

The image shows a rugged coastline with dark, layered rock formations in the foreground. Waves are breaking against the rocks, creating white foam. The water is a deep, dark blue-grey. In the background, a dense line of green trees marks the horizon under a sky filled with large, grey, dramatic clouds. The overall mood is wild and atmospheric.

# Killbear Park, the Wild Side

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# Chapter 1

Gray Fox

1860

Gray Fox looked out at the ice and snow covered expanse of what had become known more often as Georgian Bay and he stopped for a moment, caught by a spell cast when a veil of cloud moved in front of the moon and became colored along with the entire region with an orange sheen. *The night ends and new day begins*, thought the Fox, as he was usually called. *The scene before me marks not just a new day but also the beginning of great events. Previously, on this land for as far back as our legends reach we, the Ojibway, were the only people here. Yet the stone food bins beside the Shebeshekong River tell us people were here before us. We also have been pushing the Lakota westward while the Iroquois have been advancing from the south. Recently there have come traders, loggers and fishermen. More people are arriving all the time. Presently the world is painted orange as the moon dips toward the west while additional people arrive and a new time begins.*

*Of all the places I've visited, mused Fox, this area is the most beautiful I have seen. In such original beauty I know the Creator is present and regardless of all the trouble that keeps coming we can understand the spirit of life is so much greater than the difficulties, even tragedies, I have to overcome.*

Fox walked to the narrows where he used a stick to clear snow away from both ends of a gill net stretched under the ice. Next he broke up ice covering each end so he could pull on a leather cord and start withdrawing the net. After removing a trout, he replaced the net then covered the extraction holes again with snow to keep ice from returning too thickly.

Fox prepared the trout for cooking before he carried it to the wigwam where his wife and daughter were busy patterning clothing particularly coats with unique designs fashioned with porcupine quills.

"Your work adds beauty to the world," said Fox, before he started to prepare the fish on a skewer above a small fire.

“The world is beautiful if we can only see it,” replied his wife, Singer. “We take part of what we see and hold it in patterns of quills.”

While Fox took off his bear skin coat then sat down at the far side of the lodge, Singer noticed strength etched across his face and in the size of his muscular arms and legs although he was of average height. He tied his black yet graying hair back from his face where lines marked struggles he overcame to bring happiness to his family. His alert black eyes were revealed to be brown when sunlight shone into them.

Fox felt a surge of contentment when he watched his wife, Singer, and daughter, Fawn, forming their artistry in the comfortable lodge. Both women had rubbed their long, black hair with seed oil. Their faces portrayed natural beauty of calmness akin to a lake at rest before being rippled by the first breeze of a new day. There was also fire behind this film of calm and Fox tried to avoid stirring up the anger. Rarely, he stoked it. By being careful, he could avoid these storms, usually.

*Storms can't always be avoided,* mused Fox as he continued to enjoy this time in his lodge. He acquired a taste for coffee by working with traders and loggers. He had also learned their languages—English and French.

First he served Singer and Fawn coffee before he sat down again to sip this drink, while he continued to enjoy his home. Flames danced, sending shadows jumping across poles leading to the top of the lodge where a wisp of smoke escaped beyond woven mats and hides covering the outside walls.

“Are you thinking of joining the logging drives again this spring?” asked Singer.

“No,” he replied. “I was planning to travel with other men on a hunt across to the inland lake. I’ll bring back food we will need for our journey to the Seguin River where, as always, people will make syrup along with sugar and catch fish. If you agree, you both could stay here and prepare for our journey to the river while I go to the small inland lake to get food that will be needed.”

“We should stay,” said Singer.

“I like being here,” added Fawn. “I could live here all the time and not leave. There are fish to be caught at the narrows all through the year. The almost constant breeze from the lake blows away flies during the summer.”

“Bear Point is clear of flies also,” noted Singer. “The breeze sweeps away flies from the strip of land pointing out into the water. Bears go down this arm of land then swim over to Parry Island. Hunters push wildlife down

to the point. Bears like most other animals hesitate before getting wet and that's when the hunt begins. We get food we need. Some people are starting to call Bear Point, Killbear Point because that's where bears are hunted when they hesitate before taking to the water. Most animals can swim but they prefer to be on land."

"I've always called that strip of land, Bear Point, but Killbear Point marks it as different from other places where bears are present," added Fox.

"There's so much beauty in this region I'm happy with what I've seen and have no desire to travel farther," said Fawn. "The Creator has placed all the finest beauty right here where we live in this region including Killbear Point, the small bay with its narrows along with the Shebeshekong and Seguin rivers. The food, clothing, and shelter we need are provided. The more we work the more contented we are."

"Newcomers are taking trees, furs and fish—and land," said Fox. "If such taking is done respectfully, removing only what is needed for food, clothing or shelter, then the Creator's garden with its land and water will always provide. If too much is taken, we will go to the natural garden and it will no longer supply our needs. What will life be like then?"

"Maybe you think too much," replied Singer.

"The same situation has worried me too," added Fawn. "If products we need can no longer be gathered from the wilderness, people will have to grow their own plants for food in addition to producing animals and birds for food or furs—or hunting. Trees would have to be grown for wood. Fish could be raised for food. If we are careful with fish and not take too many, the lakes and rivers will always provide although in smaller amounts. Our traditions tell us never to take more than is actually needed. If we remove more than we require, the way trees are now being taken, the wilderness will no longer provide and people will have to produce for themselves."

"Our youngest member sees the future," said Fox, feeling admiration for his daughter.

"You know the past," said Singer to Fox. "Our daughter sees the future, soaring to distant places presently unseen by others. Maybe I prepare for the present. The trout is cooked."

Fox served roasted fish. Singer added wild rice, saved from the previous season and Fawn prepared rice tea. They enjoyed a banquet to greet the new day with the past known and the future just a gray cloud not yet appearing to be a storm.

Following the meal, Fawn poured more tea while Fox entered one of those times in life that he enjoyed the most. Because he was a man of constant work and action, during those few occasions when he rested, he was caught by the full enjoyment of another side of life. He savored a chance to look back upon the past, consider the present then perceive the best trail to take for the future.

“This area from here to Killbear Point is the most magnificent place I’ve seen or could imagine,” he said to his family. “Singer, you have shared with Fawn knowledge of all healing plants along with those best for food. People, who were here before the Ojibway, built those food storage bins beside the Shebeshekong River. Now we use them to store wild rice along with smoked or dried meat, providing for us a secure source of supplies to help in a time of shortage. As we said previously, shortages might come in the future because even in my time with my knowledge of the past, there are, every year, fewer and fewer birds and animals. The Creator’s garden is the wilderness and it has always supplied what we need; but we were few in number and now more people keep coming here, such as loggers, settlers, and traders. Everyone takes from the garden. What will we do when there are more people coming to the garden than there are products to be gathered?”

“As we mentioned before,” noted Singer, “when the forests or lakes can no longer provide for all the people then these products will have to be produced in gardens prepared by people. Plants will have to be farmed along with animals and birds. If hunting continues to be in demand then animals and birds must be raised for this purpose. People will have to prepare their own crops and no longer gather supplies from the Creator’s wilderness. We must not destroy the wilderness for it is more than a bunch of supplies, such as logs or meat. In the forest, we walk among the structures of the Creator’s works on earth where this sacred presence brings pure joy of life for those who see and for such a sight all a person has to do is be a seeker. For such a person, the Creator’s light will shine out from physical forms. We will find, so guided, our way home in the spirit world. We have all come from there. Those of us who seek this light of home will find it. Some will turn away, follow their own trails and finish alone. Such an end is the only evil on earth. To protect us from such evil, Fawn and I have a musket. We will use it if evil people come here while you are traveling to the inland lake to get caribou meat for our journey to the Seguin

River where we always have made syrup and sugar. We will also catch fish. Fawn and I will prepare furs obtained this winter. We will get them ready to take to a trader to get new supplies such as flour and coffee.”

“Just as there has been less of everything all the time,” said Fox, “there have been less caribou at the lake each year. As you have said, though, I’ll take the toboggan and should be able to bring back food we’ll need for our journey to the river.”

“As always,” said Singer, smiling brightly, “you have a good idea.”

“You both are in as much harmony as the forest is with a lake or other parts of the wilderness are with each other,” noted Fawn.

“That’s the way life is for the seekers,” replied Singer.

“So you accept my idea of going to the lake to get food for our journey while you both stay here and get furs prepared for trade along with getting ready to travel to the river?” concluded Fox.

“I like your idea,” replied Singer, smiling.

“I thought a man was supposed to be in charge of his family,” said Fawn.

“He’s in charge of listening to his wife,” replied Fox.

“I agree with you,” added Singer.

Feeling a special spirit in the lodge, Singer picked up her drum and tapped it to accompany a song she started to sing. From her voice, she had received her name. Her legends told of the past with the way life was and could or should always be. Taken back, through the melody of Singer’s voice, Fox and Fawn visited again days that once were including exploits against enemies, such as the Lakotas. Also, there were times of exploration along with visits to families and favorite places on earth from the narrows to Killbear Point where the winds of many winters turned branches and trunks of pines eastward and sent water of presently called Georgian Bay splashing against shorelines over and over again in a cycle of splendor unmatched anywhere by clean water and wild land where birds along with animals gathered and diminished. As wild creatures decreased in numbers, those remaining became less a source of supplies for people and more essential for their own presence that supplied not physical nourishment but food for the soul or each person’s spirit. After becoming too scarce to continue as a source of food or logs, birds, animals and trees will continue for their spiritual presence. People who are aware of this essential gift must protect the wild from those who do not see that life has changed.

The legends accompanied Fox and Fawn in their thoughts about these topics then, suddenly, the singing stopped and father and daughter returned to awareness of their happy home in this lodge near the narrows. “Sometimes,” said Fawn when the ice of winter is not here and I’m checking the gill net at the narrows, I’ve noticed water passing through this channel between Georgian Bay and the pond constantly changes. The current flows toward the pond then, after a short time swirls back out to the Bay. Even on calm days, when no breeze ripples the surface, the current is always moving as one life, breathing in and out. We are always learning and growing, becoming better than we were before. That is why we are here, to experience hardships, which don’t exist in the spirit world, so we can keep improving.”

“I enjoy the harmony and peace of a time such as this,” said Singer. “All the work we do enables us to have moments of rest and reflection as our present time. Sometimes I enjoy doing nothing but such luxuries come only after much work has been completed.”

“We’re all enjoying this rest,” said Fox. “We know more work is coming. Right now, however, we can just enjoy accomplishments of the past.”

“I had a vision,” said Singer, “of clouds along the horizon turning from gray to orange then red before there was a blaze of light when all good things come together and we walk into this home.”

“I like our time of rest so much maybe I could just sit here forever and you could both bring me food and tea,” suggested Fox.

“How can we do that when we are resting too?” asked Fawn. “Maybe you and I could enjoy food and tea while mother serves us.”

“I’ll serve you both as I always do after you have prepared the food and tea that I will serve,” suggested Singer.

“You’re both too smart to catch with words so, tomorrow, I’ll have to start the journey to the small inland lake,” concluded Fox.

“Work always returns,” noted Singer, “but we enjoy it too. It helps us to appreciate times of rest, such as our present occasion. We have to work to get here. A time will come when people will have to work to produce their own food on farms or ranches when such products are no longer supplied by the wilderness. Its role will stop supplying physical products but will continue to provide spiritual blessings by a garden that is of the Creator.”



“The sound of your songs would be enough to start me traveling in my thoughts to forest trails,” mused Fox. “Words added to the music tell the legends and also remind me or any listener of our past. New times are upon us. We include more trapping to get furs to exchange with the traders. We have a good supply prepared, which will enable us to obtain many useful items. You both have things you enjoy. I could get a gun but I prefer the bow and arrow. I enjoy making arrows. A hatchet supplies us with wood and can also be a weapon. I can throw an axe with accuracy.”

“Life is good in this region,” observed Fawn. “Maybe you could delay a day and bring in a turkey for a meal before you leave.”

“Good idea,” exclaimed Fox. “If I delay long enough, maybe I’ll decide not to go anywhere, any time.”

“Let’s not forget we have to work first before we can enjoy our comfortable home where we all want to stay,” cautioned Singer. “Our home is larger than this lodge. Our camp covers this gorgeous region. From our surroundings, we gather what we need. We could start with a turkey then get a caribou for the longer journey.”

“Tomorrow we’ll dine on turkey,” concluded Fox.

Following dreams at night of new adventures that would arrive with changing seasons, Fox greeted the new day by relighting the lodge’s fire. In rays from the new sun, he left the lodge and entered the thickest tangle of brush to be found in the forest. First he saw tracks left by the large birds as they followed small streams trickling from springs. Tracks led to a group of birds feeding in a valley.

He fitted an arrow to twisted fiber of the bow’s string. This shaft, guided by a fletching of turkey feathers, flashed forward stretching one bird out on the snow while the others faded from view. Fox prepared the turkey for spitting over a fire. He returned to his lodge where his wife and daughter met him, showing no surprise at how quickly he could supply food needed.

While meat roasted, they experienced contentment, filling the home. Fawn added more quills to a design from the past on a coat. Fox prepared and served rice tea before he sat down, welcoming a time of rest as legends spoke from Singer’s songs. Accompanied by her drum, her voice sang of the great past of the Ojibway. From the east beside salt water they had come, pushing westward their enemies the Lakota and stirred westward themselves by the empire of the Iroquois pushing out in all directions from a home base to the south. Almost always her songs spoke of the Creator,

who, for the people, supplied needed food and other necessary products from the forest. Everything worked together, only appearing to be separate. All parts were joined, as one life breathing in and out.

“The old songs tell us, remind us not to take too much from the wilderness or it will stop providing for all our needs,” repeated Fox. “When there are too many people taking too much the old system will stop working and a new one must begin. People must no longer gather from the wild but produce for themselves. I see this change starting to happen.”

“Do you live too much in the future, father?” asked Fawn.

“We call such views the future but they are part of the present,” answered Fox. “Now I am commenting on clouds I see along the horizon. They will sooner or later become the present.”

Fox enjoyed contentment of a man who has supplied good things to his family, bringing them happiness. They enjoyed the moist, tender turkey, followed by coffee.

Early the next day, with a supply of turkey packaged on the toboggan along with rush mats to cover a shelter, Fox looked around at the landscape painted along with the sky by hues of orange from the moon. He started traveling to the inland lake, following a trail, which avoided outcroppings of rock.

When the warming sun had moved past the middle of the sky, he started bending saplings to form a dome-shaped shelter to be covered by rush mats. The structure faced east, looking out over the lake. He built a fire in front of his temporary home.

Sitting within the fire’s warmth, Fox thought, *if people saw me they might think I am alone. Yet I know I’m never alone. I have spirit company of my family along with surrounding landscape that although diminishing can continue to provide as long as this is done respectfully.*

The sun gradually dropped from view after coloring land and sky with a last spray of crimson. The night brought wind. When light of next day arrived, this wind was filled with snow.

Fox walked out on the snow and ice covered lake. He waited where there had been a trail formed by caribou tracks. After the passage of much of the day, out of a wall of blowing snow, there loomed forms of approaching caribou. Fox sent out a carefully aimed arrow followed quickly by another then a third before he walked toward a dark form on the snow.

Working where the caribou had fallen, Fox prepared the meat along with the hide and loaded both onto his toboggan. He returned to camp where he secured bundles for traveling while selecting some pieces of meat to roast on sticks held above a larger than usual fire.

*This food is delicious*, he thought as he savored a fine meal. The wind had stopped, leaving behind the snow covered lake and surrounding forest painted red by the first colors of a setting sun.

Ravens called while they came for food where Fox had worked on the caribou. They took to the sky when a fox arrived then a mink. All fed well and were content to leave the site before five wolves arrived.

*One part of life ends while the total life continues*, thought Fox as he watched the ancient story unfold before him. *Caribou herds continue to live, although they dwindle. Will the other parts of this ancient partnership be blamed for a reduction in supply by increasing numbers of people? Back at the lodge we have many furs ready for trade to get needed supplies. Each day changes from morning to night as seasons too are always turning from one to another. Long lines of geese honk while flying from south to north, all called to another exciting transition. While there is constant circling of many declining details, life continues. Maybe there is nothing new under sun or moon except choices made by each unique person. As people are all different, one from another, so too are their choices. That process determines a person's development of spirit and that's what the human story is all about. We can gather legends, sing our songs but they all outline one purpose, being the development each person has planned to hone while moving about in this life span on earth.*

After preparing tea obtained much earlier from a trading post, Fox thought, *maybe I think too much but what's the use of traveling if I don't know where I'm going. Without a destination, there could be no journey. Such a situation would waste the opportunity of life. I wish I could have seen life earlier as an opportunity rather than just something to be endured, one problem after another.*

The third morning at the lake came with a warning. Fox's first thought was the region was on fire. He soon realized the appearance of fire came from the rising sun. It cast a red sheen everywhere. *Something is not right*, he told himself.

Pulling the loaded toboggan, he started the return journey. He felt no warmth from the sun and noticed no brightness from its light. A chill

gripped him. A gray film coated the world as he saw it. Feeling cold and gray he pushed onward, hauling the loaded toboggan behind him. Added to stoke his fears, there came with a breeze blowing out of the west an occasional whiff of smoke. *My family is not so careless as to be adding smoke to any breeze, he recalled. Someone has caused smoke and only a stranger would act against the natural world in such an intrusive way. My conclusion can only be there are strangers at our lodge. The chill I feel from sunlight and grayness I see in a forest come as warnings. Smoke is a third sign of impending trouble.*

As he walked westward, warnings increased until he saw charred remains of his lodge where there remained the motionless form of Singer who had been shot. The same had happened to Fawn.

Silently, as a person who was not actually present but moving about in a dream, he looked after his family. Continuing in this altered state, he followed three sets of tracks leading northward. Along with boot prints there were drag marks left by loaded toboggans. Fox pursued the same as a shadow moving across the snow.

Two nights later, he saw the light of a fire ahead. Fox approached this camp under a clouded night sky with no light from the moon.

*The fire is tall, he noted. Extra time will be needed for the enemies' eyes to adjust to be able to see beyond this light. I'll walk directly to their camp.*

One of the three men left the fireside and walked among shadows apparently to get some wood from a pile. Fox sent an arrow at him. The shaft stuck and the man seemed not to believe the sight of this strange, feathered object puncturing his body. The next arrow crumpled him.

Noticing something unusual at the woodpile, a second man investigated only to be stopped by a whizzing sound just before an arrow pierced his midsection. He fell over, missing a shaft that filled space where he had been and sent sparks shooting from the fire.

Fox was advancing swiftly past the second fallen form when a shot rang out. Fox was knocked backwards, falling near the other man.

"Was that your family back there?" asked the man beside Fox.

"Yes," he answered.

"I did not sign on to harm people," said the voice. Both men could see only sky. There was just the sound of one voice talking to another.

"You have killed me," continued the voice. "Reese Wilson has shot you. He was trying to cheat the women out of their furs when one of them

reached for a gun covered by a bear robe then Reese shot both women. He took all furs along with other cash and valuables then burned the lodge. Rick, the other guy, and I were saddened by Reese's actions. He is a violent man with a temper."

"He is approaching," said Fox. "I can hear boots crunching in the snow."

"He'll finish us both," said the man. "If circumstances had been different we probably could have been friends, explored this land and had a good life."

"Our journey is not over," said Fox. "We will walk to the spirit world. My wife and daughter are approaching and I will join them."

"My dog is running toward me followed by my parents," said the man.

The night became quiet. An owl just started hooting when one shot rang out bringing an unnatural silence. Shortly afterward, a second shot shattered the stillness.

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