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Fiction

Bill Wetzel

THE BLACKFEET ARE A TALL, DARK, NOBLE STOIC PEOPLE . . .
THEN THERE IS ME

I hate how people stereotype Indians as violent alcoholics . . . it pisses me off so much I just want to go get drunk & beat somebody up.

For most of my life I thought the Blackfeet words for “Come here quickly” actually meant: “You better run, you little fucker.”

Got drunk, tried to fight three guys at once, then got kicked out of a bar . . . which is pretty much just an average night for a short, native guy.

I say potato & you say it like a douche.

My body is not my temple, it’s more like a really awesome whorehouse.

I have turned all of the skeletons in my closet into a formidable army.

I have a lot in common with Nelson Mandela; mostly that we’ve both been to jail before.

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I think women misunderstand when I say “Have a drink on me” because they always end up throwing it in my face by the end of the night.

New neighbor was sitting naked on a mat in his living room watching tv with the door open . . . ok, nobody out weirdos me, challenge accepted.

I wish just once in my life I could be as happy as those guys on Maury in the instant he says: “Aaaand you are NOT the father!”

Wild Saturday, I’ve had women banging on my door the whole night, I wouldn’t let any of them leave, but still . . .

Sometimes you get that spark with somebody so bad that you can’t even wait until she’s fully inflated before you have to have her.

I don’t know what the big deal about disciplining kids is, look at me, I got spanked by a stripper last night & I fucking turned out all right.

The time when I’m the most honest with myself is when I put on cologne & a nice shirt before I start downloading porn.

Even I get creeped out by The Police’s “Every Breath You Take” & I’m the guy sifting through a woman’s garbage in drag right now.

There is an obnoxious drunk lady stumbling around & yelling outside my apartment right now . . . looks like I’m getting laid tonight.

Sometimes you just really need a hug . . . around your penis . . . from a vagina.

Thomas Aquinas said “The things we love tell us what we are” . . . to which I just have to say . . . are you calling me a pussy, motherfucker?

Last girl I went home with told me to “Do to me what you Indians do best” so later on when I was leaving I stole her tv & dvd player.

Saw a Powerade flavor “White Cherry” at the store & like any self-respecting Native male I never pass up a chance to take a white cherry.

A COLLABORATION WITH O

i like O. He once defined the word “unhomed” for me over dinner. O’s poetry reminds me that language is our identity; that a singleword can expand “our experience of who we are and where we are from.” asingleword can tell a whole story, but further. a story can be a letter. a shape. aspace. a period. aspaceinsideofaletter.

The more we break a(part) language, the more stories we find. Language and identity are infinite this way; the further we anatomize them, the more definitive they become. i have heard O referred to as: “That Navajolanguagepoet.” i think calling a Diné poet “Navajo” minimizes their language and, therefore, their identity. it unhomes them. But yes, you should read O’swork.

Heputallofthewhitespacesintothisstory.

YOUNG MAN AND THE WOMEN OF VERY BAD CHARACTER

There is no use for a woman of very bad character. Once, there was an old man named Young Man. He was trusting and doltish. He had a friend who he was particularly fond of, but her lover was an intemperate woman of very bad character. He had thought she had the aura of a mean Blackfeet woman when he first met her. Except she wasn’t Blackfeet. She was ambiguous. And mean. Definitely mean.

But because of his fondness for his friend he made an effort to get to know this woman of very bad character and soon they warmed to each other. Until one day she suddenly became cold to him again. This was to be expected given her nature as a woman of very bad character, so he didn’t mind so much. For him, it was like expecting the sun to rise, a woman of very bad character will always end up being a woman of very bad character.

He remembered a Kiowa legend about a bad woman. This bad woman was married to a man who had become blind. She then deceived and left her husband to die on his own. The Kiowa throw their bad women away. So when the blind man came upon his wife in another camp sometime later, he recognized her by the sound of her voice and exposed her bad nature to everyone there. So they threw her away.

And that is what Young Man did. He threw this woman of very bad character away.

Soon, unknown to him, his friend took on another lover. Again another woman of very bad character. However, this woman's very bad character wasn't as evident as the first woman's very bad character. They warmed to each other immediately. Until, eventually when he got to know her too, she predictably revealed herself as a woman of very bad character. And he had no choice but to throw her away. But this time it dawned on him. Why did his friend who he was so fond of always end up with women of very bad character? He soon came to one conclusion. That she, too, was a woman of very bad character. He did try to convince himself that it was only moderately bad character, but this only sounded foolish to him. It was very bad character. After some thought, he finally admitted that to himself.

So he threw her away.

SHOP TALK

He is taking a piss behind a dumpster.

His friend is wandering around a nearby parking lot, but he doesn't see him, so he calls out. He doesn't say a name, or anything rational.

"THIS HAS BEEN A VERY UNLITERARY EVENING, YOU FUCKER."

They are inebriated.

The world is a drunken blur.

His friend calls back to him.

Two words.

"Shop talk."

This group of men. These indigenous scholars. The best of the best and brightest. They believe they are the future, that they will change the world. Alter the way things are and always have been. They sit in a bar and talk about how smart they are. "You're a fuckin' genius!" "Bullshit, you're a fuckin' genius." They have a rule. Only one. You can't "shop talk." If you discuss politics or literature or anything related to school or work, then somebody will call out "Shop talk!" and you have to finish what you are drinking in one swig or take a shot of hard liquor. This is his first time in this circle. He "shop talks" frequently throughout the night. He likes, no, loves tequila. "To Kill Ya," he laughs. His

friend is slamming mojitos. It all goes downhill from there. He loses focus. No. They lose focus. No. Everybody loses focus.

They feed off of each other's negative energy. They talk about anger.

About white people.

About pain.

About struggle.

Shop talk.

He wakes up on a bench near the 4th Avenue underpass. His head pounding. Hungover. Dried blood crusted on his shirt, hands and face. He doesn't know how long he has been there. He vaguely remembers an altercation from the night before, three white kids, college age. One of them confronted him and words started pouring from his mouth. Words not his own. Even as he was yelling, he wasn't sure if he believed them. Earlier that night, he was drinking with his friend. A Diné doctoral candidate. Angry words came from his friend's mouth. About the world. White people. He found himself saying these same things to the white kid in front of him. Then the punches came. The kicks. To his head. To his ribs. They all joined in. He went in and out of consciousness. He remembers crawling to the bench after they left him. Lying down to sleep. Breathing in, savoring the tinny taste of blood. When he passed out for the final time, he whispered to himself:

"Shop talk."

She is spread out on a table. His friend elbows him: "That rough chick. Look at her! She's trying to act sexy." He knows this, but he doesn't want to look. Her seedy boyfriend hovers over her, they kiss and dry hump on the table.

His friend elbows him again.

"Holy shit they're gonna fuck."

He thinks about the black mold in the bar bathroom. About the tacky space heaters set up around the whole place. About how if they are in this shitty dive bar at their age, what will they be doing twenty years from now? He thinks about an old paradigm, where indigenous people were thought to be in conflict with white people. That if they had just been left alone everything would have been fine. That right now, everything would be ok. But he doesn't believe

this anymore. He sees the conflict within indigenous people, how they battle each other. How his friends, family and loved ones battle themselves. How he battles himself. His friend looks away from the couple grinding on the table, back over at him and says: "That is fucked up."

"Shop talk," he replies.

They both glance at each other, then finish their beers in one drink.