
surprising places

once, at a museum
as i was studiously viewing
a Degas painting,
i noticed coyote's vibrant
bushy tail
among the patrons of the gallery

"what are you doing here," i eagerly asked my friend

"i'm a lover of Degas," he casually replied
"as are we all, i suppose"

the silver in his great bushy tail
flashed brilliantly
in the museum's finely lit room

"so you know of Degas," i asked in amazement

"of course I know of Degas," he replied indignantly

"in fact," my wily friend continued
*"he used brushes made from the tail hairs
of one of my ancestors"*

he turned to me and whispered;
*"though he is well known for his paintings
of dancers, ballet included
he began by watching the same ancestor
dance the dance of the blood moon festival"*

coyote had allowed me to attend a blood moon festival once
where a distant cousin of his
superbly enacted the sacred movements of the blood moon

"one of your ancestors, a dancer, danced for Degas,"
i asked with incredible wonder

*"and gifted him with tail hair
for a most wondrous brush"*

i was stunned

*"in fact, if i remember my family history correctly,
he used that very same brush on the Cassatt portrait
hanging on the wall, over there "*

he pointed his left front paw towards
a painting of Mary Cassatt, seated

i moved closer to admire the brush strokes
the oil held on the old canvas

they were marvelous

excitedly, i turned to my friend exclaiming
and quite loudly at that;
"what an interesting bit of trivia"

but coyote was gone, nowhere to be found

there was only a room full of startled patrons
viewing Degas.

COYOTE ZEN

coyote found me sitting on the bluffs
 under the shade of an old oak
 that simply would not fall

*“what are you doing, my friend,
 you’ve been out here for hours”*

i told him i was contemplating
 what could be found
 on the bottom of the lake

*“many people have asked the same question
 for as many years as I can recall”*

i asked him if he had any answers,
 perhaps an observation,
 as to what lies beneath the surface

*“rocks, sand, some gravel,
 a couple of cars, and a lot of fish poop”*

it took me by surprise

the exactness of his answer
 was startlingly clear

*“Humans are a strange species
 that wonder about the strangest things,”* he murmured

i argued it was a valid question
 as i could not see through to the bottom
 so how was i to know

*“why is there air, and why does water
 not float upon it,”* he asked

he left me with a new host of questions
 to ponder while i sat on the bluffs
 under the shade of the old oak.

EGRET TEA

the great egret appeared one early dawn
 offering to brew a fine cup
 of mushroom tea

knowing his prowess at brewing
 such magical elixirs
 i heartily welcomed him in

with a well practiced eye he
 patiently boiled water to the
 correct temperature
 adding just the right amount of
 ginger, lemon, a bit of lavender
 and of course, mushrooms

while steeping the brew he regaled me
 with his adventures procuring
 the delicacies used for his tea

he told me tales of flying East
 over the plains of Uruk and Kippur
 where the Tigris and Euphrates flowed

tipped his head ever so slightly
 as he relived his journey through
 the great city of Eridu

my egret friend had traveled far
 for many ages
 his weariness was apparent

with a renewed gleam in his eye he
 offered me a cup of tea
 stating that the brew was complete

we spent the morning drinking
 his magical elixir

following the sun as it rose to the occasion

a magnificent morning
 filled with a cacophony of colors
 and splendid imagery

the egret appeared rested
 as he finished his cup

thanking me profusely for my hospitality
 he took wing and circled twice
 as he flew off across the lake

wishing me health and good fortune

Great egrets are polite in that way.

IN THE GARDEN

friend salamander appears on my doorstep
every morning

he sits patiently as i brew my coffee
waiting in the shade my cabana brings
to a hot, sweltering morning

i have offered him a cup
many times

each time he politely declines

"i have noticed," the salamander said
clearing his throat
"you take your coffee plain"

stopping for a moment to slay
a wayward mosquito,
he continued

*"is that decision based upon
your disdain for dairy products
or do you simply prefer the naked taste
of a rich, dark brew?"*

i had never thought about the sound
a mosquito's wings make
while being consumed until that moment

it was reminiscent of the sound
fine sandpaper makes
as it travels with the grain
of an aged, fine wood

"in all honesty," the salamander continued
*"i rather figured you were too cheap
to buy fresh cream"*

he wiped the remains of the mosquito
from his moist lips
with a deft flick of his tongue

the salamander had me dead to rights

he tipped his Fez and wished me a good day

humming
"Shine On, You Crazy Diamond"
his Fez cocked to one side
he quietly vanished

i made a mental note
to order more mosquitoes.

MENDOCINO DAYS

after meeting with the Great Spirit over olives and crackers
 coyote and i left with the impression that while we were
 looking for some measure of control,
 none would be forthcoming

a room with a thousand mirrors goaded us
 to count them

deciding for ourselves exactly how many
 images of our faces
 were needed in this world

i will admit it was a daunting proposition

one that filled us with anxiety
 and a healthy paranoia of dangers
 that a high probability favored

but still, we were both fond
 of a fine cracker

and our lust for the tasty flesh
 of the lovingly cared for fruit
 of the Oleaceae tree is well known

the Great Spirit bid us sit on a sapphire jewel
 larger than any presidential palace

choosing to remain amorphous,
 better that way for deniability

are we not all about deniability
 in our lives

denying religion, history, culture, civility

all the while building temples to assure
 our place in paradise

as i began to address this with the Great Spirit
 they plucked a plump, ripe olive from the jar
 with an ornate silver fork and secured some garlic, too

smiling as they held them in front of us

coyote leaned over and whispered;

*“someone has to pay for the olives and crackers,
 they are not always cheap”*

coyote stands on
a mountain
mouth wide open
waiting
to capture
the moon

PLANTING THE SEED

i am building a temple
using the dreams of grandchildren, unborn

their sacred hearts call to me
as I tend to my narratives

i have left them written instructions
for the coming times

turtles helped me
build the foundation

egrets made certain
the walls are straight

trickster coyote laughs
telling me my efforts are in vain

i often times heed his advice

unless it involves
my unborn grandchildren's dreams,
which speak a language
none can fathom

too soon their dreams
will come alive

while coyote and i leave this place
a memory for an unborn mind.

RUMINATIONS ON A SUMMER MORNING

there is a defective egret in the digger pine
next to my house

having survived many wind storms,
droughts, and all manner of insects,
the digger is a haven for nesting Great Egrets

having gone through many seasons of egret births
i am certainly not an expert on them
but i am very much aware of their habits
which are simple;

the chicks are born,
the parents feed and nurture them for a time,
and then they leave

it is a fairly straight forward affair

spring is welcomed by screaming cries for food,
with parent egrets flying out to our small lake to get the food

the usual stuff in egret life

this year, though, it was different

long after the chicks had taken wing
there was one chick that remained

i could hear it cry at the top of the digger pine
hidden behind branches

too far to see with the naked eye
though at times i could see
a white cloud of fluff flapping at the top of the tree

as the chicks would leave, one by one,
the cloud of fluff seemed to grow louder,
or perhaps, closer

one day it was crying especially loud

when i looked up i could see it clear as day
standing on a branch far below its nest
valiantly trying to flap its wings
though only one wing would move

it's right-wing appeared withered
crippled
barely developed at all

the bird remained on this branch for many days
crying out several times a day
at all hours, day and night

eventually, another egret was seen coming to the branch

it would stand with the crippled egret then fly off
returning with food

i watched as the chick waited for the other egret to bring food,
listening in as they talked to each other in the ancient language of birds

thoughts of what to do with this defective egret ran through my mind

should i shoot it in an act of mercy?

call someone for advice, perhaps a defective egret specialist?

i became captivated with its survival and checked on it often,
pondering as to what i should do with this defective bird

i argued as to whether it was my position to end its misery,
or was it in misery at all?

it was in my tree, i rationalized
i can do with it as i please

but then i realized that land ownership and boundaries
are a man-made device, i certainly had no contract with the egrets,
nor they with me

should i let nature decide what to do with a defective egret?

why did i feel i had a voice in this matter at all
or feel the need to say it was defective

many mornings were spent having coffee with my egret friend
sitting on my deck, pondering these questions that need to be thought of

carefully

in the end, nature solved its own dilemma, if, in fact
there was ever a dilemma to begin with

early one morning, 3:15am to be exact
i was awakened by a tremendous scream and then

silence

sitting on the deck that morning i could see
white feathers strewn about the ground

the egret was not on his branch

a mountain lion had taken a neighbors goat
two weeks earlier, its carcass in a tree not far
from the digger pine

it was obvious what had happened

i sat that morning in silence with my coffee,
no noise from the egret to greet me

it occurred to me that the egret was never defective,
it had a purpose all along

it brought me to think more about life
to see how simple it is to label something that is unknown

in the end, the egret chick provided me with valuable insight
into my own prejudices

about life, the need to control it, the need to develop explanations
to fit it into my view, my limited description, of life

i will miss having coffee with that egret chick more than i care to admit

i am so very fortunate we crossed paths;

allowing me to begin an understanding

it was me who was defective

never the egret.

SMOKING WITH COYOTE

the talking heads on television
were on a roll

no matter the network
a head was screaming

coyote had dropped by
as i was rolling a nice fatty

his timing was always impeccable

though he could not roll worth a shit

“what are those talking heads screaming about”
coyote asked as he puffed away

*“it’s political season, they’re screaming
about anything and everything”*

i wrestled the fat doobie from him
coyote was a known bogart

“humans are indeed strange,” he offered
“your politics are ridiculous”

“why the need for all these screaming heads,” he inquired
as i passed the doobie back to him

exhaling a large cloud of dank smoke
i explained to my friend how our media worked
how we turn to media personalities to inform us
trying to look past their opinionated diatribes

this, i explained, gave us information
as to who should lead us

he thought about this for a long moment
so long, in fact, the blunt went out

i reached for a lighter

*“so, you listen to people lie to you,
offering their personal beliefs,
so you can select your leaders?”*

the questioning tone of the trickster
was rather surreal

*“i guess when you put it that way
it does seem pretty strange”*

“strange,” the coyote yelped
“it’s downright stupid”

having relit the now again smoldering joint
i passed it back to coyote

“this makes as much sense,” he took a great
hit of the exceptionally potent weed
“as listening to one of the rabbits, or even a cow”

i took in his position while patiently waiting
for coyote to pass the joint

remembering he never passes, i reached over to take it

“what are you speaking of,” i asked
as i relished my own exceptionally large hit

“you make no sense,” i coughed and sputtered,
the hit was a bit too large

“rabbits and cows are notorious liars,” he replied
*“everyone knows this, yet we still listen to them
out of politeness”*

he had a solid point

i had many times observed
animals being polite to one another

except for pigeons, they could care less about anything

“in our politics,” he offered *“we select a leader
who is the most fit to lead us”*

i was intrigued by this, i was not fully aware
animals had a political system

“we all inherently know who will lead us,” he continued
*“and who is unfit for leadership,
it’s fairly instinctual”*

both of us sat listening to the tirading head
until i switched off the television

“that person made no sense whatsoever,” coyote stated
“i’m positive they were shouting simply to hear their own voice”

coyote turned to me and solemnly asked
if i had rolled any more of my exceptional herb

“that last one didn’t get you stoned,” i asked him

*“oh, indeed it did, but if i really want to understand
your political process, i’m going to need more”*

coyote and i sat smoking through the night
playing go-fish until the early morning hours

both of us had won and lost
an equal number of times

i suggested we cut the cards,
high card would be declared winner

the trickster readily agreed to this
advising me as i shuffled,
*“perhaps you should use this method
to elect your leaders, makes more sense”*

he drew an ace

*“it by far makes far more sense
than your current political system”*

he handed the deck back to me,
i proceeded to draw a jack

“and not near as irritating,” he added
as he declared himself the winner.

SURVEILLANCE WOULD WAIT

trickster coyote appeared as i was partaking
of a fine cup of coffee
on my dock at Lake House

“hello, good friend,”
he slyly called out
from the path where the heart lays

*“so nice to see you out and about
enjoying this fine, wondrous
morning”*

as with most of my encounters with the trickster
i remained guarded, aloof, best not to show
too much ambition for ready conversation

“the morning is indeed fine,” i hesitantly replied,
“and the coffee is stout,” i continued

“tell me, what brings you to my dock?”

across the lake geese and ducks gathered
warily casting glances
watching the trickster from afar

“have you heard of this new device called Ring,”
absentmindedly licking
his long, scruffy jowls as he asked

“it is used for security,” he continued
*“for monitoring your home
to help in keeping it safe”*

i watched his tail flick anxiously
back and forth as Li took a long, deep
drink from my cup

“i know what it is,” i replied

“i have seen the advertisements”

i instantly regretted this caffeine-induced disclosure

*“excellent, my friend, excellent.
i would like to install them
here, around the lake”*

a loud chorus from the geese and ducks
traveled across the lake
hitting us like a wave

*“it would help protect the waterfowl
that gathers on your lake
it would let you know that they are safe”*

he went on, at great length
as to how Amazon had purchased Ring
and then partnering with local police
they would join together to stop crime

he regaled me with tales of home invasions,
burglaries, thefts, all sorts of malicious actions
being thwarted by the surveillance of Ring

it was a new era of protection, of security

Amazon had several programs in place
that allowed local police to give out Rings for free

he was confident this would not cost me a dime

i placed my coffee mug down

*“this is all fine and good, but would it not also
allow someone like yourself to use the system for their gain?
with information such as this, would it not make
for a new method of alerting you as to when,
shall we say, supper might be ready?”*

again a mighty sound wave flew across the lake

the geese and the ducks were now joined
by the swans and egrets

trickster coyote laughingly asked

*“if i could not trust Amazon, nor the local police
Who could i trust?”*

therein began a heated debate about the use
of global surveillance to quiet the political noise
its people might make

the trickster feigned innocence of this affront
all the while engaging in arguments to assure me
my paranoia of these dangers was ill-founded

as my coffee had long grown cold
i told him i had matters to attend to
and rose to leave

*“it is inevitable, you know,
that we will all eventually be surveilled, even here, on your lake.
it is only a matter of time”*

with a flick of his tail, he disappeared
into the woods, without a trace

without a sound

i knew he was right, of course

eventually we will all be surveilled,
monitored for our “own good”

it is inevitable that all our fates are sealed

but for this day, and the next, and hopefully
a few after that

here on the lake

surveillance would have to wait.

you geese
stop reciting
poetry

it is time
for us all
to find
sleep

WHY COYOTE WORE A MASK

i saw coyote wearing a mask
which seemed a bit odd

i asked my friend
"why are you wearing a mask?"

he told me it was the current rage
all the humans were wearing them

i had to admit his mask
was extremely colorful and bright

*"but surely it interferes
with your hunting?"*

"Indeed it does," he replied

"but surely i look splendid."

TRAVELLING WITH COYOTE

coyote told me there would be a plan
a road map if you will
that would guide the way

the sun was shining bright
illuminating the path before us
with grand desires

we left much too late for any
decent hope of returning
with the evening breeze

but coyote traveled often
and was a favored companion
for distant journeys

leaving the path set before us
we set up camp for the night
next to a small stream

taking off on his own
coyote returned with a fine,
plump, bunny

i had started a fire so upon
his return we would have
an even bed of coals

licking his lips with his large
wet tongue, he offered a bit
of rosemary for seasoning

the rabbit was delicious

we fell asleep under a blanket
of summer stars

in the morning, a bit of dew
stuck to us, but not enough
to cause any worry

we clambered back to the path
we had left
the night before

coyote let loose with a joyous cry
upon discovering wild blackberries
ripening in the early morning sun

many days passed by
in this fashion

never, was there a plan

but I knew that as we left

having travelled with coyote
many times before.

COYOTE'S SEVEN SISTERS

it was an unusually rough morning

two cups of strong
black coffee was not enough
to refresh my mind

three, hopefully
would do the trick

coyote and his kin had spent the night
howling and yelping
at i presumed, the moon

that or there was a great kill
in the fields next to my house
and they were coveting their prize

either way, no one in our valley
was able to sleep

i sat with my third cup
of very strong coffee
a mixture the consistency of mud

coyote jauntily strolled up my path

“good morning to you,” he gleefully shouted out

“how are you this fine morning,”

he winced as he caught an aroma of the mud

“i’m tired as could be, if you must know”

i was trying not to be angry with coyote
but the fact of the matter remained;
i was exhausted

“*you do look exceptionally tired,*” my friend stated
as he gave me a thorough look over

“*perhaps you should try some warm milk,*” he offered,
“*that should help you sleep better*”

the irony of coyote prescribing warm milk
when it was his howling
for hours on end that did me in
put me over the edge

“*i am exhausted not because i needed warm milk,*” i shouted
“*but because of all your racket last night!*”

while i at once felt better for telling coyote off
i also felt guilty for shouting at him

“*oh,*” coyote replied, “*that*”

that’s what he had to say to me

he kept me up all night with howling and yelping
and all he could say was
“*that*”

“*are you kidding me?*” i shouted again

coyote moved a bit closer to me
his pointed nose barely inches from my own

“don’t you really want to know the reason,” he asked

“of course i do, the entire valley wants to know”

i was excited
the extra cup of coffee had kicked in

*“i’ve heard you yelling and howling before
but never like last night,”*

i waited for his explanation

he stared at me for what seemed an eternity
never blinking, never smiling
i was not sure if he was even breathing

finally, after a very long while he began to speak

*“my family and i were paying homage to the
seven sisters”*

i recalled in the back of my memory
his mentioning the seven sisters before

*“last night was truly amazing,” he excitedly exclaimed
“they glowed the most brilliant i have ever seen them”*

it began to return to me

“are you talking about the constellation Taurus?”

*“yes, yes, but it is not the constellation itself
it is the star cluster within the constellation,
the seven sisters, the Pleiades”*

coyote was very animated as he spoke

*“it is well known throughout history
that the earth was visited by Star People.
they came from the Pleiades, the seven sisters*

*in Japan, they are known as Subaru,
they are Krittika in Hinduism
the Chinese called them mǎo
and Persians used them to navigate at night
calling them the Parvīn”*

i had rarely seen coyote so animated and excited

*“last night,” he continued, “was extraordinary
as they shone brighter than ever before”*

“why do you think that is,” i instinctively asked

coyote looked at me with utter amazement

*“how am i supposed to know,” he offered crossly,
“they were glowing, that’s all there was to it”*

we both took a moment to compose ourselves

*“i’m sorry if we inconvenienced you last night
but none of us had ever seen them glow so bright.
it was as if we could reach up and touch them”*

coyote shuddered a bit at this thought

*“but in the end,” i arrogantly offered
“they are merely stars”*

the trickster flicked his great tail back and forth
quite rapidly, as he was wont to do when faced
with one of my many arrogant statements

controlling his breathing, coyote
placed his nose inches from mine

“the sisters, are our ancestors,” he replied

“not just ours, but yours as well,” he softly exhaled

*“the first people have many stories of those
who came from the stars where the seven sisters live.
these star people came to earth and taught the first people
how to grow food, and channel water, how to build great structures
that would give the first people shelter.
in all cultures, there are stories that tell of this”*

i felt as a child who was learning a lesson
after having failed the lesson
many times before

“your ilk, and i say this gently,” coyote was genuinely sincere
“have completely forgotten your past”

i started to defend myself by replying we honored
our past everyday, but coyote cut me off

*“the Sisters are all around you and you never
even notice”*

“that’s not true,” i shouted, defending myself

*“your wife drives a Subaru, with a modified logo
of the seven sisters”*

he allowed me a moment to think about this

*“...and before you tell me there are only six stars
in the Subaru logo, in Japanese folklore
one star of the sisters is invisible, hence,
there are only six stars”*

i sat on my chair, dumbfounded

he was right

“the Sisters are powerful magic,” he stated authoritatively

coyote stared at me for quite a while
looking at me quizzically

*“again, my apologies if we kept you awake last night
but perhaps next time you might join us
in paying homage to the sisters”*

before i had a chance to reply he was off down the path
calling back over his shoulder;

“there is much for you to learn,” as he disappeared
behind an ancient oak

my coffee had grown cold, and it tasted of mud

i sat in my chair until morning had turned
into afternoon, and then again until dusk
thinking of all coyote had said

i sat there in my chair until the stars came out
waiting for the sisters to return.

UNDERSTANDING A PUDDLE

coyote found me one morning
leveling my front porch

it had a terrible slope
at the northern end
that kept reappearing
no matter what i did

it was a fine, but simple porch

silver flagstone
set deep into decomposed granite
on top of a fine base of sand
with a thick layer
of crushed gravel under it all

not a large patio, by most measures

ten feet by twenty-five feet

but it allows for a nice coffee
in the morning when i watch
the swan groom and the egrets preen

many times over the years
i have repaired the northern corner

while the rest of it
seems to weather just fine
remaining level and true
not so the northern corner

at times it fell by only a few inches

other times, it easily dropped a solid foot

leaving a puddle of mud
after rainstorms blow through

coyote listened patiently
as i explained my task

nodding in agreement
saying not a word
taking it all in
until i explained no more

*“you say this has happened
several times, over the past few years”*
his questioning tone was genuine
there was no mockery
to my plight

he seemed deep in thought

“exactly so,” i responded

*“and, again, this has gone on
for years,”* he inquired

*“no matter how many times i level
the northern end, it continually
drops. it has done so for many years”*

i was beginning to get annoyed

coyote can allow that in you

*"i believe i understand exactly
what the problem is,"* he declared

walking until he stood
directly over the northern corner he addressed me;

*"the earth is sloped here
in this exact place
it is the way of things
you cannot change it"*

with that, he proposed
a delightful mid-morning tea
perhaps even
a bit of schnapps

"peppermint, if you have any"

i erected a cairn
of finely chosen rocks

the puddle
never bothered me again.

WHEN COYOTE WHISTLED

coyote looked depressed
his great, bushy tail drooped

he walked with a lackluster gait

i had seen this before and knew
it would pass

"how are you today, my friend," i called out
"is the weather simply not immaculate"

coyote turned his head toward me
but the ever present trickster smile
was not there

"i must tell you truthfully, i am struggling"

his voice was shallow
with a sadness that belied his saddened nature

though i had indeed seen this before
i admitted to myself this time, it was fairly severe

"come, sit with me and tell me your troubles"

i indicated towards his favorite chair
featuring a simple weave of rattan

"the problem" coyote stated as he sat upon the chair,
"is that i view the world becoming ever more callous and severe"

we had discussed this topic
many times before

“i believe that,” in an attempt to console my friend,
“we have concluded this many times in the past”

“we have,” he admitted, letting a sigh fall out into the air

the despondency of my friend was alarming

i could not recall such morose behavior

“is this in regards,” i asked
“to a particular action, or event”

*“i have always cherished my contact
with humans, guiding them, leading them
helping them to understand that life
is an interconnection with the energy
that flows through us all”*

coyote’s head hung down as he spoke

his very essence seemed devoid of life

“recently,” he continued
*“i have noticed that humans
have changed
and not for the better”*

this was a first
we had not discussed this before

*“you have always had the ability
to see deep inside us,”* i offered
“what has changed”

“that is exactly the problem,” he cried out,
leaping from the chair, knocking it to the ground

*“i am bombarded by empty carcasses
of what were once primal beings,
their shallowness and deception
can no longer be ignored”*

coyote was in a panic, his breathing erratic
as he paced the length of my porch

“it is unlike anything i have seen before”
he sat back into the soft weave
of the comforting rattan

pleadingly, he asked me
an astonishing question

*“why do they feed me their ego’s
when i have feasted on their souls”*

we sat in silence for quite a long while
neither of us speaking

not a word

finally, i offered him a bit of salvation
to help soothe his mind

*“perhaps humans are evolving
by putting on facades to mask our true
inner emotions”*

coyote pondered this for a moment
his eyes regaining their familiar twinkle
as he thought about this further

“yes, yes,” he shouted

“that is it,” he declared

*“humans are tricking the trickster,
what a wonderful turn of events”*

my friend joyfully leaped from my porch,
his tail no longer drooping
his spirits rejuvenated

*“i must look past the petty egos of men
and be content with my knowledge
of their souls, thank you, thank you”*

with that, he bid me have a good day

i watched him jauntily walk down the lane
whistling a tune, not a care in the world

i had not known
coyote could whistle.

COYOTE KEEPS

an old wheelbarrow,
its red paint peeling
its tires, flat
down by the creek
where magic grows

the flat tire makes it
difficult to use

though it comes in handy
when harvesting magic.



dave (bodhi) boles, has worked as a Publisher, Editor, Writer, and Designer. Developing the magazine *Primal Urge*, he went on to create Neural Impulse Publications, Cold River Press, and Bodhidharma Publishing. His publications, editorials, writing, graphic design, and artwork have appeared both nationally and internationally.

An eclectic traveler and artist, dave is known to drift in changing directions at the drop of a hat, having worked as a High Tower Rigger; Long Haul Trucker; Radio Talk Show Host; Renaissance Faire Magician; Costume and Bodice Merchant; a short stint once as a Life Insurance salesman that ended rather badly, and a Corporate Mercenary for hire.

A devoted collector of tattoos, dave is also a lifelong gear head and speed freak, customizing cars, trucks, and motorcycles.

The protege of acclaimed poet and alternative publisher Ben L. Hiatt, dave embraces our ever-changing literary and political structure while continuing to ponder Hiatt's school of Okie Surrealism and how it might fit in with this modern age of high tech.

He has several chapbooks, including *Balding Dissertation Of A Balding Man*, *A Small Answer To A Large Question*, *Do Aluminum Chickens Eat Metal Feed?*, and *Confessions Of A Black Ink Junkie*, among others, as well as a full-length book, *OFFERINGS*, 2011 (Cold River Press).

After obtaining a Doctorate in Divinity, he founded The Church Of The Illuminated Monkey, where he holds the position of Gringo Shaman.

His lifelong friend, Mescalito, still keeps watch over him to this day, sending a Red Hawk to check in on him from time to time. He resides with his wife, Mrs. America, and a collection of animals at Lake House; the Illuminated Monkey's Home For Wayward Poets And Socially Bereft Humans.

COYOTE MAGIC (first printing), is published in an edition of 200 copies.

Text: Body is Adobe Garamond Pro, 12pt leading 15pt. Poem headings are in Book Anitqua Bold, 14pt leading 16pt, stretched 124 percent horizontally, with a horizontal tracking of +25. Page numbers are Adobe Caslon Pro, 11.5 pt. Author bio photo is by Mrs. America.

Cover: Book title and author title is based on C720-Deco, modified, beveled, stretched and airbrushed. Back cover blurb is based on Pare, modified, beveled, stretched and airbrushed. Back cover photograph of the author is by Alex Monroe, digitally enhanced by *Bodhi*.

Cover artwork, "Coyote Speaks," is original digital art by *Bodhi*.

Paper: Interior pages are printed on 70# white 3.7 Caliper, 541 PPI. Soft Cover is printed on 12pt Cover stock 541 PPI and gloss laminated before binding.

Printing: Text was printed on an Oce 6250 digital printer. Cover was printed using a Xerox Versant 3100.

Binding: Book is soft cover perfect bound.





WE ARE ALL DIVINE BEINGS. WE ALL MATTER, EVERY ONE OF US. WE COME FROM UNIMAGINABLE POWER AND LIGHT, UNIMAGINABLE MAGIC. TAKE A MOMENT TO WATCH THE WORLD UNFOLD AROUND YOU. TASTE THE AIR, LISTEN TO THE WIND. IT IS ALL MAGIC. WE ARE ALL MAGIC. TREAT YOURSELF AND OTHERS AS THE POWERFUL MAGICIANS YOU ARE. BE KIND MAGICIANS AND REMEMBER TO USE YOUR MAGIC WISELY. IT IS THE WAY OF LIFE'S SPIRIT, THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR, THE WAY TO UNIVERSAL PEACE.

COLD RIVER PRESS

\$20.95