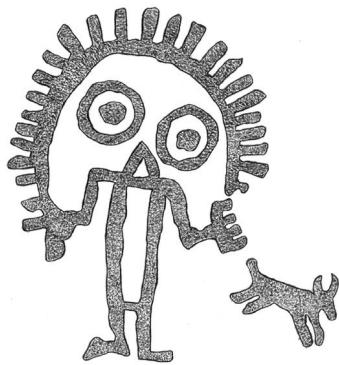


# **On Younger Daldal's Back**

**Thomas Doty**

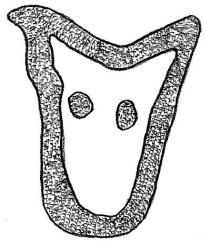


# On Younger Daldal's Back



A Doty & Coyote Story

Ashland, Oregon • 2020



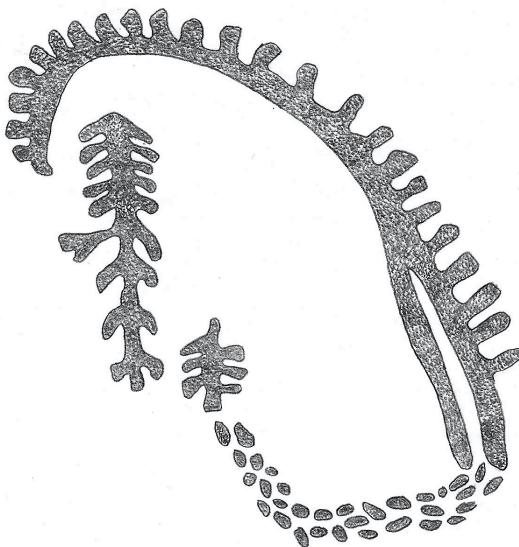
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Cover photo and drawings by Thomas Doty  
Back cover photo by Melani Marx

Coyote and I traipse across the top of the flat-topped mesa called Lower Table Rock. On this autumn night, the stars burn bright, and a rosy moon blushes just over the horizon. Tiny red lights flicker along the trail, and larger ones blink in the trees on Upper Table Rock, across the valley. Fog snakes along the valley floor, shrouding the Rogue River and the many communities scattered along its course. But Coyote and I walk between fog and stars, and the night breathes mystery into our hearts.

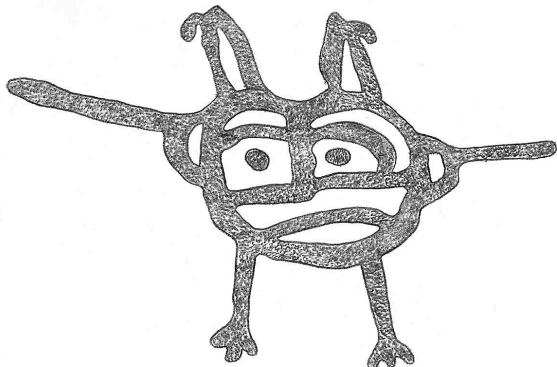


Coyote says, "This is just the sort of night we might meet him."

"Him?"

"Yes, him, that ancient one, the master of tricksters from the Old Time, that younger dragonfly brother. Across the valley there, that's Elder Daldal, the older of the two brothers. He's far too serious to my liking. But here on this rock, we are standing on the back of Younger Daldal, master of tricks and magic and brimming with humor. We are standing right on him."

We walk on, crossing the abandoned landing strip, stepping carefully between ankle-twisting rocks, sloshing through vernal pools circled by rabbitbrush, and finally into the trees. We are getting closer to the edge of the rock, a three-hundred-foot drop onto heaped-up piles of razor-sharp basalt. We feel a damp breeze rush our way from the edge, a breeze that lifts fog from the river and laps it over the top like ocean waves onto a beach.



We pass an ancient black oak twisted with shadows and age. An owl hoots five times. Stars spin. Red lights flash! And before Coyote and I know time has passed, we find ourselves walking dangerously close to the edge, many yards from our last steps, the fog lapping our faces damp.

“That was the younger dragonfly,” says Coyote. “See how he works, full of power, the guardian of this rock.”

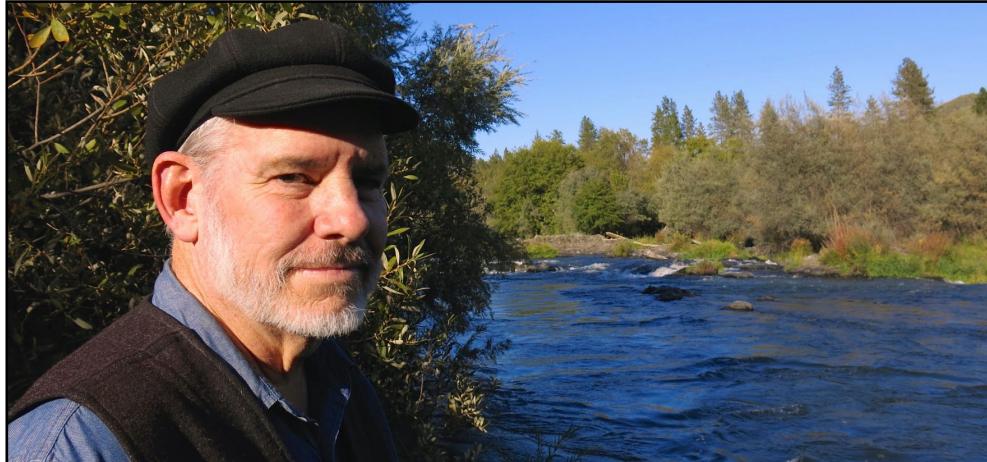
“He might have sent us over the edge. Every few years I hear about someone falling.”

“But he didn’t,” chuckles Coyote. “But he didn’t.”

Between fog and stars, Coyote and I walk back toward the trail that winds down the rock. Neither of us offers a rational explanation for what has happened. Neither speaks. Each senses that silence is what makes the most sense ... right now ... in such a place as this.

**“One of the best of Oregon’s storytellers!”**

**“A cultural treasure.” — “A master of his art.”**



Thomas Doty is a native storyteller. Since 1981, he has traveled the countryside performing traditional and original stories. He learned his art and native cultural traditions from elders, including listening to Grandma Maude, the family storyteller. Doty was born in southern Oregon where he still lives. He is descended from Irish and English settlers who settled in the Rogue Valley in the 1800s, and has family connections to Takelma and Shasta ancestors of the region.

He is the co-founder and co-director of Reading the Rocks, and the author of several books, including *Doty Meets Coyote*, a collection of 40 traditional and original native stories published in 2016 by Blackstone Publishing. His stories have been broadcast on Public Radio, and he is the recipient of a Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award from the national American Indian Program.

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