

A RIME OF GLOOSCAP

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In the morning of time, when the world was new,
Glooscap, the god-man, red of hue,
Set up his teepee—long since gone—
High on the summit of Blomidon,
For where on earth was a site as fine as
The bastioned gate of the Basin of Minas.
Great was Glooscap and vast his strength.
Often in summer he'd loll full length,
Trailing his hands in the Minas tide
And cooling his feet on the Fundy side.
The Wolf and the Loon were his faithful hounds,
And sometimes, too, as he went his rounds,
The Squirrel followed at Glooscap's heel,
Tackling all rivals with equal zeal,
And changed at times by his magic might
To a giant squirrel for a giant fight.
A Skunk had Glooscap, as big as an ox,
Who stood stern first on the Kingsport rocks,
Greeting his guests, in blasts of glee,
With super-teargas artillery;
But soon washed sweet, in the friendliest state
The guests were fed from a magic plate
Where a tiny sirloin of beaver meat
Could feed a thousand yet stay complete.
The arrows of Glooscap were swift as light
They found their mark in unerring flight
And pierced it through and returned straightway
To the hand of their Master. He wore, they say,
A wizard belt that endowed his arm
With omnipotent power against all harm;
While he was the first on all our planet
To make a canoe from an isle of granite,
Using its pines as the masts for sails
To bear him swift through the Fundy gales.
Now giant beavers built of yore
From Blomidon clear to the Parrsborough shore
A mighty dam with a pond to fill
The Annapolis Valley from hill to hill.
Glooscap, out hunting, returned in ire

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To find the flood at his wigwam fire,
 While swimming near Kingsport and almost sunk
 Was the draggled form of his gunner the Skunk.
 Angry was Glooscap. He took his axe
 And with a couple of monstrous hacks
 A four-mile hole through the dam he slit
 And the water sent pouring out past Cape Split.
 Looking to eastward, Economy way,
 He spotted a beaver across the bay
 And flung some boulders across its path.
 Even today they mark his wrath
 For off the shore near Economy Highlands
 His rocks remain with the name "Five Islands."
 The beavers have vanished long ago
 But we know that the tale of their size is so,
 For their bones have been dug out, sure enough,
 From the fossil grave-yard of Horton Bluff,
 While entrails of moose that Glooscap slew
 Are reefs along Fundy, plain to view.

II

Unmarried was Glooscap, but not alone
 In his Blomidon camp on the cliffs of stone,
 For he brought to his bachelor wigwam there
 An adopted grandmother, Madam Bear,
 To broil his salmon and tend his tent
 While out through the forest he hunting went.
 An adopted boy, named Marten, came
 To be a third by the hearth-fire flame.
 These were the people who had a part
 In the inmost love of great Glooscap's heart.

So, when the sorcerer, Win-pe, sought
 To wound the Master, he straightway thought
 Of kidnapping Marten and Mother Bear
 While Glooscap was absent, hunting the hare.
 Seizing his victims, away he went;
 And Glooscap returned to an empty tent,
 A silent hill and a cold camp-fire;
 But as he stood there in fierce desire
 To know what had happened, to serve his wish
 He chanced upon Marten's birch-bark dish

From which he speedily could divine
Win-pe's offence and his course malign.
Then in pursuit their trail he scanned
From Blomidon clear to Newfoundland;
But many a year and many a throe
Remained before he could meet his foe;
For fierce in his path a sorceress,
Pitcher the Witch, or Pook-jin-skewess,
Made ambushed efforts to thwart the Master
And compass his death in complete disaster.
She took on a hag's appalling form
And pled with him to remove a swarm
Of venomous vermin from out her hair
And each, as his hand removed it there,
Became a porcupine or a toad.
He took no harm and away he strode,
Only to meet with her hate once more
In two fierce she-wolves, but these he tore
To pieces raw with his own two hounds,
Grown by his magic beyond all bounds.
Two amorous witches they also slew,
Who hung on his neck, which they sought to lasso
With smoky nooses of bear-gut wurst,
Magic with spells of a kind accurst,
That would have wasted his strength away
And left him at once as their easy prey.
At last he stood, with these perils o'er,
On wooded Cape Breton's farthest shore
And learned again from Marten's bowl
That Newfoundland's coast was next his goal.
Then he looked at the sea and chanted a song
Whose spell over whales has persuasion strong
And a female whale of the largest size
That ever was seen under human skies
Came steaming up with a foaming track
And took the hero upon her back.
Over the misty seas he sped
With one foot on her tail and one on her head
And landed dry-shod in an hour at most
On a rocky point of the Cape Ray coast.
And he asked Ma Whale: "What thing do you lack o?"—
"Give me a pipe and some strong tobacco,"

She answered straight. And he took his pipe,
 Rich and reeking and juicy ripe,
 And filled it and placed it, as was her wish,
 Between the lips of the giant fish,
 Then he lit it politely and off she sailed
 And as she puffed on the pipe and exhaled,
 She left adrift on the Northern wind
 A wonderful cloud of smoke behind.
 And Glooscap laughed as he saw her go;
 Then turned to discover his ancient foe,
 Win-pe the warlock. With footstep firm
 He crushed him to earth like an evil worm,
 And rescued Marten and Madam Bear
 After years of hunger and slow despair.

III

Tales without number are told today
 Of Glooscap's deeds and the tricks he'd play
 To foil the wicked and help the good
 In every way that a Master could.

Thus a sorcerer sought to assail his power
 In a contest of smoking one evil hour
 And burned out a pipe with a single puff
 As being of mastery proof enough.
 But Glooscap's pipe was ten times greater
 Than that of this nicotine-gliadiator
 And he cleared it all in a single spasm
 And blew in the mountain a smoking chasm.
 And the sorcerer scuttled away in panic
 At proof of a lung-power so titanic.

Then a lordly giant, as tough as nails,
 Invited Glooscap to fish for whales
 They went by canoe and in the prow
 Stood mighty Kitpoo-seeagunow,
 With a spear in his hand, and his feet wide-straddled,
 While Glooscap sat in the stern and paddled.
 The giant's great spear was strong and sharp.
 He speared a whale as you'd spear a carp.
 But Glooscap smiled and he trimmed the sails
 And murmured, "I mostly bait with whales."
 And he took the whale and baited his line
 And trolled with care in the heaving brine

Till right off the Continental Shelf
He caught the great Sea-Serpent himself.
Now the heart of Glooscap was wondrous kind
When men of the Micmaes became inclined
To seek him out and implore his aid
In granting some wish that their souls had made.
Three men of the tribe one day had gone
To visit the Master on Blomidon;
And the first besought him for peerless height,
To stand erect in his fellows' sight;
The second asked to stay always there
Amid Blomidon's beauty and fragrant air;
While the third man begged him for length of days,
Watching the centuries pass their ways.
Then the Master thought and the Master sighed
And turned them to pines by the Minas tide—
Tall and stately and plumed and still,
Daring the centuries do their will,
The noblest trees of the noblest cape
Fashioned by Glooscap to that fair shape.

IV

Glooscap had cleansed the earth of evil,
Cannibal-giant and warlock-devil,
But the hearts of all beasts and men grew bad
And in wicked deeds were exceeding glad.
Then was Glooscap oppressed in spirit;
Glooscap moaned till the moon could hear it:
"Wicked are all in the world today.
I cannot bear it. I go away."
Then the great Master of men and beasts
Gave to all living the best of feasts,
A final supper by Minas' shore,
Laid out on the beach in abundant store.
Then he spread the sails of his stone canoe
And out into Fundy he passed from view,
And they watched him go as he passed from sight
And they heard him sing in the gathering night;
Fainter and fainter the great song came,
Faint as a far-off candle-flame,
Till silence fell and beyond all ken
Had passed the Master of beasts and men.
Then all living creatures who once had spoken
A common speech, found their concord broken,

For every species, old or young,
 Gave utterance now in a different tongue,
 Braying and chirping and barking and mewing
 And so on down to each age ensuing,
 Marking the tribes off, each from each.
 Glooscap's departure was met with woe.
 Nature sorrowed to see him go.
 And the Wolf and the Loon bewail their friend
 Night after night till the world shall end,
 While the Snowy Owl in the woods makes stir:
 "Koo-koo-skoos, I am sorry, Sir."

V

Whither went Glooscap? None can tell
 What far adventures his lot befell;
 But legends linger about his name
 That dream the ways of his after-fame.
 Sailing, they say, to west and north,
 He pushed his craft on a broad stream forth,
 A mighty river, serene and fair,
 Where he sailed with Marten and Madam Bear.
 But the stream grew narrow and dark and swift,
 Stony-bedded and shadowy-cliff'd;
 Higher and higher arose each bank,
 And then in a tumult the river sank
 White over monstrous cavern-sills
 And under the base of the ancient hills.
 Swift as an arrow the small boat sped
 With only the black of the cave o'erhead,
 And the waters wailed as they swept in grief
 By hidden boulder and unseen reef.
 Marten and Madam Bear paled to hear
 And their strong hearts died in their utter fear
 At the risk of wreck by the slightest error,
 The cold of the night and the cold of terror.
 But Glooscap still paddled erect and calm,
 And sang in the darkness a dauntless psalm,
 Sang through the eddy and cataract
 Till the shadows paled and the current slacked
 And the boat swept forth into sun at last
 With the terror done and the danger past,
 And a waiting wigwam beckon'd a gleam
 On the shining bank of a tranquil stream.

Glooscap turned to the corpses twain
Of his friends who had died in their panic pain:
"Numchahse, arise!" And forth they stepped,
And lo, they deemed they had only slept.

There in that far remotest west,
Surrounded by those he loves the best,
He labours, they say, as the years glide by,
Storing up arrows, a vast supply,
Infinite arrows, made swift and keen
For a Day of Battle too well foreseen,
A terrible day when the evil dead
Shall rise from the grave for a purpose dread.
Then Malsum, his brother, fierce and strange,
Who slumbers now as the Shickshock Range,
Shall come once more as commander fell
Of all of the vampire hosts of hell.
Glooscap that day shall return again
To fight for the lives and the souls of men,
And his arrows shall darken the midday sky
Where the good and the evil by millions die,
And the sun shall set on a waste of mud,
Moistened with flesh and a sea of blood.
But the field shall be won and the wicked destroyed
And kingdom of evil be waste and void,
And the dawn that comes to the earth once more
Shall shine on the righteous for evermore.
Then Glooscap, the Master, once more shall rest
In his Blomidon wigwam, by all men blest,
Healing and teaching, redeeming, forgiving,
The bountiful Master of all things living.