

Coyote and Raven are on a road trip traveling north to the central coast to peek at the dunes and ocean beyond. They stop to buy strawberries (Raven's favorite) in Guadalupe. Coyote heard there were rockets blasting off from Vandenberg Air Force base and drives his '58 Impala up to the gate but the soldiers wave them off. They meander north toward 101. They park by the side of the road to eat the strawberries. Raven wants to listen to the radio but there isn't any music to be found as he twirls the knob back and forth. There is a shouting man who reads the bible. He switches it off.

He leans against the white flank of the car and peers at the oak trees on the hills. The smell of the oak and rustle of the tall grass makes him close his eyes in a passing reverie. "Time to go back."

Raven puffs her feathers. She is silent. She knows it is time. She loves these sojourns; sometimes the desert is just too much. Too much wind, heat and static electricity. Her feathers got so hot. Coyote was more of a night creature and slept in most of the day. He taped tin foil to the windows of his little trailer to keep it dark. She was from the north, but her favorite people, the *Ohlone*, had disbursed across the state and she felt lonely when she went home.

They drove down 101. There is a short tunnel just above Goleta. As they passed through she can suddenly smell the sea again and perks her head up. Just over the sound of a train crossing a bridge that spans the beach she can see wind blown waves. On the horizon, robotic figures of oil derricks.

All the windows are down and the smell of eucalyptus, seaweed and orange blossoms are making her dream. Coyote growls a little to himself. She looks at him. He seems tired. He isn't used to being awake at this time. She starts to nod off her self, but the stiff wind and roar of passing trucks keeps bringing her back.

He pulls the car east off 101 and drifts past Fillmore, through Canyon Country and then onto the Pear Blossom Highway. The mountains are on the right with patches of snow left from the last storm. Finally they are coasting down the Cajon Pass. Coyote turns onto Route 66. A tunnel of tall eucalyptus sways in the wind. Looking east, through the haze there is a faint outline of San Gorgonio peak.

"I like cars," he said, "But I'm tired of all the *melkish*," switching to Cahuilla. *Melkish* meant noisy and loud, but what he meant were all the colonial faces and their busy untethered lives. "It was just yesterday, only the *Ivilyuat* were here. Their vibes harmonized with everything..." His voice drifted. They drove in silence for some time. This was an old conversation.

She looked at him askance. "There are still People here, I can always sense their vibe."

"Let's go hunting!" he said with sudden enthusiasm. On the left was the Wigwam Motel on Route 66. "I'm turning left here."

They sped up North Meridian Avenue in San Bernardino, past the "U-pick-em" strawberry sign. He saw some people with sweaty faces in the field hunched over picking fruit.

Raven felt hungry again.

"We're getting warmer," said Coyote and starts looking around. Suddenly he turns down a street going east. There were a lot of new stucco houses and fresh lawns here. The trees were all saplings. Raven was jolted by the turn, "Hey! Be careful!"

Coyote acts as if she said nothing and starts craning his neck. "I think I have been here before." He turns left on Terrace Road and looks over a bit of a cliff. Laid out below is a great white wash, full of boulders and isolated trees. Rivulets of water sparkle in the distance. "Hey! I used to hang out here with Wildcat. And Snake and Tortoise," he said in a low voice as if he was reassembling old stories bit by bit.

"Wait!" Said Raven, "I see a one!" She stretches her wings and points ahead. A little boy on a red bike with a white banana seat stopped at the edge of the road looking out at the wash.

"Oh yeah, I can feel his 'a'iv'a," It wasn't a vibration exactly, just a bit of energy that he and the old ones could sense. "Absolutely." He grins.

The lost indigenous melt into the world of loud colonials. Their communities are scattered everywhere in America. This one was Cahuilla by the vibe.

Raven giggled a little. These special lost creatures need their care. They used to spend all their time tricking them one way or another, playing games, sometimes dangerous. After the Spanish came and then the rest of the Europeans, well it was all too sad.

"Don't scare him like the last kid you found, she fell out of that tree and broken her ankle," she squints at Coyote.

"I got it." He doesn't like being reminded of his mistakes. "You talk to him, then."

They pull the Impala up to the boy. He tries to ignore them. "Excuse me," she said in a soft voice. He turns slowly. His eyes grow wide. He shakes his head and looks into the car again. Coyote pulls out a

cigarette places it in his mouth and pushes in the lighter on the dashboard. He doesn't say a thing. Let Raven handle it.

The boy thinks, "I see a giant crow and a skinny wolf in a car!" He blinks and they transform into people, a rugged dark man with greying temples and a beautiful woman with long black, shiny hair and yellow gold eyes. He feels dizzy.

"I want to give you something," Raven says. She reaches under her wing and pulls out a feather. She winces. She dangles the feather in his face. He looks at it with incredulity.

"Go on," she twirls the feather slowly and he reaches out with his small hand and takes it. Its deep black and purple essence shimmers in the light.

Coyote takes a puff of his cigarette and puts on his sunglasses. He steps on the gas.

Pebbles fly up from the tires and the boy feels the sting of them on his bare legs. He sees the car turn abruptly left and hears the tires squeal against the torque of the V8 engine. He tucks the feather in his shirt pocket. His chest warms from the power of the feather. He sets off for home.