

For “Little Brother Who Sings”

ODE TO THE COYOTE © JOEL NELSON



*Sit little brother and we will talk—you and I
We go back a long way together—you and I
Back to a time when both our worlds were larger—yours and mine*

*Time was when we were young—our legs unsteady
Then as our strength grew so grew the primal urge to hunt
Your urge was to fill your hunger
Mine to fill a hunger to kill
Instinct remains far longer than the need for instinct
For years my finger itched as my urge grew
And you became mistrustful
I taught you well how to mistrust man*

*And still you sat on your hills around my camps
And kept me company at night with your songs
Which told the story of what a good life we had
When our worlds were much larger—yours and mine*

*You learned so quickly how to mistrust my kind
While I was so slow to learn until my child became my teacher
My traps now hang rusting on a nail
But they were no match for your cunning anyway*

*My rifle though still in my hand is not for you
Except to send showers of rocks and dirt upon your careless children
And don't look disdainful—Little Brother—my aim is still true
I am teaching your children fear and mistrust for my kind
to save your kind*

*You are no longer my enemy or I yours
Our world is too small for those feelings
Though others of our kinds are not yet so wise as we
Perhaps they will inherit our wisdom from their children*

*We are brothers now you and I
And if times should become hard for you and yours
Take a calf from my herd—but use discretion
And don't spread the word around*

*Lest others of my kind
Thinking surely I have become senile and old
Take matters into their own hands*

*Go on your way now and feel free to trot past my camp
And sit and scratch the flea behind your ear
And tease my dog on cold mornings
Bring your brothers to the hill near my camp
And let us hear your songs at night*

*For as long as we can hear your songs
We will know our world is still large enough
Yours and mine*

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