A Peculiar Treasure

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Book One

KONKI

SONG OF THE EAGLE

CHAPTER ONE

Rock-Face jutted out high above the evergreen forest, painted in bright oranges by the blazing sunset. Its glory held little Konki's soul. His eyes reflected its change into gold. As the great Fire Spirit descended into his forest domain and rested in his sacred cave to the west, he sent his arms of purple and violet up into the sky and lit up the night with countless sparks from his hair. Konki noticed that not all the stars were white, but there were reds and blues and one for each color of the great bow that sometimes rested upon the rain. All these stars reflected themselves in the wet blue of Konki's eyes.

Konki's vigil was a sleepless night which held so many wonders that sleep had fled from his eyes like a wild man being chased by a ghost. There were many ghosts of men, the ancestors, and many animal spirits in the woods this night, waiting Konki's choice. He could hear their chanting and wailing songs. He saw many shadows flit past him in the dark. None of these scared him so much as the one that was close by and lasted all the night long. Sometimes it faded into the dark, sometimes approached so close he could feel and smell the old man. He was right behind him, sending shivers up his back. But for him to turn and look or run, would label him outcast. Many had been outcast before, he was told, and their restless souls now roamed the forest and howled for fear of the night. Was it their cries he heard?

Old Wey-cho-kay approached Konki again and again, chanting as he danced throughout the night around the boy huddled within his tabernacle of tree branches. Konki froze and broke out into a cold sweat each time the old man came near.

Konki's vigil stretched out into days. He suffered the heat of the day and the icy chill of the night. He was allowed no fire, visitors, food, drink, nor was he allowed the welcoming sleep that always passed with her arms open ready to receive him, but old Wey-cho-kay chased her away with his relentless chanting.

Feeling very small and frightened, all Konki could do was to peer out of his little tabernacle. It sat in the mouth of the sacred bear cave into which only Wey-cho-kay could enter.

By the third day, Konki was dazed. For all his eight years, he had wanted for nothing. His father had always provided him with food. His mother had always kept him warm. Now, his legs were without feeling from crouching in that little tabernacle. His stomach was past aching. He didn't care anymore about the glorious sunrises and sunsets, the changing of the colors, the stars or the mountains and green woods. He didn't look at the blue sky and try to

figure out the shapes of the clouds or listen to the chirping of the birds and copy the different songs he heard. He looked at nothing. He cared for nothing. He only fed on the buzzing in his head.

Konki was slowly aroused by a growing fear lurking from behind. His eyes blinked repeatedly, and tears rolled down his cheeks. He felt a mean, cruel darkness crawl up out of the bear cave. It pressed itself against his back. His teeth began to chatter. His bones melted and shook apart like the bones in Wey-cho-kay's magic cup. Konki knew that it was the grandfather of all grizzlies, a giant bear of pure hate. One swat of his paw, and Konki would be sliced meat, and everything he knew and loved would be lost forever. It was his death.

Prickly black fur pushed against the tabernacle, shoving it several times as if testing it. The prickly fur pushed against Konki like porcupine quills. He thought the tabernacle would topple over, but it remained firm, somehow. It was only twigs and branches, but it was magic. If he did not move, he knew it would protect him. He must not move. But the pressure increased, and it felt like he was being pressed hard against the branches of the tabernacle, so hard he couldn't breathe. The giant bear pushed and pushed until Konki was thrust straight through the branches of the tabernacle as though he had been boiled into jelly and oozed out. Konki had suddenly and magically popped out of the tabernacle unharmed. He rolled onto the ground, got up, and glanceded back. He saw himself still in the tabernacle, but he was also outside it! The form of himself in the tabernacle was dark and still chattering and shaking with fear. It was Wey-cho-kay's magic.

The giant grizzly stood up behind the tabernacle, grunting. It was ready to come after the new Konki, but Konki stared at it curiously. He knew that nothing could hurt him in his new and shining form. The bear moved, but not to come after him. It danced around the tabernacle, twisting and turning, until it grew feathers … or perhaps, it shed its skin. Konki couldn't remember. It was really a giant eagle with a beak as long as his arm, dancing around the tabernacle. It was singing a joyful song. The simple joy filled Konki's heart. The song filled his soul. He couldn't help himself. He began singing and dancing along with the eagle. The chanting was laughter, a joyous laughter.

Konki woke up and realized that he was still inside the tabernacle, but he was gleeful, singing his song as taught to him by the eagle. He now had a personal song which no one else knew nor would he sing it to anyone else but to himself. The eagle was now his animal spirit guide. Konki was singing the song of the eagle, a form of the Great Spirit.

As he sang, Konki saw Wey-cho-kay dressed in his eagle feathers and eagle headdress with his wings spread out, dancing around the tabernacle, singing Konki's song. They were a blend of oneness. They were singing in harmony.

"He giveth power to the faint;

The Great One reneweth strength;

They shall mount up with wings

As eagles, they that wait for him.

They shall walk and not be weary;

They shall run and not be faint;

They shall climb up on high;

As eagles shall they fly,

They that wait for him.”

Konki chanted and chanted his song until he fainted into a deep sleep. He dreamed that the giant eagle swooped down and grabbed him with his talons and took him up into the heavens. The eagle tossed him into the air, and he landed on the back of the giant eagle. He looked down over the left wing and saw his village. They went higher, and he could see the whole world with all of its forests and mountains, rivers and valleys...the big ocean to the east, and another to the west.

Konki wondered if the eagle would drop him or if her brood would eat him. He gathered courage and asked, "O wondrous eagle of my fathers, what is my fate? Am I to be eaten?"

The eagle answered, "I am taking you to the cave of the Great Fire Spirit."

"Am I to be his meat?" Konki gulped.

"There, you will be given a feast, and you will eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Giver of All Life."

Konki's dream came to an abrupt end as he was yanked out of the tabernacle. He was surprised. Life had been given to his limbs. He still carried that floating sensation as though being carried upon the wings of an eagle. He stood before Wey-cho-kay.

He was so proud of himself now. He had returned from his vigil with his song and his dream.

The old buzzard yanked Konki's arm again, almost tearing it from his socket. He seemed quite upset.

"Tell me your dream!" he demanded.

Just then, Konki's older brother, who was a full fledged warrior, appeared on the trail and watched. Konki noticed and smiled at him. But the old man yanked Konki again, trying to shake him back to reality, demanding again that he tell him his dream.

"I am to be taken to the cave of the Great Fire Spirit to the west," replied Konki with sudden soberness.

"What do you do with my brother?" demanded Konki's brother Wey-not. "Shall I not slay the eagle and save my brother?"

"Slay this eagle, and he shall rise again, but you can have this boy. He is but a dreamer." And Wey-cho-kay threw Konki towards his brother.

"I will slay this one if he does not live up to the code of honor of our tribe, becoming a good provider for the camp," Wey-not said as he grabbed his brother.

"I will not be a provider, but a healer," Konki heard himself say.

"Then you will be banished from the tribe!" both Wey-not and Wey-cho-kay exclaimed.

As the two brothers left the cave of the Great Bear, Wey-cho-kay set fire to the little tabernacle to purge and purify the cave entrance, for only he was allowed up there. He stared back at Konki. Here was the next Keeper of the Path, but he had not chosen the Great Bear, he had chosen the Great Eagle. The path the tribe will take in the future will change because of this small runt who would except no responsibility for the tribe, who day dreamed his life away. The tribe surely will follow Konki to the south and then west. It will be a sad thing.

Wey-cho-kay had known this instinctively and had set Konki on a rigorous path to make him into a man. He would have to be banished from the tribe. They would sing the song of death, and by the mercies of the Great Spirit, Konki, upon his return would be a man.

Konki ran ahead of his brother, anxious to tell his mother about his song and his dream.

"Hey, Little Woman," called Wey-not, "wait up. Don't leave your escort, it will bring you bad luck."

"Why did you call me Little Woman?" Konki called back.

"Because that is your name from now on. That is what everyone is going to call you as you leave on your quest to become a man."

Wey-not caught up to his little brother and put his arm around him. He was proud of him. There was a tear that wanted to come out, but the long years of training didn't let it escape.

"Wey-cho-kay put them up to it," Wey-not said.

"This is the most important day of my life, and they call me Little Woman?" Konki was quite puzzled.

"When you leave us and come back as a man, that will be the most important day of your life. Then the tribe will be proud of you."

"I will leave on my quest and come back a man," Konki said with pride and ran on ahead.

"What makes you so sure?" Wey-not called. He ran to catch his brother. He knew the heartache that was in trading post for him. Nothing he could do or say would prepare him for that. He had been told that they would sing the death song for his brother.

Konki ran on through the underbrush to take a short-cut. Wey-not had to dodge the branches slapping back at him from his little brother's passage.

Wey-cho-kay had sung the song of the Great Bear, the Deer, the Turtle, and many others, and finally the song of the Great Eagle. Konki had responded to the song and spirit

of the Great Eagle. All the other boys of the camp had sung songs of the hunt or songs of war, but Konki had sung the song of medicine. He had chosen to be a healer. But a woman cannot be a healer, and Konki, though a boy, had lived the life of a woman. He cared not for practicing with the bow or the spear, had not shown any interest in hunting and providing for the tribe. He made pottery with his mother and had woven cloth. He had painted pictures to tell of histories. He had played with the animals instead of killing them for food. How was this little woman going to become the spiritual leader of the tribe as the Great Bear had spoken?

How was he, a little woman, going to be the keeper of the ways? He would have to kill that little woman so Konki could become a man. He would fight the woman in Konki with Power. And so now it would start, Wey-cho-kay, the old buzzard chuckled to himself. Konki would have a surprise when he reached the bottom of the mountain.

Konki's family had camped at the foot of the mountain that night. They had sent their eldest son before sunrise to fetch Konki. When they heard Konki's song whispering through the trees, they chanted their own songs of trial, strength and growth. Konki's mother Uno-kay-ti couldn't stop the tears from flowing when she heard her son's harmony blend with her own tongue. She looked forward to catching a glimpse of her son. She would never be able to see him again until he came back a man, but she could peer through the bushes. She would not dishonor him with her presence. She was a woman and could not participate in manly rituals, nor sully them with her presence.

"Hey, Little Woman, wait for me," Wey-not called. "Have you forgotten you have not eaten in three days?"

"I am Konki," the little woman called back. "I have flown with the Giant Eagle whose head is like the great fire in the sky. I am no longer a little woman." He felt as though he were still flying as he descended the mountain.

"You have not come back from your quest. You are not a man yet. You are still a little woman!" Wey-not teased. He had a hard time keeping up with his brother.

"I am going to visit the cave of the Great Fire Spirit in the west," Konki said without equivocation, jumping over rocks and swinging around trees in his path. "The one who rides along the sky and settles down in the west."

Wey-not laughed and teased, "Little Woman is going to the Fire Spirit...Little Woman is going to the Fire Spirit...Little Woman is going to get burned by the Fire Spirit," he repeated over and over in a sing-song voice, laughing at all the energy his little brother had acquired.

Konki saw his father waiting for him in a clearing at the foot of the mountain. Then the unexpected happened rather fast. All the boys from the camp ran out of the woods and got between him and his father. They rushed at him, each one carrying a grass whip. In a glance, Konki saw his father turn his back and start chanting the death song. Konki was

forced to turn and run as the boys whipped him. He never reached the green woods. The boys caught up to him and were on top of him, stripping him naked and shouting, "Little Woman, Little Woman. How are you today Little Woman? Aren't you tired of woman's work Little Woman? When are you going to be a man Little Woman? When are you going to be a man?" All the while, the dry grass blades of the whips cut into his flesh, stinging him.

Konki became so wet with blood that he was able to squeeze through the flailing arms and kicking legs of the renegade mob. They ran after him, through the woods and over the rocks until he was far from the camp boundaries. They formed a semi-ring and heckled him as he ran farther into the forest. The echo of an insidious laugh came from the direction of the Great Bear Cave.

Konki ran on as with the wings of eagles. He only stopped when his body collapsed by itself, spent of all its strength. He fell into a stream bed. It was cold and comforting. He covered his body with its cool mud to take away the sting and pain. But his heart was broken. His mother's sobs could be heard on the wind. He climbed up the bank and collapsed.

When he awoke, it was dark, and he felt sick. A bubble of nothingness rose from within his soul, trying to escape out of his open mouth … a silent scream.

As a bubble rises to the surface of the water, so Konki crawled back the way he had come. His heart led him back to his village. On the way, his hands found roots and berries on their own without thought or feeling. The roots and berries stayed his physical hunger, but nothing could stay the longing he felt for his family, especially his mother. He managed to crawl over an outcrop, a dome-shaped ledge that overlooked his village of bark-covered lodges. The flickering night fires outlined the lodges. He could see tiny figures milling around. He heard as a whisper, his father's chants of the death of his son, Konki.

Chills engulfed Konki, and then sobs...deep throated sobs of a broken heart. He was outcast, bared from his village, for some reason unknown to him. But he would, he swore, return as a man. All human contact had been taken from him. He was unwelcome by man. He was fully alone now, naked and cold. He shivered. He got up and hobbled into the forest where the only welcome he knew was evident. The forest spirits welcomed him. His trial of manhood had begun.

CHAPTER TWO

Konki had looked around in the dark for his leggings, but one of the boys must have taken them. The thought of sneaking back to the village to steal some flashed through his mind, but he would never dishonor his family by doing that.

What he needed was shelter from the cold night air. Even in this evergreen forest, there were trees whose leaves were changing to red and gold. The time of snow would soon be upon him, and without clothing and shelter, he would not survive. Tomorrow, he would have to figure out a way to make himself a coat. A coat meant killing a bear, which meant making a bow and some arrows. He didn't really want that much meat right now. He thought he could smoke it, look for some salt, or keep it in ashes. But right now, he had better find some shelter.

Konki yawned. From tales other boys had brought back, he knew there were plenty of caves to sleep in. Any one of the trails would lead to one. It was hard to see in this moonless night. He didn't want to scrap or cut himself, so he had to be cautious. It was frightening to be alone. His thoughts went back to the village. There had always been people around. When he strayed, his mother scolded him. Now, they didn't want him. He was forced to be alone. He shivered. The mud he had covered himself with began cracking and falling off. That made him feel colder.

Stars covered the sky like a long gleaming blanket. His eyes were adjusting, and he could see more of the trail that seemed to lead to nowhere. It must be really late. The stars had already begun to move. He rubbed most of the mud off, trying to keep warm. He had seen no sign of a cave anywhere. Konki came to a rocky clearing as the path moved upward. The swath of stars inspired him, and he remembered his mother having spoken of the Great Spirit who lived in the sky. He had created the earth and all living creatures on it. The stars were his eyes, she had said, and he watched over all his creations. She told him that if ever he needed any help, to call upon him, and he would give it. He had never needed anything until now. He would call upon him. The Great Spirit lived high enough to see a cave, better than a little lost boy. But, he had better climb to the top of this mountain to be high enough so the Great Spirit would be able to hear him.

Climbing up through the darkness, the trail became thin, and he was continually scraping his already sore limbs and back against the bushes, trees and rocks. He wasn't expert in this because he had grown up with the women, never associating with the boys that always mocked him.

Coming to the top of a knoll, he could see the jagged edge of the black mountain against the blanket of stars. He heard a rustling over his left shoulder that sent chills up and down his spine. It must be a forest spirit, he thought, so he bowed to the earth and asked, "Great and kindly forest spirit, I am looking for the Great Spirit who made all things to ask him for help. Do you know a sacred spot where I might pray? A spot high enough where he might hear me?"

The phantom didn't speak, but moved off slowly, making noises like the crackling of dry grass, the breaking of twigs, and the rustling of bushes so Konki could follow, and that, Konki did. He followed the forest spirit to a rocky ledge overlooking the vastness of stars. The sky was bigger here than anywhere he had seen. He thought, surely, this is where the Great Spirit lives, for I can see all the heavens. He turned to thank the good forest spirit, but it was gone, again sending chills up Konki's spine.

Putting his right foot forward and raising his hands, Konki faced the heavens and spoke.

"Oh Great Spirit, I am thankful for all this greatness I see before me, and I am thankful for thy strength and the protection. I am thankful for the forest spirit who guided me here."

The kind forest spirit had been old Wey-cho-kay who had watched him ever since he had been driven from the camp. He wanted to see what a little woman in the guise of a boy would do.

"And thank you," continued Konki in tears, "for my song and my dream, for my successful vigil. I have such great desire to fulfill my dream and visit the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit to the west, but tonight, I am freezing and I need a cave to sleep in and food to eat in the morning and clothes to wear in the coming snow, or I die. But if I die and come back to thee as my mother said I would, I thank thee for that too, because my mother said that I should be thankful for whatever you give."

Konki folded his arms and shivered, bowing his head against a cold gust of wind. Maybe the Great Spirit didn't hear him, maybe he did, but now, he had to go find a cave. He turned and saw in the distance a faint light coming from the rocks. He followed it and found a cave! The Great Spirit had answered his prayer! He entered and saw to his surprise a freshly cooked rabbit above a fire and a warm black bear's coat. He grabbed the rabbit with one hand and the bear coat in the other, thinking what a great blessing from the Great Spirit. Then a fierce gust blew out the fire!

Great darkness and fear grabbed Konki. It wrapped around him like a great coat and choked him like smoke. His eyes bulged, and his teeth chattered. His bones shook as the bear coat rose up and stood with its paw around his throat. He knew it was the Great Bear Spirit. It was shaking him. He dropped the rabbit and let go of the coat that had come to life.

Konki then heard Wey-cho-kay's voice speaking, "You little thief! You come into a man's cave and steal his fire and his food and take the coat off his back! You will be banished forever! You will never be permitted to come back home!"

When Konki heard this, he ran screaming from the Cave of the Great Bear. The terrors of his three day vigil were back.

Bear Spirit pushing

Bear breath laughing

On the heels of Konki flying

Over rocks fleeing
Bear Spirit striding
Bear teeth gnashing
At the back of Konki dashing
Through tangled bushes
Up rocky passes
Scared running making
Doing maddening dashes
Up rocky passes.

Within a spark of time, Konki found himself behind a bush and wedged between two rocks to hide. He panted like the deer fleeing the puma. His lungs burned for want of air. They were on fire. Surely, this was death, and he was in the place of fire for stealing. He would be forever punished.

The Great Spirit rumbled in the heavens. The night grew suddenly black. A flash of light and thunder boomed and echoed in the mountains. The Great Spirit had come to punish Konki.

A deafening CRACK
And a flash of fire
Exposed a man
Dressed as a bear
Fleeing for fear
Dropping his coat
And into the night
He disappeared.

Old Wey-cho-kay ran down the mountain path, startled by the sudden lightning. Where the evil spirit had been was now a fiery flaming tree. A comforting warmth engulfed Konki. The Great Spirit had not come to punish, but to save, for, in the last flash of light, the crack he was wedged in lit up. There was a cave inside. There was fire for him from heaven, and there was the bear coat on the trail. He would gather that up, gather up the fire, and sleep for the night. He felt safe. He could trust the Great Spirit as his mother had taught him.

In a few moments, Konki had a slow burning fire at his side in a cave the size for a little boy and a bed of black fur to sleep on. He would worry about food and clothing in the morning. A heavy rain cleansed all of nature outside, washing away all thoughts of fear in Konki.

CHAPTER THREE

Upon awakening, Konki remembered dreaming...of having been flying with the eagles, and there had been a strange pale man with golden hair, the color of the blue sky in his eyes, the color of Konki's own eyes. It was his eyes that had brought ridicule from the other children and caused him to play by himself.

Rising up, Konki felt weak and faint. He leaned upon his elbow for a minute to catch his breath. He looked around upon the darkened cave as memories of the previous night returned ... more dreams it seemed to him, that, and the days before. He let it pass.

The fire had gone out, but there was a warm beam of light shining through the crack in the wall. It shone on the overhead roof that slanted down towards him. Konki crawled over to the ashes of his night's fire. They were as cold as his memories. He had not awakened to put on more wood, or maybe the wood was too wet from the rain. Anyway, the bear coat had kept him warm.

Squeezing out of the crack in the rock, he heard the splashing of a spring, and he squinted at the sun. Following the sound of the water, he found a crevice in the rock up ahead with a little water fall and a stream that ran down the mountain-side. There was evidence that during most of the year, the stream was much larger. The water in the stream bed only trickled over the rocks.

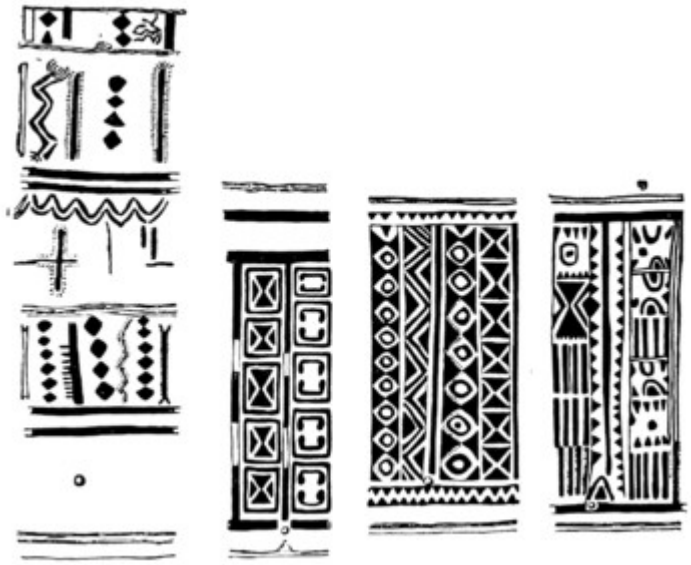
He had forgotten how thirsty he was. He cupped his hands and dipped them into the cold water and drank again and again several handfuls. He found some watercress and mint which he stuffed into his hungry mouth. There was some sweet grass which he feasted on, and looking around, he found some sorrel, lilies and other grass-like plants that had crisp and tender roots which he ate ravenously. He also saw some blackberries farther up. When he had eaten several handfuls, he was stuffed and couldn't eat any more.

Following the stream bed down the mountain, he came to a little marsh which had wild rice growing. He took the rice, and using stones, ground it up, storing it in a little pouch he made using some broad leaves. He twisted grasses together to make a semblance of twine to hang the pouch across his shoulder. He went back up and gathered berries to put with the rice.

Twine...the thought came to him how he might make himself some clothes. Having stayed close to his mother, he knew about making twine for bows and using that skill to weave twine into a rude cloth, as well as making baskets and pottery. He wasn't very skilled at making or using a bow and arrows, not having the inclination to kill his beloved animals of the forest.

Konki spent most of the day stripping grasses and making twine and weaving that into cloth. He made himself some leggings, a loin cloth and a vest. These proved to be very uncomfortable. He thought of cutting up the bear coat, but that would be too hot, and he would need that for when the snow came.

He thought of using bark since they made their lodgings and canoes from bark...but that would be too hard. He was not a turtle. He could not live in a bark shell. Then it struck him that there had been a slave of his aunt's that used to take the thin strips off the inner bark of the white trees and pound them together with a rock. She would make a soft cloth that way, paint some design on it and put it down her clothing next to her heart.



Konki spent some time examining several barks, both of live trees and dead ones. He finally came upon the same white tree that the slave had used. He got a sharp rock, stripped the bark and hammered the pieces together. He wound up with a skirt. He laughed at himself. They would surely have cause to call him little woman now. With the sharp rock, he cut the cloth into a loin-cloth and leggings.

He still had no moccasins. That would take deer skin. He would improvise though; he would take some bark for the bottom of his feet and wrap his feet with the wide leaves of swamp grass.

By the end of the day, Konki was tired and hungry. Tomorrow, he would fashion himself a vest and a coat. Now, he would visit the fire tree to see if any sparks remained. When he climbed back up the mountain, he discovered there were no sparks remaining. Last night's rain drenched the tree completely, washing the fire away. The Great Fire Spirit was entering his cave to the west. Why not ask him for fire as he had seen others do?

So he knelt down with his hands raised to the sky and spent many long minutes asking. His supplication was not forthcoming. He saw no clouds gather like last night, no lightning or thunder, not even in the distance. At least, he got to watch the sunset. He had to watch the great beauties of Nature which always inspired him. He was no medicine man, for sure. He could not make fire come down out of the sky. He would have to work for it like everyone else. He knew that fire was held within the rocks and fine dry wood or bark. He was wearing some, and the mountains were full of flint, the fire rock.

It wasn't long before Konki, upon striking two stones together against some of his bark loin-cloth, got a fire started. He found some dry twigs under thick bushes, and used the sap of evergreen needles to aid his fire.

He needed a bowl, so he got some clay from the spring and formed a bowl and fired it in the embers of the fire as his mother had taught him. After that was done, he cooked his rice and berries with some water and ate. Being well satisfied, he gave thanks to the Great Spirit, took fire into his cave and crawled up in the bear coat and went fast to sleep.

Konki woke up choking on the smoke from his fire. Someone was slapping him on his back, driving him out of his little cave. He squeezed out the hole quite dazed. He went to the spring and splashed water in his face, ate a few roots and berries and drank lots of water to get rid of the smoke. He still felt dazed. He couldn't quite wake up. The mountain-side seemed but a dreamland.

Konki chanted his dream-song as he descended the mountain. He was oblivious to his surroundings. He stepped over stones and fallen branches without stumbling and without making a sound. He walked through the undergrowth and around trees without touching them as if he were a ghost. Something inside him had snapped. The world had changed, or the way he had before seen the world had changed.

Old Wey-cho-kay had found his lost bear coat. The Great Bear Spirit had led him through the Great Bear Cave, through crevices and through holes until he came to a hole above Konki, and there it was, keeping Konki warm. A little trail of smoke climbed up to Wey-cho-kay, giving him an idea. He went back the way he had come, dropped some dried medicine plants onto Konki's fire. They would keep Konki in the dream world so the spirits could guide him to man-hood. He dropped himself down into the little cave as Konki began coughing. He hit Konki on the shoulder repeatedly, on the sensitive points of his soul to get him to wake up to the guiding spirits...ones that would lead him to power.

Konki's young life had been one of harmony with the land and all the forest spirits. He had talked to the deer and the bobcat and the wolf, to the rabbit and the turtle, and all the animals of the forest, learning their ways. The deer would follow him, and the bobcats and wolves would play with him. He had talked to the plants and the rocks to find out all their special properties of healing or of poison or what to use in crafts, and his face was always directed towards the sky as if talking to the Great Spirit.

When other little boys played with bows and arrows, played war games, or hunted by shooting their miniature arrows into birds or chipmunks, Konki would chide them, but they would only laugh at him. Konki loved the animals and didn't want them to be hurt. He would rarely eat meat. When he did, it was in the time of snow. He watched his mother to know what plants to eat, which ones were for healing, and which ones hated man.

As Konki grew, a deep rift opened up between him and the other boys. He spent more time alone or helping the women make clothes or build their lodgings. What he liked best was making pottery and decorating them. He liked decorating the leather clothes with beads and shells. He was often found writing on the rocks and making up stories for passers-by.

But he would get scolded by the men for not telling the truth.

Other boys became proficient in the tomahawk, the spear, and the bow. They laughed at, jerked, and pushed Konki, calling him a girl because his talents didn't lie in the same paths as theirs. The boys liked to gather around the men who told war stories and chanted gruesome songs of blood and gore. They liked to help torture prisoners taken in battle. He was chided and shamed for not doing so. He was not one of the brave ones.

He knew it wasn't right to maim or to kill. He was taught this by his mother and the other women who suffered when their men were killed in battle or lost their sons to war. Women could not go out and hunt like the men. But for the most part, the widow was taken care of, and if she was still of child bearing age, was given to the brother of her husband (unless he had enough wives already). Konki took all their sufferings in, and all their religion in the stories they told. He knew of the pride of men, their cruelty and the hardness of their hearts caused by war and war-like games. His mother also taught him the ways of their ancestors, of the different allies of animal spirits, and of the creation of their people and the structure of their society from stories, of why there had to be war and hunting. It was all set up long ago, and if they changed their ways, the animal spirits would leave them and not help them anymore, and they would starve and die off.

Wey-cho-kay watched Konki. He had written the history of Konki on the palm of his hand. If Konki would not become a warrior in the sense of going to war with other tribes, and if he refused to join the hunt to provide for the camp, then there was only one path for him. He would have to become a warrior of a different kind. The spirits had chosen Konki to take old Wey-cho-kay's place, and that meant that he would have to become a warrior for the souls of men. And in order to do that, he would have to do battle. If he wouldn't fight men, he would have to fight with spirits. He could die in the process...then good riddance. We don't need a woman in a man's body, thought the old man. But if he lives, he will have the power to heal and to guide the people.

Konki had never liked old Wey-cho-kay. There was something sinister in his eyes. They looked out from the mouth of the Great Bear he kept draped around him. They were surrounded by giant teeth and always glared at Konki. At times of story telling when all the children gathered around the old man, those eyes reflected the camp fire which pierced Konki's soul. They melted Konki's bones, and he would retreat, silently slipping away from the group. Whenever he was scraping hides or making pottery and old Wey-cho-kay would walk by, he could feel those staring eyes sear the back of his neck, and he would slip away, leaving the chore to someone else.

Wey-cho-kay glared at Konki, peering at him from behind the rocks and trees as he followed Konki down the mountain. As a giant grizzly bear, the old man stalked in silence, looking out from the soul of the grizzly. He was the guardian of the land and of the people. He could not allow this misfit to live. He sought the opportunity to kill Konki's old self. He would have to wound him at the right spot where power would change this misfit into a warrior. Then and only then could he become a contributor to the people. Only a hunter or a warrior contributed to the people. If only he could be tricked into fighting … He would trick the boy into thinking he was being killed and the great mother would rescue him and give him an ally, a guardian spirit. The boy would have to fight for his life, or the great mother would have to fight for him … all the same thing. But all of this could only be done in a place of power where the Great Spirit manifests itself. The Great Bear Cave was such a place as was the place of prayer where he had led Konki the other night.

It would take a long battle to turn this little woman into a warrior. Even if it meant killing the boy, he would keep the ways of his people safe.

CHAPTER FOUR

The old man watched Konki. He peered carefully and knew that Konki was dreaming and rethinking his whole life. He knew this by reading the symbols in the little whorls of light that surrounded the boy. When the boy woke, Wey-cho-kay would present him to the Great Eagle either to be eaten up in death or to be spewed out of his mouth alive. Only then could he teach the boy the way of the warrior. Either the boy would fit into the Bear Clan or take old Wey-cho-kay's place as Guardian. The old man may have to sacrifice his place in the tribe in order to save Konki.

Konki day dreamed as he found his way down the rocky slope. He dreamed of a sacred spring which his mother had led him to. She said that one of her ancestors had worshiped his gods there.

"His name was Gawain MacKonki," she had said quite reverently, "... a warrior with horns coming from his head, holding the great circle in one hand and a long knife in the other. His hair was golden like the sun, with hair to hide his face so that you only saw his eyes, which were the color of the sky, like yours. He had another horn at his side. He would lift it to his mouth and blow into it. It sounded like the cry of an elk. He struck fear in the hearts of all our warriors, for he was a giant, and he came across the great waters in a large canoe led by a monster from the sea."

She had on her wrist, an amulet made of golden hair. She said that it had come from his head before he died from a wound in battle. “He had been a great warrior.”

"I have dreamed of men like this," he had told his mother.

"There was a time when we lived in the north countries. The yellow haired men lived among us then," she said. "But there was an argument between our people and theirs. We fought each other. They fought valiantly, as we hailed them in our songs, but at that time, our people were many ... too many for them, so they left and never returned."

"Why has not my father told me of these things?" Konki had asked.

"He is a warrior," she had explained. "Warriors do not talk of the dead. It would steal their strength when it is time for battle. Only the women can talk of such things."

"Mother," Konki had asked, "am I a woman?"

She had held Konki to her breast. "I think not, my dear child. I think not."

"Will I be a warrior then?"

"I think not," she had replied. "...not that either."

"What will I be then?" he had asked, quite bewildered.

"Only your death will tell. Only when you face your death will you know what your

life will be, my dearest son. Your eyes of the sky color tell me you are very special." Then she held Konki out at arms length. "Promise me you will never tell this to anyone except your children. Promise me."

"I promise, mother," he had said. "Mother, if I die, how will I tell my children?"

"Only your death will know."

"Mother, is that my trial of manhood?"

"Yes. It is that," she had said quite frankly.

Konki dreamed of a visit to the sacred spring. It was in a small clearing in the woods trickling from a rocky outcrop. It formed a small pool before the water flowed out to join a larger stream two leaps away. Boys from the village followed him and watched him from behind the bushes. They came to tease him. As he worshiped at the spring, he sang:

Spring of bright waters,
Two waters brought together,
One water lapping our shore,
One water bubbling forth
From under the ground,
One man holds them both,
One man alone,
One water in each hand,
One man alone.

Then the boys began chanting:

Little piss-ant thinks he's a bird.
Little piss-ant sing us a song.
Fly away home little piss-ant.
Fly away home and piss on your mommy.

The boys pissed into the spring, chanting "Piss, piss, piss!"

Konki yelled in anger as he woke from his dreaming. His yell echoed off the mountains as an arrow pierced his back through the shoulder. It pierced his frail torso and lunged him forward into blackness over a steep cliff. Wey-cho-kay had taken careful aim and shot the arrow into an important spot of power on his back, a place of a little whorl. The chasm into which he fell was called by his people, The Chasm of the Warrior's Fate, a spot of great power where warriors of the soul were born or killed. Now it was up to Konki's

death to choose him or to spit him out.

Konki fell through the blackness. He was conscious of falling, but he couldn't be sure whether he was falling up or down. He fell for a long time. The blackness was everywhere. It seemed to him there was something tight about his shoulders and head like bands that wouldn't let him move. Slowly, there arose a red horizon which grew brighter and brighter, like a band of blood before his eyes. The more he looked at it, the more it looked like the opening of a giant beak of a bird that was as big as the world. As he concentrated, he found that it was a black raven as broad as the sky with soul-piercing eyes as big as the ocean. He could see many people entering the bird's mouth. It was eating the dead. He saw the raven look at him. Konki screamed! His cry was the cry of an eagle.

Konki's descending cry was answered by another eagle. Konki's cry became faint. The cry of the other became louder as it rose from the canyon floor up the steep cliff.

Wey-cho-kay stood breathless at the entrance to the Bear Cave as he heard the cry, the shrill splitting of the air, and the beating of giant wings which produced a deafening roar of wind pushing against the old man.

Wey-cho-kay trembled and dared not look down over the cliff. The screaming and roaring wind blew him back. He gasped in his trembling to see a giant white headed eagle with a golden beak as big as a man, coming up over the edge, and soaring into the sky, looking at him boldly, defiantly, as he carried in his talons the limp body of a boy with an arrow in his back.

It was the Great Spirit Himself, thought the old man. So he began to sing and dance to the old song of the eagle.

He lifteth up upon wings of thunder,
He lifteth up upon wings of thunder,
He lifteth up upon wings of thunder
    the soul of a man reborn.
He taketh the soul above the sky
He taketh the soul above the sky,
He taketh the soul above the sky,
    to save him from the raven.
He looketh down upon the weakness of man
He looketh down upon the weakness of man
He looketh down upon the weakness of man
    and bears his heart to Heaven.
    … and bears his heart to Heaven.

Death had rejected the boy. The thunder bird who rules the sky took the boy. The boy's father was of the Bear Clan. The boy was now of the Eagle Clan. The old man would

go and tell the boy's father. A new Guardian of the Land had been born this day.

Konki awoke from the black sleep of no dreaming only to find himself in a dark cave. He lay upon a bed of straw. Terrible pain shot through his chest and neck. He could only breathe in short gasps of pain. Anger flared his nostrils. It had been old Wey-cho-kay! Why did he try to kill him? Now he was dead and in the place of no return. He thought perhaps he was in the Cave of the Great Bear, no place for Konki to be. He tried scooting his body to lean up against the cave wall. The pain was like fire. He panted with each beat of his little heart, and it beat as fast as a chipmunk. He finally sat up when he heard mocking words from Wey-cho-kay.

"So, you want your mama now?" he yelled. "Why, you ungrateful snorting pig! After I have saved you from death, after I have given you your life, you want to go back to your mama! I will get rid of you!"

Konki felt the old man grab his arm. Everything went black with pain as he thought he was being thrown into the air. He thought he was floating or flying.

Konki was dreaming his dream again, flying with the eagles, soaring over the land, beholding all the green and snow capped mountains, the rivers and valleys and plains below. He could see the whole earth, that it had no corners, but was rounded everywhere. The sun stayed in one place while the earth turned below him, showing different scenes continually.

Konki went into blackness again and knew only pain. He thought he was back in the cave, being kicked around and mocked by the old man. "Oh, you are crying? You want your mamma?" went the taunting. Somehow, he managed to get out of the cave, falling down the rocks into a ravine. He crawled over stones, smearing them with his blood, blacking out from the pain again. Again he dreamed he was an eagle.

Konki woke up crawling over the stones and jagged rocks. He sang his song:

He giveth power to the faint;

The Great One reneweth strength;

They shall mount up with wings

As eagles, they that wait for him.

He felt the earth give him strength. He went on, mountain after mountain, crawling, sometimes walking, but always flying overhead. He seemed to be having two dreams. In one dream, he was an eagle, flying overhead, looking down upon himself, watching over a little boy who was quite bewildered and in great pain. In the other dream, he would look up and see an eagle watching over him. That also gave him great strength to go on searching for a path that must be, a path he knew he had to follow. He had forgotten where he was supposed to go, but he would follow the eagle overhead, and it would take him there.

Konki hadn't imagined that his trial of manhood would be so difficult … go out and live by yourself for a year or two, learn to provide for yourself, get good enough at hunting

to provide for your family and the village, get to know the forest spirits who would help you in your hunt, and then return home where everyone would welcome you and admire your necklace of bear claws or puma teeth, or admire your buckskins. No one would call him Little Woman anymore, and his mother would be proud of him ... his mother … Oh, how he wanted the comfort of his mother right now!

"So!" came the mocking voice of old Wey-cho-kay. "You want your mother, do you?"

Warriors can never go back to their mothers. A man must leave his father and mother and become a father himself. He would have a wife some day and children to take care of. He had to live for them and for the village. He had to be responsible from now on. He had to finish this quest. He must live to finish this quest.

He loved his mother. He would never forget his mother.

He remembered the times when he would bring home little injured animals from the forest … a fawn, a skunk, a bird with a broken wing. She would help care for each one of them. He remembered that after his father had been away from home many days on a hunt, she would know exactly when he was coming back. She would have a meal prepared for him and comfort him and rejoice with him. He remembered her teaching him how to make pottery and how to make buckskin for clothing. She thought it nothing strange in this, treating him like a girl, father would say. But she would laugh and tell him that such things would come in handy some day. Father could never demean her or strike her. Her smiles and laughter and good sense always overcame him.

Old Wey-cho-kay could never make him forget his mother or make him stop loving her or stop listening to her words of wisdom.

Konki was hot with fatigue and fever. If there were nights, he was not aware of them. If he had been dropped or eaten by the Great Thunderbird, he had not known it. He did notice the fragrance of mountain meadows and flowers and fresh air and his need to sleep. It seemed to him that he had reached a place of peace. There was a crop of large pine trees he could smell. He didn't see much with his eyes. They ached too much. Everything ached too much. He would lie down on a bed of pine needles and rest. Then he would get up and search for his path. He needed to rest a few minutes. He would search for his path then. He was tired. He lay down, slept, and dreamed.

The eagle above looked down on the little boy and guided him. He followed in a dream. When the pain was too great to bear, Konki became the eagle, looking down on himself, guiding and protecting him. He liked being an eagle, for he was free, and he hurt no more.

CHAPTER FIVE

Morning brought a surprise with bright warm sunlight awakening Konki. He appeared to be in a cave, but it wasn't the Cave of the Great Bear. This one was different. It was not dark. It seemed to be as bright and cheery as the morning itself. He felt well and rested. He could breathe easier, and there was no arrow in his back. He was lying on a white fluffy woolen skin spread on a raised bed and covered by a soft, tightly woven material that was thicker than skins. It was decorated by different colored squares, and he was naked underneath. He knew that the clothes he made of tree bark wouldn't last. His shoulder was bandaged in a soft, loosely woven material unknown to him.

Konki's nostrils quickly caught the smell of a meaty and oily broth to his right. Looking over his bandaged right shoulder, he saw a shiny white table supporting a bowl and a water pot with a long skinny neck, both as white and shiny as the table. He could see vapors rising from the bowl. It smelled like home. Next to it was a container of water made of clear crystal. The ladle for the broth was flat and silvery like the moon. There were also two polished blood stones on the table. It must be for magic, he thought.

Looking around the room, Konki saw that the source of the light was a ceiling covered in crystals the size of his hands. They reflected all the colors of the rainbow. He seemed to be inside a gigantic earth egg.

Other tables supported different types of sand colored pottery holding dried herbs, flowers, grasses and pods of differing shapes and sizes. Also, displays of polished stones, as if sliced with a knife, showed mountain scenes and sunsets in the banded patterns of the stones. All of this spectacle was too great for Konki. He would have closed his eyes in fright if it had not been for his intense curiosity.

Around the sides of the crystalline walls were holes of differing sizes … not of darkness, nor showing the outside. He could see the outside clearly through the main entrance to this magical cave. No, the holes showed scenes of mountains and forests and some with huts of stone instead of the bark they used in his village. People stood around them; pale people, yet beautiful, with sun colored hair and eyes the color of the sky, like his ancestor MacKonki. One of the men had horns coming out of his head. He held a bright shield and brandishing a long knife reflecting the sun. He must be the chief whose cave this was, thought Konki.

Konki's eyes caught hold of a life-sized image. He changed his mind as to who was the chief of the cave. With pale skin and white hair flowing down below his shoulders, the image wore a full length robe, all white, so Konki knew the image was a spirit. His smiling face seemed very kind with his square, firm jaw. His nostrils were broad, and his eyes were not slanted like Konki's, but were straight and as blue as a deep lake. He wore no leggings or moccasins but had only the bottoms of shoes strapped to his feet and legs.

This lovely man was quite disarming, but when he moved towards Konki, Konki's hair stood on end and his eyes grew quite round. The man stopped, and showing him the

palms of his hands, spoke in a deep resonating voice, “You are safe here,” reassuring Konki that no harm would come to him. The man's countenance whispered peace. Even so, Konki would be on guard, for the man's eyes had a fierceness in them that looked straight into his soul. Konki could feel the joy and happiness in the man, and that made Konki giggle.

"I see you are in good spirits this morning." The man stooped down beside Konki. "You must have just awakened, for you have not eaten your broth."

"Are you the Great Fire Spirit?" Konki quickly asked. "Is this the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit? Are you going to eat me?"

The man laughed softly.

"The Great Eagle who brought me here ,” Konki said with enthusiasm, “said that he was taking me to the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit."

Aaron smiled. "My name is Aaron. I live here inside the womb of the Great Mother. I found you sleeping outside under the grand old pine just outside with an arrow in your back. You have suffered much," the man said, choking back a tear. "It is time for you to rest and regain your life."

"You mean you will not eat me?" asked Konki with increasing hope and courage.

"Perhaps you will eat me." The man laughed heartily. “Or maybe you will want some venison.”

Konki nodded towards his bandages.

"Yes, I applied medicine while you slept."

The man walked around the bed and took the bowl into his hands, knelt down and fed Konki a few spoonfuls of the broth.

Konki took another sip of the warm broth and asked, "Are you the Guardian of this magical cave?" waving his left hand, pointing to all the things he had seen.

"I live here in this cave by the grace of the Master."

When Aaron said the word "Master," Konki felt something warm in his heart and felt that it must be good. But then he noticed something strange that made him screw up his face.

"Oh, is my broth that terrible?" asked Aaron.

"It is not that," said Konki. "I have noticed that you are not talking in my native tongue, yet I can understand you."

"That is because the Great Spirit, the Spirit of the Master who created all things tells you what I say. It is a gift to you. He likes you."

Aaron spooned in a few more bites and the broth was gone.

"And you know all my thoughts," replied Konki with some amazement.

"The Great Spirit knows all things."

"The Great Spirit?" asked Konki. "The one my mother taught me to pray to?"

"Yes, I am sure." Aaron put away the dish and ladle somewhere out of sight. He began walking away when Konki sent up another question about the cave of the Great Fire Spirit. Aaron held up his hand and said, "There will be plenty of time for questions later. Don't trouble your mind so. It has to concentrate on healing your body."

Konki looked around. Aaron had disappeared as if the cave had swallowed him. Konki waited to see if he would come back, but he didn't. The day seemed to stand still, and even though Aaron said not to trouble his mind, the thoughts came of their own volition.

Konki's thoughts took him back to the time of his vigil. It was to have prepared him for his hunt for manhood. He thought that this hunt for manhood would be about hunting and fishing, making his own shelter, making his own clothes, playing whenever and whatever he wanted. He had imagined that now he could do whatever he pleased and not be ridiculed. He would go on an adventure and relate it to everyone when he returned like he had seen the older boys do. Return … that was a word that stuck in his throat. Going home now didn't seem like a possibility … nor did he want to … not back to all the ridicule. Perhaps when he brought back tokens of bravery that no one would call him Little Woman again. But now, it seemed for sure that he wouldn't be bringing back tokens. He would be bringing back totems … tokens of a spiritual path. He hadn't realized, and hadn't prepared himself to think of his hunt for manhood as a spiritual journey.

He had first noticed it when he was going back towards the village looking for his leggings. He had fed himself without really knowing what he was doing. He had been grateful for the roots and berries which the earth had given, but it had been as though his hands did it without his direction, without him actually doing it, as if his hands had done it on their own. There had been a separation of himself and his body. His body had known where to dig, where and what to pick all on its own without him having to think about it. He was totally disconnected from the whole affair, as if his body had a separate intelligence. He concluded, not really thinking all of this in words, that his body was quite knowing.

Another time his body had acted on its own was when he was scared completely out of his mind. The Great Spirit had led him with such trickery to the Cave of the Great Bear, had presented him with old Wey-cho-kay's nightly meal and fire and a warm bear coat, only to have that coat turn into a live bear and chase him out of the cave. He was so frightened, even when he found out from the lightning that it had only been the old man dressed in a bear skin, that what he could call his "self" fled and was no more. At that time, his body took over, and in complete darkness ran along the cliff ledge and hid under a bush that covered the entrance to a little cave he could call his own. One moment he was being terrified by the Great Bear, and the next moment he was under the bush. It was magic. His body had made no mistakes. His body was all knowing.

Konki's mother had taught him to trust in the Great Spirit. Surely, thought Konki, it had good reason to trick me with fright. Maybe he was only trying to teach me of the knowing of my body. And when I was most frightened, that was when I was the most safe and had a perfect knowing of what to do … but not I, something bigger than me … inside of me. It is a lesson, he thought, that I shall never forget. He thought also that during his vigil,

when he was really scared out of his skin, he really *was* out of his skin, and then the magic of old Wey-cho-kay happened. It was when he gained his vision and song. It puzzled Konki's little mind that he had knowledge he knew not of and complete safety and magic when he was most frightened.

Konki wondered at his own worth. If his body knew how to get along without him, what need did his body have of him anyway? He wondered if the Spirit of the Great Bear had come and taken him away and entered into his body and done all that for him. Then the Great Bear was his friend. Or did the body actually fend for itself? And what was he anyway? Was he not now soaring in the sky above? Could he not blink his eyes and see now with the eye of the eagle the land below? It was a steep mountain gorge opening up into a blue peaceful sea. The green pines were ancient and tall. He could see through the opening in the woods the entrance to the cave. One of the trees next to the cave was the grandfather of them all and radiated peace. It had the feeling of being the one he had slept under before Aaron had found him. Another blink and he was back inside the cave on his bed. Perhaps his body had already known of this cave, and, never telling him of it, had come here on its own to be healed. Yet, there was the Great Thunderbird who had rescued him twice … once with lightning and once when the Great Thunderbird caught him as he fell over the edge of the cliff, carrying him up above the earth. Where was the understanding of it all? The more he thought about it, the more he began to believe that the Spirit of the Great Bear and the Spirit of the Great Eagle, the Thunderbird, were his totems or spirit guides introduced to him by old Wey-cho-kay.

He had hated old Wey-cho-kay. He had been scared of him. Now, he saw the old man in a different light. He was hard on him, to be sure. And then, there was the shame. He had no honor with his people, and Wey-cho-kay had used that against him. The boys had shamed him, calling him Little Woman. Old Wey-cho-kay had shamed him by offering him food, clothing, and shelter, only to accuse him of stealing. The temptation had been too great. He was outcast already, but to steal meant never coming back home. The Great Spirit would have told everyone in the tribe of his theft as surely as his mother always knew when his father was coming home from the hunt. His mother had taught him these things, and the Great Bear had changed his mind. It had been a teaching moment to test his heart and soul. Now there was a soft spot in Konki's heart for the old man. Still, there was the pain of the seeming hate the old man had for him. It made his head hurt trying to figure it out.

Konki thought back on his life and all the pain and suffering that other people had caused him. He had only tried to love everyone and all the brothers of the forest. All of his life experiences culminated in shame. The effect of this shame and the heartache together with the magic of old Wey-cho-kay had opened a door or a pathway. The arrow that had come into his back had caused the pain in his heart to become unbearable, so he had left through that door following that path, leaving his body to fend for itself.

He concluded that no one had ever cared for him, not really. His mother had loved him, but there was a limit to that love. He wasn't like his brother who could hunt and fight and trade and bring honor to the family and to the village. His parents bestowed honor on his brother.

His father only tolerated Konki. He was different from the rest of the people. He didn't fit in. His eyes were blue like the sky and his nose like the beak of an eagle, curving downward. If they didn't call him Little Woman, they called him Beak.

After a moment's thought, he realized that only the Great Eagle had cared for him, and then, there was Aaron, a total stranger who had picked him up and took him in, dressing his wound and giving him strong medicine, this magical cave. Surely, he was the Great Fire Spirit, and this was his cave.

Aaron was also like the Great Eagle who had saved him from old Wey-cho-kay. It had been the Great Eagle or the Raven that had decided not to eat him. It dawned upon Konki as much as the day-dawn itself beamed forth to break away the night, that it was the Great Eagle who loved him … the same eagle that hovered above in the sky at this precious moment to ever guide him and protect him. He and this eagle were one. Did he not see out of the eye of this eagle? He would worship this eagle all the days of his life.

Konki pondered all of this. He folded his arms across the snowy soft blanket. His heart pounded in his little chest, and he began to grow faint. The light-headed feeling grew into a sensation of floating, not as the eagle above hovered, but he thought that his body drifted into the air. The light in the cave seemed to come together as the sun shines down through the trees in the forest. It came together to shine on him, and he had the sensation of floating up into the light. He thought that he was approaching the Great Fire Spirit in the sky, passing through the ceiling of the cave. It didn't hurt his eyes, and he was filled with the joy of it.

He seemed to be in another room filled with light as bright as the sun above. He was aware of wings beating and a man stood before him whose countenance was brighter than the sun. The man wore the garment of the eagle, whose feathers were beams of light. All was clean, peace, and love. He had never known such tremendous love … a melting love as the man reached down and lifted Konki to his breast. The feathers of his wings gently caressed him. Konki looked onto his smiling face. He wore the headdress of the Great Eagle with its giant beak over his forehead. His eyes pierced Konki's soul, and Konki fainted. When Konki awoke, Aaron was bringing him another bowl of steaming broth. The smell of the tangy, meaty broth made Konki's mouth water. His stomach growled in anticipation. Konki's face beamed.

“I see a brightness in your eyes that I have never seen before.” He handed Konki the broth, and said, “You have had quite a night with a fever, but you seem full of life this morning.”

They both smiled at each other, but Konki's smile was more eager as though he wanted to say something very important. It appeared to Konki that Aaron knew he had seen the Master. It made his heart feel glad. He smiled with such reassurance and light that Konki knew that he knew. He didn't question this knowing, he accepted it as a way of life … Konki's new way of life. The Great Spirit had revealed it. They beamed at each other for a moment and then Konki spoke.

"Aaron, why do I feel so comfortable here?"

Aaron sat cross-legged by the bed, feeding Konki ladles of broth. "Go ahead," he said.

"I mean, why are you here?"

"To take care of *you*," was his simple answer.

"Why is it that I feel no shame here? I mean, the old medicine man in our village gave me food, clothing and shelter before I came here, and I felt great shame. If I had taken what he offered, I would have been a thief. I don't feel that shame when *you* feed me and take care of me." He paused in thought. "I don't feel like I'm stealing when I take *your* food. I feel like I'm at home."

"This is the Master's house. He invited you here. And when the Master of the house invites you in, this is your home. When I first came here, I felt as though I had always been here. It is true that we all lived with the Master before we were born," Aaron said wistfully.

Konki suddenly remembered something his mother had taught him. It was a story that said the same thing as Aaron had said. "Yes," he said, contemplating. "This is like one of the stories my mother told me." He sat up, and Aaron placed the bowl upon the porcelain table. Konki began squirming and rooting his little bottom into the bed as though he were about to make a big jump into something grand. His words built up in his throat, and he was ready to take off like a charging buck.

"What is this tale?" Aaron asked, almost laughing.

"It is the Tale of the Old Woman Who Went in Search of Her Death."

"Please tell me before you pop."

"I will!

There was this old woman
who was all dried up and wrinkled.
Her hair was as white as the snow.
She knew that it was time to leave this world,
but she didn't know where to go.
Her village would not feed her;
They told her to go away.
She left all her belongings to her people,
For she had better not delay.
She moved as swift as a turtle
down the old crooked trail.
There she met a man of the Turtle Clan.
He put a girdle on her body and said,
“This is for your protection

when you arrive in the land.”
For all the Heavens, she did not know
what to ponder, only to wonder,
To wander through a mist in the land.
Coming to a clearing, she met an eagle.
She met an eagle coming down to greet her.
She surely thought it would eat her
and leave her bones to dry.
But he left her with a feather, and said
this would protect her when her soul
would someday rise and come into the land.
She put the feather in her hair,
And down the trail she hobbled.
Down the trail she stumbled;
Down the trail she came.
Her courage failed her,
and her strength waned.
That's when she met the lion,
That's when the big bear came.
They found her crying,
They found her dying,
They found her slain.
The lion gave her courage.
The bear gave her strength.
The lion sat her upright,
The bear carried her the length,
Down the trail to a spring,
To the clear flowing water,
To the life's blood of our Mother.
Too old to gather, too old to drink,
She sat there pondering
the clear crystal spring.

Then up walked a man
who shone so bright,
He lit up the sky.
He dipped his hand into the spring.
Three times she drank from his hand
until she realized it was a man.
But before she could thank him,
He whispered as soft as the breeze,
"I am come to take you home again."

Konki gazed and smiled at Aaron.

"That's what he said, isn't it," exclaimed Konki, " … to take you home *again*."

"Yes, that is true," Aaron said reassuringly.

"And Aaron … is this the Master's home?"

"Yes."

"I thought this was your home," Konki said quietly. He got the courage to ask again, "Are you not the Great Fire Spirit who wanders across the sky each day and comes down to sleep in this beautiful cave?"

"The Master is born inside his mother. As you regain your health, you will rise from this womb of the Great Mother and become a man, or I will eat you," and Aaron roared like a bear and burst into laughter and tears. "I live here and you live here," he said. "Is this place my home or yours?"

"I think it is the Master's home. I think he greeted me," Konki yawned. He was getting very tired.

"That is right."

"I love my mother," Konki said, going off to sleep. "Where has my shame gone?"

"From now on," said Aaron quietly, "Wherever you go, you will be a guest. People will feed you … will take care of you, or try to kill you. But don't worry. You are under the Master's protection. You have nothing to be ashamed of." Konki fell asleep as Aaron said these last words.

Konki dreamed. He had his arms around Aaron, and Aaron was carrying him outside into the sunlight. He hugged Aaron about the neck where Konki kissed him. When he went to look at Aaron again, he had turned into the likeness of his father who smiled at him proudly. A warmth and a strength flowed from his father, a gentleness that tore at little Konki's heart. He had never felt such love and security from this man before, and he wept. Next, he was visited by all his family. His mother's shining face he loved the most. And then there were the animal spirits of the forest making a circle around his father, mother, brother,

himself, and all his extended family. He dreamed that he was an eagle next, flying high in the sky, overlooking evergreen forests, rocky mountains, and an ocean surf beating against the rocks.

CHAPTER SIX

Konki didn't know when he stopped dreaming, he only knew that he was flying high above a green forest near a rocky mountain beach and ocean spray. He flew down and squatted naked on a rock overlooking the bay. The little cave where he had slept before could be seen on the opposite shore high above the salt-washed cliffs. It sparkled, reflecting the sunshine. He sat there pondering his dreams of home feeling very homesick. He wanted to go back, but he knew that it wouldn't be the same. By the time he could walk back across the continent, he would be grown, and so would all the other children. No one would be the same. The children would have adult faces, and the adults might be old and wrinkled. His brother wouldn't know him, and he wouldn't have a baby sister anymore. One thing may not have changed though; he may still be outcast. His father would not speak to him. He would not acknowledge his presence and could never show affection towards him as could Aaron. His father had sung the song of death for him that night after his vigil. Konki's heart tore remembering it. In his father's heart Konki had died. Surely, the *boy* Konki was dying, never to return. Maybe there was yet hope if he returned a man. Maybe they would accept him as a man.

Konki desired to walk the land of his people even if he was still out-cast. That was where he belonged. But then there was Aaron. Konki had never felt such love from a man before. His mother had loved him, but so would a mother deer love its fawn. His brother tolerated him, and his little sister looked past him, never knowing him. There was a rift between him and the rest of the village. They didn't understand him. Yet, he longed for their company … but he couldn't leave Aaron.

Half asleep, he felt Aaron's strong arms embrace him, and he was carried at once across the waters and back into the cave. He would think on this more tomorrow. He now had to sleep. He was not yet well.

When Konki awoke, there was another bowl of broth which Aaron helped him drink. He went to sleep again only to wake up to more broth. There seemed to be only this dream of waking up and eating or being taken out by Aaron so he could piss and then go right back to sleep again. He remembered being terribly hot one night and Aaron bathing his forehead with cool water. At one point Aaron had put oil on his head and said something about the Master.

Konki became numb from sleeping and waking and sleeping and waking until he got tired of sleeping. He woke up one morning very hungry and restless just as the sun came through the cave entrance. He looked at the sunlight. It turned into Aaron. He knew then that Aaron was indeed the Great Fire Spirit and this was his cave, but he wouldn't say anything to Aaron about it.

Aaron walked out from the sunlight and said, "You are healing fast. Are you hungry for some solid food?"

"Yes," he replied. "I could eat a bear!"

"Good. I will go and get you some good meat and roots."

Konki enjoyed his feast as would a wild and ravenous beast. He had never eaten meat that was so fit for man and that satisfied his hunger so. The roots and tubers were sweet and tender. When he was well satisfied and full, he sat back against the cave wall, gave a good belch, and smiled. He wiped his face and hands on a wet cloth Aaron had given him.

Presently, Aaron came in with some skins still dripping with blood. Konki placed his dish on his little table to his right and stared at the skins. The drops of blood turned to drops of sunlight as they hit the floor. Konki's belief that this was indeed a place of powerful magic was confirmed.

With great reverence, Aaron said, "The eagle brought this for you."

"I will get up and prepare it," Konki said, wanting very much to do something.

"It will be an honor, Konki, for me to do this for you," said Aaron. "You will have many times to make your own leggings. I will not always be with you to have the honor of serving one so great."

Konki could not think of anything to say. He leaned up against the sun-warmed wall, held his knees to his chest and thought for a long time about what Aaron had said. Could a mere boy be great?

After what seemed forever with nothing to do and getting anxious, worrying what he should or could do to spend his time, Konki slipped off the bed. At that point, Aaron returned with a garment which contained both leggings and shirt. Aaron held them out for Konki to see. He saw that it would cover his whole body. What a peculiar thing, Konki thought. Aaron handed it to Konki, and Konki reached for the garments. Aaron withdrew it a little way to teach a lesson.

"I want you to remember," he said earnestly, "that this sheep gave his life for you so you could have these garments. And if there had not been a shepherd, that is, the Great Creator, there would have been no sheep. So, whenever you put these on, don't you think you should show some sign of gratitude?"

Then he handed the clothes to Konki, whereupon Konki held up them up to the four directions, shaking them each time, and sang his song of gratitude to the Great Creator, to the sheep, and to Aaron. But as he did so, he noticed the bead work on the front and on the back of the shirt. There were spirals, circles and crosses, and on the back, a sun circle, a circle with a cross inside, the cross touching the circle from within … the four directions … completeness.

As he slipped on the garments, tying the tethers in the front and attaching the loin cloth, Konki asked, "… and what are these markings on the front and back?"

Aaron picked up a red stone from Konki's small white table and dropped it. It fell swiftly to the floor.

"When you drop a stone from your hand, it goes straight," he said, emphasizing the thought by shooting his flat hand straight ahead of him towards Konki. "That is the law.

Keep that law that is written on your garment and you will go straight."

Aaron pulled out a leather sling from his robe near the opening of his chest. He picked up the stone from the floor, and putting it inside the sling, twirled it around and around in front of him, making it go faster and faster. He then pulled the tether through his left finger and thumb, making the end of the sling carrying the stone move in ever smaller circles until he had pulled the stone into his hand. Konki was ecstatic. He loved seeing tricks.

"The stone cannot escape," Aaron explained. "It is pulled into my hand. Such is the law. The pulling and the dropping of the stone … it is the same. Which law you use is a matter of choice … a matter of the way you see things.

"Now, let us go outside. Do you feel strong enough? or shall I carry you?"

"I feel good." Konki smiled and stuck out his chest.

So out they went from the cave into the bright sunlight, but the contrast in lights was not that great, and Konki didn't have to squint. They came out through the archway of the cave and stood on the ledge in front. Aaron swung his sling and let the stone go. It went in a straight course over the waters below and over to the next hill.

"Why did you throw the blood stone, Aaron?" Konki asked, putting his hand over his brow to look over to the next hill.

"Can you find the stone and bring it back?" Aaron asked, not wanting a yes or no answer.

Konki understood. He blinked his eyes. Now, he was high above the forest looking down with the eye of an eagle. He saw a small dot of red, swooped down and grabbed it with his claw. He blinked again, and he was standing beside Aaron. He opened his hand, and there was the blood stone.

"How far, Konki, will you go in search of Truth...in search of the Great Spirit?" Aaron asked, putting his hand on Konki's shoulder.

"My mother taught me to always pray to the Great Spirit, to thank him and ask him for what I need," he replied.

"Are you a man of your word? Do you keep your word? How strong are you at making promises and making sure you do what you say?"

Konki studied Aaron. What was he asking? Would he ever let anyone down and bring shame to them or to himself?

"You will have to know the answer to this question before you can become a man," Aaron said very solemnly so Konki knew that it was very important.

"I can keep my word," Konki replied with some pride.

Aaron smiled. He knew there would come a time in Konki's life in which that statement would be tested.

"That will do," Aaron said, motioning that Konki should follow him. "Now come, we

will go meet the sheep."

Konki looked around as he followed Aaron. Sure enough, there was the great pine tree that looked older than all the rest, right in front of the cave. The first time he had seen it he hadn't noticed how huge it was. That was where he had curled up and slept so peacefully after he had escaped from the old man, Wey-cho-kay. That was before Aaron had extracted the arrow from his back and carried him into the cave. It would take many men to encircle that old tree with their arms outstretched. He also remembered that he had never seen the night with its bright blanket of stars since sleeping inside the cave. He must have always been awake in the daytime.

Walking along the trail, Konki noticed other great pines and that the forest wasn't cluttered up with a lot of underbrush which he was used to in his own land. There was occasionally a young pine or a bush and a continual bed of pine needles. The smell of the pines invigorated him.

Interrupting that smell was the smell of meat being smoked. Konki's mouth watered even though he had already eaten. In a clearing was the carcass of a large ram already dressed and laying on a bier with a smoking fire underneath. He could tell it was a ram because next to the fire sitting on an old stump was the ram's head staring straight at him.

"Afraid?" asked Aaron.

"No!"

"Come. I want you to meet him."

Aaron lifted the head of the ram by its curved horns. One of its horns was bigger than Konki's chest.

"This is the sheep that gave its life for you. The Spirit of the Eagle is in this sheep."

Putting the head back onto the stump, Aaron took his knife and sliced off a piece of the meat from the carcass and gave it to Konki.

"Eat of this meat and remember the Eagle and this Ram who gave its life for you so that you may have its protection," and Aaron pointed to Konki's clothes, "in the form of that garment. It is a garment of power. If you should lose it, you will not be man nor eagle, but a whimpering dog."

Konki gulped as he ate the delicious meat. He was not sure what was happening. He saw Aaron now with a ram's horn. He brought it close enough for him to see that it was filled with blood.

"Drink," said Aaron. "It is the life of him who gave you his life and protection. Always remember him, the giver of life, and you will always have a portion of the Great Spirit or the Spirit of the Eagle in you."

Konki took the ram's horn and drank from it. It tasted sweet like the fruit of the vine that grew north of his village. He felt a little dizzy.

"Hold!" cried Aaron. "A man does not faint."

Konki gathered his consciousness as hard as he could by taking deep breaths of air, cool, crisp mountain air full of pine scent.

"Now," said Aaron proudly, "you are Eagle Clan. Take this ram's horn and keep it with you always. It is a gift from your ancestors. It came across from the many waters where the sun rises to greet you each morning. Whenever you need help, blow it. The Great Spirit will come and your ancestors will come and send you the help you need."

"The Great Spirit?" asked Konki.

"Yes, the same spirit which is in the cave."

"Is it the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit?" Konki asked, not understanding yet, and wanting to have that question finally answered in the affirmative.

"It is your cave, Konki. It is the cave of your healing. Whenever you need it, it will be here."

Konki raced back to the cave entrance and blew into the ram's horn. A little toot came out. Aaron was still by his side as if he himself didn't run, but was just there.

"What are you calling for little one?" Aaron asked with a smile.

"I want to call the Great Spirit and thank him for all of this, and for you, Aaron."

Aaron knelt down beside him and said with affection, "I see you are quite well. It is time for you to leave."

Konki looked at him quizzically.

"Aaron?"

"Yes, little one?"

"Aaron? Are you leaving, or are you staying here?"

"I have other errands to run for the Master, for I am his servant. So, yes, I will be leaving."

Konki hugged him gently, and, looking around, whispered in Aaron's ear, "Aaron, are you going to take all your people with you?"

"My people?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, the ones guarding the cave. The ones living in all those holes in the walls of the cave...especially him!" Konki referred to the picture of the big warrior having horns and brandishing a long knife.

"Oh, them!" Aaron laughed. He realized his mistake. Konki had never before seen photographs, something which wouldn't be invented for many centuries, but the Master let him have these valuable visual records to show to Konki.

Aaron got up and took Konki by the hand, took him inside the cave and presented these people to him. "These," he said with a sweep of his right hand, "are pictures of your ancestors."

"Let me introduce you to Gawain MacKonki who was washed up upon the shores of your homeland from where the sun rises."

"They look," said Konki with reverence and awe, "so real. I thought they were holes in the walls, and that they were outside the cave looking in. But when we went outside, I didn't see them. They stood so valiant and still, I thought they were the guardians of the cave."

"In a way, they are, but more importantly is that they are *your* guardians, your ancestors."

Konki stood looking at the one with the horns coming out of his head and the great amount of hair on his face. Chills went all over his back and shoulders. He felt proud that such was his ancestor, that he was such a terrible looking monster, and that he was his guardian spirit.

Aaron watched Konki place his hands on top of his head feeling around for horns. He let out a little laugh. "No Konki," he said. "You will not grow horns. That is only a cap or a head-dress that shows his authority and prowess as a warrior."

"Is he not a monster then?" Konki asked with his eyes wide open and staring. "Look at all that hair!"

"No. He is a man as I am. You see, the people that live across the east sea are hairy people. And the people of the west sea," he pointed to the sea that could be seen outside the cave, "in the lands where my people come from, are not so hairy."

Konki continued to stare.

"This is your Great-Great-Grandfather, who, finding himself in a strange land took to wife one of the daughters of the land, his people having given him up for dead."

"Oh!" Konki exclaimed. "Is he the one I am named after?"

"Yes, Konki. Now let me show you some of your father's ancestors."

Aaron showed Konki people living near great buildings, called temples, which pointed to the sky, saying that they had lived to the east near the inland seas, that where the sea east came near to the sea west at a narrow neck of land was called the land Bountiful. This people had been divided into a white-skinned people and a dark-skinned people, and they had many wars in which the dark-skinned people overcame the white-skinned people. Those that had believed in the Master were killed, and the others joined the dark-skinned people and became like them.

"Your mother is descended from Gwain MacKonki. Your father is descended from these white people," Aaron said.

"But you have not been killed, Aaron," Konki said, trying to take in all this wonder.

"Out of the mercy of the Master,"Aaron said reverently, "so I can help others come unto him."

"Who is this Master you keep talking about?"

"You have already met him in a way that you could understand, and you will meet him again when you are ready to see him as he is. But first, you must experience many things."

"The Great Eagle?" Konki asked, astonished.

"Some people see him that way. In time, he will reveal himself to you. You must be patient. Now," he said, taking Konki's shoulder to guide him out of and away from the cave, "it is time for you to leave."

As they were walking back past some of the pictures, there was one picture in a little alcove they had missed. Konki looked at it. It made great emotions swell up from deep inside his heart to burst out of his breast. He couldn't understand the love he felt from that man. He ran outside the cave, grabbed his horn and blew loud and long to send his song up into the heavens. The deep treble echoed through the pine forest and between the cliffs.

Heart felt sounding 'round temples of green,

Ground thundering unseen the sounds of Konki's horn.

Spirit shining close, answering sobs enclosing

Konki's heart rejoicing kissing Konki's throat.

Konki wrapped himself around Aaron and wept for joy for things yet unseen and not understood.

There was a braying heard and a high-pitched snarling. Playmates came romping and looking about out of the woods. Aaron laughed to see such a cat and little bear appearing, looking bewildered and wondering if anyone really cared.

"Look what your horn blowing has brought you," he cried.

He turned Konki around to see the playmates that paid them never-a-mind but went about searching and poking their noses into everything as if to see what trouble they could bring.

Konki was so delighted that he let go of Aaron and went to the little bear cub and the mountain lion kitten, hugging them, having an arm around each one of them. They three pranced around the trees together and wrestled and held each other until sleep finally overtook them and night came. The sun returned to the depths of Mother Earth, sending up oranges and reds then purples and grays into the cloudy sky above. Konki dreamed beneath the old granddaddy pine of the Great Eagle. It told him to go home to where the sun rises out of the east sea.

Konki woke up to the sun beating down upon him. He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, wondering why he wasn't in the soft bed in the cave. Instead, he was the guest of the great granddaddy pine and on a bed of his soft needles. He looked around. Where the cave had been was now an out-crop of orange glassy rock. The cub and kitten were nowhere to be seen, neither was Aaron. Perhaps, he thought, I have been dreaming of everything, until he looked at the strange leather garments he was wearing and the ram's horn strung over his shoulder. He felt these to check reality. He put his hand up to his shoulder and chest. There

was no pain. He saw animal tracks in the dusty trails near the out-crop, a small bear and a kitten with big feet. The pine needles had been greatly messed up as if someone or something had been thrashing on the ground.

He went to the place where the cave had been. "Aaron! Aaron!" he cried, placing his hands upon the rock in disbelief. He then felt the burning spirit within the cave as if it were in his own heart, as if it had been a voice, a small burning voice within. Thoughts welled up into his mind from his heart.

"This cave is hidden from the eyes of mortal men until a time when you will need it again."

Konki hugged the mountainside, calling, "Aaron, Aaron," weeping softly, wetting the orange quartz rock with his tears.

"I will see you again," came the soft voice, "But now that you are healed of old Wey-cho-kay's influence, you are to return home to the rising sun. The eagle will guide you." The voice faded as if going back, deep within the cave. "Stay close to the Spirit," it said almost inaudibly, a faint whisper.

With a heavy heart, Konki started out for the sunrise.

Not long after, a braying and a high-pitched snarling came up from behind him. He turned around. There was the little bear cub and the mountain lion kitten trotting out of the woods towards him. They didn't seem to notice him; they were too busy playing and exploring, prancing about, looking for trouble.

"Oh!" cried Konki, "Bearcub and Cat! I thought you had gone away, back to your mamas."

Konki grabbed each one by the neck and hugged them. They squirmed to get away.

Bearcub stood on his back legs, pointed his snout into the air and cried, "Mama!" in his deep voice. Cat sat on his haunches, threw out his chest and said, "Yeah!" pulling back his ears. Cat nudged Konki with his nose and licked his face. Bearcub put his front paws on Konki's chest and pushed. They all three fell over and wrestled on the ground, Konki, laughing, saying, "*I'm* not your *mama*! *I'm* no *squaw!*" He laughed some more, and they cried and grunted. He roughed up their pelts, got up and ran. The playmates chased him, fully attached to their new mama.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Konki had been running with Bearcub and Cat for several days through mountains and forested valleys. He was anxious to get back home. They came to the edge of the forest, and Bearcub and Cat hesitated. Konki followed suit. The landscape had abruptly changed to a desert place, where there would be little game or water. But wanting to explore the area, Konki thought to go on.

"Come on, you two. Let us see this strange land," Konki called.

"No-o-o," said Cat with his lips puckered up, sitting on his haunches with his nose pointing to the sky.

"Ugh-uh," said Bearcub standing on his hind legs, shaking his head.

"What's wrong with you two?" asked Konki. "Are you cowards or something? We have to follow the sun, don't we … to where the sun rises?"

"Better," Bearcub wailed.

"Way," Cat snarled with his ears back.

Then Bearcub and Cat pranced back into the forest like little play things.

"Wait for me!" cried Konki. Perhaps he could trust his body to follow his two friends and let his vision explore that desert place through the eyes of the eagle. All he would have to do is blink. But something was wrong. He blinked and nothing happened. Aaron had said that he was now free from the influences of old Wey-cho-kay's magic. Was this what he meant, that he couldn't be an eagle anymore? He couldn't force his awareness in any way to be one with the eagle, and it was not an automatic thing as it used to be. He ran to catch up with his spirit guides. He was disappointed, yes, but why think about it? He needed to get home.

Running, Konki daydreamed. His body ran on without him while he was deep in thought, visualizing that desert place, how it might look. His awareness gradually drifted away. He was dreaming he was an eagle again while his body kept running north. He never decided to become an eagle, he just let go. Getting home was the only important thing now, and he trusted his friends not to go into the desert, but he could dream about that lonely and dry place.

Konki learned other things as he ran. He learned how to fish, but not as himself … as an eagle. Somehow, in his daydreams, he connected with the eagles who lived near the lakes and streams. Dreaming he was an eagle, he watched the other eagles swoop down and pluck a fish out of the waters of a lake. As if he were born to it, Konki, on a dreamy day, sitting underneath a pine tree by a small mountain lake, dreamed he was diving through the blue heavens. He spotted a trout feeding near the surface of the lake and snatched the fish with his powerful talons. It was as thick as his neck. He ate it and went back for more. He caught three more fish and dropped them beside a little boy sleeping against a pine tree. When Konki awoke, he smelled fish. He looked at his side and saw a giant trout still flopping on

the ground. He saw Bearcub and Cat each devouring their own. Deep inside himself, he had learned to connect with the animal spirits, but especially, the eagle. He could now have the eagles provide for his friends and himself. He had never decided to … it had become instinctual and intuitive. He ate his fish roasted.

Konki got used to the new way of dreaming. As his feet fled northward, he dreamed, and the more he dreamed about the desert, the more it became a continuous reality … flying high above the desert as his body ran with Cat and Bearcub. Konki flew over a succession of mountain ranges. The only trees he could see were scrub oak and ceder with a few dry pines on the northern slopes. At the end of this desert area was a vast white plain and then a great salt sea governed above by white seagulls. He could smell the salt.

Konki was told by the high flying gulls that the sea was too salty to support any life. Only in ages past was it full of fish. Their ancestors ruled over a much vaster domain that had covered most of the desert. The rivers and streams and some small mountain lakes had plenty of fish, and so does the fresh lake to the south, but that is a different domain. He thanked them and flew on.

Using his eagle eyes, Konki surveyed the land below, picking out the tiny details. One thing caught his emotions like a hook. There was a bright sparkle on the east shore of the sea. He circled down to investigate. The closer he came to the form, the more it glowed from within itself. He felt that it was a place of the Great Spirit. He didn't understand the form at first, then he noticed that it had four corners and was made of crystal, like the crystal cave he had been in with Aaron. But he knew from the Spirit, that this was a man-made cave. It had three spires like frozen trees on the west end and again on the east end, except the middle one on the east end was higher. As he circled around it, he stared at that middle pinnacle. A man of radiance with a horn set in his mouth stood on the top of it. The horn was like his ram's horn, but uncurled and stretched out. The man glowed as bright as the sun. Konki could only stare.

Konki's peace was shattered by a blast from that horn more shrill and lasting than his own horn. The blast from the horn seemed to be words fierce and true: "You have left yourself unguarded in order to see a spectacle. Return to your senses. Do you think that a bear cub and lion cub can protect you from this band of warriors?" The words were as fierce as the cry of the Great Eagle, and the beating of his wings created a monstrous wind that blew Konki's soul back into his body.

Konki had run head-long into a band of warriors still wet with the blood of their enemies. The women with them carried something in nets. As they came close, Konki could see they carried heads. Each face in the nets stared at him in a frozen grimace. He was caught by thick rough hands. Bearcub and Cat scampered up a tree. The roughneck warrior called out to the others, "What have we here?"

Another, covered with lightning on his chest and streaks on his face with a head full of feathers peered down at the boy and answered, "It must be a ball!" Konki had rolled himself up into a ball to protect himself from grabbing hands, hiding his precious ram's horn. They proceeded to kick him as they would a ball. They divided into two teams to see who could kick the ball to goal. Konki was only aware of pain after pain of being kicked

and bumped onto the rocks, but he held fast to his horn. Only after the ram's horn was kicked into his mouth did he remember it. In the pause between two kicks, he took a deep and painful breath which he let out into the horn. The blast startled the men. They stopped the game and looked skyward. The blast of the horn give way to the screech of the Great Eagle echoing off the mountain walls. Dozens of human screams joined the cry and chilled the air along with the beat of a fierce wind … the beat of giant wings. Konki felt himself being carried away by giant talons. The cries of the men were softened only by the first snowfall that came like a thick white fog.

Konki was deposited on the eastern shore of that great salty sea near a mountain range covered with pines. He could hear the sea gulls fighting and quarreling over bits of food. He cast his eyes about. He recognized the place as where the glowing crystal cave had been, though, it hadn't been a cave. It had been a crystal lodge-house where the spirits dwelt.

The flight had been a swift one. Konki was out of breath and hurting all over. He was bleeding from somewhere, probably his head, because he could taste the blood. He lay down on the warm salty sand bathed by the sun. The salt stung his wounds, but it didn't matter. He had to rest, and lost consciousness quickly. He dreamed of Aaron who had squatted beside him and was busy tending his wounds, sponging them with salt water.

"Ow!" cried Konki.

"Hold your head back a little," Aaron said gently, "yes, that's it, right onto my leg."

Aaron pinched Konki's nose to make the bleeding stop.

Soon, Konki was bathed, and his bleeding from several wounds had ceased. Returning to his senses, he grabbed at Aaron's legs and cried his name.

"Aaron! Oh Aaron! I'll never do it again! I promise!"

But there was no Aaron. He soon fainted and dreamed again.

Aaron asked, "Do what, son?"

"Go off like I did and leave myself unprotected. But I thought that Bearcub and Cat were there to protect me," Konki almost sobbed.

"They are only children like yourself," Aaron replied. "They need to grow before they have any real strength."

"But they said they knew the way," Konki almost whined.

"They cannot see as high as the eagle, but their way is safe enough if you know how to climb a tree," Aaron reprimanded. "Look at what your eagle eyes have seen."

"There was a mountain-sized lodge-house right here," Konki remembered. "Now, it is gone."

"It is called a temple," answered Aaron, "and it will not be here for many generations. You saw from very high up."

"I was with the high fliers." Konki pondered a moment and asked, "Aaron, it had a bright spirit holding a long horn, and he blew the horn. It was frightening."

"He was trying to save your life," Aaron said softly as though it were a breeze. "You will meet him again someday."

"Aaron?" asked Konki tipping his head. He knew he was waking up and leaning on his elbow. "Why am I not back at the Cave of Healing?"

Aaron's reply was a whisper on the salty breeze. "You can always go there again … when you are defeated."

Defeated? It wasn't made clear. He sat there pondering, then all of a sudden, he knew a storm was heading this way. He remembered now … the snow. It would take a couple of days to reach him. That would give him time to make a shelter, get food, and sew a winter coat. He looked around and wondered where Bearcub and Cat had gone and whether he would ever see them again. The mountains would be a half day's walk. He didn't want to stay in this wide and open valley. Better shelter would be up there, and he stared at a canyon that looked promising. Stiffening against the pain, he rose up and walked, then loping along, worried about Aaron. Would he ever see *him* again?

Before Konki stood a mountain that rose straight up from the valley and the sea. He could see higher mountains beyond. There were mountains to the north that turned west, but to the south, the range went on without stopping. He could see them as far as the horizon. Between he and the mountain, there wasn't much vegetation. They were all scrubby plants that smelled very sharp and strong in the bright sunlight. He saw several varieties that all smelled the same. It was the scent of the desert. He passed an occasional scrub oak, but these became more plentiful on the mountain, as did everything else. A canyon began as a crack in the base of the mountain where the scrub oak grew in clumps. He spotted familiar pine farther up, near the top. That's where he would head. It would be more like home to him.

When Konki got to that first clump of trees, he heard water running. It ran down to the salt sea in a little brook he hadn't noticed before. He looked at the sea then at the beach where he had seen the temple. The thought came to him that it would become a place of safety to many people. Out in the open? But the Great Spirit knew all things. His mother had taught him.

Following the stream of water up the narrowing valley, Konki found a mountain meadow with a small spring on the north side. He saw other springs sharing their waters, making the little brook which cascaded over the large broken dolomites in the shades of the pines. There he set up camp, building a woven grass hut from the tall grass in the meadow.

Konki found a glassy flint in the rocks on the sides of the canyon and made a fine-edged knife. He then set snares as he had seen his brother do. When later that night he checked his snares, half asleep, he thought he heard Aaron's voice talking about the creation and how the animals had volunteered to sacrifice their lives to save the lives of man.

"Because that man," he said, "had wandered off into the wilderness away from the protection of the Great Creator God, there were many of the animals who loved man that sought permission from the Great Creator to go down into this dark and dreary waste to help man survive. We need therefore, Konki, to thank each animal that gives itself to us in

sacrifice until the day that the Great Creator himself shall come and save us all."

Konki ate well that night, remembering to give thanks to the squirrel, as well as giving thanks to the Great Creator God who made the squirrel and the fire.

Konki didn't build much of a fire for fear of being seen. Rather, he dug a pit, making just enough of a fire to heat up some stones and then covered the disemboweled squirrel with them.

He watched the moon glide across the sky. When it moved over one twelfth of the sky, as his mother had taught him, he dug up the squirrel, ripped off the skin and ate. It was delicious. Rubbing some of the ashes onto the meat made it taste better, a little salty.

For several days Konki caught squirrels, chipmunks and rabbits. He saved their pelts, tanning them with brains and bark and smoking the flesh, always burying the bowels in the earth to feed the great mother. Leaving his camp, he went down to the salt sea and gathered up great handfuls of salt that had dried along the shore. Thinking this would enhance the flavor of his meat, he rubbed it on the little animals before smoking them. He also rubbed it onto the pelts. He thought it might help preserve them.

Konki knew that when he had a good supply, he would cross these mountains and head for home across the great plains. The snow was coming, and he would have a good coat of these pelts. He could have a bigger and better coat, but he couldn't see taking a larger animal's life. He loved to look at them and behold their grandeur. Besides, their meat was for families. He was only one.

Walking through the woods one morning after having eaten some of his smoked meat, he ran into some very tough spider-webs. He panicked and ran. Between every tree was strung a spider-web with a huge flat spider in the middle of each one. He batted at the webs and spiders as he ran. They were covering him, and the spiders were crawling down his neck! They were all over him! He ran right into the hands of an old woman!

"What are you doing?" she asked, shaking him. "You are ruining my webs! You are running away with my sisters and killing them!"

"Who...who are you?" Konki asked, trying not to be afraid, but not being able to help himself. He had never liked spiders.

"I am Spider Woman," she answered. "And you are destroying my house. For this you will *wear* my webs."

Konki looked at himself. He was covered everywhere with spider-webs. Leaves like feathers stuck to him. He had to fight his anger and fear of the spiders, though he knew they weren't evil.

He remembered his mother talking about Spider Woman. He looked up, and the old woman had disappeared. In pulling off the webs in great wads, he found some that would not break easily. As he pulled on them, they stretched into long cords.

Stripping himself of the webs, clothes and spiders, he began dancing and laughing. He would wear the webs.

"Here is cord," he cried, stretching the spider-webs.

"Here is web.

Here is the net I thought in my head

to make a coat to keep out the cold.

What a strange story to tell when I am old.

What a bold and shining coat!

What a bold and shining white coat!

What a wintery bold and shining coat for the snow!"

Never before had Konki seen such a strong strand of web from a spider! Now, he was thankful for the spiders, and he thanked them and the old spider woman. He thanked his mother for teaching him how to weave. The tradition, though, looked down upon by the rest of the tribe, was handed down from Wayne MacKonki, his great great grandfather. He had tried grasses before, but now, the Great Spirit had given him *such* a gift! He knelt down and thanked his Maker. He would be a maker tonight.

After gathering many, many abandoned spider-webs, winding them up on sticks, he had another brilliant idea. He went down to the beach and gathered into the chest of his leather suit the smallest of the sea-gull feathers he could find either lying on the beach or in the gull's nests. Originally, he was going to put these feathers on the outside of the coat he was to make, mainly for decoration. But by the time he reached camp, he discovered that the feathers being on the inside made him hot. He had another idea. He would stuff his new coat with the feathers, putting them on the *inside*. They would keep him warm in the snow. That meant he would have to have two coats sewn together so there would be an inside.

Konki gathered up his sticks of webbing (there being several arm loads), and went to work spinning a primitive thread. It was similar to fire-making in which the stick was twirled in the hands. The fine strands of webbing were twisted off the top of the stick and fitted onto another stick. He had to use hands, feet and mouth to do the trick. All this was accompanied by the song he sang.

He worked late into the night. He hadn't counted on this taking such a long time, but it took him three days of twisting before the thread was ready. He didn't eat much in those three days, nor sleep much. He was too excited. At the end of the third day, he made himself a belt loom in which the woof lines were tied to a tree. The other ends were tied around his waist. He made several belts of strong silky material. By the seventh day, after having asked a porcupine for some needles, he had sewn them together, having cut them into the shape of a coat of sorts. Sewing the pieces of cloth that resulted, he stuffed in the feathers. By this time, the snow was falling.

Stuffing in the sea-gull feathers, he saw that they all sagged to the bottom of the coat. He laid the coat down on a flat rock. He thought a moment. Then he spread the feathers throughout the coat and sewed the inside to the outside at several different places a fist's breadth apart with cords so that the feathers stayed where he put them. He pulled on his

white silky coat, patted himself on his chest and admired his reflection in the slow part of the stream. He was very proud of himself, but he raised his hands to the sky and thanked the Great Spirit, as his mother had taught him.

Busy making his coat, Konki didn't notice he was being watched.

The watchers saw a tall lanky youth with a long slender beak for a nose, short cropped hair, and blue eyes. He was dancing to a hidden song in silence. This youth, they thought, must be lost and very far from home, for all the tribes around these mountains, even on the plains, were shorter and heavier and wore their hair long and none they knew had eyes of sky color. Now they saw him do magic with spider webs and sea gull feathers. The five of them talked and judged that this must be a demon. But they would test the demon and see if the magic of his coat could withstand the magic of their arrows.

Because of fatigue, Konki dreamed while awake. He felt light headed, joyful, and delirious. He saw himself dancing far below on the ground in slow motion. He was flying with the eagles, many of them. As in a dream, he saw dark figures in the snow hiding behind the rocks and bushes and trees all bending their bows, aiming their arrows at him. He called to all the eagles, screeching, to dive down with him and save this youth, this fool of a youth who didn't have the sense to hide and get out of the way of the arrows.

An arrow traveled in slow motion towards the dancing youth. An eagle intercepted it with its body. Konki felt the numbing pain as if it were his own body. He fell over, grasping his stomach. He turned around slowly to see an eagle fall at his feet and roll, feathered wings flopping. Another arrow sped through the air behind him. Konki received another shocking blow. This time in his back as another eagle fell to the snow behind him. Another arrow came, and another eagle intercepted … another arrow, and yet another eagle fell. Konki turned around to see arrows coming at him from all sides, only to be intercepted by the eagles. They were letting themselves be destroyed to save *his* life. They were taking *his* place in death. His heart broke, and he cried out, "Stop! You're killing the eagles!"

He danced around with both hands up trying to put a stop to the massacre. The five braves in ambush stared wide-eyed as Konki blew on his ram's horn. They shrieked in terror and fled. Konki dropped to his knees, crying and petting the fallen eagles, asking, "Why?...Why?...Why?" and not understanding. Surprisingly, the answer came in his own voice. "Why has the Great Eagle sacrificed his life that I might live?" He wouldn't know that he had uttered this question until a long time later when memory would return to this event.

Konki made himself an ax the way he had seen his brother do and set about making a funeral bier in the snow. Upon it, he tied all the eagles that had been slain in that little mountain clearing. As a memorial to them, he took one feather from the wing of each eagle and tied it to his coat at each cord that made the quilting. His coat was now covered with eagle feathers, and he began dancing and chanting the death song of his people.

He stayed there all night in a vigil, building little fires, praying and chanting, trying to understand what had taken place and why he was so beloved. He slept dreamlessly in his hut

the next day with snow falling and blanketing everything. He never did make that fur coat out of the skins he had collected.

Konki awoke famished. He grabbed some smoked rabbit and ate more than he had planned. He ate the whole thing! He looked out at the snow from inside his little hut. It was still snowing. He thought that he had better work on some furry moccasins when he saw movement outside. It was people. He stuck his head out of the hut and saw a circle of people, men, women and children. They stood motionless in the light snowfall. Most everyone was covered with blankets of snow-covered fur. When Konki came out of the hut, everyone stepped back. A little girl giggled somewhere in the crowd. He didn't know what to say, so he raised his arm to the square and said, "Peace."

An elderly man with many decorations on his shirt, which Konki could see through his open robe, and having many feathers in his hair, approached Konki. He talked, using sign language along with his speech which Konki couldn't understand.

He said, "Many warriors fight many battles take many prisoners. Prisoners talk of Son of the Great Eagle. Other tribes talk of Son of the Great Eagle. These braves," and he pointed with the palm of his hand to the five that had tried to kill him, "say you cannot be killed. Come, tell me of your great power. Are you Son of the Great Eagle? Come. I will give you one my daughters to wed. Come. Live with us. We will be prosperous. We will have plenty deer and elk for our lodges. We will have strength against our enemies. We will live a good life. Come."

Konki knew some sign language. He was frightened but remembered the great love the Eagle had for him, so he signed, "I cannot. I must return to my people. I have a long journey ahead of me."

The old man seemed wise and made sense when he said, "Surely, it is a great hardship to travel in winter. Come. Live with us until the melting of the snow when it again is green and safe to travel."

Already feeling homesick, Konki knew the old man was right. He should wait out the winter. Was it old Wey-cho-kay's doings to trap him in the winter snows so he could not return home? But he promised himself and his mother that he would return.

Konki accepted the old man's hospitality and thanked him. The old man turned to the people and told them he would stay. They laughed with the joy of knowing that Konki's magic would be used for them instead of against them. They accepted him as the Son of the Great Eagle.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Villages in these mountains looked similar to what Konki was used to. The difference was that the huts used by each family were covered with skins instead of bark. On the east coast, several families lived together in one lodge, but here, there was only one family to a hut. Many of the huts were decorated with deer antlers. Although one had human skulls, some of which had the hair and dried skin still attached. They stared with eyeless sockets and grinned with all their teeth. Konki thought that they must belong to the medicine man. He saw an old man enter the hut. Medicine men could be tricky. He would watch this one. The old man returned and approached him. With his outstretched hand he offered entrance to another hut which was a little larger than the rest. It was decorated with eagle feathers as well as with antlers. Konki entered the hut wearily, thinking this must be the hut of the warrior chief.

In the dimness of firelight little round faces giggled. One face had no expression, except for the many deep wrinkles that covered it. She must be the grandmother, Konki thought. She said something and everyone made way for him. He was offered a seat by one of the girls. They were all girls. The old man behind him said something roughly in a grunt. Konki got the idea that the man didn't have any sons. Maybe they had their own families by now, anyway. He looked at the old woman again as he took his seat by the central fire. She was suckling a baby. One of the girls offered him a bowl of broth sprinkled with what appeared to be forest roots and herbs. He was already full of smoked rabbit, but he had to be polite and accept the food. After he had eaten, he signed gratitude and asked for water. The broth had been spicy. They gave him a small cup of water. He nodded his gratitude and drank.

The old man left, and for a long time the four or five girls of varying ages watched Konki and giggled. He remembered that the old man had wanted to give him one of his daughters to wed. That worried him, for he was not yet a man in his own tribe. He could not be until he returned home with trophies of his long quest. Then he wouldn't have to marry one of these chubby things, he could marry a nice tall thin girl that looked like himself. But the more he looked at these girls, the more he worried, and the more he worried, the more he sweat.

Konki noticed that he was sweating a lot. He seemed terribly warm. There was a strange exotic smell that reminded him of the desert plants. It would have been alright in the desert, but not in here. It made the air thick and unbreathable. Looking around, he saw that the chief had arrived and that everyone was passing the pipe around. He could tell it was the chief because of the feathers and trophies he wore. Konki had never smoked before because he wasn't yet a man, but he noticed that even the young girls were smoking from the pipe. When it came his turn, he thought he would cough, but he didn't. He found the smoke to be very soothing. After that, someone gave him a small cup of warm liquid. It tickled his tongue. The girls continued to giggle. The smoke filled the room. His eyes began watering. He heard chanting. Everyone was chanting. He didn't recall when they began. Konki began

to get dizzy and feel very heavy. It was too strange in here. He wanted to go home.

Women and girls chanted and danced around Konki. They looked full of holes and quivered like the flames of fire. Their dark hideous shadows rose up along the walls of the lodge. They turned into

weasels, foxes, and hares,
weasels, foxes, and hares,
weasels, foxes, and hares,
dancing, dancing, and chanting,
dancing, dancing, and chanting
and roaring like bears;
screaming, snarling and
yelling like cats in their lairs
their songs of
weasels, foxes, and hares,
their chanting and chanting
their dancing and dancing
screaming, roaring and
singing their songs
in their Indian lairs of
weasels, foxes, and hares,
weasels, foxes, and hares,
weasels, foxes, and hares,
… and wolves …

A wolf had entered the den and was howling. The hair stood on end all over Konki's tall body. He ran outside on all fours barking at the wolf inside. The wolf stepped out. Konki yelped and ran, a frightened little dog.

The little dog ran through the village and wound up back at the door to the lodge. The wolf was gone, but the little dog barked and yapped and scratched at the door post wanting in. Inside, terror struck Konki. His eyes grew wide. His heart clattered, and his teeth chattered, and he sweat profusely, looking at the door. Any moment now, the dog would come in. The dog! The dog! All Konki's fears, hates, and all his resentments were in that dog, all the hate and envy from the boys his age, all the nasty tricks, all the lying to get him into trouble, all the name calling, the ostracizing, all the loneliness, all the heartache, everything Konki had run away from was in that dog. The dog's scratching and yelping was saying that Konki was a woman. He could never be a man. He doesn't do manly things like hunting, fighting, torturing, playing war. It said, "You're a woman Konki who weaves and

makes huts and pottery and takes care of the children. You are an outcast. You can't do mighty things as a man to feed or protect the village. Your head is in the clouds. You are not Bear Clan!"

At that moment Konki grabbed for his ram's horn. He was among witches, but he couldn't find it. He found that he couldn't soar up to be with the eagles. He couldn't concentrate, and he couldn't let go of the horror that held him. He tried to scream like the eagles to call the Great One, but all he could do was to yelp!

"I am coming inside," said the dog. "I am coming to devour you! Then your secrets will be known by everyone."

Konki yelped and yelped. He got down on all fours and ran around the hut among the dancing witches who chanted their magic in unison with Konki's heartbeat. Konki ran out the door, yelping, right into the mouth of the little dog who devoured him whole.

Inside the wiry dog, Konki ran through the village yelping and yelping. Women, boys, and girls chased him around the huts laughing and throwing sticks and stones at him. Those who caught up to him hit him on the back with sticks to make him yelp louder, and the louder he yelped, the more the hate leaped from his heart. Each time they hit him on the back, he yelped out his hate and resentment, all those wrong feelings toward those back home who had wronged *him.* When his energy was spent, he crawled back into the chieftain's tent and curled up by the fire. There he slept until he was himself again. The party was over.

When Konki awoke, he saw the same round faces again, but they paid no attention to him. They only talked among themselves as though nothing had happened. He curled up again and slept through the night.

Waking up the next morning, he noticed that one of the girls was sleeping next to him. He remembered that the old man had promised to give him one of his daughters. When she opened her deep black eyes, he signed to her as he said, "I am not yet a man." She moved back from him with a face of disgust. She signed to him as she said, "That is right. You are not a man. You are a dog!" To his surprise, she was right. He blinked his eyes as he used to in order to become an eagle. But now, he looked out of the eyes of a little dog. All he could see was close to the ground. Great sorrow entered his heart. He could no longer soar upwards and be with the eagles high in the air. The witches! They had stolen something very precious! How precious was his hatred and resentment! Where was it? He could not feel it. There was nothing there. He whimpered. The girls muffled their laugher. The old woman looked at them hard and they fell silent.

When Konki was fully awake, he wondered what he should be doing. He noticed the old chieftain across from him. He was wearing Konki's coat that was given him by Spider Woman. Konki gasped and quickly felt his chest and arms. His coat was gone! It looked funny on the old man. It was too small for him. He wondered again if he had his horn, but he couldn't see it.

"My land, my eagles, my spiders," signed the old chief.

Konki felt sorrowful for the loss. Those eagles had given their lives to save his. He loved that coat. It had taken a long time to make it, and now it was the old man's. He defiled it. It was meant for Konki. He wept. He howled like a little dog. The old man threw a stick at him. He whimpered at being hit, and the girls threw sticks at him. Grief-stricken, he began to chant his song. The old woman threw a big stick that hit him in the mouth. He froze, letting the tears dry up.

"You ungrateful cur!" said the old man. "You are no longer Son of the Great Eagle. You are a Son of a Bitch!"

That was all Konki could stand. He chanted his song again, but it sounded like a howl of a little puppy dog, and everyone beat him with sticks. He was compelled to be humble.

"You will be our slave," said the old man. "You will fetch us more wood for our fire." He kicked Konki out the door.

Konki rolled onto the ground.

When he stood, he found that everyone wanted more firewood. If he didn't act quickly, they again beat him with a stick.

By nightfall, after doing everyone's chores, Konki was hungry and tired. He trembled he was so tired, but he wasn't cold. Working hard had warmed him. Now what was he to do? Was he still a guest at the chief's hut? He went over there to see if he could get in, but they barred his way. A dark man walked up to him and bid him come. He knew that this was the medicine man of the village. He motioned Konki to enter into his hut. He did so. There was a little boy in there. He giggled and threw leaves at Konki. Konki ducked and stepped aside to let in the medicine man. The dark man motioned to Konki to sit. He gave him meat and a little broth in an earthen bowl. He gratefully ate, thanked his host and curled up next to the fire and slept. The little boy curled up against Konki and slept.

Konki dreamed of the Great Eagle who chastised him for going off on his own and leaving Bearcub and Cat behind. "These I gave to you to protect you from harm. You have left them. I would have guided and protected you. Now you have allowed yourself to be captured by these mountain people whom I love also. Stay with them and help and serve them until the land once again becomes green. They will let you go and think well of you."

In sleep that night, though he had been chastised by the Great Spirit, Konki felt comforted.

In the middle of the night, the old chief came in to talk to the medicine man. "Rejected my daughter, he did. I rejected him. You have him. You feed him."

“I will,” the medicine man said. He knew that Konki was special. He would watch over him until it was time for him to leave. He would make sure that he would stay humble, though.

Winter was harsh that year with continual snow, wind, and ice. The days of sunshine were few. Most days were gray. Konki spent the winter with numbed toes and fingers. The mountain people were not cruel, but they did treat him as a slave. After a month of diligence in their service, they gave him a coat and fur moccasins, each made of the rabbit and squirrel skins he himself had prepared before his capture. He asked them if they stayed among the trees to keep from the winds down below in the valley, but as a slave, they wouldn't talk to him except to give orders. They hit him whenever he tried to talk. Maybe his language seemed strange and funny or maybe slaves weren't supposed to talk. If he learned their language, he thought, it would be different.

Konki spent most of the time gathering firewood, making fires, finding edible and medicinal plants, such as wintergreen, with the medicine man, tanning hides and chewing them with the women who laughed at him, repairing huts. At night, he would sit and listen to stories and tales of animals, men, and the creation, along with tales of war and bravery. In doing this, he was able to learn their language, because they used signs as they talked. These were not unlike what he had listened to around the campfires at home. One time he forgot and said something in their language. This time, he was not hit with sticks but simply told that dogs do not talk, and that was that.

Konki became *Little Woman* again because of his working with the women. They kept him on a tether except when he was with the old medicine man who explained they thought he had such power that they needed to keep it on a leash. Otherwise, the world might fall apart and they all die. He was actually being worshiped, but because of the bad treatment, he never knew that. They could not allow his pride to hurt the earth, so they had to keep him humble.

Young bucks and braves also liked Konki. They liked swatting him with branches, swinging sticks of firewood at him or an occasional stone. They made it their winter sport to see who could hit him. Being raised in this kind of an atmosphere, Konki had obtained a certain knack for dodging. It became instinctual to know when to duck or when to slink cat-like back an inch or two so as not to be struck. Sometimes a young buck threw him to the ground, thrusting his body against Konki. It became a game for Konki to step out of his way and apply a little pressure to the boy to send the boy crashing into the snow. There were times when someone hit Konki, but only by ambush. Then everyone cheered the one who hit him. By the time winter was over, they couldn't ambush Konki. It seemed that some spirit always intervened and warned him of the ambush. He either stepped out of the way or went back. Sometimes he caught the stone or the stick, but he never threw it back, just stared at the person and wondered why they had such a perverse nature.

Pay-wa-no-chay was the name of the old medicine man. Konki had found that out early, whenever the chief came to talk. These two watched Konki. They wanted to know his secret. He was a sight to see, being a head taller than most people in the village. He was lean and sinewy and swift, easy like a cat that can't be touched.

If someone tried to touch him or caress him, he would slink away as if he had the spine of a cat, loose and wavy. That's what made him detestable. He never stood proud and rock hard like the mountains. He always looked down and slouched. No wonder that he

turned into a dog when caught by the people. He had no foundation. He was like a breeze that was sometimes refreshing and sometimes too cold and could never be touched.

Konki became the one who could not be touched, not even by Death. But he was not a warrior destined to became a hero, but a dog to be kicked around. Was this his true nature, not that of a soaring eagle? Konki did not deserve the eagle coat. When he was found, he was a soaring eagle, and that had been refreshing, but in the Testing of the Heart, he turned out to be only a little brown dog, lost and far from home. What was he doing way out here in these mountains? He didn't look like the desert people or the plains people or the mountain people. He was totally different. His home was far away past the plains.

After a long day around the small hearth fire, eating their evening meal, Konki overheard a conversation between Pay-wa-no-chay and the old chief.

“Maybe he belongs on the other side of that great river that divides the world,” Pay-wa-no-chay said with a mouthful of venison.

“Is he the Son of the Great Eagle?” the old chief asked as he squatted before him.

“He looks like an eagle with that long beak of his.” Pay-wa-no-chay smiled, turned his head and winked at Konki who sat behind him enjoying the venison stew.

“He cannot die. Surely, the Great Eagle loves him.” The chief frowned as though he could not figure out why.

“I will pray to the Great Spirit,” Pay-wa-no-chay said as he dipped a bit of millet bread into his stew. “He will tell me what this boy is all about. He will give me an omen.”

When the old medicine man left the hut, Konki followed him as he was used to by now. They climbed to the top of the peak that overlooked the little mountain village, and there, Konki watched him lift up his arms, chant his prayer, and dance before his maker. Konki was sure that old Pay-wa-no-chay would receive his answer by the early morning. That's when Wey-cho-kay usually received his revelations.

CHAPTER NINE

Not all winter's moments were dark for Konki. There was a bright moment, a spark of joy called Peg-weg. He was the little boy in Pay-wa-no-chay's hut and was half as old as Konki. Before Konki had arrived, Peg-weg's favorite thing to do was to follow the older boys and copy them in whatever they did. Whenever the older boys scolded him, he only laughed and imitated their faces. He became so good at it that he made them laugh. He was the jewel of the whole village. He was blessed. He could neither hear nor speak except for making bird calls and some animal sounds. He could hear birds, it seemed, and could imitate them perfectly, but otherwise, he was dumb.

When Konki joined the village that winter, and Peg-weg had joined in hitting Konki with sticks, Konki could not help liking the little rat. He knew instinctively that Peg-weg was pure and innocent and would be for the rest of his life. So Konki thought the boy to be no trouble. He often let Peg-weg hit him and then howled like a dog and ran around. Peg-weg howled in imitation and laughed. That made Konki laugh. They wrestled, Peg-weg on top of Konki. They rolled around in the snow. Konki enjoyed the attention. He was the only relief in what seemed to be a scourge from the older boys.

Mountain people were honorable. They were also very proud. They each had to show off their skills, courage, and strength. Therefore, there was never a time the boys ganged up on Konki to whip him. It was a game of skill for them to try to hit Konki, and each boy took his turn.

Women were entirely different. They had no honor or pride to protect. They and the girls ruthlessly ganged up on Konki and tried to beat him, either until he bled all over or until he escaped into the woods, the way he ran away from old Wey-cho-kay. Whenever Konki made a mistake, like being late for firewood or wrecking a hut when trying to fix it, step on a foot or a blanket a woman was wearing, they attacked him like a pack of wolves, throwing anything they could get their hands on. He was their slave, their property, and they let him know it continually. Perhaps they had to have such a slave to focus their tempers on so as not to focus on each other. At least he was helping keep the peace. If any of them liked Konki, maybe it was for that.

When Konki was being beaten by the women, Peg-weg attacked them with the same ferocity as they used on Konki.

Konki didn't fight back against the women, and that was good. Because of his cat-like prowess, Konki didn't get hurt too often, usually escaping without injury. But Peg-weg stomped the ground, howled, hissed and chattered at the women with as much anger and fierceness as he could muster. Often, he lunged at Konki when Konki was being beaten to knock him away from the women so they could run away together. The women then threw out every curse in their vocabulary and every condemning oath that was in their language at Peg-weg, but they never hit him or threw things at him because of his blesse'd state. They then turned around and laughed uproariously and dispersed.

In the early spring after the ground thawed, Peg-weg made like a badger digging his burrow. He dug a giant burrow into the ground with his bare hands. It looked like a mound of earth. He placed some of last year's golden leaves he had saved from Autumn into the burrow and thatched it over with sod and branches so it looked quite natural. He laughed all the while. This was for Konki to hide in whenever he needed to run away from the women.

There came a day when flowers poked their heads out of the snow-dampened soil, and the snow-melt made little rivulets of clean mountain water running down to the rivers that fed the great salt lake. On such a Spring day when the sun shone bright in a clear blue sky, Konki made the big mistake of falling and tearing one woman's skirt and needed Peg-weg's protection from the enraged women. He was only trying to grab at something to prevent his fall.

Peg-weg bounded into the melee, butting against Konki with all his force, pushing him out of reach of the women. Shouts and screams followed the boys for a long distance into the woods. Coming into a clearing, Peg-weg motioned with pointing fingers, jumping up and down in a frenzy, chattering like a squirrel to get Konki to see the hole in his mound. Konki looked at the little mound with boyish pleasure. He understood and jumped down into the hole. Konki crawled all the way inside and rested against the dirt embankment. Peg-weg plugged up the hole by sitting in it, beaming with pride as the women of the village passed them by, shouting all the obscenities they knew.

One of the women came back and drove Peg-weg back toward home as though he was some kind of cattle, lashing at his back with a switch, and lashing the rest of him with her tongue, using the meanest words that came to her. He couldn't hear her anyway. After everyone ran away, the woods were silent except for a songbird, the meadow lark. Konki was left alone with the task of opening up the hole into which a boulder had rolled after Peg-weg left. He decided that he was not going back to the village. It was springtime, and he should be off toward his own home.

Konki sat inside the little knoll on the yellow leaves thinking. He was glad to have a rest from those women. He was sure they were all witches. But he must be going. It was getting pretty stuffy inside there. Thinking of exiting, he stared at the boulder sticking in the hole with beams of light streaking through around the edges. He saw magic. He saw the expanse of the dug-out with its floor of golden leaves and felt himself to be in the womb of Mother Earth, a holy place. He looked at the leaves. They glittered in the sunbeams. The glittering formed a circle around him as if signaling great things. He looked closer at the sun on the leaves and saw something peculiar. He laughed when he realized what he was looking at and rolled around in the leaves laughing. It was something he had done when he was a little boy. Peg-weg had drawn little picture symbols on all the leaves. Oh, what a wonderful little guy Peg-weg was. He was going to miss him. Konki rested on his belly and looked at the leaves one by one, holding each one of them up into a sunbeam.

Pay-wa-no-chay's chanting could be heard in the distance. Konki became alert, noticing the similarity to old Wey-cho-kay's chants. Here he was inside Mother Earth waiting to be born again as if he were going through another vigil. Similar feelings entered his breast. There was a far off buzz in the air inviting sleep. All of a sudden, panic struck,

and he pushed against the boulder with all his might!

The angle of assent made it hard to push the boulder out. How had Peg-weg ever pushed that boulder in so hard? He was only a little thing. Konki couldn't see that a log had fallen in front of the boulder and had twisted around so that its nose was up against the boulder and its tail end plowing into the snow-softened sod.

By the time Pay-wa-no-chay came down into the little clearing where Konki was struggling to get out of Peg-weg's little knoll, the Great Fire Spirit was descending into the western desert over the salty waters, throwing up legs of purple and orange fires to pull down the stars. When Pay-wa-no-chay stopped to stare at the little knoll (for he heard a rumbling and a grunting inside), Konki popped out all covered with golden leaves with writing on them. The leaves caught the fire in the sky, dazzling the eyes of the old medicine man.

There was the omen! Pay-wa-no-chay chanted, and Konki, so startled at running into the medicine man, was shocked into the same spirit and, trance-like, also chanted along with him.

Behold, all is as in a night vision:
The hungry man eateth and awaketh,
But behold, his soul remaineth empty;
The thirsty man drinketh and awaketh,
But behold, his soul becometh faint;
His soul hath appetite and it fleeth.
So shall it be with all nations that fight,
To those that war against Yeo-sep-was.

For behold, all ye that doeth iniquity hear:
Stay yourselves and wonder be,
For ye shall cry out and cry, yea,
Ye shall be drunken but not with wine;
Ye shall stagger, but not with strong drink.
For behold, he hath poured out upon you
The spirit of a deep sleep.

And it shall be that he shall bring forth
Unto you the words of a book,
And they shall be the words of them

That have slumbered,
And it shall be the words of they
Who have slumbered and slept;
And the words of a vision shall
A seer speak forth from the dust.

In that day shall the book be read by them;
It shall be read upon the tops of the mountains.
They shall be read by the power of Light.
In as much as the eyes of the blind shall
See out of obscurity and out of darkness,
And the deaf shall hear the words of the book,
And all things shall be revealed that ever
Have been and that ever will be to the end.

So cry out and cry for the work of Yeo-sep-was,
For the terrible ones are brought to naught,
And the scorner is consumed with his fire,
And all that watch for iniquity are cut off.
Great Yeo-sep-was shall not now be ashamed,
Neither shall his face now wax pale and faint,
But when he shall see his children in the midst,
They shall sanctify the Holy One of Yeo-sep-was.

(from the prophecy of Isaiah 29)

As the song came to an end, Pay-wa-no-chay and Konki were one with the Great Spirit. Both were on the straight path. They breathed the same breath. With their eyes, they saw in each other's eyes, their own reflection. They were no more enemies nor strangers nor foreigners, and they were more than friends, so had the Great Spirit entered them.

CHAPTER TEN

After a long spell in which Konki was swept up into ecstasy, standing there in front of little Peg-weg's knoll, Konki opened his eyes and shook off the feeling of over-all numbness. Pay-wa-no-chay was gone. In his place was his eagle's coat and ram's horn and a well trodden path up and over the mountains to the east which hadn't been there before.

Konki jumped into the air, giving a loud shout for joy, beating the air with his fist. He picked up his ram's horn and blew a long loud full blast. A little dog yelped, jumping out of Peg-weg's knoll and fled whining back to the village. Above in the air, a lone bald eagle circled. Konki blinked and could see out of the eagle's eyes. He blinked again, and he saw out of his own eyes looking up at the eagle. The sun shone through the circle made by the eagle. Konki was whole again. The air smelled fresh and clean. The trees sang to him in gentle breezes. He whistled with the meadow lark and took off up the trail.

Not long after Konki had started on the trail eastward, he heard the sound of a bear behind him. It had the distinct sound of crying out "Ma-ma!" A big grizzly bear came romping up the trail wailing in his deep full voice. Konki gulped back the tears. It was Bearcub! He was full grown. Not far behind him was Cat. He came running up behind Bearcub, all four paws in the air, trying to catch up. He plowed right into Bearcub's rear, yelling, "Yeow! Watch it!" Bearcub turned and bellowed "What'd ya do that for!" He asked in fast grunts. "If you'd keep up, ya wouldn't be so much trouble!" He shook his head fast as if tearing at the air. "Trouble!" He shook his whole body and galloped up to Konki yelling, "Ma-ma!" Cat yelled out "Sorry!" then ran up along side Bearcub who had Konki in a squeeze, licking him in the face. Cat licked Konki on the rear and on the head, saying, "Chonki" with his tongue sticking out.

Konki laughed so hard at the antics of his friends that his insides hurt. They all three wound up on the ground on top of Bearcub, wrestling. Suddenly, Bearcub jumped up. He had had enough of that, but Konki was on Bearcub's back, riding him. Off he ran up the mountain trail with Cat following, crying, "Where? Where? Where are we going?" Cat repeated his whining every hundred feet or so, and Bearcub responded by shaking his head and growling, "Shuddup!" Konki enjoyed it all. It was Springtime, a time for laughter.

The air, perfumed with the smells of wild flowers, was mixed with the sounds of bubbling brooks, whispering trees and the piping and trilling gaiety of the birds. Spring air freshened all of Konki's senses to a new life and a heartfelt destiny. All the hardships of winter were forgotten. He rode peacefully on the giant grizzly's back. At the same time, he soared overhead, seeing out of the eyes of the eagle, the mountains that lay before him and the great plains with its masses of buffalo.

Coming upon a clearing, they startled a dozen or so doe and young bucks grazing. They lifted their heads and backed away. One of the young bucks, a six pointer, jumped from the bushes and startled the three travelers. He put his head down ready to charge.

Cat approached softly and whispered, "I am quite willing to eat fish, thank you."

Bear volunteered, "I love the beauty of the deer and the antelope."

And Konki said, "Yes, we're fish eaters."

Taken aback, the buck cleared his throat and lowered his tail, and looked at the coat of many feathers that Konki wore. He spoke up. "I have heard The Son of the Great Eagle, was in these mountains. The description fits you. You even smell like a bird. Wait here." He then walked away slowly and went down through the herd. Later, Konki could see him on a rock ledge talking to a twelve pointer.

“It must be,” Konki said in awe, “the Great Prince the mountain people spoke of.”

Cat and Bearcub were growing fidgety. Konki calmed them down by petting them. In Nature, all three were enemies, but these three trusted each other, and Cat and Bear were content to be with Konki.

Presently, the young buck returned. "The Prince will see you Eagle-son," he said haughtily, wearing his pride as a badge of authority. "You have permission to cross. This way."

Crossing the green-way, all the doe and young ones parted as the three untouchables followed the buck. They came to the edge of the clearing where the mountain resumed its rise. He told the cat and bear to remain and took Konki up a steep trail to the left. Pine trees covered their ascent until they reached the rocky abutment. There on the ledge stood the Great Prince watching over his wives. His massive hairy chest and great antlers were striking. His antlers were almost as big as his body. His neck and shoulders rippled with muscles. He was a little undignified in that he was still shedding his winter coat, but his eyes were black and piercing.

"Bow before the Prince," spoke the young buck in subdued tones.

Konki bowed with his legs as a deer, with his right knee on the earth.

"There are changes coming," said the Prince, not looking directly at Konki. "I fear for my brood and all the forest creatures." He walked around nervously, not being accustomed to humans.

"My kind have always been hunted by your kind. Yet, for all time, there has been mutual respect. Your kind has never taken without asking nor have left us without the strong, the beautiful, and the brave. That is coming to an end.

"Oh! Please do get up. That is enough bowing," said the Prince with a sharp glance of his eye. "Hate to see a man bowing to an animal. It's unseemly.

"Now, where was I? Oh, yes … coming to an end. There will be great trouble for your kind as well as mine. The forests will be diminished. Its sweet smell will become bitter. The clear waters will no longer be clean. Buffalo will be slaughtered. Their numbers, a child could count. My kind will grow small in number. Your people will starve, become greatly sick in both mind and body. What they do to the buffalo, will happen to your people. All life is in danger … great changes … great pollutions." The Prince looked directly at Konki. "*He* is coming! More powerful than all of us put together. He carries thunder in his hands. He

will lay waste the land. He will destroy all that he sees to build him a dwelling place, and the land, the Great Mother will lay on her deathbed."

"Who?" asked Konki. "Who is *He*?"

"The Pale Face, of course," said the Prince matter-of-factly. "Not the ones that used to live here, the ones that were destroyed in the great war because they rebelled against the Great Creator of all things … no … a different breed altogether. He comes as a conqueror … some kind of pestilence that eats up the land … and its people.

The Prince looked blank for a second and then gazed up into the air thoughtfully. "Great thunder birds will chase the eagle out of the sky, spreading their great pollutions, changing the seasons. They will carry men aloft who will spread fire and destruction from the sky." He looked back at Konki. "Your people will be pushed back into small corners of the earth … will become weak for a time, but if they unite, they will be like wolves among the herd.

"My family will be hunted for sport … for laughs. Only the ugly and weak will remain. The young braves will be brought to shame and the old braves humbled to the dust.

"The land will be raped. Her insides eaten away as by giant worms. Her beautiful mountains will be torn down to feed the belly of the Pale Face. The waters will be poisoned by his waste and the forests stripped to build his dwelling places. Many lives who subsist on the forest will perish. The forest will no longer feed her young. The land will become sick and die as when a man burns with a fever and dies.

"Go and tell your people that because they refused Shilo, the Peace Giver, and because they have sought each other's blood up to their necks … because they waded in the blood of their brother," and the Great Prince's eyes looked like fire, "tell them that the Great Eagle sends upon them a great flood from the east to wash away their blood … to wash away the blood from off the land. It will not be a flood of water as in the old times, but it will be a flood of men, women, and their children and their children's children who come to inherit the land. It will be a flood of their feet and the feet of their horses and their chariots and their houses and their towers and all their cattle, and their thunder and smoke that kills."

Konki saw that tears ran freely from the Great Prince's eyes, yet his voice never faltered. He looked at Konki and said, "That is enough. I am tired. You may take your leave." As he talked, the Great Prince walked away, shaking his tail behind him.

Konki was escorted back down the mountain trail by the young buck that brought him. He told Konki that it was time for him to leave, and that he should visit the buffalo. "Visit them and behold their grandeur that will be no more," he said.

Konki had heard rumors of the buffalo and had seen their clouds as he was carried by the Great Eagle across the sky, but he could only speculate what the buffalo was. He had heard the buffalo was a giant monster with many many legs, and that when he ran, he made thunder, and that he made the clouds and the rain. He caused the lightning to strike, causing great mountains to topple and burning up whole forests with his fire. He made the earth to shake and swallowed up whole villages, causing mountains to come up where there had

been valleys before.

"What is a buffalo?" asked Konki as the buck turned to go.

"The buffalo is a giant hairy beast that runs on many many legs. When he runs, he shakes the earth. He makes it thunder. He makes the clouds and the rain. He is the Life-Giver. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. His skin clothes the people and makes their dwellings." He turned and walked slowly away. He added, as an after thought, "He is one of us, only bigger and more hairy, and he only has two points, but how big are those points!"

"Oh," said Konki softly, thinking, *that was what I was already told by the mountain people*. He still did not know what a buffalo looked like. He had to see for himself, so he walked away, nodding his head.

Konki called to his friends Bearcub and Cat and headed southeast out of the valley. He turned to look at the bluff where he and the Prince had talked. He saw the Prince standing there majestically, again looking over his herd. He raised his hand in farewell. The Prince nodded his head and disappeared back into the shadows. Konki left, wondering about the Pale Face.

It wasn't hard to figure out that his ancestor, Wayne MacKonki, had come from the land of the Pale Face. Knowing that his ancestors' people were aware of the existence of this land, they might be telling others about it around their home fires. Others were bound to know about this land. It wouldn't be too long before the word spread and the Pale Face started arriving in the great numbers the Prince had talked about.

There were stories handed down how the people of the north had driven out the Pale Face long ago that had come from the sea beyond the rising sun. Now, Konki had the vision of great invading forces overwhelming the land and his own people. What could *he* do but spread the prophecy? How could his people defend themselves against prophecy?

Bearcub and Cat followed him down a ravine and up a canyon wall to the southeast. Bearcub found honey and gorged himself, coming back all sweet and sticky. Cat found a nice sunny rock near a stream where fish flew through the air from time to time. All he had to do was to swat them his way. He smelled fishy and satisfied. The three of them continued on their trek, following the eagle flying above them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Instead of crossing the mountains and valleys that lay north and south, the three travelers headed south, going from one ravine to another, crossing swollen streams full of the winter melted snow. They were forded with difficulties, each taking their turn at almost drowning.

Spring showers threw up rainbows about the traveling trio. Konki remembered home and the great waterfall across from Rock Face. It was always shrouded in a white mist. With the sun shining on it, it threw up a rainbow like a circle around himself when he was younger. Only, the center of the rainbow had been, not about his head, but about the head of his shadow. He figured then that as he had a shadow, the rainbow must be the shadow of the Great Spirit. It was a sign that the Great Spirit surrounded him as its shadow surrounded his shadow.

The shadow of the Great Spirit followed Konki and his friends in bows so big they covered whole mountains. As they crossed the last of the great Rocky Mountains and entered the vast grass lands, the land of the buffalo, they saw a huge rainbow, mountain high, stand between them and the black clouds to the east. It was like a doorway opening up to other adventures that lay ahead, a sign from the Great Spirit saying "This is the way."

Not a day had passed when Konki heard the distant thunder that never stopped. It went on all night with black clouds and lightning, the thunder drawing ever closer.

Morning brought a surprise. As Konki lay in the grass on a little knoll, he realized thunder was upon him and the ground was shaking. Not fifty strides from him was a black mass of buffalo moving south. Chills ran up and down Konki's spine. Here was life and death all in one. Cat and Bearcub had disappeared. They were nowhere to be seen. They had run away and left Konki to experience this mind rendering and heart tearing sensation alone.

It took most of the day for the herd to pass. While waiting, Konki had time to look around his immediate surroundings to see if Cat or Bearcub were nearby. He couldn't see far because of the dust cloud surrounding him like a dense fog. What he did see made him laugh. Cat and Bearcub were huddled in a deep ravine behind him. He laughed so hard that he rolled over and fell into the ravine.

This area of the grass lands were rather hilly and cut by the mountain waters into deep ravines.

Konki hit bottom laughing. He reached for his horn and let out all his joy into it. The blast was so astounding that it changed the course of the herd. One young bison was so confused that he ran right into the deepest part of the ravine and broke his neck. Konki looked around. There were some small trees, and yes, even a spring farther down from the dead buffalo. He immediately went to work on the carcass, gutting it and laying out its hide as if it were a deer, using the knife blade he had used among the mountain people.

Cat and Bearcub were drawn by their noses to the carcass. Konki fed them huge

chunks of the meat until they were satisfied. He cut slabs of flesh, and finding good fire wood that had been washed down from the mountains, smoked the rest of the carcase, cooking only a small portion for himself. After his meal, he began scraping the hide and cleaning it. From the hide , Konki made himself a shelter, some new moccasins and a loin cloth.

Konki moved his quarters out of the ravine when the rains came. He had only followed Cat and Bearcub instinctively. Peering back down into the ravine afterwards, he saw a torrent of water washing away their previous camp. All their provisions took most of the room in the little hut, so when the sky cleared, Konki slept outside underneath a carpet of stars.

On the fourth day, Konki decided he'd better head for home. He packed up everything and put it on Bearcub's back. It wasn't long before they heard the familiar sounds of war. All three of them dropped down into the tall grass, only Bearcub's back stuck up. Of course, he could easily be mistaken for a buffalo.

War whoops and yells surrounded them. He heard arrows slicing the air and the cries of the dead and dying. Men ran passed him and then chills ran up and down Konki as he saw the most beautiful animal. It was as if it were a spirit carrying a man aloft. It seemed to fly across the grass lands. He fell in love. But he stuck his head up too far, and a warrior rushed past him on a horse and knocked him on the head with his club. Bearcub raised up on his back legs, bellowed, and sent many warriors scattering. Cat cried out, shattering the air. The warriors with their painted faces and painted ponies retreated to the north. They fled as though they had awakened some evil spirit in the place of battle.

Konki fainted and dreamed he was racing with the wind, racing with the wind animal he had seen in battle. These animals were sleek with flowing manes and tails. They looked like nothing he had ever seen before, and so he called them wind animals, for, they flew along the ground like the wind. The buffalo were made of earth and were heavy, but this new creature was made of the blue sky.

In his dream, Konki was again an eagle, and he watched the warriors on their sleek wind animals travel to a huge village to the north. It would take many mountain villages to fill it, and all their dwellings were pointed.

Though Konki wanted to follow and watch the horsemen, the Great Spirit called him back to the place of death. The eagle cried. His screams could be heard from the mountains to the horizon. Konki heard the scream and awoke to Bearcub licking his sore head.

Konki moved the bear's head with his arm away from his face. "I'll be all right!" he exclaimed. He looked above as he heard the eagle's scream again. It was the Great Spirit directing him to the dead. The Great Spirit told him there was someone yet alive that he must attend.

Konki wandered among the dead, listening for a heartbeat, for a breath. Cat heard it first and pricked his ears, then Bearcub. Konki followed them to a deep ravine where he heard groaning. Only one remained alive.

“They have come for me,” the dying boy cried as he looked up. A huge cat, a monstrous bear and a tall thin man, not quit a man, peered at him from the edge of the ravine wall. “They have come to take me away from my people to live with the mountain spirits. The Great Buffalo has deserted me. I am unworthy. I have failed.” Then the young warrior fainted for loss of blood.

Konki, Cat and Bearcub jumped down into the ravine.

"On my back, the boy," growled Bearcub.

"Away from this place," Cat whispered loudly.

Konki placed the man on Bearcub's back. He looked around, but he neither saw nor heard anyone else alive. Tears ran down his cheeks when he saw another boy his own age with an arrow through his heart lying white with the muddy water of the ravine running over him.

Searching for a place of shelter on the open plains was difficult. Konki knew now not to make camp in one of the ravines, and it wasn't safe out in the open to be spotted by warriors or be trampled by buffalo. He didn't have the eyes of the plainsmen, but he did have the eyes of an eagle. He raised his arms to the Great Spirit and prayed. An eagle cried. He followed the eagle, and it led them to an outcropping of rock, a flint quarry with an overhang. Cat sat on top of the rock ledge as a look-out while Bearcub added his body to the rest of the outcropping to be a perfect wind-break for the wounded man.

Leaving his friends to watch over the boy, Konki went back to their previous camp in the ravine. It was upwards of the battle scene and the water poisoned with blood. He found that although there was now a muddy stream running through it, the spring in the hillside was still trickling clean water. Building a fire, he took clay and made some pots, filling and surrounding them with coals and ash. While the pots were firing, Konki looked around and tasted several herbs, asking desperately in his heart if they were good to heal the boy. He came across a couple which revealed themselves to him … a prairie flower to heal a prairie boy.

After firing the pots, Konki filled them with fresh water and herbs. He had never thought to put water in a buffalo's bladder like a plainsman. He was raised in the woods in a village and did what he saw the women do. When he reached the camp, he immediately gave the wounded boy a drink. The boy woke up long enough to sip a little water. He was likely not accustomed to pottery. When he was finished, he passed out again.

Konki nursed the wounded boy for several days, dressing his wounds with herbs and cool clay. He chanted the songs of his old medicine man, the songs of healing he had heard old Wey-cho-kay chant over the sick. After a couple of days, Konki made a broth of buffalo meat, and as Aaron had done for him, he fed it to the young brave. Konki didn't have a ladle, so he lifted the boy's head onto his lap and let him sip out of the blackened pot.

Nursing the boy dwindled Konki's supply of buffalo meat. Cat understood that and brought them prairie dog and rabbit. Cat had to feed Bearcub because the little animals were always too fast for his bulk. Bearcub complained a lot, growling and making a fuss over

every little carcass laid at his feet.

Konki continued the kindness he had learned from Aaron. When the brave came to his senses, Konki signed to him, asking his name and place of origin. Konki called him What-chew-make-it-to-be, and learned that he was from the south. His people were simply called the Southern People.

Bearcub tried to come around the outcrop to lick the young boy's face. He screamed and tried to knock the bear away with his arms. Konki laughed. Cat watched from the upper ledge and tried pawing the young boy's scalp. He let out another yelp and shivered.

"Back off, you two," Konki said calmly.

The two pets came down and sat beside Konki to stare at the boy. He was strange to them.

The stranger backed up against the rock, signing, "Who are you? What are you?"

Konki pointed to himself and said, “Konki,” then, pointing to his guardians, he signed, “And these two are my friends, Cat and Bearcub. They will not hurt you. We have nursed you." Konki paused and signed, "What happened that you had to fight?"

"Where are all the other braves?" What-chew-make-it-to-be signed.

"They have all gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds. Why did you fight?" Konki signed, not understanding why men had to fight.

"I am of the Southern People. My people do not have the wind with four legs."

This could be interpreted as Wind Runners, thought Konki, as he looked at the other boy's signs.

"The Northern People always take them. They do not let us have them. We went to trade for the wind runners. The Northern People are very rich. They want nothing from us. So we took the wind runners and escaped. The Northern People followed us and killed us. Now, we will have no wind runners to hunt the buffalo. We run with the buffalo, shoot them, and chase them over the cliffs. I cannot go back to my people in shame. I am ready to go to the Happy Hunting Grounds with you, oh Mighty Spirit."

Konki looked at the sadness in the young brave's face. It was the sadness of dishonor. He remembered that he himself had been as a mere dog in the presence of the mountain people. He had been rescued by the prayers of the medicine man Pay-wa-no-chay whom he had thought to be his enemy. Konki would pray for What-chew-make-it-to-be, and surely, the Great Spirit would take away the disgrace and dishonor and give him his freedom again. The Great Spirit had done so with himself. Surely, thought Konki, the Great Spirit would be graceful and give unto What-chew-make-it-to-be a final victory he could not obtain for himself, giving him wind runners that did not belong to someone else, so he could take them to his people to hunt the buffalo. Konki wanted him and his people to be happy. He couldn't stand the sadness he saw among the dead.

"What-chew-make-it-to-be," Konki addressed the young brave in as honorable a tone of voice as he could project, speaking in his own tongue and signing to him, "Your story has

filled my heart with much sorrow." He felt for the right words to say. "I am moved to give you back your honor and lead your people to victory. The souls of your brothers who have died in combat at your side will not walk the earth in disgrace, but will find a safe home with the Great Eagle whom people say is the Great Father of All." He didn't want to seem proud and say my father, so he said Father of All. "I will pray to the Great Spirit, and he will give us the wisdom to give you back your honor." With that, Konki climbed up to the top of the outcrop.

What-chew-make-it-to-be mumbled a chant to the Great Buffalo. He rocked back and forth to the rhythm of the chant.

Cat watched him closely, putting himself in a crouching position, ready to pounce on the boy. Cat's face was expressionless, except that his eyes were filled with ferocity, a ferocity that could cut into any young brave's soul.

The young man signed as he prayed. “A light has entered into my mind and seared my heart. The light shows me the petty theft, the lying, reveals all the evil and slyness, seeking revenge, resentments, trying to get power over others, my pride and anger. All my secret past is revealed to me as I communicate with the buffalo.”

All the while, Konki prayed to the Great Spirit on top of the rock outcropping with raised hands.

Cat whined profound words to the young man. “I protect Konki. If I kill you, you will die in your guilt.”

So the Great Spirit poured out a gift and a light upon these four creatures to help this poor boy's people that they may become great.

Storm clouds gathered overhead;

The air was heavy like the ice that falls

Hitting against the boy's chest,

Tearing like lightning, his soul.

What-chew-make-it-to-be cried out,

His heart wide open like his mouth

That swallowed deep his anguish loud

In roaring thunder torn from the earth

Giving birth to some form bright and

Shining like burning white fire

Brandishing steeds shaking deeds

Making rain breaking forth that

Washes away … that rumbles away

The mirth brought on by filth

Leaving strong steel in his veins,

Bringing a man as living gold as a

Gift to the One who rules on High.

Rumbling within, What-chew-make-it-to-be puked blood onto the ground, making the ground to rumble with the sound of the buffalo. lightning flashed and the rain poured, and the thunder overtook the four friends as the black hordes shook the sheltering rocks they huddled behind. All the darkness in What-chew-make-it-to-be fled with the thundering, the rumbling, the huffing and braying of the buffalo. He felt cleansed and washed in the rain of someone else's tears. He climbed to the top of the rocks, wanting to grasp the sky, wanting to grasp the presence of someone he felt he could only imagine as the Great Buffalo or the Great Eagle with his teeth and his hands, giving out a yell and a whoop, whoop, and screaming with glee, crying in gratitude to the Great Creator of earth and sky.

Lightning flashed, revealing the Great Eagle. With a tearing scream, he swooped down and caught What-chew-make-it-to-be and carried him aloft into the storm. Out of the clouds, the wind runners came. The wind poured from their nostrils and beat upon the earth and upon the three friends. The lightning fast eagle placed the young brave onto the back of the leading steed. He caught his mane and gave a war whoop. He led the herd and chased the white buffalo in the sky. With his bow taken from his back and a single arrow, placing it in the bow and aiming surely, he pulled back and let go, sending the arrow straight into the heart of the beast.

Konki climbed down from the rock, returning from praying to the Great Spirit. He had seen a vision in the great lightnings and thunder of the storm of What-chew-make-it-to-be and had been shaken by the thunder claps too near, yet he had prayed on in the presence of lightning striking too close. Chills had run up and down his spine. As he reached the ground, he saw What-chew-make-it-to-be huddled together with Bearcub and Cat under the rock. There was a light rain falling. The young brave was calmly meditating and looked comfortable with the animals. He opened his eyes and looked at Konki with a smile. He spoke softly without signing.

"Konki, my brother, you have returned me to honor and oneness. I am grateful."

Konki held back a thrill. He seemed to understand the boy's tongue. He nodded his head with a manly shake and sat down among the trio where steam like smoke came from everyone's heads.

"You have honored me and my people. You have given us the runners-with-the-wind," he said slowly to Konki. "Come, you will be honored in my village and in my tepee." At that saying, he pointed to a buffalo laying on its side only a few strides from them to the south.

Konki had not noticed it before. It seemed magical as if it appeared as What-chew-make-it-to-be spoke. He could see an arrow sticking out of the breast of the beast.

What-chew-make-it-to-be arose. The two forest animals stirred, looked lazily at the two men and went back to sleep. He took one of the clay bowls and led Konki over to the buffalo. Taking his sharp flint knife, he cut a deep hole where the arrow had pierced the

heart. The bowl caught the blood. What-chew-make-it-to-be chanted his buffalo song as he opened the big animal's chest. He stopped chanting long enough to drink from the bowl the blood of what he called the Life Giver in his chanting. He continued to chant as he handed the bowl to Konki. Konki drank the rest of the blood very solemnly. There came a buzzing in his head and everything became weightless, ephemeral. What-chew-make-it-to-be, Konki, the buffalo, the rock outcropping, Bearcub and Cat, all seemed to float upwards as clouds lifting off the mountainside on a spring morning as the sun rises.

What-chew-make-it-to-be cut off some of the warm flesh of the buffalo, still chanting smoothly, cut it in two and handed a piece to Konki. They ate in silence with great respect to the buffalo. The Great Spirit entered them and they chanted the buffalo song together. As they sang, they danced, and as they danced, the dead buffalo arose and embraced What-chew-make-it-to-be. They became one. Konki beheld the face of the young brave peering out from the mouth of the buffalo. Its feet and hands were the hands of a man. They danced the buffalo dance, singing out,

"What-chew-make-it-to-be
Rode the wind-runner;
What-chew-make-it-to-be
chased the white buffalo.
With one swift arrow to the heart,
What-chew-make-it-to-be
Vanquished the white foe.
The buffalo hath given his life;
He will not take him in death;
The Great Spirit pierces the man's heart.
Sing the song of the Life Giver;
He provides his flesh;
He provides his blood;
He provides his skin and bones
For all the people of the plains,
They who live in the skin of the buffalo,
They who make tools of the buffalo's bones
Clothe themselves with the buffalo's skin;
They feed upon the buffalo's flesh;
They live within the Great Buffalo;
He lives within them."

When the dance was over, What-chew-make-it-to-be taught Konki the correct way to cut up the buffalo, smoke the flesh, and expose of the entrails and head. There were many delicacies which they enjoyed, and many parts which they could not properly preserve. When they got through with the carcass, Cat and Bearcub devoured the remains. There was not one piece left. All four of them departed with a full stomach. Each one took turns burping.

Using poles from the nearby ravine, the two men built a small tepee, using both Konki's buffalo skin and the recently acquired skin. There, they rested for the night, telling each other stories and visions and the histories of their people.

"Tell me of your dream given you, Konki, Son of the Great Eagle, by the Great Spirit of the wind-runners," asked What-chew-make-it-to-be .

"I saw many wind-runners," responded Konki. "I saw you riding the lead stallion, bringing the whole herd of them into your village. I saw much honor bestowed upon you and your family by your village."

"Konki, Son of the Great Eagle, only you with your far vision can see the wind-runners running wild upon the flat-lands. Only you can take me there. To you will be given much honor and praise."

"Let us give honor to whom honor is due, "replied Konki. "… to the Great Spirit who giveth to all men all things they are worthy of, as my mother taught me."

"This is true. The Great Spirit is in the buffalo as he is in the Great Eagle. He is the true Life Giver and Creator of all things … as my mother also taught me, " said What-chew-make-it-to-be with a far off look in his eyes.

"And so it should stand in the councils of all the nations," said Konki, thinking of his mother, which brought a tear to his eye, yet he did not choke on it.

"What shall we do now?" What-chew-make-it-to-be asked.

Konki knelt down upon the ground facing east and facing his new friend. He took his ram's horn in both hands, showing it to him.

"This is my power," he said. "It was given to me by my friend who dwelt in the cave into which the sun sets each night. It is the horn of the Life-Giver whose blood I drank with him and now with you. With it, I call the name of the Life-Giver, even the Great Spirit who created all things." Then to make his cause holy, Konki commanded, "Anoint this ram's horn with the blood of the buffalo and your desire will be sent up to the sky to the Great Spirit. I desire to give you this great gift, that you may have the wind-runners, that you may be at peace with the other people of the plains and not covet nor envy nor steal any more. The power has been given me to bless others, and this is the blessing that I desire to give you … to give you your honor."

With desire bursting from his heart, Konki pushed the horn at What-chew-make-it-to-be . "Anoint it!" he cried.

What-chew-make-it-to-be looked around wildly, knowing they had already devoured

the buffalo. He went to the bones. He ran his hand over the bones of the buffalo, hoping there would be enough blood left. The more he rubbed, the more wet his hand became. He touched his own breast and then going over to Konki, smeared some of the blood onto the ram's horn.

Konki brought the end of the horn to his mouth and blew long and loud. Nothing happened. He cried to the Great Spirit."Oh bless me according to my desire!"

He blew again. Nothing happened. His breast swelled with such burning that he thought he would burst!

His friend waited in great anticipation, for what he knew not.

Bowing his head, Konki prayed, filling his prayer with all the faith, humility and desire he could muster, shaking, shedding all the human nature in him, concentrating on all the light and truth he was made of. Suddenly relaxed in a moment of inspiration, he could feel the Spirit pour into the top of his head like a funnel from the Heavens above filling his whole soul. The Great Eagle had turned into a dove and lighted upon his heart. The Spirit raised him to his feet, and then he floated to the top of the rock outcropping, putting the horn to his mouth. As his foot touched the rock, he threw his head back and gave out a loud and clear call on the horn that filled the sky and all the plains. Bearcub and Cat stood still, looking at their master. Miles away the buffalo stood still and listened. All the prairie dogs and rabbits stood still with their ears pointed towards the call. The whole of the plains and the sky were calmed at this outpouring of the Spirit.

Thunderbird screaming,

Light flashing at midday,

Changing, quickening,

Konki spreading his wings,

Southward soaring flying,

Screeching against the sky,

Triumph songs sounding,

Konki diving grabbing

What-chew-make-it-to-be.

Caught up into the sky, the young brave was dazed, knowing only the great wings flapping around him. He could see the great white head, an eye looking back at him, the golden beak that was as big as his leg. He looked below as if looking out of the eye of the eagle. He could see individual branches on each bush and the hairs on each rabbit and prairie dog and the black eyes bulging from each buffalo, though he was high into the clouds of the sky. He saw the villages of his people spread out over many lands. He saw others riding their wind-runners hunting the buffalo. Then he saw *his* wind-runners running free on the plain in a great herd, and the Great Eagle swooped down and dropped him on the lead stallion's back. He rode with the wind-runners.

The stallion was all white. His black eyes popping out in great desire, his nostrils flaring, his tail aflame with glory. They ran into the wind, into the clouds, through rainbows of all colors. All the mares and young lords followed their master into the clouds. What-chew-make-it-to-be ran with them, was one with them, riding as the wind.

Wind in his face,

Wind in his arms and legs,

The wind racing burning,

His breast on fire,

Roaring thunder

Across the plains

Wind-runners' manes,
Flying reigns of pure color,
Stroked their new master
Giving him a new name.
His wind-runners
Bequeathed to him
The name:
"Maker of the wind
Whose wings roar."

Konki swooped down from above and joined Maker-of-the-Wind, settling onto the back of a mare running beside his friend. As cloud gave way to solid earth, they neared an encampment of tepees. The roaring of the wind was answered by the roaring of the glorious voices of the people, Maker-of-the-Wind's people. With great exultation, Maker-of-the-Wind ran his wind-runners through the village amid the shouting and cheering, and the whoop-whooping of the people. He sought the tepee of his father. He would give them all to him, for his father was chief of the tribe. He would show his father that this day he was a man reborn and could no longer fail him, having been immersed in the Great Spirit. Now he could sit on the council with him and with all the elders and braves of his people.

Maker-of-the-Wind found his father standing by the entrance of his tepee. He quickly slid off the white stallion, ran and embraced the ankles of his father, crying, "Oh father, I give you all these Runners-with-the-wind!"

Maker-of-the-Wind's father lifted him up and embraced him. "This day," he called out to his people who had gathered around, "I have a new son! I give unto you a new name. From this time forward, you shall be called Maker-of-the-Wind-Whose-Wings-Roar!"

The People shouted for joy. They sang in unison, as they danced, “Now we will be looked upon with honor by the other tribes. The Great Spirit has lifted us up. The Great Spirit has brought upon us honor and glory. We shall rejoice all the days of our lives."

A great and noble figure stood in their midst clothed in a buffalo skin, wearing the head of a large buffalo. He spoke from the buffalo's mouth, having authority from the Great Buffalo.

"Now is the buffalo ours. We do not steal nor do we slink in the grass. We will ride alongside the buffalo. He is ours and we are his, and we will not fall to shame anymore. Our shame is gone, and our honor has been brought back to us, therefore, let us live by the law the Great Buffalo as it has been handed down to us from our great ancestors."

The people shouted again for joy. The Great Chief, father of Maker-of-the-Wind, spoke out.

"Saddle the Wind, for tonight we ride! Tonight we hunt the buffalo as men and not as dogs. Tonight, we prove our honor!"

All the young men left in the camp and all the old men who dared, leaped upon the wind-runners and rode out of camp yelling and whooping, crying out their thanks to the Great Spirit and to the Great Buffalo and to the Wind-Runners, and to their hero, the son of the Chief, Maker-of-the-Wind. Many ran out calling him their new chief.

Maker's father stood by his tent and watched his tribe ride out into the plains. His eyes filled with tears, his chest puffed out with pride. Konki stood next to the chief who turned to him and said, “My old son, the one I sent to trade for the wind-runners was no good. He was lazy and too proud to work. He made others do his work, making slaves of those who would have been his friends, stealing anything from anybody in the village because his father had allowed it.” The chief touched his forehead and sighed. “I loved my only son. I scolded and admonished, but he did not respond. The medicine man told me to send him out to trade for the one thing this tribe needed … the runners-with-the-wind. But I knew I sent him to his death. I knew he would not pass the tests the northern tribe would require of him. They would immediately take him for a thief. They would read it in his eyes and in his countenance. They would kill him. Yet, he returned, and he returned with a greater prize than what he had gone out for to seek. He brought his better and higher self back. Only an outside influence, some higher power, could have done this. I know these wind-runners have not been stolen. They have no marks of man on them, and no marks of having been ridden. They are fresh and wild. Where did he find them?”

The old chief stared at the tall lanky boy covered with eagle feathers. The horn of a mountain ram hung at his side. The boy's eyes were blue … as blue as the noonday sky and as deep as eternity. His nose was itself a beak, long and hooked. His presence was noble, yet without pride. “You were with my son as he rode into camp with the runners-with-the-wind.” He scratched his head. “I thought you to be one of my village. I am puzzled at your presence. And why does a mere boy wear the feathers of the Great Eagle?” He stared at the boy. "Are you the Great Spirit?" he asked. "Who are you, and how is it that you were with my son in the stead of all the young braves I sent with him. Where are they? Did you take them?"

Konki bowed his head and spread out his hands, answering, "Oh Great Chief, I am but a small boy sent on a quest. I found your son among the dead. I pulled him out of the earth. I loved him and nursed him back to health. The others are all dead. They died bravely."

The women who stood by looked on curiously, but when Konki spoke of braves dying, their eyes filled with tears and they moaned.

“The story is clear enough,” said the chief as he lifted his hands to the women. “Your sons who have been sent out to trade for wind-runners have lost their lives.”

The women's moans turned into wails of sorrow. They cried out and sang the song of death and danced. That night, there would be songs of sorrow at the loss of loved ones mixed with songs of rejoicing for the wind-runners.

The old chief opened the portal of his tepee and motioned for Konki to enter.

"You who have loved my son, come," he said. "You are welcome to my tepee. Come

and tell me how a boy like you has wandered so far from home, and how is it that you have been so honored. Come and bless my home."

Konki was ushered into the tepee, ducking low to get through the hole. He uttered a small blessing as he entered as his mother had taught him. This was a strange type of home to live in, he contemplated. Although he saw the medicine man who had set aside his buffalo head, he felt no animosity or fear. He remembered the witches of the mountain people. He hadn't given their wigwam a blessing. Maybe their malevolence had come from his fear only. In this tepee he felt and saw the radiance of the sun come through the tanned skins of the wall. The dwelling was shaped like a horn. Maybe in token of the buffalo who gave them life.

The three of them sat around a small central fire. The two men told of the coming of their people from the south lands, of the wars they had with the cliff people and the mesa people. They talked of the Mother Buffalo with her calf leading them to the plains and feeding them with the flesh of her own calf, of how she tore her calf into many pieces and it became a great herd that sustained their people in time of need. They said that she has ever fed them since.

Then they looked to Konki for his turn. He told his story of how his people came forth out of the great waters, landing on a river, and of how they were almost drowned. If it hadn't been for the Great Bear feeding them and nursing them, they would have perished. He told of how the Great Bear gave them wisdom in how to hunt and fish, make clothing, homes, and how to govern quarreling families … how in ceremonies they were given wisdom … of his own vigil … of how he was driven from his village and rescued by the Great Eagle. He told how he has been wandering through the mountains and plains to return home.

"But tell me now," said the chief, "how is it that you came here with my son? Tell me how he became a man."

Konki began with the mountain people, about Pay-wa-no-chay and the strange writings on the golden leaves, how he had left and trodden over mountains, meeting the Great Prince, what he said to him, and ending up on the plains with the great herds of buffalo.

Buffalo-who-hunts-people was the medicine man's name. He asked Konki, "What are these writings on yellow leaves?"

Konki looked puzzled. It was so obvious to him that he didn't know how to express it. He said, "Writings."

"Show me!" demanded Buffalo-who-hunts-people, jabbing his fore finger into the dirt near the fire. He was a dark figure, and looked like Old Stone Face on the mountain cliffs back home. His expression was fierce and never changing like stone, yet, Konki could see compassion in his eyes. He also noticed that all the men wore their hair long like women. All men in Konki's tribe shaved their heads. It made him wary to see men like these, but respectful still.

Konki wrote on the ground in the curling figures he had seen on the leaves. Buffalo-

who-hunts-people glanced at his chief and back to Konki with a puzzled look in his eye. Both he and the chief had seen such writings when they were young bucks.

Chief Way-Hay-Che told Konki of the long ago time when he and Buffalo-who-hunts-people were young and hunting in a canyon far to the south. They came upon an old white man who showed them yellow plates covered with writings on them as Konki had described.

"The old man was pale like a spirit," said Buffalo-who-hunts-people. "He had white hair and long white whiskers. He talked a strange guttural tongue. We could almost understand it, but we knew the signs portrayed by his hands. He said the yellow plates were the writings of the Great Spirit and that it talked about our ancestors and our children's children. He said there would come other white men to the land as your Great Prince said. The white men would give these writings to our children's children but not the plates, and that they were sacred, telling of the Great White Brother among our people long ago, that these white men would take our land away from us, but that the Great White Brother would come and give it back. He said that our people were bad because of our wars and bloodshed and that we would not get these writings until our hearts were broken and lay upon the land like dust. We became angry and would have killed him, but he disappeared right in front of us. He was a Spirit, and we ran from that place and never have gone back."

For a time, the chief and the medicine man both sat silent, staring at each other. Their eyes were enlarged and white, expecting something. Then they broke out in laughter.

"What is it you want?" asked Konki.

"We now have a second witness," said the chief. "It is good you are with us. Continue about my son."

Konki told them how he found his son, cared for him, loved him, and wanted to give him a sacred gift. So he gave him the wind-runners by the power of the Great Spirit.

"How did you come to own such great power?" asked Buffalo-who-hunts-people.

Konki told them of his long relationship with the forest spirits, Wey-cho-kay, Aaron, and Pay-wa-no-chay.

"You have great medicine. You will rule over your people, serve and protect them," Buffalo-who-hunts-people said.

At that, many elders who had not gone on the hunt came through the door as if by some unseen summons. They all sat around the central fire. Someone brought out a peace pipe and passed it around. When it came to Konki, he felt so honored he wanted to shed a tear, but he didn't think that would be approved. As he inhaled, Konki struggled not to cough, and everyone laughed, but only in fun and friendship. These people were good humble people. They talked of many things, and then the wind-runners were heard in the camp. Everyone got up and filed out into the whoop-whooping and yelling.

"Come," said the chief, "a feast is being prepared in your honor and for my son who has come home to me."

Women, children, and the elders followed their chief and Konki as they became surrounded by wind-runners and the merry-making of young bucks bringing in many buffalo. Konki was surprised as the women took charge of the buffalo. They took the pieces of carcasses and the hides off the travois pulled by the horses and dragged them to the middle of the camp. They sang to the beating of drums as they cleaned and quartered the animals. Smoke fires were started. Part of the women cleaned and scraped the hides. The heads were put in great stew pots and boiled, as were the entrails. Nothing was wasted.

Maker-of-the-Wind joined his voice with the hundreds of voices now singing. He sang as though his heart within him was swollen with joy. It must be for his people, thought Konki. Even before he had reached the camp, Konki could hear the villagers sing songs of heroic deeds for Maker-of-the-Wind and all the young braves that followed him. The last time Maker-of-the-Wind had gone out with the band of warriors, it had ended up in defeat, but now, he had come home to victory. Everyone who had followed him on the big hunt had returned unharmed and safe. Arrows and spears had met their marks, and the harvest had been plenty. It was a grand omen. Thanksgiving would be an all night affair.

People danced around the fires, singing Thanksgiving to the Great Buffalo who gave them life. The throb of chanting and drumming echoed off the nearby canyon walls, and the night fires reflected off the clouds, turning them into reds and oranges. Grotesque shadows danced on the walls of the tepees.

Buffalo-who-hunts-people took Konki and Maker together and gave them a special seat where they could watch the dancing. This was the Dance of the Great Buffalo in which both the chief and his medicine man took part. Several of the most prominent men of the tribe donned buffalo heads and skins adorned with eagle feathers and beads of all kinds. With knees and elbows bent like bows, their feet stomped the ground in step to the rhythm of the drums. Others sang and danced in the sacred circle enclosing the buffalo dancers. Their voices were raised in Thanksgiving and blessings and songs of the hunt which was portrayed in the dance.

The battle was fought valiantly by the buffalo, and the Great Buffalo showed the people of the plains which ones to kill and which ones to leave alive so they would always have the buffalo with them. None of the fathers or pregnant mothers were ever killed. The fathers and princes of the buffalo were revered and honored. When it was their time to die, their heads and skins were used in the ceremonies to adorn the chiefs and elders of the tribe.

During the festivities, Konki was given the chief seats, the choicest meats, the pipe like a man, and the women took the feathers of his coat and put them into a headdress. This was presented to him by Maker-of-the-Wind as everyone shouted great honors upon him. The people sang to him as if he were a god. Maker-of-the-Wind gave him his own white stallion. Konki's heart swelled as big as the Heavens. He put his arms around the stallion and laughed with joy. Was he lifted upon the wind-runner's back or did his joy lift him up? He didn't know, but he was paraded through the camp and was presented to the rising sun at dawn. The horse turned and faced the people. There was a halo formed by the sun around Konki and the horse.

Wind-Runner whinnied and rose up on his back feet, waving his forelegs. Joining his

voice from behind and coming to stand on either side were Bearcub and Cat. Wind-Runner didn't stir. They were all magical creatures. It was time for Konki to go. The people trembled with terror. Konki was indelibly impressed upon their memories as the Great Spirit who brought them the runners-with-the-wind.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Konki, Bearcub, Cat, and now Wind-Runner, the white stallion, headed east into the sunrise towards home. Overhead was the bluest sky in all creation. It was the waters overhead, the very vault of heaven. Everything that was made, thought Konki, must have dropped out of that infinite expanse. At night it was a sea of stars as numberless as the grains of sand in the desert they had once crossed. Night after night Konki was caught up in the Eternal Glories of the Heavens and of the breathing presence of the Great Spirit. Never had he witnessed such glory while living in the eastern forests. The sky on the plains was infinite. But the forests to the east he did yearn for, and after sun-baked weeks passed, he saw a line of trees on the horizon. Konki's heart leaped for joy at the sight of trees, not the scrubby things he had been passing, but real forest green. Though he could soar above the forest, nothing felt as much like home as the smell of pine and green woodlands, the smell of familiar animal spoor and the feeling of familiar animal spirits that haunted the woodland shadows.

Wind-Runner was not a forest animal. As he moved through the forest, rubbing up against trees and bushes and smelling unfamiliar animal smells, he became very jittery. He was trapped. He would jump at the smallest noise or smell.

"What is it?" inquired Konki soothingly, rubbing Wind-Runner's neck. "What's wrong?"

"This is not my world," whinnied Wind-Runner. "It fills me with terror! I cannot run free as I was born to do."

"There is nothing to be frightened of. I, Bearcub, and Cat are right here. We can protect you from anything."

"I don't belong in the forest, Master. I know that death is stalking me. I need to return. I need to run free on the plains."

Konki bent down and put both arms around the neck of Wind-Runner. "Oh, I love you Wind-Runner! I want you to stay with me. With us. We need you to take me to my home and always be with me."

"Yeah!" said Bearcub.

"Yes. Please stay," said Cat.

"Very well. I will stay until we come to the big river that divides the land in half. But I cannot cross that river without meeting my death. I have seen it in a dream. That dream has always been with me to warn me."

Konki hugged Wind-Runner and thanked him. He would not push him to disobey his own heart or the Great Spirit. For surely, it is the Great Spirit that speaks in dreams. After this they went on, stopping only when hunger or fatigue overtook them. Konki grew more homesick the farther east they went. He did not want to stop.

Thoughts arose like smoke from the heart of Konki. He wondered at his adventures of living like a slave among the mountain people and living as an honored guest among the plains people. He had been a dog on the one hand and almost a god on the other … two extreme opposites. As he pondered this, he seemed to doze off with Wind-Runner still plodding on to the east through the darkest part of the forest. With a jerk of his head, he woke up. Had it been a dream? He remembered having stopped at a campfire and talked with his friend Aaron. He knew this as a real experience, but knew it only as a memory … as if it hadn't really happened, not even dreamed it. It was more like the Great Spirit placed the memory of it in his mind. Aaron had quite answered his questions as to his experience.

"You have had these experiences," Aaron had said as the firelight danced upon his face. "that you may have therewith to judge all situations in your life and know how to act with others."

"And what does it mean to have in both experiences the writings on yellow leaves or plates?" Konki had asked.

"They are the words of the Master, or whom you call the Great Spirit. Seek for them always in your heart and he will speak these words to you. They will be given to the pale face who is coming, and he will give them to your people. They contain a history of the Master's dealings with the people of this land as well as the people before them. Be patient in your life and you will see both the pale face and these words of the Master written on the yellow metal called gold by the pale face."

Konki remembered them talking for a long time, but these are the only words he could remember. He pondered these words and felt the deep warmth of love in his bosom. His meditation was interrupted by the big river that divides the land as Wind-Runner stepped out of the forest. There, to his surprise, was his plainsman friend, Maker-of-the-Wind.

Maker was standing by the bank of the wide river waist deep in grass, just beyond the woods. He was holding the reins of a gray horse with white spots on her flanks. It was the same wind-runner on which he had ridden into Maker's village weeks ago. Two mounted warriors stood on each side of him.

Konki wanted to dismount, run over to him, and give him a bear hug, but seeing the other two braves beside him, he deferred. Having the feeling that this was a formal meeting, he put on his bonnet of horns and feathers that draped down his back and rode over to them, Bearcub and Cat on either side of him. Wind-Runner whinnied at the sight of his former master, anxious for the reunion. Konki raised his hand to the square and greeted them.

"Hail, Maker-of-the-Wind! Hail to the greatest of buffalo hunters!"

"Greetings Most High Brother of the Wind and Sky," Maker said in return.

There was a period of staring at each other. Konki thought perhaps Maker was in such awe of Konki, Son of the Great Eagle, that he was afraid to ask what was in his heart.

Konki dismounted and removed his bonnet and everyone relaxed.

"I am amazed," Konki said, smiling. "The great Wind-Runner was talking to me,

telling me how much he missed his home on the great prairies." He held his bonnet to his chest, hiding his own feelings. "And here you are. The Great Spirit must have sent you here to lead him home."

Konki could read in Maker's face that Maker's heart was ready to burst. Konki threw down the headdress, grabbed Maker in a wild rush, and kissed his neck. They both let out a wild yelp and laughed. Maker stepped back and held Konki's arms.

"Konki, son of the Great Eagle," Maker said proudly, "I came here carrying a great burden in my heart. You have lifted it out and taken it away. You are a true brother. I don't know what to say."

"Say the truth," Konki grinned, shrugging his shoulders, and said, "Be glad."

Maker was not going to tell Konki something that they both knew … that he had brought his two best braves with him to take what he thought was rightfully his, but he would honor him. He knelt down before Konki with upraised hands and said, "You will always have my loyalty." The presence of the Great Spirit felt like a fire burning around and in them.

"Maker-of-the-Wind," Konki said, taking him and lifting him up, "I am only a mortal man. The blessings you have received were truly the workings of the Great Spirit. I will always remember my brother … no, my two brothers … Maker-of-the-Wind and Wind-Runner."

Wind-Runner neighed and pushed his nose against Konki. Everyone laughed, even the two braves standing by.

At parting, Wind-Runner talked to his master Maker-of-the-Wind.

"Master, I would like to honor the great one also. Will you give him my mare to carry him forward across this great water? She is a powerful swimmer, and she is fearless."

"Konki," Maker-of-the-Wind asked as he held the reigns toward his friend, "would you accept another gift from us? Please take this paint. She will deliver you safely across this great water, and she is fearless in the woodlands."

Konki put on his bonnet again and said his thank-yous. He mounted the beautiful mare and called out, "I shall not forget my brothers of the Great Buffalo."

With whoops and hollers of joy, their horses kicking into the air, the two parties rode off in opposite directions, Konki, upriver to find a crossing, and Maker-of-the-Wind and his two braves off through the forest and on to the great plains and the buffalo.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Konki saw a village ahead of them on the other side of the river, hopefully, before the inhabitants saw him. He did not know what kind of people they would be, and he had a bad feeling in his gut.

"Let's go back into the woods before they spot us," he said to his animal friends, "Perhaps we can watch them from the trees. We will find out if they are friendly or not, but I have a suspicion."

They backed into the woods, winding around the trees and bushes until they faced the village.

It was within a stockade, and barricades usually meant trouble. Either they were hostile, or they had enemies. It could be used to keep people in as well as out. A fenced city, it was told, was usually a dirty place with bitter people living inside, having narrow minds, working only for themselves, forgetting their neighbors. Konki remembered this from tales told around the campfires of home. But as he climbed high into the treetops, he saw something different. The huts were spaced wide apart with gardens or racks to smoke meat in between them. The many gardens looked well cared for. A main thoroughfare in the center led to a central lodge that was big enough for many families to gather in. The lodge and huts were made of bark and palmetto leaves

Both men and women were tending their gardens. Konki guessed that the two men he saw were caring for medicinal herbs and would have been the medicine man and an apprentice. Children were playing everywhere. Some were rolling the hoop, others chasing friends laughing. Hunters came in to clean and smoke their catch of the day. There were many canoes along the river bank at the village gate and a lot of traffic in the river.

After spotting canoes crossing the river, Konki decided to go down. Men would be coming his way. It would be hard to hide from experienced hunters, so he had to rely upon the Great Spirit to protect him from trouble. He pulled Paint into the shadows, donned his bonnet, and mounted the mare. Cat and Bearcub stayed on either side. Konki did not have to wait long before he was surrounded by the hunters. He had been protected in the past, and he expected to be protected now. Should he wait until they passed, or should he make his presence known?

Konki didn't have to make the decision. He was spotted. The hunters, seeing him, drew their arrows and aimed. When Konki moved out into an opening in the sunlight, he and his animal friends must have been quite an unexpected spectacle. Konki's bonnet, with its buffalo horns and eagle feathers, probably made him look like a specter. Cat and Bearcub didn't like the weapons pointed at them, so Bearcub reared up and Cat put up a paw, screaming, which made Paint rise up. Every on of the hunters ran, leaving their bows and arrows unused on the ground.

Konki thought this was peculiar. He had put his hand to the square in peaceful greeting, but he guessed the animals must have frightened them off. He would now have to

visit these people and explain his presence. He didn't want them to have the wrong impression. He headed for the river.

Cat and Bearcub left to go up river to find a crossing suitable for them. Konki thought it best as well so he could land straight across. He had observed the canoes, that they could only cross slant-wise down river as the water carried them. When Konki decided to cross, Cat and Bearcub said their moaning goodbyes, and Paint said that she would protect him. She was swift and able … and, she was a good swimmer, as Konki found out as they crossed the river.

Guards at the gates of the palisade were not used to young boys not of their tribe approaching with such courage, especially one wearing such an extravagance of eagle feathers and buffalo horns, because they were complaining, “How could a boy be such a great warrior? He must be a thief.” They sent for the leader of their tribe that he might examine him.

While the chief counselor of the village walked around Konki, looking at him and asking him questions with hand signs, Konki noticed a great commotion about the gate and around him. Many people came to see him, all talking at the same time. The Great Spirit told him that some were saying that he must be a great warrior. Some said that they saw him across the river with two devils and that he himself must be a devil, and that they must be rid of him. Some said that he must be a thief, for no mere boy could be so decorated. Others said that he must have killed a great chief, taking his war bonnet and his horse, and in that case, they must welcome him with great honors.

Konki explained to the chief that he was carried from his home by the Great Eagle, that his home was to the north by the sea of many waters from where the great Father of Fire arose into the sky each morning. He was only trying to return, he said, and would he give him free passage across his land? He had many tales to tell if he would be allowed. This would be the only way, thought Konki, to explain his appearance.

"This is an omen," the old chief told the crowd. "Make a feast for this boy. He will take our prayers up to the Father of Fire this day!"

With that, there was a unanimous shout for joy. Everyone sang and danced throughout the village. Drums beat a heartfelt rhythm. People brought out food and costumes. Bonfires were built, and circles of dancers orbited around them. Konki was led into a city of festivals.

A girl touched Konki's hand. She smiled and lightly gripped it. With a gentle tug, he was made to slip down from Paint and led away by the chief counselor. He was surrounded by other counselors of the village; they all had wide grins on their faces. Konki thought that perhaps he was in the hands of more witches, but he was led to a feast spread upon the ground with many aromatic meats and fishes and fruits of all kinds it made his mouth water, and he forgot the grinning faces of witches. They sat him down and invited him to eat. Bare breasted girls brought him wreaths of flowers and beaded skins and moccasins. Boys brought gifts of hunting knives and bows and arrows they had made along with bear-claw necklaces and the heads of many pointed deer.

People danced before Konki until the setting of the sun. Their cries and chants and

cheers filled his heart, something he never wanted to happen. He had only wanted to explain why he was here, and that he would like permission to cross their land. This shouldn't be happening to me, he thought.

Konki was compelled to try on the new clothes and necklaces they had given him. He was so distracted by the bare-breasted girls trying to change his clothes and dancing all around him and rubbing up against his face that he couldn't do anything for himself. The girls stripped him and put a brightly beaded shirt on him. The design on the chest was a bright sun. They put a new loin cloth on him that was brightly beaded as were the moccasins they slipped onto his feet. He was so embarrassed that he was shaking.

After they had dressed him, the girls seemed to be asking him questions. They implored him to do something he couldn't understand. He became frightened, and the men were laughing at him. The big chief came over to him and with a swipe of his arm pushed away most of the girls. He signed to Konki that they all wanted to marry him, but he wanted to give him one of his daughters, maybe two or three. Then using signs he interpreted the questions of the people.

They wanted him to convey messages to their Sun God in the Heavens who gave them Light and Life. Some asked that their crops grow and produce much fruit. A few wanted lots of children. Others asked that their hunting would be successful throughout the year. Some wanted leadership in war. Still others wanted messages of love sent to their dear departed ones.

It sounded as though the questions were framed in respect to him returning to the Great Fire Cave in the west. He had told them how he had traveled west while he ate and watched three dancing girls in front of him and that now he was returning home in the north east. Yet it seemed that he was being asked to return west to the home of their sun god instead of going east to his own home.

There had always been three dancing girls, he reflected, in one of the festivities at home. It had something to do with the three divine beings who created the world.

Only Paint understood what they really wanted. She had loosened her tether and nudged her way to Konki. She then nudged his shoulder and whinnied a message only he could understand. "Konki, Great Master," she whinnied. "These people are cannibals, and they plan to eat you after they dance themselves into a frenzy and slay you on their altar of sacrifice, that mound in the middle of their village. Move back slowly now, but mount me sure and fast. I will take you to the wall where you can jump over. Don't worry about me."

Konki's hand moved stealthily over to his sheep's horn which Aaron had given him. He slowly put the leather string over his neck. He didn't want to leave it behind. The bonnet would be too cumbersome, so he left that behind. He also grabbed his old clothes, stripping himself while backing up.

Konki quickly slipped away and mounted Paint who jumped over the crowd of people that had surrounded them and ran for the north wall. Konki threw his clothes over the wall

and jumped from Paint's back, grabbing two of the spear-like points on top of the wall as he flew over it.

How he landed, slipped on his leathers, and ran into the forest without hurting himself, he didn't know. All he knew were the angry voices behind him and those who wanted to take his life. He heard the screams and kicking of Paint. Tears streamed down his cheeks for her. It would be Paint whom they would sacrifice now instead of him. That's where Wind-Runner would have wound up, but because of the wisdom of the Great Spirit, Paint had taken his place and became a valiant warrior who sacrificed herself. His heart burned within his breast. He could feel that he was being carried through the forest by the spirit of that valiant wind-runner, now running free.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Konki ran through the green woodlands for days without end. Seldom did he stop for water or food. He ran as though in a dream, flying with the eagles above and with the wind-runners of the sky. Longing for his family and his people, he ran north and east to a land of many lakes and rivers and jutting mountain peaks. Soon, Bearcub and Cat joined him in his race, and whenever they ran into a hunting party or a war party, the men ran from them as though they were spirits chasing them. They were phantoms passing through the green silence, for everywhere they approached, the birds stopped singing to see who was going there, and all the animals pricked up their ears.

As Konki ran, he dreamed of meeting Aaron again, sitting down at a campfire in the green darkness and talking with him.

"Aaron, tell me of the animals, and how they came to be," he asked, "and why does man hunt them for food? And why did Paint sacrifice herself for me, and why did the eagles?"

Aaron laughed at all those questions spoken at once. "There are many legends about the animals," he explained, "but there is only one truth. You will learn one day that all life came from the Place of Light where all return when they die. All the plants and animals and all the creepy crawly things in the earth and man himself came from the Place of Light. All life grew in experience as far as they could, knowing all things. Only one experience they lacked."

"What was that?" Konki asked, eager to learn.

"They lacked knowledge of suffering … being blind and deaf and being all on their own to make their own choices. They could only obtain this in a world of opposites where we now live. I say opposites, because the Great Creator of all things would never leave them without light in opposition to the darkness.

"Man decided to come down into this world of darkness to gain all knowledge, to compare good and evil, pleasure and pain, light and darkness. They could do that because the Great Creator let them bring with them the light they had in the Place of Light.

"Now, some of the animals knew that without them, man would not be able to survive. So they decided to follow man to this earth, this world of darkness, from the Place of Light or the world of spirits (for all were created as spirits before being born into this world of knowledge, as it is also called). They would teach man how to survive, and even give up their lives if necessary, for the survival of man. The animals made a covenant to be meat for man and to be his clothing, his dwelling, and his weapons, doing all things, even to carry his burdens. The plants also made a similar covenant.

"The bear and the lion would teach courage and ferocity. The sheep would teach loyalty. The buffalo would teach them honor. The turtle, patience. The eagle would teach them to soar above their petty selfishness to the heights of wisdom. The wind-runners would

teach them freedom and sacrifice and again, loyalty. The weasel and snake could teach them craftiness and carefulness and to be invisible. Different animals can teach you many things as you watch and imitate them. Yet, many of them have been overcome by the darkness and should not be followed. You will find an order in all things. The Great Creator teaches both man and animal that killing is to be only out of necessity, only out of hunger and great need. Yet, there is more to life than all this.

"You must call upon the Great Spirit in all things that come to your mind and then listen. He will teach you of the Master, and the Master will teach you why the eagles sacrificed themselves for you. You must know that you are nothing and that you are everything, as your experiences have taught you."

Konki continued his trek toward his homeland. He had many experiences that proved his manhood. Meetings with other tribes proved his courage, while so others gave him food and drink and respite.

By the time he reached his homeland, he had become a man by the estimation of his people. Even though he was only twelve years old now instead of the awkward eight, he was tall and muscular and had left his look of youth behind. He had become a full fledged shaman or medicine man, and so he spent a lot of his time in the dream-time.

Dreaming, Konki passed by a lonesome people moving south. He recognized none of them. They were a shadow to him. Dreaming, Konki, as an eagle, flew over Rock-Face Mountain and the Cave of the Great Bear. Konki ran north of his homeland, north of the place of his birth, passed an empty village that used to be his own, the place of his family. Dreaming, he ran on, forgetting entirely why he ran, forgetting expected joy and the happy reunion with his family. Dreaming, he ran upon a place of mounds and hills that looked man-made, a place gouged out by glacier ice and snow. The very rocks in the valley had been sheared off. He recognized none of the many lakes. He was lost. He landed himself on the side of a long lonely hill covered by evergreen trees.

Konki ran into the grizzly that had become a giant, who had accompanied him all these years. It roared. That woke him, but as numb as he was, he fell against the bear and slept. The now full grown mountain lion that had been Konki's companion along with the bear licked Konki's face and head, as though thinking his friend was dead.

Konki woke up to a mind-wrenching sadness. Both Bearcub and Cat were also moaning. He pulled his knees to his chest and leaned against the bear for comfort, rocking, trying to press down his swollen heart. This was a place of the dead. He could feel the presence of an immense number of the dead, as numerous as the sands of the sea. Whole nations had died here. He could put his hands beneath the grass and feel the graininess of crushed bones. The soil was white. Everywhere under the soil was a white layer of what once was piles of bones heaped up upon the earth as far as the eye could see.

Konki dreamed again. He dreamed of a great battle fought in this place. The dark enemy were numberless. They were as a dark mass that covered the earth, sweeping down tens of thousands here and tens of thousands there, and the smell of carrion boiled in his throat and nostrils. He couldn't breath the air! It choked him!

One lone character atop a hill, wearing yellow armor stained crimson red, stood wounded, peering out over a wide expanse of dead bodies. He was an old pale-face. He knelt upon the earth and cried, "Oh ye fair ones! Why have ye died! Why did ye reject him who could have saved you? Why have ye fallen! Why have ye rejected your Lord and Redeemer, your Master who would have gathered you as a chicken gathers her young ones under her wings, and ye would not? Ye wanted revenge and blood, and now it is a sea of blood, your own blood that ye have!"

Another man rose up, also a pale-face, and having fainted for the loss of blood, now tried to comfort the old man. He called him his father. The young man was none other than the image Konki had seen near the great salt sea in the middle of the desert! He awoke!

There standing before him above the ground in the air was this shining visage of that young man, the same that had blown his horn made of yellow metal in the desert.

"Who are you?" Konki asked, shielding his eyes with his hand, so bright was the young man.

Konki searched his own mind. He realized he had asked Aaron why the eagles had saved his life. He had a premonition that it had something to do with the Master Aaron had spoken of. So he asked, "Why did the eagles save my life when I was only a dog, not worth much, and was it the Great Eagle or the Master that Aaron spoke of?"

The young man gave a wide sweep of his arm and said, "Look." Konki looked and beheld a panorama of people who had come to this land, having been given a promised land for their inheritance. He saw the people multiply and cover the face of the Earth. There were many cities from the sea east to the sea west, and from the sea north to the sea south. He saw that the people were divided into a pale skinned people and a dark skinned people, and that the dark skinned people hated the pale skinned people. He saw many wars and rumors of wars between the two peoples. He saw that because of the wickedness of the people, the earth heaved herself into convulsions, tearing herself in pieces and heaving waters upon the land, covering many cities. He saw many cities burned by lightning and many cities carried away by the whirlwinds of a mighty storm.

After the storm, after three days of total darkness and much mourning of the peoples, there came the Great White Brother spoken of only in sacred circles and in private. It was the Master. Konki knew it. Many secrets now revealed themselves to him. Nevertheless, Konki asked, "Who is this great man?"

The Great Spirit opened Konki's eyes and showed him a great city across the many waters where his people came from. He saw a great man, going about healing the sick, casting out devils and teaching the people many important things, and then being lifted up upon a cross. After that, he descended out of the sky to his own people. The Great Spirit said, "Behold the Great Eagle, the Master who saved your life and will save it until his purposes be revealed in you."

Konki then saw that the people to whom the Great Master had revealed himself rebelled against him. There were wars and rumors of wars, and in the final great battle most all the pale-faces were destroyed. There were those who denied the Master and joined the

dark skinned race, and twenty four who did not deny, who were hunted down and killed.

Konki was upon the last great battle field and felt the anguish of it all. "Why? Why?" he asked, "did they turn away from the very Life?"

Konki saw the pride in the hearts of his own people. He saw all the wars still among them. He saw his village destroyed and the people fleeing south. He saw his mother wounded and left to die. He saw his father dead and not cared for. But where was his brother? Maybe that was him leading the old ones and children fleeing to the south. He remembered them now. He had passed them as in a dream and had not noticed. He had then run past a deserted village.

Konki saw his people move south to seek a peaceful tribe to join and to share their land. He saw his people assimilated by friends in the southern mountains. He then saw an astonishing thing foretold by the Great Prince whom the Great Spirit said was a symbol of the Master. His people and the people they would live with would come in contact with pale-faces. These would wear short beards and have golden hair. They also would wear shining metal on their chests and heads. And … they would ride the runners-with-the-wind! He saw it all as though it had already happened.

Konki saw others coming across the many waters from the way of the rising sun. He saw many settlements where his people used to live. He saw much religious commotion, and he saw a young lad about his own age, but not as tall, come to this very hill, open it up, and lift out a thing made of yellow leaves with writing upon them!

The Light dawned upon Konki … yellow leaves with writing on them! He knew.

Konki addressed the spirit standing in the air above him. "I have known of them before. The boy showed them to me. The Plains Chieftain talked to me about them."

The Great Spirit answered that they were the record of his own people through the lineage of his father down to the time they came from a distant land called Jerusalem.

Konki felt everything within him shine for joy. The Great Spirit told him that this record would be translated by the gift and power of the Great Creator. His people would learn the language of the pale-face, and this record of the Master's dealings with his people would be given them. They would read it and know from whence they came and their purpose here on the earth. They would gain the knowledge it would take to go back and live with the Great Creator and Master and the Great Spirit in that Place of Light forever and ever.

As Konki meditated on these things, he heard the rustle of silken robes. There was the soft beating of giant wings in slow motion, a feeling of fainting and then the shining of a bright light. A soft feather caressed his cheek. He sighed. Before him stood the Great Eagle, but as the light increased, it appeared as though it were a man shining brighter than the sun.

Konki trembled as he recognized the man. He cried out, "Master!" but all passed away as though it were a dream. He remembered though that the Master had said, "You will witness of me to your people."

Konki lay in a daze for a long time. How long, he knew not. He only knew that it was

very difficult to breathe! There was a giant grizzly bear sitting on top of him, wailing his heart out!

"Get off me, you ugly one!" Konki grunted.

Bearcub turned over and licked Konki's face.

"Get off me!"

"It's a sa-a-a-a-a-d place! A-a-a-a-ah!" Bearcub wailed.

He got off Konki when Cat swatted at him. But Cat was wailing also, causing Konki to cover his ears. The wail sounded like the screams of the dead.

Konki was weak. He didn't want to leave what he now knew to be a holy place, but he had to go to his village, find his mother, and then his people. He had Bearcub carry him out of the place of vision and mourning.

Konki fainted and dreamed he was back in the cave of healing, being fed by his friend Aaron. It was a dream remembered as he lay on the back of Bearcub who carried him to his village. When they arrived, he felt stronger and could walk. He looked around. The village had been abandoned in a hurry. Corn mush remained in bowls on the common table. Some were overturned. He paused to remember. They had fled from an enemy. He went to each wigwam and found it empty.

Konki ate some of the mush he found and the smoked meat that had been left behind in their haste. He knew there had been an invasion from somewhere, but he didn't know why the invaders had not burned the village, leaving all these supplies. Konki felt gratitude at his village being spared. Perhaps the invading army had been too busy fighting and chasing his people, and perhaps they would be back. He thought of these things as he ate. The mush tasted good. He hadn't had any for more than two years.

After receiving his full strength, Konki thought of his mother dying somewhere. Even though it was dark, he would take her some cornmeal mush. Konki was anxious to tell her of the things he had seen and heard. He would like to find his people and tell those who would listen.

Konki ran in a straight course to his mother, not consciously knowing where she was, following the Great Spirit as an eagle flying overhead, seeing ahead for him. He took with him a bear coat that had been left behind. It was probably old Wey-cho-kay's. He wondered what had happened to him.

Konki found his mother lying beside a stream of water too weak to lift up her hand to drink. The water mocked her as it splashed along the rocks and stones. Konki took the bear coat and draped it over her skinny body. He then lifted her head onto his lap, dipped his hand into the water and brought it to his mother's mouth. She drank and coughed. He continued bringing the water, letting her drink from his hand until she shook her head, saying that was enough. She was satisfied. Someone cared.

Konki's mother knew not who it could be. Was it the old medicine man? All the others were dead, she thought. No, by feeling his arms and chest, she could tell it was a young man. Why didn't he say anything? She grabbed his hand and pressed it to her heart. She knew then that it was her son, but which one? Her older boy was gone, and her younger boy Konki was dead. She looked upon the young man nursing her. She called out in a raspy voice, "White Eagle! Your name is White Eagle." She was joyful that she was yet alive. By giving this young man a name, she had adopted him. She had given birth to him.

Konki had a long talk with his mother as he fed her the cornmeal mush. Even though she seemed not to know him, he told her of all his adventures, the witnessing of the Master, telling her of the record to come written on leaves of gold. She passed away silently in his arms. At sunrise, he found a small cave and buried her, having wrapped her in the old man's bear coat. She never saw his animal friends. They stayed their distance in the surrounding bush.

Winter was upon White Eagle again. He would have to find himself another coat if he were to survive. If he could find one of the many caves in this area, an empty one, Bearcub and Cat would keep him warm enough. He could almost keep between them all night and hunt for food and a coat by day. Thinking of the possibility that the invading army might be back soon to burn the village, White Eagle thought of old Wey-cho-kay's cave. If he had fled with the others, his cave would be empty. He would go up there and investigate. It would be a good place to hold out for the winter and hide from the invaders. He would go back to the village and gather up all the necessary supplies that had been left behind and take them up to the Great Bear Cave.

White Eagle. That was his new name. His mother had named him. He wondered about it. He wondered about all he had seen at that hill. He had gone out seeking manhood. He came back with a vision and a mission.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Old Wey-cho-kay lay dying in his cave. He waited for death. He was too sick and wounded to flee south with his people. Besides, he had to wait for his replacement, the one who would watch over his people and guide them through life's hard journey, through their dreaming, for true life comes after death. Who would teach the young? Who would heal the sick? Time was running out and he had no apprentice. How could he teach anyone the medicine herbs and ceremonies? The people will forget.

Time brought the two together at the right place. Wey-cho-kay's replacement walked right into the cave followed by a big grizzly bear and a mountain lion. Old Wey-cho-kay moved slowly to lean himself against the back wall.

"You have come to eat my bones, have you?" asked the old man still filled with spunk.

The two animals now standing on either side of White Eagle stretched their noses out and sniffed the old man.

"They won't harm you," said White Eagle.

Old Wey-cho-kay opened his eyes wider and got a good look at the intruder as his camp fire reflected its wavy red and orange flames off the young man's face.

"Why, the thief has returned, I see!" he said, "and with power!" Old Wey-cho-kay paused. He reached out to touch the snout of Cat, but Cat quickly pulled back. "You were always bringing animals into the village and getting scolded for it."

"These are my friends. We need a place to stay for the night," White Eagle said, almost apologizing.

"I am dying. You must carry me down to the place of bones." He pointed to the back of the cave which was in the shadows. The little fire he had burning didn't reveal the entrance to the bigger cave. "Here, take my bearskin coat. You will take my place as resident and keeper of the ways I taught you. Now, you must teach others. Only, you don't know how to use the healing herbs properly."

White Eagle took the bear coat. He figured maybe it wasn't the old man's coat he had buried his mother in. And here he was, trying to take credit for teaching Konki, the White Eagle, when he knew it was the Great Spirit that should be given the credit. He reflected now on a memory or a dream in which Aaron was talking with him at a campfire deep in the dark woods in which Aaron was teaching him of the different herbs. Aaron should take some credit for teaching him, but he wouldn't, of course. White Eagle knelt down to view the old man more closely.

"Hee, hee," laughed the old man.

"I have gained knowledge, and the plants and animals tell me their secrets. So don't worry. I have come to take your place. The world is changing. The old ways are dying with

you. New knowledge will be taught our people," White Eagle said gently.

Old Wey-cho-kay got angry and said, "You think I don't know about the Master? About the Great White Brother? About the book? I know them all! But that won't save this people! They need to be taught about the land and the animals and the way of Life itself so they can survive. They need to learn to hunt and grow corn and squash so they can survive in this wilderness. You think I don't know the history of this people and their wars? What do you think a man of knowledge is? This people need to be taught to survive in the wilderness. They are not used to it. They are a city people. Their fathers were city dwellers from across the many waters. They do not know how to live in the wilderness. They must be taught. It was my duty to teach them. Now it is your duty. You must teach them the ceremonies so they can live at one with Mother Earth, the land, the animals, the plants. So they can survive! If you take this knowledge away from them, they will again be city people unable to live out here in the wilderness. The Great Spirit gave them this land to live on. The land is to be their nursing mother, to feed them and clothe them, and if they do not continually renew their knowledge, they will die. City people die in the wilderness."

"Yes, old man. Their life will change. They will become city dwellers. They will forget their old ways. But a new teaching from the book that comes will save them. They will learn of the Master and his ways, and he will lead them. They will not die. They will be given a new life."

"Take me to the place of bones. I cannot stand to look upon the death of my people. The white man comes. He will be the death of my people." Tears came down the old man's cheeks.

"Yes, their old life will die. Their pride will die. Their lust for blood will die. There will come a time of war with the pale-face, but then, there will be peace as the pale-face learns of the land and learns to live in harmony with it and our people. They both will learn of the Master and learn his way."

White Eagle took a fire brand from the fire and said, "You hold this old man, and you can guide the way." He then took the old man up in his arms and moved to the back of the cave. The light from the fire showed a cleft in the rock which they could scoot through. Bearcub and Cat watched the two disappear through the hole in the rock and sniffed after them. Bearcub smelled another bear and growled. Cat slipped through, silently slinking to follow his master. Bearcub found it difficult to squeeze through, but he made it.

There was a trail that led through a maze of stalagmites and stalactites. The old man said to follow the trail. The light of the firebrand threw up iridescent shadows and ghosts upon the walls of the cave. They followed the roundness of pillars and vestibules. It was a holy place, full of spirits of great power. White Eagle could feel the pushing of the Great Bear Spirit, and he remembered his vigil that important night before he left. He could feel ghosts of other medicine men all around him, chanting their songs of power and knowledge. The air and stones down here were frigid. The trail led ever downward, ever colder. This was the trek of death, and the death song came from deep within White Eagle's throat to mix with those of the ghosts.

As they turned a corner, Wey-cho-kay told him to lay him on top of the bones of his ancestors. There was indeed a pile of bones. Some still had the flesh upon them. It was like leather. White Eagle lay Wey-cho-kay on the pile of bones gently.

He interrupted his song to ask, "Shouldn't I build a fire or something? Do something for you?"

"You want to take away my honor with a fire? Go on with you! Leave me to my death! Death is *honorable*! You should *learn* that. Go and find our people and take care of them. They need you."

With that, White Eagle took the fire brand from the old man. Way-cho-kay resumed chanting the death song, and White Eagle turned to go. Wey-cho-kay's last words were, "Remember! Protect the people. Teach them how to live in this wilderness."

"I will," White Eagle called back, his words echoing through the cave.

White Eagle stayed that winter along with Bearcub and Cat in the Cave of the Great Bear. He watched the people of the north set fire to his village. They never found him. A great bush grew in front of the cave entrance. He later went in search of his people and found them, but they rejected him and his fancy words. He went back to the Great Bear Cave.

He watched the pale-face come from across the many waters, but he never let his presence be known to them.

As he grew to full stature, he learned to hibernate like the bear during the winter months, finding he could live longer that way. Bearcub and Cat wandered off every spring to find a mate, but they would always return to be with their master.

There grew up a legend among the people of the north about an old man wandering the forests and mountains followed by a giant grizzly bear and a mountain lion of extra normal size. He would seek out young boys who were on their trial of manhood, who went in search of their dream and song, who went out to learn to hunt, to build their own wigwam and make their own clothes. It was told that he would show himself to those few who had the Great Spirit with them and teach them, not only how to survive in the wilderness, but also of the Master and the book that was coming that would be given them by the pale-face. He also taught of the Great White Brother who would bring peace to the land. To one or two he deemed worthy, he introduced his friend Aaron. Whenever he blew on his ram's horn, he could perform miracles by the power of the Great Spirit, and always, there would be Bearcub and Cat by his side who never seemed to grow old.

So told many mothers to their children.

THE END

Book Two

LONGSHANKS

AND

THE ESOPUS WAR

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CHAPTER ONE

The white man had come as was prophesied by the old men. Even the animals knew before it happened. The settlers had purchased land along the big river what they called the Groote River that led to the sea and put up forts and laid out farms. They had been friendly enough and had brought a tremendous amount of gifts. The metal they called iron replaced native stone axes and clay pots, bone awls, and other implements. They had brought horses, steel knives and hatchets with them which the men were particularly interested in. The pale ones cut down the trees with the axes and plowed the land with horse drawn plows. Buildings were built of stone, too hard to tear down when they moved. But others came and occupied them. Their canoes were giant with clouds and wind above them to push them along. Then there were the thundersticks which hurt more than just the ears and scattered the animals. They killed and wounded people whenever there were arguments. The way of the people was to sit in council and talk things out, but that was not the way of these white men. They shot their thundersticks and talked afterward.

Many of the white men did not talk to the red man before they started building houses and plowing the land under. They just took the land. If there was a dispute about it, they erected round forts with thundersticks pointing out of holes in the walls and said, “This land is ours now. No one owns it, so we are taking it.”

Many of the Red Man, called Esopus by the white man, did not understand the ways of the white man and became angry. They wanted to drive the white man back into the sea. They burned many farms and killing men, women, and children, but that did not frighten the white men. All it did was to stir up a hornet's nest of thundersticks and lead beads. The glass beads were of all colors and were good for trading and decorating clothing, but the lead beads brought only one color, red, the blood of brothers, fathers, wives and children. Children who lost their families became prey to the white man who used them as slaves.

They would dunk the children into the water and give them new names, trying to give them the white man's religion. These children were forgetting the ways of their fathers. Sometimes the Red Man would take white children and teach them the ways of the native peoples, and sometimes they would trade the white children to get the red children back. Other times, the families of the red children would simply come in the night and lead them back home.

After the great war with the white man, there were very few Esopus left and a scarcity of land and wild game. It became difficult to live, so they found that if they worked for the white man on their farms, they would be given food and the white man's clothes. Yet, they would not eat beef or cheese or drink milk. In war, they would slaughter the cows.

The Red Man were called many different names. They were first called Indians or Injuns, but when they found that some of the Indians wore turbans, they called them Turks or the Children of Israel. Many of the white men just called them Heathen or Savages. None of these names were of the seven tribes that existed among the Red Man.

One family that was caught up in the conflicts with these newcomers, left a little boy behind named Huycon. His brother, Conduon, could not handle him. The little boy was angry at the death of his parents and was on the warpath all the time, destroying his brother's wife's pots, trying to tear down the wigwam, destroying the fire built to cook with, hitting his cousins with sticks, and running around, trying to hit anyone and knock things out of their hands. The women of the village especially complained. Conduon was at his wits end. He would cover his ears at the complaints and whip little Huycon, but it didn't do any good.

Conduon's wife took him aside one evening. “Why don't you give him to one of the white men. Let him bother them instead of us. It will be a just reward to them for their actions.”

So that is what Conduon did. He grabbed the boy by the hand the next morning and swiftly took him through the woods to a clearing being worked by a Dutch man by the name of Schencks.

“This little man,” said Conduon deceitfully, “has no family. You took his family, now you take him. He a good worker.”

“You stay with this man,” Conduon told Huycon in his own language. “He take care of you. You no come back to village.”

Conduon left.

Huycon turned to watch him enter the woods. He shot back, “You go. I not want to come back.” He turned to Schencks and smiled.

“Now little feller,” Schencks said, also with a smile, “Ye come to mit house.” He motioned to the boy who must have been eight years or so. Huycon was tall and slender with a hooked nose, long black hair, and was naked except for a buckskin loin cloth.

Mr. Schencks took him by the hand and left the field with him, giving instruction to another Indian nearby to finish with the plowing.

Mr. Schencks took to teaching Huycon Dutch, pointing to items and saying their names and giving names to things the boy was doing, such as digging, hoeing, pulling weeds, packing, carrying, so he could finally tell the boy in Dutch, “carry der ladder, pull der rope, chop der chicken's neck, pluck der fet'ers, hoe der row, carry der sack, sweep der floor, pile der dung, etc.”

The farmer was not satisfied with anyone on his farm having a name he couldn't pronounce, just as he couldn't have the Indians speaking their own language. So, there was a Sabbath day when an itinerant preacher came to town. He had him baptize Huycon and give him the name of Benjamin. From then on, everyone called the boy Ben.

Ben learned about everything there was to do for a laborer on the farm. He took care of the cattle, mostly, and kept the barn clean. At night he would lead the cattle back to the barn, but after a couple of years working for Mr. Schencks Ben ran off, and the cows were left in the pasture. Mr. Schencks had to gather them in himself.

“Vell, vell, it be true t'at der natives be vanderers.” Mr. Schencks scratched his head. “He get hungry, he be back.”

CHAPTER TWO

Ben had not planned on running away. It just happened. The night he disappeared, Ben took a switch from a bush, wrapped his fingers around it on one end and wiped its leaves off with one swipe. He gathered the cows by slapping their rumps with it. He noticed an old man standing at the edge of the forest. He had white hair adorned with a single feather, was draped in a blanket, and held a peace pipe in his hand. With his free hand, the man motioned for him to come. The urge to go was so compelling that Ben left what he was doing to see this strange apparition, for he glowed.

It wasn't strange to be summoned by a spirit. Everyone saw spirits. If they didn't they were caste as strange. This old man seemed to be a good spirit, so Ben was not afraid of him.

When Ben came up to the man, he asked, “Are you a spirit?”

“No,” he said. “I am just an old man who wishes to teach you the ways of your people. Konki placed his hand on the boy's shoulder. “Come Ben, I have something to show you.”

The man's countenance was very pleasing to Ben, like inhaling a lungful of fresh mountain air after waking up in the woods or that sense of freedom while running through a field just for fun.

After walking silently through the trees for awhile, Konki said, “You must find a place to stay for the night.”

“What kind of place?” Ben asked.

“Bears have caves, squirrels have nests in trees, badgers have holes in the ground.” Konki smiled. “Which would you choose?”

Ben looked up at his new friend. “I not an animal.”

Konki stopped, placed his hand on the boy's shoulder and said, “True, so what is your suggestion?”

Throwing out the palms of his hands, Ben followed with, “My people make wigwams and longhouses with branches and twigs.”

Konki pointed to the setting sun through the trees. “It will be quite dark soon.”
“I will gather branches. I have seen my mother do this.”

Ben gathered branches from the forest floor and wove them into a hut with enough room for only himself. At first, his hut began to fall apart, but Konki stepped in, and with one twig, showed him how to fix the problem.

“Spring nights get cold here,” Konki said as he wrapped his blanket tighter about him.

Ben looked up from inside the hut. “I have no blanket.”

“You are quite naked.” Konki tapped his chin with his forefinger as if in deep thought.

“Humm. Some people make clothes of leaves, some use bark. You haven't killed a bear by chance have you?”

Ben shook his head. “Ugh-ugh.”

“What?” Konki asked with his hand to his ear.

“No, I have not.”

Konki stood there a moment as if he were considering. “What will you do?”

Ben scrunched up his face as if he were thinking hard. Then a smile brightened his whole countenance. “I know! I will build a fire.”

“Where will you get the fire?” Konki remembered that night when he was a little boy and lightning struck a tree. He had fire *that* night.

Ben thought a moment, wrinkling up his forehead. “I saw my brother make fire. He struck two stones together over wood shavings. He keeps them in a bag tied to his waist.”

Konki's expression, as he tilted his head, invited Ben to find some dry wood, a sharp rock and two stones that would make sparks.

It took an hour to find stones hard enough to make sparks, and there were several boat trees whose bark was used for making canoes. The bark on them was dry enough to start a fire. Ben was able to shred some of the bark after scrapping it off the tree with a sharp stone. By that time, it was totally dark.

“I'm scared,” Ben said without too much emotion. “What do I do now? I can't find my way back.”

“You could try to feel your way, but stay still for a moment.” Konki tapped Ben on the shoulder. “Look at the mountain.”

Ben almost asked where, until he saw a glow in the sky that outlined the mountain. He stared at the outline. The glow became brighter, especially at one spot on the northern slope. It became very bright there. That spot became a small crescent of pure light. He could then see the outlines of all the trees.

“I can see now,” Ben said jubilantly.

“Wait another moment,” cautioned Konki.

Within two blinks of the eye, Ben saw a bright full moon float into the sky to the right side of the mountain. He jumped with joy at the sight.

He ran through the moon lit forest and found his little wigwam. He arranged some spare twigs into a teepee shape, dropping the dry bark at the bottom. For several minutes he hit his two stones together until he learned to make sufficient sparks to light the bark. He was able to blow into the bark in such a way that hot flames pushed into the twigs which soon caught fire. He had a cozy source of warmth at the door of his wigwam hut.

Without any thought of Konki, he crawled inside and curled up like a little bear and fell fast asleep.

Konki walked patiently back to where Ben had made camp. He sat nearby with his legs crossed. Taking a twig from the fire, he lit his pipe. He blew smoke over the area and gave a blessing, chanting,

“Great Spirit, Great Spirit,

He who sees all and gives

Blessings upon all his children,

Bless now this boy,

Bless this boy, Ben Schencks.

Give him the grace of a deer,

The curiosity of a ground squirrel,

The strength of a bear, and

The wisdom of the snake,

But harmless as a dove in the blue

Blue sky, Oh Great Spirit.”

CHAPTER THREE

Ben woke just before dawn to cold ashes where once a little fire had blazed. He shivered with the freezing air. He got up and hopped around to get his blood going. His stomach growled. He had no water, food, or fire. He looked around for the old man, but he wasn't there. The thought came to him that what was important now was to build another fire. But he had used up all the bark. He tried using leaves. That didn't work. He tried breaking up twigs into little bits. That didn't work either. He ran back to the boat trees and retrieved more bark, ran back to his hut and started another fire. This time, he put on more twigs to make the fire last longer.

What was he to eat or drink? As soon as the sun came up and he was warm enough, he put some moss around the fire to keep the coals warm … something else he had seen his brother do.

He had to find a brook. He needed clay to make a cup. If he could find a small animal, a rabbit or a squirrel, he could catch it and roast it over the fire or make a stew. Maybe there would be a fish in the brook.

Ben climbed a tree and didn't find even a little stream of water. He decided to go to higher country. He knew that water came down from the mountains.

Eventually he did find a streamlet where there was much clay. After he drank from the stream with his hands, he formed himself a little bowl he could use as a cup or dish to eat in. He set it aside to dry and looked around to see if he could eat any of the plants growing there. He found sorrel which he knew from his brother's wife had a starchy root that was good to eat. Ben pulled a few of the plants from the soft ground, washed off the roots, and placed those near his drying bowl.

Ben had a gift from his father which other boys envied. He could throw a pebble at a target and hit it. Even at a young age he was expert at knocking squirrels out of trees. Birds were harder, because once he let the stone go from his fingers, they were already in the air. Distance was also a problem. His father, he remembered, could throw a stone across a field. Others had to use a sling. He imagined that when he was grown he could do as his father had done.

Picking up a few pebbles from the stream, he went in search of a squirrel or chipmunk. He came back to the stream with a dazed squirrel and sat it down by his bowl. He looked around the hillside and found a slate field which would be fun to slide down, but he decided his stomach had to come first. He spotted a thin piece of slate he thought he could use as a knife. It had a sharp edge, so he picked it up and went to fetch his bowl and food.

Ben was surprised when he got back. The squirrel had awakened and run away. He stomped his foot. He took his roots and bowl back to his campfire and threw them on top of the coals. He stacked other branches on top to get a fire burning. He had to blow a considerable time to get it going again. He would get that squirrel later.

After he finished eating he went back with his bowl to the stream to drink some water. When he stooped down to drink, he thought he was attacked by a large white headed eagle, but it turned out that it was Konki standing there with a gust of wind blowing his blanket. Ben noticed he had a vest of eagle feathers. He had heard stories of a man that could turn himself into an eagle, but he shrugged it off. Konki was just a kind old man, and the wind had blown across him.

“Go ahead, my little friend,” Konki said kindly. “Finish your drink.”

Ben could hardly breathe at the presence of Konki coming so suddenly upon him. He confused breathing and drinking and started coughing. Konki laughed softly.

“No need to be startled. Look.” Konki handed him a fish. “I had my fill this morning. I saved this one for you.”

Ben took the fish. It had holes in the sides, as if it had been scarred by talons.

“You took it from an eagle?”

Konki just smiled. “Let's go see if your fire still burns. I can see the smoke in the distance rising through the trees.”

After a few minutes of walking through the woods, Konki said, “Others may see your smoke and come. A thin column of smoke invites them.”

Ben glanced up at his new friend. “Should I be alone?”

Konki patted his shoulder. “Do you want to go back working with cows?”

“No. I like it here with you.” Ben continued staring at his fish. It looked like it was watching him.

“Then after you eat, you had better put out the fire.”

“It is so warm.” Ben looked back up to Konki. “I would hate to do that.”

“Would it not be better to be covered from the cold so you could travel and see the world than stay home by your fire and keep warm?”

“I guess I have to keep finding food.”

When they arrived back at camp, Mr. Schencks was there. Ben turned around and caught his breath when he didn't see Konki.

Mr. Schencks grabbed Ben's arm, making him drop his fish. When he tried to stoop down to retrieve it, the man yanked him back up. He had a switch in his other hand.

“I have ta teach ye not ta run avay.” Whereupon, Mr. Schencks whipped Ben on his back and legs. The boy hopped around because of the pain, but he would not cry out.

“Ye see,” Mr. Schencks said in a kindly tone, “ye had not power ta hide from mit eyes andt feet. I al'ays find ye.”

Mr. Schencks never let go of his grip on Ben's arm until they reached the farm and had shackles put on Ben's ankles.

“Ye vilt stay in der barn andt clean it.” The old man who had seemed to be a nice father to him before had now shown his true character, and like a pirate with his hands on his hips, looked down upon the boy. “Ye vill be fedt aftervards.”

Ben hadn't strayed very far. Mr. Schencks must have seen the thin line of smoke drifting upwards a mile away in the wooded hills. He simply walked over to the spot and found Ben's little wigwam. Having been familiar with all the inhabitants in the area, he knew it had to be him.

After a year had passed and Ben showed continual obedience to Mr. Schencks, the farmer took the shackles off him, Ben promising not to run away again.

CHAPTER FOUR

After Ben had been retrieved, Konki never stopped visiting him. He came often in the evenings. They would sit down and Konki would tell him stories, but never in the summer months. He told Ben that the little people, that is, the little animals of the forest, would put a curse on him if he did. Summer was always time for work, not telling stories. Also, if an animal would overhear a tale in the summertime, he would wander aimlessly through the forest and not be able to gather food for the winter. It made both men and animals lazy.

One night at the edge of the forest, Konki and Ben sat by a small fire. Konki told Ben of the creation as taught by his mother.

“The ruler of this earth they call Tormenter. He is the Cave Dweller. He calls himself Ruler. The Great Creator who made the world and everything in it is his brother. He also calls himself the ruler. They two dwelt in the heavens before time. They had an argument. The Evil One who dwells in the cave said that mankind is his. All he has to do is to say the word and man obeys him. The Great Creator said that little children are his. They can do no wrong. Ruler said that all he has to do is tell a little child to pick up a stick and hit his friend, he will do it. Creator said he will send his messengers and tell man to be good and kind. Ruler said they will forget. Creator said, 'I will send down my son. Maybe they will not forget him.'”

Ben, warming his hands near the fire, asked, “Who is the Son of the Great Creator?”

Konki said, “The white man brought a book with him called the Holy Book. It tells of the Son. There is another book. It is made of gold and is hidden in the earth, in the mouth of the great turtle. It tells of the Son also. But we must keep it safe for the son of Joseph. He will read it and tell us of the Son.”

“Is the earth the Great Turtle?” Ben asked, scratching his head.

“Yes,” Konki replied, looking like a stone mountain. The only part of his body that moved was his mouth. “It is the Great Turtle. In the great argument between Ruler and Creator, the giant apple tree was pulled up. Under it was a great river into which the turtle fell. Sky Woman was there. She was pregnant with all life. She jumped in after the turtle to catch it. There were many animals in the cloud river. They thought they would be hurt by the thing falling on them. Sky woman surrounded the turtle to protect them from it. As the turtle floated down the river, she delivered. She had twins, Good and Evil. Now that is what exists in the earth.” Konki showed him both hands, and then, as if he were pulling things out of the air, said, “All the animals gathered on the back of the turtle to live there.”

Ben looked puzzled. “Why does Ruler dwell in a cave and Creator dwell in the sky?”

Konki asked. “You heard that from other red men?”

“Yes. The other workers here tell of such tales, but it is confusing to me.”

Konki waved his hand through the air above the flames. “In the beginning, as I said, Ruler and Creator were having an argument. The argument turned into fighting, and Creator

grabbed hold of Ruler and thrust him down into the earth. That is why we say he dwells in a cave, because he was banished to be forever under the earth. He cannot come out, so he sends his messengers, half animal, half man, to tell man what to do."

"Where did man come from?" Ben asked as he picked his nose.

"Ruler and Creator said, 'Let us prepare room for another people to grow and dwell there.' And so Sky Woman came down and made love to the turtle. She lay on top of the turtle and became the Earth Mother. She bears the children of men. When man dies, he goes back into his Mother Earth."

"Oh," Ben said as understanding came. "Is that where the animals come from too?"

"She gives birth to all life." Konki smiled.

"Tell me more."

Konki rose and tousled Ben's hair with his big hand. "You had better go. You will be missed."

Another time, Ben was in the corn field at night and Konki appeared. The moon shined upon him. Ben was startled at first and then saw it was Konki and not a ghost. He sat upon the ground and motioned for Ben to do the same.

Konki motioned with his hand. "Look around you Ben. What do you see?"

"I see the corn. The beans and squashes grow here too. They climb all over the corn. Why is that? Don't they choke the corn?"

"There were three maidens sent by Creator to watch over the beans, squash and corn. These were special gifts of Creator given to man to help him endure this life. The three maidens were called Corn, Bean, and Squash, and they dressed in the leaves of each plant they were to guard. Ruler, the Evil One, came by night and took away the maiden called Corn. Ruler didn't like man, so he caused a blight to come upon Corn, and she, being alone, did not have power to heal her plant. Bean and Squash looked all over for her, but they could not leave their respective plants unprotected, so they called upon man in dreams to find Corn and bring her back. Finding Corn, man planted beans and squash together with the corn and the blight vanished. Bean and Squash wrap themselves around Corn so she will never be taken again from them."

"There are three maidens that dance every year at harvest time." Ben squirmed at the thought of girls. "They are very beautiful. Are they Corn, Bean, and Squash?"

"They represent the three maidens of legend." Konki smiled. "We show respect to what Creator has given us by having ceremonies like this."

After another beating, Ben ran off to live in the woods again. It was a blustery day, and the wind roared through the treetops. Ben found that a young pig had followed him

from the farm. He gathered grass and formed a rope from which he made a noose. He tried walking over to the pig carefully as it rooted around a tree, but the pig didn't let Ben get closer that five feet. It would scurry away and go to another tree or bush to search for food. *If that was going to be his game*, Ben thought, *I will climb a tree.*

Ben lay upon a low branch of an old tree that looked promising, for squirrels would often bury their nuts under such a tree. He let down the noose end of the rope and waited. The pig seemed to sense Ben's presence. He sniffed the air and then started rooting again. When it stepped into the noose, Ben yanked on the rope. He caught himself a squealing pig.

Later that day, Konki appeared, standing beside Ben who was leaning back against that old tree eating a roasted leg of that pig. The wind still howled.

Konki gazed up at the sky and the trees rocking back and forth. “The bear is prowling in the sky.”

Ben looked up. “Wouldn't a bear fall down if he were up there?”

“It is the West Wind, Ben.” Konki smiled. “That is how we refer to it. It is the Bear. You can see it at night up in the sky.”

Ben offered the leg to Konki. “I only eat fish. I never eat white man's food.”

“I have never seen a bear in the sky,” Ben said as he continued gnawing on the leg.

Konki sat down and invited Ben to be seated beside him. He waved his hand at the sky and said, “That is enough.” The winds calmed down. “The fawn is returning to its doe.”

“How do you know?” asked Ben. He threw the bone on the ground and licked his fingers.

“That is how we refer to the summer breezes.”

Ben surveyed his surroundings. The trees were silent. “Did you do that?”

“What?”

“When you waved your arm, like that.” Ben waved his arm to demonstrate.

“I know Ga-ha, Master of the Winds.”

Ben settled back against the tree. “Tell me about the winds.”

Konki signed with his hands as though Ben spoke a separate language and he had to translate. “There are four winds. There are also four directions. Many people call these two the same names. The names we use are Bear, Panther, Moose, and Fawn. The white man calls these four North, West, East, and South. The north wind tears at the trees. It will tear a man's coat off. The Bear is strong and powerful. The west wind is cold as it comes down from the mountains with snow. The Panther whines and freezes the lake. The east wind brings rain and mist. We say that the Moose spreads it breath. The south wind is the most pleasant of all. It brings summer breezes and the sweet smells of the forest flowers.”

“Oh,” was all the response Ben gave Konki.

Konki stared at Ben.

“What?” Ben preoccupied himself with picking the grass in front of his crossed legs.

“You must go back to the white man.”

“He beats me.” Ben could feel Konki's eyes peering into his soul. He turned his face to the old man. “What do you want?”

“You must make friends of your enemies. It is their place now. We will recede toward the West while they follow us in their expansion, taking over our land.”

“We will fight them!” Ben said aggressively through his teeth, clenching his fists.

“Yes, you will. Yet, you will not win. The Great Creator has brought them here. It is their land now.”

“What can we do?” Ben put up the palms of his hands.

Konki remained still as the stone mountain, except for his eyes which seemed to search for something.

“You must learn to live among them in peace.”

Konki arose. Ben followed.

“You must go back.”

“I will not work for that man Schencks.”

Konki noticed how tall Ben had grown. “You are almost a man, but you have a lot to learn.” He paused. “Ask to work for someone else. Go to a different farm.”

“Will I see you again?” Ben moved as if to rise.

“We have much work to do together. Our paths will cross many times.”

“I will take the rest of the pig as a gift.” Konki gave Ben his hand and helped him up.
Konki shook his head. “Bury the pig. They will kill you for stealing.”

As Ben buried the pig, he shook his head. “These white men have two faces. They smile with one, and it is happy. Then they frown with the other, and it hates you.”

As they headed for the clearing, where the farm began, Konki reminded Ben, “Be sure to do the best you can to be friends with these settlers. It is easy to hate them, but then you become as wicked as they. To keep yourself clean and free, be a friend. Be patient as a lion stalking its prey.”

Ben waved goodbye to Konki as he entered Mr. Schencks's field. He determined to be friendly and patient. He would be a stalker, like a warrior.

He met Mr. Schencks as he talked with the neighbor, Broddy, a heavy man with a bulbous nose and long straight hair hanging from his wide brimmed hat.

Mr. Schencks heard Ben approach. He turned, and with some indignation, pointed to Ben and said, “Ye kin take dis von also.”

He addressed Ben. “Go wif Mr. Broddy. He vill vork ye at his farm.”

At the end of the day, Ben marched with several other Indians to Mr. Broddy's farm,

but Mr. Broddy didn't keep all the Indians that had been given him. He didn't like Ben's rough appearance, so he took him to the next farm over to see if Mr. Jansen wanted to work him.

CHAPTER FIVE

On the north end of the Shawangunk mountain range, in the southeastern part of Ulster County, a vast amphitheater of piled rocks overlooks the Walkill River Valley where grazing lands and dairy farms abound eastward from the Hudson. The valley's walls are covered with a green forest of hemlock, maple, and sumac, along with the Virginia creeper, and expanses of goldenrod and purple asters cover forest floor and meadow.

October brings thousands of “burning bushes not consumed” and the famed Shawangunk huckleberries.

The traveler, as Washington Irving tells it, “… by an easy ascent, on the summit of the Shawangunk … *before* him will generally be spread an ocean of mist, enveloping and concealing from his view the deep valley and lovely village which lie almost beneath his feet.” In a short period of time, the sun melts the low lying clouds, and the traveler sees below him an abyss, which Irving alludes to as a fairyland.

This summit is bounded on the south by the Delaware River and New Jersey mountain range; to the east is the Hudson River Valley; to the north, the Helderberg Mountains; to the northwest, the Catskill and Shandanken Mountains, and the Neversink to the west in a breathtaking panorama.

On low sloping ground, rising toward the high cliff wall of the surrounding bluff, sat a log cabin of a German, Johannes Jansen. It had a loft upstairs which was approached by an inside ladder. It was fitted with two chimneys, one for the kitchen and one for the parlor and upstairs bedroom. It was one of the earliest cabins to be built in the Walkill Valley.

His wife's name was Antjie of the Hardenbergh's of New Amsterdam, who eventually moved close by. Their children were Antjie, Katrina, Johannas, Jacobus, Jacoba, Gerardus, and Jannetjie.

Mr. Jansen brought a few cows with him to graze on the fertile valley sod, and built a large Dutch barn to house them. Because of the isolation and lack of roads and transportation, milk was sold only to the locals, but his cheese became known all over the New Netherlands. It could be transported over mountain passes and across long stretches of land and sea, so dairies exported cheese, not milk. Because of a lack of European labor, many Indians were hired. Men and boys came across the Atlantic as bondsmen, and there were some slaves sold in New Amsterdam, but in the backwoods of communities just starting, most of the labor was obtained from the indigenous people.

Jansen's neighbors were the Quicks, Van Vliets, Westbreoks, and the Kools. There were only three black slaves among them to start with. When Jansen earned enough money, he went to New Amsterdam and bought three for himself. Counting the Indian field workers, and a handful of other neighbors, there were near 100 people in the valley. The Indians were nomadic, they didn't stay long, and so their numbers kept changing.

The natives were not loyal subjects of the crown. They chose their loyalties carefully,

but usually, they were without attachments except to their own families and clans. Arguments came up often because of the differences in culture. Distrust ensued, and war was inevitable, especially with a people who adopted war as a profession. All boys were expected to become soldiers (braves) and were trained young. Hunting and warfare were synonymous.

Whenever there was trouble, whether from the natives or the neighbors, the small settlement always sought out Jansen to be arbitrator. When the town was incorporated and named Shawangunk, Jansen became its supervisor. He even had a paper signed by the governor, which he hung on his wall. By that time, he had built a two story stone house to accommodate all the children he and Antjie were having.

Of particular interest to Mr. Jansen was a little Indian boy brought to him by the name of Ben Schenks. The boy had lost his parents in a conflict with the Esopus up north near Wiltwyck. He was tall for his age of ten years, slender and athletic. His jet black hair was clubbed behind, his forehead high and wrinkled, his fierce brown eyes sunk deep in their sockets, his nose aquiline, his teeth broad, prominent, and white, his cheeks hollow. His countenance was already that of an adult. To look upon him one would think he was a bloodthirsty savage, but when he smiled, Mr. Jansen became completely disarmed.

“'Tis vell, 'tis vell.” Mr. Jansen put his hands behind his back and nodded. “Ye must be Schencks' boy. Jes?”

“Yes, yes,” Ben said, nodding his head rapidly. “Mister Schencks a good man. He like a father to me.”

Broddy, the man that brought him, said, “Mr. Schencks callt him Benjamin. He hast taken to beink callt by Schenck's name.”

Mr. Jansen turned to Broddy. “I t'ank ye, I t'ank ye. Ve vill put ter jung fellow to vork, soon.”

Ben was put to work tending the fields, pulling weeds, hoeing, and hauling hay to feed the cows and horses. He liked being outside, but in order to try to make friends with his new master, Ben would clean the barn without being asked. Konki said he should do things like that. Mister Jansen watched his good work, and it wasn't long before he gave Ben charge over a crew. Because of the teachings of Konki, Ben showed the other Indians how to become friends with the cows and horses. Way-No-Gonk would not be friends with cows.

“I despise the white-man's cows,” he argued. “They should all be killed. Man should eat deer and buffalo like the Great Creator intended.”

“White men are not like us,” Ben pointed out. “They have different gods who like cows. You see, Master Jansen has the maids squirt some milk on the ground as sacrifice to the gods that live in the cats. They drink up the milk spilt on the ground.”

For the most part, the Indians were friendly with the cows, but especially with the horses. They would not talk to the pigs, but would feed them. Ben had to clean the pig pen as well as the barn because the other Indians wouldn't touch the filth. They were peculiar as to what animals they would like or hate. It all had to do with legends of how the Creator

divided the animals into service animals and the ones you could eat. They could eat cloven footed animals if they chewed the cud. That meant they could eat beef, but no one could make them like the dumb beasts, and maybe that is why, because they were very dumb. They also considered milk to be for babies only, so they wouldn't have anything to do with milking or making cheese. The white men had to do that.

Mr. Jansen would not allow the drinking of spirits on his premises, white or Indian. He knew of the Indians uncontrollable and rowdy character when they were drunk. They became wild and ferocious. He had enough trouble with them stealing things. They would tell him that either they forget where they put it or that “Someone else took it.” And then they would leave and return at their leisure. They were nomadic. It was no way to run a farm, but that was the labor he had for the moment. When he gained enough capital, he would go to New Amsterdam and buy some African slaves. At least, that was his warning to them. He never did have but a handful of slaves. Most of his workers in later years were indentured servants.

Months later, many of the Indians became agitated. They were known to be lazy and slow moving, doing their work in silence and at their own pace, but they began talking among themselves and making frantic gestures. When Mr. Jansen or the foreman came around, they would hush up and continue their work as if nothing had happened. It was a puzzle to Mr. Jansen, so he went to Ben. He felt he could trust him. He found him in the barn.

“Ben.” Mr. Jansen looked around to see if any of the other Indians watched. “Have der Injans bent liftink der cider jug?”

Ben stopped raking the dung and smiled. “Master Jansen. No one drink liqueur without going far away where they can sleep. Then they come back sober.”

“Vat hast t'em agitated so?” Mr. Jansen stood there with his hands on his hips and with a furrowed brow.

“When they go away, they hear stories.” Ben moved his head closer to Mr. Jansen and smiled more.

“Vat kindt of stories?” Mr. Jansen blinked, trying to glare back at Ben who didn't blink.

“Up north, where the bear roams and tears down the trees and near the sea of the moose, white man kill lots of red man. There is the smell of war in the air.” Ben sniffed the air. “Smoke and blood.”

Mr. Jansen shook his head. “Mit heard not'ink.” He peered at Ben from the slits of his eyes. “Do ye t'ink der Injans here ko on der var path?”

“They talk of going up north and going on the warpath up there.”

“Mit farm vilt loose many a men. I need vorkers. How do I keep mit vorkers?”

“Give many presents … many presents.”

Mr. Jansen walked away and came back, looked at Ben, walked away again and returned, holding his chin. “Vat presents?”

“Many clothes, many knives, many guns, many pots. No bone, no clay. Want metal.” Ben slapped his hand with his fist in imitation of a hammer hitting iron. It was the Indian sign for iron, but Mr. Jansen took it as an ultimatum.

“Ben! Do not tell der master vat to do.” He mumbled to himself with his head bowed. “Vilt break mit farm.” He turned to Ben again, reconsidering what Ben had suggested. “Chose mit out der best vorkers. I kif dim presents.” With a swipe of his hand in air, he added. “Let der vest ko.”

Ben went about talking to all the Indians, getting their views on things, for he was younger than most of them. He asked them who wanted to stay working for Mr. Jansen and who wanted to go up north. It was the young ones who wanted to leave. Those that stayed were the old men and most of the women. It seemed that they were the only ones who wanted to live in peace with the white man.

Mr. Jansen gave those who stayed pots and tools and his wife's store of cloth, which she vehemently objected to. They nodded their heads and smiled, thanking him many times.

Ben didn't stay. He was persuaded by the young boys to join them.

“You need to be a warrior,” they said. “How are you going to be a warrior if you stay here and become a farmer?”

“You will be a momma's boy forever, ruled over by women,” said another.

“To be a man, you need to go on the warpath.”

“I will go with you because it is the land of my youth, the land where I was born,” he answered. “I want to see what is happening between our people and the white man.”

Ben didn't tell Mr. Jansen he was going. He had had enough of farm life. He wanted adventure. He wanted to be a warrior and follow the life told in stories of the great warriors he had heard about from the other workers.

He wanted stories told about him.

CHAPTER SIX

Nicho'las, Cano'pe and Ben Shanks became solid friends and suffered many indignities at the hands of the white man. They left the Jansen farm together, escaping into the woods, running at a comfortable pace, traveling north for several miles before they stopped to rest, eat, and sleep.

Cano'pe, dark-skinned and shorter than the other two and, did not go by his Christian name, or maybe he never had one. The other two accepted the names other people called them, having been baptized very young. Ben's last name got confused and was changed by people thinking Schencks was actually Shanks, a description of his height. He was the brightest of the three and always had a lofty attitude because of the high ideals Konki had taught him. Yet, he never mentioned the old man. Ben became a fierce fighter, seeking savage revenge anytime his friends or family were hurt in any way or murdered. Nicho'las was stocky, gruff, and serious all the time. He kept his head shaved except for a lock of hair that hung behind him where he tied a single feather. Cano'pe and Ben wore what could loosely be described as turbans. They sometimes wore nose rings, earrings and beaded necklaces. The three represented the clans of the Esopus: Wolf, Turtle, and Turkey. They called themselves Lenape, the original people. Esopus was perhaps a French name as was Mohawk, the people north of them.

Later that evening, a scout came into their camp as they sat around a small fire. He gave his name as Now-wa-sonk.

“Have you come up from the Fawn?”

Cano'pe answered. “We came from Master Jansen's farm.” He offered him the hind leg of a rabbit.

Now-wa-sonk sat with them and ate, nodding his head in thanks. As he turned his head to see each of them, they introduced themselves.

“Ben.”

“Cano'pe.”

“Nicho'las.”

Nodding again, Now-wa-sonk asked, “You come to fight the white man?”

They each nodded their heads several times as they ate.

Finishing his leg of rabbit and wiping his mouth on his sleeve, Ben asked,“What is happening in the house of the Bear?”

“Wiltwyck,” Now-wa-sonk said, licking his fingers, “has been burned, many women and children taken captive. We burned New Village first … killed most of them. The roundout fort near the big river we left alone.”

Ben stared with astonishment. “All we heard was that we Lenape went on the war

path and were killing the white man. How did you burn Wiltwyck when it was so heavily guarded?”

Now-wa-sonk peered at Ben and smiled. “We caught them when most of the men were out in the fields.”

“They wouldn't just let you in the gates,” Cano'pe said, hugging his knees.

“We came to trade, carrying corn and beans. There were two hundred of us. We went in and visited the houses asking to trade our food for iron.”

“Then what happened?” Nicho'las inquired.

“We did nothing.” Now-wa-sonk lifted the palms of his hands with a sneer, “until some fool from New Village came on a horse and complained that we had burnt down their town. Then we darted into the houses, killing some, burning at least twelve houses. When we heard a horn blowing, we went to the windows and started firing our guns and bows to kill the people in the streets. We knew it was the men coming in from the fields. When there were too many of them, we grabbed as many women and children as we could and fled into the forest of the Panther.”

“What did you do next?” Ben asked, hungering for more of the story.

“Nothing.” Now-wa-sonk looked around as though gathering his thoughts. “But then, we sent out spies to gather our forces for the next attack.”

“We will go with you,” the three friends said in unison.

“It is good. We need all the men we can get.”

Everyone slept around the campfire under the trees. The three friends had taken woolen blankets with them when they left Mr. Jansen, so they slept comfortably. Now-wa-sonk slept close to the fire. The moon and stars watched over them. Little Fire Spirit warmed their hearts with its breath.

In the morning, the scout led them to a group of braves armed with guns, pistols, and bows hiding along the white man's road that led to the roundout.

Ben knelt behind a boulder beside a brave holding a long barreled gun. “What are we waiting for?”

“A scout spotted wagons and soldiers marching toward the fort. We will overcome them and take their supplies.”

“Let me use your tomahawk,” Ben said. “I will fight along your side.”

“Get your own. A brave does not lend his weapon. If you have none, stay here or pick up a stone and use it.”

After a few minutes, along the road there came three horse-drawn wagons with men marching in front and in the rear, kicking up the dust. Each one carried guns on their shoulders and wore broad-rimmed hats. Their leader rode a horse.

“Be silent,” the brave said in hushed tones. “... and don't move until you hear Chief

Papequanaehen cry out."

In two seconds, the chief yelled a terrifying scream, whereupon the braves fired at the soldiers. They jumped from their hiding places with blood curdling war cries and ran upon the marching Dutch. But the soldiers had previously loaded their muskets and turned and fired upon the marauding savages. Those that ran swift and sure did not get shot, but pounced upon soldier after soldier, hacking them with their axes and stabbing them with their knives, many of which were the iron implements given to them by the Dutch. Blood covered the savage hands. Some of the braves smeared it on their faces or chests and yip-yipped with joy.

Ben couldn't stay hidden like a woman, so he picked up a stone and ran toward the soldiers. He hit many on their heads, splattering their blood all over him. Then he saw the brave he had talked to previously lying on the road with his eyes staring at the heavens above. A bullet hole in his forehead gave him the appearance of having a third eye. Ben rushed over to him and grabbed his tomahawk. "I *will* get my own, dear friend. It is mine now." Ben continued the fight with the ax he had taken. He was proud to have one made of iron. He found he could swing it with deadly accuracy.

The Indians raided the wagons and carried off some of the supplies. When that was done, the chief gave another signal, his yell shattering the air, and his braves vanished back into the forest.

After running a couple miles to the southwest, with leafy branches slapping his arms and chest, Ben looked for his two new friends to see if they were still alive. Nicho'las and Cano'pe found him. They all three laughed as though what they had just experienced was a lark, something young boys do for fun. It had been exhilarating.

A couple of other braves stood nearby. One of them said, "So, boys think themselves men, now that they have shed the blood of the enemy?"

That question sobered Ben. "He who taught me told me to make friends with the white man. It would be to our advantage. I have done so, but I am young, and I still make mistakes. I will follow where my heart leads."

"You are wise for your age," said the brave. "I notice you have taken my friend's tomahawk. Is that due to your, um, wisdom?"

Ben took the tomahawk and gave it to the brave. He would honor his elders as Konki had taught him to do.

The brave placed his hand on Ben's shoulder, smiled, and left.

"You should have stood your ground," Cano'pe said, looking a bit irritated.

"Come," said Ben. "The others are starting off. We must follow." Ben thought to himself, *The brave was right. I will learn the true wisdom of a warrior and be honest and upright.*

Ben, Cano'pe, and Nicho'las followed the band of Indians through leafy forest southwest until they came to Wawarsink, the major town and fort belonging to the Warranawonkong of the Esopus. It was situated on a high plain surrounded by 200 acres of corn. Above the town was the Shawangunk Mountains. They had to cross the Great Esopus River, but it was fordable by foot. They passed through the cornfields that surrounded the town, treading carefully to respect Corn, Bean, and Squash. The town, larger than Wiltwyck, had the same kind of palisade protecting it. Inside, the streets were lined with wigwams, and the longhouse for the community was situated in the center of town. There was space around each wigwam for cooking, tanning, and drying of meats. Along the walls of the town were pits filled with beans and corn from the fields outside the wall.

Arriving in the city, the band of marauders disbanded and went to their individual homes, leaving Ben and his friends alone. When Now-wa-sonk saw this, he invited them to his wigwam, but his wife said they could stay in the longhouse. Her name meant *sure footed fawn*. It was the women in council who governed, even though they had a chief, which the women could remove with a vote.

The three friends found a place to sit on the ground and were conversing when Sure-Footed-Fawn brought them cornmeal mush to eat, which they greatly enjoyed. They thanked her by smiling and nodding their heads repeatedly as they ate. She also brought gourds filled with water from the river.

“This is good,” Ben said as he dug into the porridge with his fingers.

“It is just like home,” Cano'pe commented.

Nicho'las nodded at each of his two friends, turning his head from one to the other and back again as he stuffed his mouth several times, smiling.

“I never had this before,” Ben said, washing the cornmeal down with water.

“Where have you been?” Cano'pe spied a gourd that still held water and reached for it.

“Save some for me,” Nicho'las said in his deep voice.

Ben and Cano'pe laughed because he hardly ever spoke. Cano'pe handed Nicho'las the gourd he had picked up after he himself took a sip. He wiped his mouth and smiled.

After eating, Ben rose and said, “Let us see the village.”

The other two rose, and Cano'pe said, “You mean you want to spy out the girls!”

All three laughed and walked out of the longhouse. Taking a breath of fresh air, they began walking around.

Suddenly, a spy returning from the forest gave a war whoop, crying, “The white men have followed and are upon us!” Everyone deserted the village, going out the back pass, except one old woman who remained sitting in front of her wigwam.

From the Shawangunk mountain above Wawarsink, hiding among the trees, Ben, Cano'pe, and Nicho'las watched as the army of whites crossed the river, entering the cornfields. They burned the fields, and then destroyed the corn and beans in the pits and

then set the wigwams on fire. The soldiers found the old woman, but she would not leave her home, so they set her on fire along with everything else. Next, they set the palisades on fire and left, going around the hill where the Indians were hiding.

Everyone looked at each other and then to their chief. Papequanaehen motioned for the people to follow.

“Where are we going?” Ben asked Now-wa-sonk.

“We go to a new location,” Now-wa-sonk said, “where we can build again another village.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fourteen women and thirty children, who had been taken prisoners by the Indians, were rushed into the west mountains. Some mothers had one child; some had three. One woman had four of her children with her. There were eight children without mothers, but the women watched over them as their own. The small children had to be carried because everyone was running. The braves warned them repeatedly, “You slow down, we kill! We kill you papoose.” The women cried out because their children were being hit and herded with a vicious cruelty. They were themselves hit repeatedly and wound up badly bruised. The women they would use for slaves. The children were to be adopted into the tribe.

It was a miracle the captured women and children all survived and arrived at the Indian village, but they were not allowed in. They were moved up the mountain overlooking the village. Guards were set around them to prevent their escape. The air smelled of pine, and they sat on cushions of pine needles, but they were cold, hungry, thirsty and terrified. The children kept saying, “Mama, mit honkry,” or they would whine, whereupon a guard would raise a stick and the mother would have to hush the child quickly. More than one of the women got angry at their children and pinched them to make them be quiet. The lucky children went to sleep.

An old Indian, wearing a blanket, walked through the camp, giving the women pine sprouts or the ends of branches where the needles were young and green. He said, “These will help with your hunger and thirst.” He didn't stay long.

Overhead an eagle circled as if he were curious to see people out of place.

As the sun descended over the mountain of the Panther, the women and children were allowed into the village. Some of the children were taken away by elderly people. The mothers who objected were hit with sticks by the Indian women. The white women could only sob. The prisoners were then led away into the longhouse where they were fed cornmeal mush and given water.

The spies of the Indians were sent out to watch for the army of the white man. Whenever the army was spotted, all the women and children were herded back up the mountainside to hide them. After the army passed by and were far enough away, the prisoners were brought back down and stored again in the longhouse. This happened several times a day for three days.

After the third day, near the evening, when they had been driven up the mountain again, while everyone was trying to catch their breath, a flutter of wings was heard. The once overcast sky cleared enough to send down a single beam of sunlight. It shined on an old man wrapped in a blanket. He carried a peace pipe and wore a single eagle feather in the back of his head that slanted a little. He raised his right hand to the square.

“Peace be unto you,” he said, looking at the nearest guard.

“What are you doing here old man?” the guard asked.

“It is hard for you, is it not,” the old man said, “to run these poor people up and down the mountain every time the white man shows his pale face?”

“We have to hide them,” the guard said with both voice and sign language, “every time the white man's army approaches.”

“Why not let them stay here?” Konki smiled at the women and children as he waved his hand over the area. “They will not leave. They are lost in these woods. They are simple minded and have no knowledge to find their way back to their homes. They are only women and children. Leave them here until the chief knows what to do with them.”

The guards talked it over with each other and answered the old man. “We will stay here and guard them. It *will* be easier than running them up and down.”

Konki waved his hand toward the guards. “Only one guard is needed.”

As if hypnotized, the spokesman of the guards said, “Yes, only one guard is needed.” Then he stayed as the other guards left and went back to the village.

Konki waved his hand again. “Listen to the Fawn going back to her doe.”

A warm breezed wafted through the camp. The guard yawned. He sat down and fell asleep.

Konki gave a call of a bird and several white soldiers came from behind the trees into the camp. “Follow us,” one of them whispered loudly. The soldiers went about the camp shushing the children. Tears streamed down the faces of the women as they gathered up the children. They couldn't say anything, being so choked with joy.

The happy prisoners were marched down the opposite side of the mountain, but one woman looked back. Her boy and girl had been taken by the Indians. She was to see them no more. She noticed that the old man was gone. The cry of an eagle was heard in the sky above.

After the women and children were well on their way back home, the soldiers came back to the village to punish the Indians, who were apprized of the coming white man by their spies. There was a small skirmish as the soldiers caught the Indians escaping to the southwest. About five Indians were killed, including a woman and her child, and one white soldier. Of course, the village was burned to the ground. The Dutch went back to Wiltwyck thinking the war was almost over.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Wiltwyck was a black cauldron. Many newly built homes were nothing but ashes and chimneys with some black corners sticking up as if in agonizing protest. A muster was taken. Twelve men, three of them soldiers, four women, and two children had been killed. Only eight women and four children were taken from this town by the Indians. Most of the people taken had come from New Village.

Even though Sheriff Roelof Swartwout received a bullet in the shoulder as he tried to enter the town, he had rallied all the men coming in from the fields and organized an army. At the same time, he sent to the roundout on the Esopus Kill (or small river) for reinforcements and wrote a letter to Director General Stuyvesant asking for more reinforcements from New Amsterdam. He was able to route the Indians from Wiltwyck and only had a few skirmishes with them after that. The first thing he did was to restore the palisade and gate.

It was Sergeant Christiaen Niessen who went to the roundout with the wagons to get ammunition and more men.

The sheriff warned all the men not to go out alone into the fields and to arm themselves if they wanted to work the land.

The next day a white girl was brought up from the Esopus Kill Roundout. Sheriff Swartwout questioned her. “Var did ye comp from, andt var ist ye home?”

“Mit comp from ta Injan mit captured me,” she said. “He up nord in ter voods var der maize grows.” Her eyes blank, she added, “Andt fer mit family, day be kone … New Village … all kone.”

The sheriff sent out forty men to scour the hills north of Wiltwyck. When they returned, they said they found a maize plantation and a campfire that had recently been used, but no Indians.

In this way Sheriff Swartwout dealt with all kinds of reports coming in from the settlers. He also had to deal with the army sent up from New Amsterdam. A couple of scouts came charging in with complaints about the settlers in Wiltwyck not giving them horses.

“Ve need dern horses to carry der voonded back,” one said, leaning on the sheriff's desk, shoving his face into the sheriff's.

“One folk vants security fer der horse,” the other said with his palms thrust out into the air.

Sheriff Swartwout leaned back in his chair. “Ye can't juss take der horses. Der settlers need dem too.”

The first one stood and reared back, putting his thumbs around his suspenders. “Dare be a var on, Sheriff.”

“Jes, jes,” said the sheriff, scooting back his chair to get up. He rose and went to the

door with the two hecklers at his heels.

“All ve get is spite and insults.”

“One said ve vill have to take dern horses by force!”

All the sheriff could muster was six horses, and the two soldiers left with them, yelling back, “Tank ye, tank ye,” several times.

Nicho'las, Cano'pe and Ben Shanks had been recruited as spies. They were to gather information concerning the white armies and what the people of Wiltwyck were up to. All three of them donned white man's clothing of loose white shirts, dark knee high breeches, and broad rimmed hats. They didn't take the time to peel off the stockings of the bodies they got their clothes from, but when they crossed a stream, they found white mud and spread it on their legs and faces.

The three Indians entered Wiltwyck in the early morning hours and stayed in the shadows, listening. They heard stories of how the Indians were routed there and to the west where they found most of the white prisoners. The men that came down from the roundout with supplies, who had fought off the Indians, said the Indians were savages who fought like women and scampered off into the woods because they were afraid of the long barreled guns. But it was the way of the Indians to hit and run.

As the spies stood in a shaded corner between the general store and the store owner's house, smoking long handled clay pipes, they whispered among themselves.

“We fought like panthers!” Cano'pe said, slapping his fist against his chest.

“There were more of them sent to the happy hunting grounds than there were of us,” Ben commented with assurance.

Nicho'las grunted in agreement.

As they continued their whispers, a man coming out of the store asked them, “High! Ye t'ree. Ve need men on der stockade, and ye standt aroundt smogink?”

They had been noticed. That was their exit cue. They threw down their pipes, hit the man on the head with a tomahawk, and ran out the gate, shrieking blood curdling war whoops. The men about the stockades were startled at first, and when they got around to firing at the fleeing Indians, they were out of range.

Nicho'las, Cano'pe and Ben Shanks ran into the woods, leaving a trail of men's clothing. They ran silently through the woods around the perimeter of the farmland to the west of the town. The soldiers sent out after them ran in a straight line to the south.

A kill came down from the mountains and flowed along the farmer's fields, turning south into the woods. It soon joined the Groote Esopus River. At the point where the stream turned, the men of Wiltwyck had cut down many trees for the palisade. Here they spotted a man whom they had seen leave the town earlier. From conversation he had with another white man, they knew his name was Louis Du Bois, and he was looking for his oxen. The

man he had been talking with said they had been spotted in back of Juriaen Westphaelen’s land.

Du Bois, not armed with pistols or anything else, was rotund and short with a small beard. He took his hat off, wiped his brow and returned his hat.

Nicho'las took an arrow from its pouch, and slowly armed his bow. He pulled back the arrow, aiming carefully at the man's back, but as soon as he let go the arrow, Du Bois turned and saw the three Indians. The arrow scraped his shoulder. He took up a piece of palisade and ran toward the three Indians as Nicho'las ran toward him with a tomahawk. De Bois threw his full weight into it as he hit Nicho'las in the chest. Nicho'las fell backwards. De Bois ran back the way he came to alert Wiltwyck.

Ben and Cano'pe stood over Nicho'las shaking their heads. The big guy sat up and coughed. “That hurt!”

The other two laughed, grabbed his arms, and pulled him up. They ran into the woods to the southwest to tell others what they had seen and heard, that they had damaged the white settlement considerably, but had not broken their spirit.

Captain Kregier's first expedition had two hundred men and two cannon. They brought with them a woman who had been taken captive by the Indians. She said she knew the way to Wawarsink, only thirty miles distant. Because of the rain, the cannon were bogged down in the mud and became useless. After finding only a handful of Indians and destroying massive fields of corn and beans, burning the village, getting covered with mud and soot, most of the soldiers deserted and went back to Wiltwyck. The fifty-five men that remained were a hardy bunch, but they went back to get fresh supplies of powder, shot, and biscuits.

On the second expedition, Captain Kregier marched his small band another thirty six miles to the southwest. The new fort was located on the right side of the Shawangunk Kill running down from the Shawangunk Mountains to the west.

The soldiers were plagued all night with steady rain. Everything in the wagons was wet except their powder which they kept covered with oil cloth. The men were wet down to the bone. Their faces were covered with the rain, forcing their eyes half shut and their mouths sputtering, but they persisted and would not relinquish their oath to destroy the Indians and their fort.

In the morning, when the soldiers arrived, they found the waters too swift to cross, so men were sent back for ropes and axes to form a line across. The task seemed ominous, as the fort was high on the precipice of a hill. Down below was twenty acres of corn.

Waiting for the ropes, the soldiers bivouacked on the shores of the kill, and while lounging, they discovered two Indians and one Dutch woman across the kill gathering corn. There was nothing they could do to rescue the woman who was obviously a slave.

After the men returned, Captain Kregier decided that it was still to dangerous to cross,

for who would go out in the middle of the stream to pound poles into the stream bed if the current was too swift in the first place? It was decided by a war council to go up to Tuthilltown and cross there. They took down their tents, attached them to the horses and waded in the mud up to the town.

Ben Shanks and his two friends had been watching Captain Kregier's little force for several miles. They kept to the tops of the trees and sent messages back to other spies by imitating birds. The message was thus relayed to the new fort that the white man's army was coming with only fifty-five men.

When the army arrived, the palisade was not yet complete and had a gaping hole in the back which the soldiers couldn't see. Ben had returned to the fort and was helping the continued effort to finish it. When he saw the army leaving, he was relieved and began laughing and acting like a cock. He was chided by an older brave.

“You laugh now, but a brave is always watching.”

After two days, Captain Kregier's men came from above the fort down the hill in the back, running right through the hole. A woman, who had been gathering wood outside the fort, gave a blood curdling scream. Ben and the rest of the Indians ran to their separate wigwams to get their bows and arrows or guns, but the soldiers were fast upon them continuing their fire, killing and wounding.

The Indians who could escape ran out the gate of the fort, through the corn field, and across the kill to the other side. There, they fired across the kill at the soldiers who returned fire, felling more of the Indians. The rest fled into the woods.

When the battle ended, Captain Kregier had captured fourteen Indians. Two of them were women with three children. One of the children was wounded, and it was the opinion of the men that he wouldn't live.

To make sure there were no natives hiding in the village, the soldiers went from one wigwam to another. What they found instead was twenty four Christian women huddled together in the longhouse … no children. What children they had, they told the soldiers, were taken away several days ago.

Searching the wigwams, they found bear and deer skins, blankets, and elk hides, besides other smaller articles which they were obliged to leave behind. What they couldn't carry, they destroyed, breaking kettles into pieces, taking half of the guns, smashing them and throwing the barrels here and there into the stream. They also found several horns and bags of powder, thirty-one belts, and some strings of wampum.

“Tie der captives, Sergeant Niessen,” the captain commanded, so the sergeant ordered the soldiers to tie them up with leather thongs.

Ben Shanks and Cano'pe were among the captives. Nicho'las had escaped with the others. The currents of the kill had slowed down considerably, so the prisoners were led across. The captives sang songs of respect for the dead which they spied on both sides.

When they came across one body, the women gave out a cry and bent down. They raised their hands and their faces to the sky and mourned, raising their voices to the heavens. The dead man was Chief Papequanaehen.

One of the soldiers kicked at the women and told them to get up. Ben yelled and jumped at the man but one of the soldiers standing nearby hit Ben on the head with the butt of his gun, knocking Ben down. All guns were cocked and pointed at the captives. They were thus pacified.

Captain Kregier bivouacked on the far side of the kill until morning. They first cleared away the dead by throwing them into the waters of the kill.

Ben and Cano'pe were silent most of the night, and could not lay on the ground, as they were tied to a tree. Ben's head ached fiercely. Cano'pe pouted, pulled up the grass between his feet with tied hands and chewed on it.

“What will you do, now?” Ben asked Cano'pe as they sat watching the stars.

“I will go home.” He spat out some grass.

“You will live with the Delaware in the land of the Fawn?”

“Yes. I will see if my people are yet alive.” Cano'pe heaved a sigh. “What will you do?”

Ben stared into the darkness. “I will stay in this area, see who I can find. We will fight still. I will be a warrior.”

When morning came, the captain ordered the tearing down of the palisade. Soldiers dug up all the poles, put them into piles and burned them. Then they burned the wigwams and the corn fields. After that, they put the wounded on the horses, carrying one man on a stretcher made of poles and a blanket. The men took turns carrying him.

They made it back to Wiltwyck in three days. The men could have made it in one day, but they had women and prisoners to take care of.

Ben Shanks sat in a dark and smelly jail for two days before someone came and let him out. They didn't let the other prisoners out, just him. He was very puzzled until an extremely short rotund squaw came up to him.

“The women,” she said in a soft monotone voice, “have voted you to be the new chief of the Warranawonkong Esopus.”

Ben straightened his shoulders and firmed his jaw. *How could this happen*? He stared at the little woman.

“You will come this way,” she said, using her forefinger to strike an arc from her shoulder, pointing down the street. “They are waiting for you in the council.” She led the

way to a central building. He walked behind her. “The white man have brought together all the sachems of our people to talk of peace.”

Ben hadn't noticed the pipe she carried. It was long and had an eagle feather attached to it on the tobacco end. “It was Papequanaehen's. It is yours now … to smoke the peace.”

Ben took it with pride. He stepped up to the door, entered, and took his seat.

The talks went on for several days. The Esopus wanted concessions. They wanted to be paid for the loss of life and property. They wanted boundaries which the white man couldn't cross. But what they received was a promise that they could exchange prisoners, and there would be a truce. Also, there was a warning that the Esopus were not to build any more towns or forts. They were to disperse among the more peaceful tribes, but many of the braves that were released lived in the woods in small groups or alone, continuing a hit and run warfare, striking at the whites when it suited them. One of these was Ben Shanks, also known as Longshanks, one of the last chiefs of the Esopus.

CHAPTER NINE

From the trees, Ben had been watching three boys cross a split rail fence. He drew back his bow and took careful aim. Before he let go the arrow, a familiar hand touched his shoulder.

Ben withdrew the arrow with a little resentment and placed it back in its beaded pouch. He turned and beheld Konki by his side. He was about to greet him, but Konki placed a finger to Ben's mouth, shushing him.

After the boys passed, the old man said, “You kill, unprovoked?”

“All white men have provoked me. They have destroyed the Esopus.”

“Come with me, little boy.”

Konki led the way out of the woods.

“I am *not* a little boy! Why have you come?” Ben asked, greatly perturbed.

As they arrived at the fence, Konki turned, leaned on it with his elbows, and faced Ben. “I came to see you. I want to know how you have fared.”

Ben stood stiffly. “I fight the white man until I myself die.”

Konki cocked his head to the side, pointing with his nose. “They didn't look like men to me.”

“They will soon be, and they will hurt my people again.” Ben spit on the ground.

“This is their land now.” The expression on Konki's face was stone serious. “The white settlers will spread from sea to sea and cover the earth. There will be little room for the red man.”

“No!” Ben complained with his fist in the air. “This is my land. I will *never* give it up.”

“Come with me,” Konki said, wrapping his arm around Ben's stiff shoulders.

Ben heard the flapping of wings, and they were suddenly at the sight of an elongated hill cut out by glaciers long ages ago.

I am asleep, and this must be a dream. Ben slapped himself, but he didn't wake up.

Konki laughed. “Have you been eating the crazy weed?”

“No.” Ben looked around him, wondering where the previous landscape had gone.

“Then why do you slap yourself?” Konki nodded his head.

“I am surely asleep, or you have put a spell on me.” Ben turned his head to the left and then to the right. There were only hills and valleys covered with grass and a few saplings and trees. “Where are we?”

“Take in the air.” Konki took a deep breath. Ben followed his example.

“It has the smell of death in it, yet …” been looked around again. He beheld that the wide valley between the hills was empty but for grass. He heard water fowl and the faraway trickle of water. “There is only peace in this valley with no sign of war. There are many lakes and rivers.”

“Take your knife,” Konki said, pointing to Ben's belt, “and dig down into the soil, the length of your hand.”

They both stooped down. Konki watched as Ben cut through the grass and then dug a bit deeper.

“There is a layer of white gravely chalk.” Ben drew his face up into a puzzled expression. “What does it mean?”

Konki stood. Ben followed.

“You have heard the story of an ancient people who lived in these lands and in the Kentuck?” Konki pointed to the southwest.

“I have heard of the great wars, and that our ancestors overcame a wicked people,” Ben said with the palms of his hands out. “But that is all I know.”

“You are treading on those people.” Konki spread his hands out and waved them over the ground.

Ben jumped, and his eyes popped open. “I do not like this place. Let us leave.”

Konki laughed. “Their bones lay under the soil across this whole valley and up the hill a way. You can not escape it.”

Konki took Ben by the arm. “Walk with me.” Konki continued. “They were once a white and a delightsome people, very righteous, keeping the commandments of the Great Creator and his son, the Great White Brother.”

“I have heard of the Great White Buffalo.”

“It is but a symbol.” Konki's face became stern. “What I wanted to show you is this hill. It is the place of the great last battle when they were all destroyed.”

Ben looked at the hill and then the valley. “They could have had little advantage over another army unless they built a fort here.” Ben put his hands on his hips and squinted. “I thought they were wicked. That's why they were destroyed.”

“They rebelled against the Great White Brother. That's why they were destroyed. But they left a record. Come a little this way.”

They walked toward the middle of the hill and up its side. Konki sat upon a boulder. Ben sat beside him, crossing his legs.

“In this area,” continued Konki, “a man called Moroni finished the record of his people. He wrote upon the yellow metal … golden leaves.” Konki reminisced, remembering the little boy that had dug a badger hole for him and had filled it with yellow leaves. “The white man search for this yellow metal. They use it like wampum.” Konki tapped the boulder he sat on with the palm of his hand. “He buried his record here, inside the hill.”

“Why do you tell me?” Ben pointed to himself with his fingers.

“I need your help.” Konki smiled.

“My help?” Ben bowed his head.

Konki turned and peered at Ben.“To guard this record of our people.”

“Our people? I thought it was the record of this wicked people who were destroyed.”

“Do you think that our people were more righteous than they?”

“That is what I was told.” Ben pulled at the grass in front of him.

“It is by the wicked that the wicked are destroyed,” Konki said, displaying the palms of his hands.

“Oh.” Ben stared out across the valley. “How are we to guard this record?”

“We will make a diversion.” Konki waved his hand.

“And fool the white man?”

“Yes, fool the white man.”
Ben crossed his arms. “Fool the white man!” He faced Konki. “What is your plan?”

Konki discussed his plan at length with Ben, mentioning the names of Dutch men who would play a part in the farce. One of the names was Sam. Konki sat silent for a few moments. “We share a common ancestor, this fellow and me.”

THE END

Book Three

THE PIRATE

CHAPTER ONE

Dark heavy clouds hung over the port city of New York, promising a long needed rain. There was no wind, only the black stillness at night and a pitiful promise of light during the day, and day after day the still darkness continued, weighing heavily on the hearts of men. The heavens grieved, but they would shed no tears. Some said it was an evil omen.

The once proud city of New Amsterdam was now under British control; even the city's name had been changed to suit the fancy of an English Lord. Nature reflected the resentment of the Dutch as a night fog rolled in, filling the minds of the citizens. They had no power to rebel, so they drank the rum brought by the British and the ale brewed at home in the taverns along the wharf. They turned their anger against themselves in drunken arguments and fist fights. But if it were a Britisher who became victim of their despair, there was quick retaliation, and bodies of the Dutch would be lined up and left hanging along the wharf to plague the citizens.

One such night a two masted schooner slid up the Hudson and docked against the wharf near the Three Pigeons Tavern. The crew on board stood as stone statues glaring at the dock workers who felt chills go up their spines and their knees weaken as they saw the meanness in those eyes. They seemed not as men, but as some crew of wraiths caught within a curse on a ghostly ship.

One dock worker looked up and saw the skull and cross bones flying on the top most mast and caught his breath. He pointed to it and warned the others, “What see ye now?” He ran into the tavern and warned those that sat at table smoking their long tapered clay pipes, drinking ale and watching a fist fight. They were aroused from their seats, and the fight stopped as they peered out the windows.

All the men on the wharf froze when a gang plank was laid across and a lone man sauntered down it, carrying a large wooden trunk (called a dead man's chest) upon his shoulders. The trunk was heavy enough to make the man bow low to the earth, but struggle he did not. He immediately swaggered toward the tavern. He let down his trunk and dragged it inside.

He asked the proprietor in a low guttural voice, “Ye kot a room up dem sta'rs?”

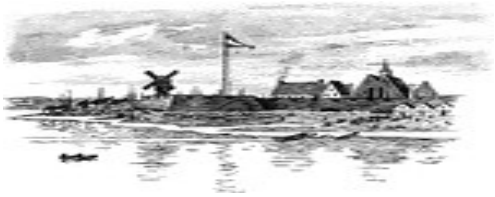
“Naw, naw, master boats'n,” said the man shaking and sweating behind the counter as he faced the dark huge hulk before him. “All der rooms been taken.”

The man turned his face toward the crowd of onlookers who went swiftly back to their tables and bowed their heads. The pirate left, dragging his trunk back outside where he hefted it onto his back. He could hear a clamor in the tavern with everyone talking.

A drunken sailor leaning against the tavern offered, “Dar's a more roomy board down Stone Straat vay.” He pointed to a street ahead reaching out to touch the wharf.

The pirate grunted a “T'ank 'e,” and walked toward Het Houten Paard (Wooden Horse Tavern) on Stone Street.

The sailor called out, “ … between Vhitehall and Brood Streets.”



The stranger trudged down Stone Street until he came to a pale lantern at the doors of the tavern. He let down his trunk with a loud thud which was clearly heard at the wharf. When the shipmates heard it, they took up the gang plank, and the schooner slid back into the fog from whence it came. Chills again ran through the men who saw it leave.

The pirate slammed his thick hand down on the counter and woke the proprietor with a start. He had been leaning his chair against the wall behind. His chair slid to the floor and he knocked his head against the rail above the wainscot. The men seated around tables farther in the tavern, seeing what had happened, laughed. The pirate slowly turned his face toward them. At the sight of him, the laughter stopped. They saw meanness in his eyes and scars across his tanned face. He turned back toward the proprietor.

The old man picked himself off the floor. He was thin and bald on top with overgrown hair above his ears and down to his chin,

“Yah, yah, yah. vill it be a room, den?” he asked, sliding an open ledger book across the counter to the rough looking man who scribbled his name as “Samuel Gunzalez-Duk ” in fancy scroll.

“Das four schillinks now der Britich be here,” and he glanced at the book, “Master' Duke.” He turned and retrieved a key from the wall. “Hmm … also four … room number four, yust up dem sta'rs.”

“Me trunk,” grumbled Samuel as he threw his thumb over his shoulder. “Have ta porter ket it.”

The old man left the front of the room and walked down to the fireplace at the far end where he commenced kicking a man sleeping by the fireplace and cursing at him. He pointed toward the door. The doleful creature looked as if someone had stretched him so that his clothes no longer fit. His coat came up to his elbows, and his knees stuck out of his nickers. His face also looked stretched so that his mouth was a little hole below his long nose. He resembled a crane as he walked towards the door. His arms were folded at his sides, and his long fingers clawed at the air.

The lanky figure went out, took one look at the trunk, turned, and came back through the door, saying, “I … I cannot … cannot,” shaking his head.

The proprietor turned and called out, “Tom! James! Lift yer lazy bodies to der door. Bolly needs extra hands.”

Two heavy set men left their tables and their ale and assisted Bolly with the heavy trunk the newcomer had left outside the door. They struggled as they followed the man up the stairs. He came to the door with the number four painted on it. He stared at the number and then at the key and finally opened the door. He turned to the men holding his trunk in

the air.

“Sit it t'ar,” he pointed the the middle of the room.

Samuel nodded at the men. They left him, whereupon the proprietor came with a lit candle, giving it to his new tenant.

“Der villt be a maid up chortly to fill der bowl.”

Samuel felt his chin. “Needs a chave … a bit scruffy.”

“che'll do das for two pence.” The proprietor hesitated, staring at Samuel.

“Ahh …” Samuel felt for his wallet tied to his waist, opened it and retrieved a coin. “Ten pence.” He handed it to the man who pocketed it with a smile and left.

Samuel sighed and took inventory of his surroundings. There was a bed snug up against the window with the shutters closed. Below the bed was two large square doors opening into a storage space to put luggage and provisions in. To the right was a chest with drawers. A washbowl and pitcher sat on top of it in front of a small mirror. Candle drippings covered the right side of the chest top. He sat his candle down there. Behind him was a coat rack and an oval painting of a stern old man.

Presently, a maid stepped in, the door not having been closed. The lantern she carried painted her as ephemeral. She was slightly chubby; her dark curly hair was pulled up, and she wore an indigo gown that showed most of her chest that wiggled like jelly when she walked. “Mit I soivice ye?”

“Don't need no voman,” Samuel said under his breath. He pointed to the bowl on the table, spying she carried a wooden bucket.

She placed the lantern near the candle and poured water both into the bowl and into the pitcher for in the morning.

“Let me pull down ye cofers.” She blushed and said in a high-pitched voice, “I meant, der bed cofers.” She set the bucket down, mumbling to herself as she pulled the covers back on the bed, fluffing up the pillow. She picked up the bucket and asked, holding the handle with both hands, swayed gently, “Mit I help vit anyt'ink else?”

“Ye are done. Ko.”

She retrieved the lantern, brushing close to the new guest, curtsied, slightly bending her knees, and left.

Samuel closed the door behind her, locked it, paused and sighed. He stepped over to his trunk, took a key from around his neck and unlocked the massive weight. Opening it, he put his hand down through the orderly rolled clothes and small cardboard boxes, feeling for the strong box. It was there. He felt its brass bindings. He stood and sighed again.

“Bury it some vheres up ta rifer,” he reminded himself under his breath. He retrieved his clay pipe and tobacco tin from his coat and set them on the dark side of the chest next to the bowl.

Taking his coat off and hanging it on a hook on the wall, he took his two loaded

pistols from under his wide leather belt, stepped over to the bed and shoved them under his pillow.

He yawned, made two fists, lifted his arms above his head, and stretched. He sat on the bed and pulled off his boots, then the rest of his clothes came off. He carried them over to the wall and hung them next to his coat. Walking back to the bed, he knelt on it and peered out the shutters to the street below. It was empty of people as far as the fog would let him see. He scooted off and went for his pipe. Tamping some tobacco in it from his tin, he lit it from the candle, lay upon the bed, smoked and thought.

A pungent white cloud formed above his head as he blew into the space above him. His imagination formed a picture in the smoke. It appeared to him that he was back in the Caribbean and the Spanish coasts. The wind blew full; it was raining, and the waves tossed the little ship to and fro with waves slapping him in the face. The cannon boomed and rounds of muskets lit up the night sky. A musket ball bounced off his tin vest, putting another dent in it. Their schooner, the *Jack Silver*, came along side *The Lady Mary*, a Spanish merchant vessel, heavy in the water. He boarded with a saber in one hand and a pistol in the other. Some men carried a blade in their mouth so they could handle the ropes. The air was filled with the smell of gunpowder. Cries and yells scraped the insides of his ears. He soaked his blade into many men and shot one in the forehead. During the melee he was unnoticed as he stepped into the captain's cabin. It being empty, he took a quick look around for any valuables. Peering under the bed, he found a small chest of gold. He hid it under his coat and slipped back on board his own vessel. He didn't tell his captain or anyone else. He carried it down into the hold and stored it away in his trunk. No one saw amid all the clamor. He would have been hung on a yardarm if anyone had seen. It was a fond memory. Now, he breathed heavily, lying on his bed, inhaling the biting smoke from his pipe. It relaxed him, and he was able to sleep.

CHAPTER TWO

Morning arrived early. The sun had not come up. Samuel looked out upon the misty fog. It had not abated. A cold chill ran across his back. He was no “land lubber,” but he was through with the sea. His destiny lay now with the land and the people on it. He sighed, sat up, let his feet touch the floor, and rubbed his face. His stickery beard reminded him it was time for a shave. He could do it with his eyes closed. He might as well, because the candle had gone out. It had melted down and left him in the dark. He could do with at least a faggot to light the room, but lurking in the holds of dark ships was his custom.

His spark had also gone out. He didn't want to fight anymore. He was getting old. A half a century had passed since last he suckled at his mother's breast. Oh, his old mammy and pappy, he thought. V*at vould 'e t'ink of me now?*

He got dressed in clean clothes from his trunk and retrieved his bar of soap and razor, taking them over to the wash basin. First, he splashed water over his face and then, with gnarled hands, duncked the soap in the water and worked up a lather, which he rubbed into his face bristles.

As he shaved, he thought of his old home near Lisbon. The settlement rested on a rocky slope overlooking the sea. The cows had enough pasture between the rocks to provide the family with plenty of milk and cheese, and the sea provided them with fish. It was the sea that had attracted him. He had wanted to travel the ocean and see what was on the other side. They called it the New World, and it was full of savages.

The Catholics didn't like the Dutch settlement on their coast. They called them heretics. After Spain had conquered the Netherlands, it was she that had invited them in the first place. They said it would bring peace to the war torn land. But the Portuguese didn't see it that way. Spain was a hard master for the Portuguese to serve and being displaced by the Dutch didn't quell their anger. He was glad to have left the old homestead. The Dutch would have brought prosperity to those ancient shores, but the people wouldn't have it. And the Dutch wouldn't convert to Catholicism after having known the freedom of Protestantism. The Spanish should have known better. So the Dutch had to leave.

Now ta Dootch be conquered akain. But the holdings in the far east wouldn't be so easy to take. The British didn't have the ships nor the manpower. *But if t'ey vould try …*

Shaving done, Samuel splashed his face with water again and looked for a towel. He felt around the side and found one hanging on a rod. He dried his face briskly, dropped the towel on top of the melted candle and slid the soap and razor back in their respective boxes in the trunk.

A light passed along the bottom of the door as if a mouse had carried its little candle across from one end of the doorway to the next. Samuel surmised that someone had walked down the hall. He opened the door quickly and followed the person downstairs. He had not thought during the night to extinguish his candle for use in the morning. He had always had a lantern.

At the bottom of the stairs, Samuel discovered that there *were* lanterns in the building. The room was filled with them. They gave off a warm morning glow as people waited for the sunlight to shine through the windows.

All the tables had been moved together to form a breakfast board. Men from all over the world were gathering around it, sitting down and helping themselves to beans and molasses, which they got from the north, pickled eggs, called “stewed”, bread and cheese, a soup-like mixture of bread with vegetables called “sop,” and small-beer, the kind children would drink.

There were Spaniards and Portuguese, British, Dutch, Afrikaans, French, Germans, and even a Scandinavian, all speaking a conglomeration of languages. It was modern Babylon. Samuel knew why they were there. They were all traders. New Amsterdam had become the trade center of the New World. Maybe that was why the British wanted it. There was more than the political aspect of taking over Dutch settlements because they were aligned with the Spanish. There was profit to be made in taxes.

Looking at them, Samuel could tell who the Dutch were with their wide collars. All the French had long curly hair, and the English had no collars.

As he sat down to eat, first grabbing an ale and guzzling it down, the man next to him, who had forgotten to put on a vest, asked him, “In der night ye came in?”

Samuel glanced over his shoulder as he took two slices of bread and clamped a bit of cheese between them. “Aye. Cam't in der knecht.” He filled his mouth and commenced chewing.

The other man wiped his whiskers after drinking from his mug. “Vat business be ye in?”

Samuel guzzled down more ale. “Donk know jet. Lookink vor some landt,” he growled.

After inhaling some more sop with a great noise, the man said, “Nutter sailor, humph? Settlement up der rifer some. Need stronk hands.”

“No von ist stronker.” Samuel smiled out of the side of his mouth.

The man next to him, who was a bit overweight and balding, looked Samuel up and down. “Clearink der landt.”

“Hmmm …” Samuel rubbed his chin considering. “Who owns der landt?”

“Der Britich do now. Landt office up der straat a stretch.”

After breakfast, Samuel sauntered up the street and found a little office with diamond shaped panes in the windows on both sides of the door. A sign swinging above

the door had the symbol for the *Dutch West India Company.* He looked around. Most of the buildings were made of the same quarried stone as this one, but none of them had a sign said Land Office. He opened the door. A little bell attached to a spring near the top tinkled. He stepped into a dimly lit room with a couple of desks facing him. The men behind them were busy writing in ledgers with quill pens by the light of candles. A map of the area hung on the wall behind them, and shelves of books covered the wall to his right. After waiting a few minutes, the one to his right looked up.

“Yes?” he said impatiently.

“Lant office?” Samuel asked, hardly moving his mouth.

Now the man with a balding head and long white hair near his shoulders appeared apologetic. “Sorry. We do need a new sign. This is no longer under the Dutch, know ye?”

“Ches.” Samuel must have seemed like a giant to these men. He had had to duck in order to enter. It was a wonder he could be any kind of a sailor. There had been little room for him on the ship, sailor's quarters being small. He stood there with his hands behind his back, waiting.

“How can we be of service?” The old Englishman crinked his neck up to see Samuel.

“Vant a tract of landt.”

“Where would this tract be located?” The clerk slipped his pen above the upper crest of his ear.

“Up ta rifer.” He pointed with his thumb over his shoulder in that direction. He smiled, mostly on the left side of his face.

“There are several settlements starting between here and Kingstown. We don't patrol anything above there. The Indians, know ye. They are hostile all the way up to Orange.” The man scratched his nose, adjusted his glasses, then took them off to wipe them on his handkerchief and put them back on again. “You take a hike and look around. Ask the people up there if they are accepting and then come back down here and register. Taxes are all that are required.”

Samuel moved to go, and the clerk said, smiling, “That will be two farthings.”

Samuel took off his purse and fumbled around in it, took out two coins and slapped them onto the table.

“Thank ye.” The clerk picked up the coins, opened a change drawer and dropped them in. He nodded at Samuel. “That will be all.”

Samuel was out the door and didn't hear the last words. Getting a boat was the only thing on his mind.

CHAPTER THREE

The fog had lifted somewhat over the city, but not by the river. There was still enough mist in the air to dampen one's clothes, and the sun was only an ember in the fog. The ship sailing in seemed like a ghost, and men, both on the ship and on the dock, became shadows found only in the imagination. The pirate strode up to the wharf thinking to rent a little slip, but when he saw a schooner loading crates aboard, he went up the plank and asked about a fare.

“Vare vilt ye be puttink in?” he asked the quarterdeck, taking out a couple of gold rounds. “Two schillinks to go up ta rifer.”

The officer of the deck said in response, “As soon as der Britich disempark, ve sail up ta Fort Oranch.”

Samuel held his hips and leaned to one side. “Vilt ye be stoppenk off to der side some vat?”

The officer, dressed in a brown half-coat, turned and yelled, “Cap-tan! Kot a fare!”

As British soldiers danced up from the hold, a voice from below said, “Tent schillink five for a stop. Four schillink all der vay.” An officer whose cap proved him to be the captain came prancing up the stairs after the British. He joined the officer of the deck.

Samuel grumbled, “Pirates!”

The first officer standing by the captain put his face into Samuel's. “Takes time ter stop!”

Samuel shoved his face into the officer's. “Half fare, ant I joomp off!”

The captain laughed and slapped Samuel on the back. “You joomp, an' ti vill pay *you*!”

Captain Savant turned back to the soldiers and spoke to them about the contraband they didn't find. Samuel heard him say, “No guns, no liqueur. Vee clean. Ye sign der papers and ve take off.”

Samuel paid four schillings to the ship's purser sitting at a table behind the officer of the deck. The little old man, who sat stooped over smoking a clay pipe, put the money in a box. He looked up at Samuel, winked, said,“Joomp,” and cackled like a hen.

Samuel turned and went up to the fo'c'sle, the fore part of the ship, to get out of the way of the men shoving off and hauling in the halyards.

In two hours the schooner sailed out of the fog. Samuel leaned against the gunwale watching the bow cut through the placid waters. The landscape was all river and green

foliage. Thick forest lined both banks. There was an occasional brown skinned native peering out, either standing near a tree, walking through the underbrush or stepping into a canoe. All wore feathers in their heads and leather on their skins. Sometimes they were in groups carrying a deer they had shot with an arrow or paddling up or down the river.

A sailor approached Samuel. “Tay harmless. Friends o' the Dootch.”

Samuel turned from the pastoral scene to have his awareness thrust toward the form of a boisterous stocky sailor. His whiskered smile showed missing teeth, and his eyes were small and far apart. The sailor blew his nob of a nose into a brown rag, and stuffed it between his belt and trousers.

Samuel never lost the opportunity to use a man to accomplish his purposes. He pointed at the man with a nod of his chin. “Vant to take a schillink or two?”

“Ten pounds kill a man,” said the sailor as he took his turn leaning backward on the gunwale and resting his elbows on it. “A schillink flattens a hand.” The sailor stuck his hand out for Samuel to place something in it.

Samuel frowned at these sailors, always wanting more money than he was willing to pay. “von pount vor a fafor.” He flipped a pound sterling into the sailor's hand. “Yoost vatch der line I's to trow ofer.” Samuel threw a line overboard on the port side that was tied to a rigging hitch, a wooden knocker jabbed into a hole with the line wrapped in opposite loops on each end of the club.

Samuel grabbed the sailor's throat and said calmly, “Er I cut'er troat ven I clomb back apoart.”

The sailor gulped. As Samuel let his hand relax, the little man smiled at him and said, “T'is a nice day vor a svim.” The sailor smiled in relief, fingering the newly acquired coin which he stashed into his purse. He said, “Me mouf ti's dumb. Silfer ti's me frient.”

Samuel went back to scanning the banks. He knew it would come to him. He was used to leaning on intuition. A friendly spirit, he called it. He waited to see the patch of forest that would be his.

There was a small bend in the river where a tree leaned over, stretching one arm out towards the water to quench its thirst. *There*, he thought. He turned around to see if anyone watched him. None did. He slipped over the side and was gone.

CHAPTER FOUR

The forest near the woods was thick with thorny blackberry bushes. Not interested in the sweets, Samuel spent the next hour pushing through, prying one branch after another off his shirt and pantaloons. He would have gone around except that he couldn't see the end of them. Sometimes he would go under a bush where conies jumped out of his way. He could see the bushes were old because their trunks were as thick as his thighs.

Samuel reached the other side of the blackberries, but he didn't come out. He heard voices, a mother scolding her young daughter as they picked the blackberries, putting them into baskets. Their black hair hung in long braids over many necklaces. They wore leather dresses with beaded leather strips along their arms and around the bottom of their skirts with a lot of bead work about their necks and covering their breasts. Influence of the Dutch, he suspected.

After they passed, he slipped out from underneath the bushes and went in the opposite direction from the females. He made slow progress through the forest, going from one tree to another, hiding under the bushes, watching more natives pass by. He found well defined trails. There must be a village nearby, he thought.

Samuel trekked west, determined to scout the area before he had to leave. He came to a clearing where a spring flowed down an outcrop of rock and fed a small stream on the north side. The water flowed over well worn rocks and underneath the overgrowth, pointing the way back to the river. There was enough room for a cabin and a shed for hogs. The place was perfect. He could tolerate the Indians as long as they behaved themselves.

Bending down to take a drink from the spring, he thought he saw a light out of the corner of his right eye. He turned, but saw nothing. He sat on a boulder and meditated upon what he would do up here so far from the sea he had gotten used to. The sound of the laughing water, the fresh mountain breeze through the foliage, and the twittering of the birds brought peace to his soul. He could breathe deeply here. There would be an end to fighting. He could do a little farming and raise hogs. There was plenty of trees for lumber. He was a ship's carpenter. He could buy tools, maybe cut shingles, become a joiner and make furniture. He would visit the nearby towns and see what was needed.

On his way back, he thought he saw that white light again among the trees and thought it must be another clearing. But when he arrived in the area he saw nothing but another mass of trees. All the trees in the area had several hundred years of growth on them. Underbrush made travel slow. That told him he was near the river. He expected that farther west, the underbrush would thinner. He needed to hurry back to the river and wait for the ship.

Samuel didn't travel but a few yards when he saw that light a third time. Now it was behind him. He got an eerie feeling. All the small hairs on his skin stood on end.

“Ooooo …” he said as he rubbed his hand on the back of his neck.

He went back a ways to investigate. Was it a ghost? He saw the light again through the trees. A lattice of rays of white light fanned out from, going behind and over the leaves and branches within his vision. Walking into a small clearing, he spotted an Indian standing over the same stream at which he had taken a rest. The Indian had a large hooked nose, long white braids, wore a single eagle feather, slanted a little, sticking up from behind his head. He wore an open coat of eagle feathers across his torso, overlaid with a bear-claw necklace, and leathern leggings with leather tassels along the outside seams. His feet were bare. He stood in a column of light and returned Samuel's stare.

Samuel advanced a little closer. He wanted to touch the man to see if he was indeed a ghost. As he put his foot forward the man disappeared. In his place was a large bald eagle swooping down, heading for the water. It flapped its wings furiously, screeching, and flying just above Samuel, heading back up into the sky. Chills went all over Samuel's body.

What omen was this? Was it the spirit of the land? Was he welcomed or warned? He walked back to the river, shivering, and in awe of this new land.

Samuel walked north beyond the blackberry patch and sat on a large boulder to wait for the ship. He examined it. It was carved, looking like some piece of Greek temple that had been thrown down. He had seen such things in picture books. He wasn't interested, though. To him it was simply a seat to sit on.

The sun set in the west. He watched the pink and purple clouds turn dark blue and night settle in. The river water lapped the shore and frogs began croaking their mi-mick, mi-mick songs. Even the frogs had a Dutch accent.

In the distant dark up river, a single small spark blinked as though it had been a star. But it was too low. It was under the horizon.

Within moments, the spark expanded to show several lights approaching very slowly, coming downriver. It was time Samuel waded in.

The pirate swam like a frog under a canopy of millions upon millions of twinkling points of light popping up overhead. There was enough light that he might be seen, but he had taken the precaution of smearing mud on his face.

He could now hear the rushing of the waters as the bow of the ship plowed its way through the river. He waited with only his head bobbing above water. He would have to be fast. He had only one chance to catch the rope he had previously tossed overboard.

The huge bulk of the vessel came close to plunging Samuel to his death. The swiftly passing hull bumped against him, throwing him under for a moment. He caught the rope. It yanked his arm. The speed of the ship threw him into a horizontal position, but he held on and started the climb out of the water and up onto the gunwale. He clamored aboard and landed on the deck as light as a cat.

This he had done time and time again, stealing aboard ships as only a pirate could along with his shipmates to take over, slitting sailors' throats, plunging his saber into an officer's guts, and thus hacking his way across the deck to take down the standard and raise the Jolly Roger.

Samuel had to restrain himself when he saw a sailor approach. He leaned his arms against the gunwale, staring out onto the dark waters reflecting the starry sky.

“Thy face, t'is shiny,” said the sailor, leaning over the gunwale next to Samuel. He peered over the side of the ship. The rope still hung there, dragging at an angle alongside of the ship. “We must tidy up nou …” he said as he grabbed hold of the rope. “We must not leave it dangling.” He pulled up the rope and coiled it at Samuel's feet, holding out his flat hand afterward.

Samuel growled as he untied his purse. “T'is ye last schillink!” Whereupon the sailor pocketed the coin, spit in his hand and offered it to Samuel.

Samuel grabbed the sailor's hand and shook it hard. The sailor simply laughed. “Me name, t'is Sweeney.”

“Gunzales,” grumbled the duke.

“Pleased ta meet chee.” Sweeney grinned his toothless smile. “Hee hee! Partners we be nou …”

Samuel took little thought of making Sweeney a partner in anything. He would forget him as soon as he was on shore.

CHAPTER FIVE

When the skiff rolled up to the wharf in New York, its bow pointing towards the Atlantic, Samuel sauntered down the gangplank, saluting the captain. “Happy sailink to ye Captain.” When his feet were on the wharf, he danced a jig and stretched. The captain peered down at him with eyes pressed into slits of anger. “Huh?” The captain pounded his fist upon the gunwale. “How dit ye ket pack apoart? Ye veren't apoart in Oranche!”

“It vast a smoot voyache, Captain!” He saluted again, laughed and walked away towards Stone Street.

“If'n I see ye akaint, I'll hank ye on ta vart arm!” The captain steamed, took his cap off and threw it on the deck.

The next morning, Samuel spent little time getting to the land office as soon as it opened.

The recorder walked up to the door and unlocked it, and seeing Samuel standing by, asked, “You have new information?” He opened the door and waved his hand to invite Samuel in. “Have you seen a map, perhaps?”

Samuel followed the elderly gentleman inside. “Took a trip up ta rifer. Spied out ter landt.”

The man sat down at his desk, opened his book and then the inkwell, and looked up at Samuel. “That was quick. There must have been a fast boat waiting for ye.”

“Me luck.”

The old gentleman rose, pushing his chair back and pointed to the map above his head. “Can ye point to the plot ye wish to purchase?”

New York 1665

Samuel stepped forward and tapped his finger where he thought he had been. “T'ere.”

“Near Kingstown, I see.” The man turned to a wall of books on his left, ran his finger along them, and said, “Aw-huh.” He took down a book and placed it on his desk. Opening it, he thumbed through the pages until he came to a map laid out in plots. He looked up at Samuel again who had walked back to the front of the desk. “Is this the area?”

Samuel examined the map. He bent over, ran his finger over the river, noticing the sharp bend of the shore, then moved his finger across to the place where a little stream which fed the river came to a head. “T'ere.”

The area which he pointed to had already been surveyed and laid out into townships with many little settlements or forts, mostly along major tributaries. The greater township was Minnessink, covering the area below the Katskill Mountains and containing the fort of Kingstown. The plot Samuel wanted was just southeast of Kingstown. He wondered if he really wanted to live that close to the fort. He must have been only a few rods from it as he trekked through the woods.

The recorder took out a clean piece of paper from the center drawer of his desk and set it neatly next to the open book. He scribbled out a description of the plat which he figured Samuel wanted to buy and rolled a blotter over it then turned the paper around to Samuel, handing him the quill full of ink. As he took the pen, a drop of ink plopped onto the paper.

“Just sign there.” The recorder pointed to a place underneath the description.

Samuel leaned against the desk and signed. The recorder took it, blotted it, and handed it to the copier at the second desk who had just stepped in. He sat down, acquired a second sheet of paper and carefully set the two papers side by side. He opened his inkwell, grabbed his quill, and commenced copying the document slowly, letter by letter. After what seemed like an hour, the copier blotted the copy and handed both papers to the recorder.

“That will be fifty schillings, please.” The recorder held out his hand. A white sleeve covered his coat to protect it from the ink.

“Fifty schillinks?” Samuel asked, feeling his empty purse that was attached to his waist. “I vill half to return vit der money.”

“A cheque will do, sir. What bank do ye apply to?” The recorder cocked his head.

“No bankt. **I** keep ta money,” Samuel said as he thrust his thumb at himself.

“Then,” the recorder said as he slipped the papers into a holding cell on his desk, “we will keep the papers until ye return.” He smiled a fake smile and went back to his work.

Samuel turned toward the door and spat back, “Gut day to ye, Sir.”

The recorder said, “Good day,” without looking up from his papers.

“He won't be back,” the copier said, peering over his wire rimmed spectacles.

Samuel didn't go back to the Het Houten Paard where he kept a room. He went to look for a boat that would take him back up river.

Smittey, with one eye closed in his squashed face, took a long puff from his pipe, blowing the smoke across the table in Sweeney's direction. “Ye say heavy chests hold gold. Ye say dim pirates lookin' ta find a hole ta bury it in. I say dim pirates comin' pack to get der gold.”

Sweeney smiled, showing his rotting teeth. “I say slippery hands remove der gold afore said pirate returns.”

“Hee hee!” Sweeney and Smittey laughed, slapping their dirty hands together, and taking another swig of rum, smiled at each other.

“Proprietor Geraerdy's cousin, Bolly,” Smittey said grinning and squinting, “is ahold of der key.” He rubbed his hands. “Hee hee.”

“To der pirate's bedroom?” Sweeney scratched his bristly chin.

Sweeney nodded his head several times and got to his feet. “Ye shall stand on der sta'rs up at ta top whilst I go fetch Bolly.”

Sweeney, Bolly and Smittey searched Samuel's room. They looked in the chest of drawers, found it empty, in the cabinet under the bed, also empty, and carefully took apart Samuel's heavy trunk after forcing the lock with tiny picks. They found nothing, so they carefully replaced everything as they remembered it to be.

Sweeney grumbled and swore under his breath. “Curse'd lock! Cannot close its.”

“Leave its,” whispered Smittey, sneaking out the door.

Sweeney backed out the door after looking down the hall both ways to make sure he wasn't seen, and closed the door. He scurried down the stairs. Smittey and Bolly had disappeared among the crowd. They had no need to leave because Samuel would not suspect them. But Sweeney he knew, so he ducked out the back door just as the pirate entered the front.

Samuel sauntered up the stairs whistling a happy tune. He had rented a boat with a single sail and a cart which he filled with supplies so as to live in the woods. He would collect his stuff and leave immediately. He didn't plan on going back to the land office to pay taxes he didn't want to pay. He was not a citizen of New York anyway.

Samuel stuck the key into the keyhole and turned it. There was a click.

“Huh?”

Samuel drew back a little. He tried the doorknob. The door wouldn't open. He realized he had just locked the door and had no doubt had locked the door that morning. He turned the key the other way and opened the door carefully. Used to ambushes, he looked behind the door. There was no other place to hide. The light from the window showed an empty room, but also that his trunk had been moved, and upon further examination, he saw the lock had been tampered with.

Samuel slammed the door and launched himself toward the bed. He got there in two steps. Kneeling down, He threw open the right storage door and reached into the far right corner. He pried the boards loose and felt inside the wall. The money chest was still there where he had hidden it.

He grabbed the chest and opened his trunk, slipping the box of gold deep inside. Next, he threw off the mattress, untied the rope that crisscrossed the wooden framework of the bed, sliding it out of its holes. He then wrapped the rope several times around his trunk and secured it with sailor's knots.

The thud, thud, thud of the trunk as Samuel slid it down the stairs with one hand woke the sleepy folk at the tavern tables. Proprietor Geraerdy came running to meet the pirate.

“Leaving so soon?” He asked as he scooted behind the desk.

Samuel dropped the heavy trunk in front of the desk. The loud bang visibly shook the proprietor as he opened the guest book.

Samuel grabbed the man by the neck and dragged him over the desk. He placed the manager's face into his face. “I vill not pay anot'er fart'ing, mit room being ramsackeled an' mit poison robbed.”

Geraerdy's face was turning beet red. He gasped for air. Samuel threw him backward, and the poor man landed on the floor against the wainscot, the place where Samuel had first noticed him.

Samuel pulled his trunk outside and hefted it into a cart he had borrowed. The pony attached to the cart almost flew into the air. The heels of its feet momentarily left the pavement, but as Samuel stepped up onto the cart, its feet were firmly planted on the ground again. Samuel sat on the seat, slapped the pony with a whip, and off they trotted down the street toward the river.

CHAPTER SIX

A lone man, smoking a clay pipe, was seen in a small rig of one sail lazily moving up river. He had his hand on the helm and his eyes on the lay of the water. He passed little farms and settlements. Sometimes he waved at people who noticed the little boat and stopped their work, took a breath, and waved back. Then they returned to tilling the field, leading their cows, or clearing the land.

Samuel watched for the rivulet that was south of fort Kingstown. He wouldn't go back to the land he wanted to buy. He would go beyond the taxes and the townships and the plots he had seen on the maps. It would be close to William Penn's land which was recently given to the German immigrants. The land he wanted was west of Kingstown and was called by the Dutch, Minnessink after the Indians who occupied the land.

The rivulet he was looking for was called the Great Esopus after the Esopus Indians. The owner of the boat said that if he were to follow that river, he would wind up at the main village of the Seneca over in Pennsylvania. The man told him he could also pass by a lot of Delawares. But those who sold him supplies to start a new life had said that the land he was headed for was in the midst of the Minnessink Indians who could not be trusted. They were the ones that helped the Esopus in the war that made the Dutch give up the land to the English. He was also likely to find Waranawankongs and Matanacs.

He didn't care about the natives. He would find a place of his own and live out the rest of his days in peace, away from people. He would drink when he wanted, curse when he wanted, and not have anyone tell him what to do.

According to the map he had seen at the land office, he should make a left turn, and he would be on the Great Esopus. He set his sail and turned the helm and slid up the smaller river. Figuring his speed and direction by peering at the sun through a small sextant, and keeping watch on his compass, Samuel was able to land a few miles southwest of Kingstown where the river started turning south.

He arrived as the sun lay down in the west, turning the forest ablaze with its red and orange fires. He pulled the boat ashore and took out his supplies. He thought a few pack mules at this point would be nice. He had a huge trunk, boxes of food, axes and saws, a plow and household goods to carry across the land. He also had sailcloth and rope from the boat. Having been a ship's carpenter gave him the skills to solve this transportation problem. But tonight, he would use the boat for shelter. He unloaded the boat, turned it on its side, and set it up against all his luggage and provisions which he had separated into two piles. He took out the mast, cut and drove some stakes in their proper places, and covered everything with the sail. Tying it down, he had himself a well defended tent facing the river.

Before the sun rose to the east and glared off the water, Samuel had a fire going. He cooked himself some pork belly and lumps of fry bread in a skillet with a bit of tea on the side boiling in a cup. After he satisfied his appetite and washed everything in the river, he set about making himself a cart.

Dismantling the boat was easy for him. He used the timbers for the sides and bottom of the cart, felled a tree and formed the frame and axial. The wheels were made of thick slats held together with leather and pegs. He used lard for the axial grease. The frame of the cart extended out in front on each side and was held together with a cross bar.

Samuel stood back, put his hands on his hips and grunted. It would do to get him to where he was going.

He buried his trash and loaded the cart. The weight of the baggage thrust the crossbar into the air, but stepping in between the cart and crossbar, he pulled it down. He pushed forward. The first two steps were as hard as lifting the trunk had been, but when he started moving, the inertia kept him going.

Samuel had a good sense of the land. He could tell from memory where Kingstown was and how to avoid it by traveling northwest. He had a forest to pass through with a lot of underbrush. The cart left a path behind made of crushed bushes and small trees that tried to straighten themselves like a drunk man trying to get his balance.

After two weeks of tedious labor, Samuel arrived. His inner sense said this was the right place. He had come upon a hill overlooking a large clearing. The summit would make a good fortress and lookout. He could build his cabin just beyond the outcropping of granite

on the northeast corner of the hill. He would start cutting a winding trail up to the area.

Samuel knew he had been followed by one or more Indians. The forest should have been congested with them, but he knew from what he heard about the natives they liked to keep to themselves unless they wanted to trade. He had all the patience he needed. He just didn't care about them. If they showed up, they showed up. If they didn't, they didn't. It was no mind of his. He expected to be spied out, seeing he was traipsing into someone else's territory.

He thought about it for awhile, rubbing his chin, feeling his two week old beard. He had better take his belongings with him as he forged a path up the hill. He could not leave them at the bottom as he worked. There would be savages poking into his things. So as he chopped down a swath of trees, he pulled his cart up to the next area, cut another swath and pulled his cart up again. He did this until he was half way up the hill.

An arrow swooshed through the air and stuck in a tree to his right with a loud thud. Samuel turned slowly around. If the Indian had wanted to kill him, he thought, he would have done so. This was a warning shot.

Samuel bent down and took some small boulders from the ground and set them under the axial to hold up the cart. He then took a hammer and knocked out the pin holding the wheel on. Grabbing the wheel, he ran down the hill as a shower of arrows flew at him. Turning the wheel this way and that as a shield, he caught a lot of arrows. Some glanced off.

He could see many of the Indians running across the open field to the safety of the woods across the way. He noticed out of the corner of his eye that one Indian had stayed behind. He turned just in time to intercept another arrow with the wheel. Throwing down the wheel, he ran up to the Indian just as the he reached for another arrow. Samuel was upon him and threw him to the ground. The bow hit the tree next to them. The Indian reached for his knife, but Samuel grabbed and lifted him up into the air and shook him violently.

The Indian sat up against the tree looking dazed and drunk. When he fully came to, he jumped up, looked around and saw Samuel sitting on a rock staring at him. Samuel stood and cocked his head. Unexpectedly, the Indian smiled, raised his hand to the square and said, “How!”

“Do ye speak Dootch?” Samuel asked inquisitively as if nothing had happened.

“You brave … strong,” the Indian said, still smiling. “Longshanks like.”

“Ye lift arount here?” Samuel pointed in an arc.

“Village not far.” The Indian pointed to the northwest beyond the hill. “Over there.” He pointed toward Samuel with the palm of his hand down. “You come. My people treat you nice.”

“Anot'er day. Ye see I am workink ter landt. Heatink to der top.” Samuel pointed to the work he was doing in clearing the land for a trail, grunted, and then pointed to the top of the hill.

The Indian cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled a repeating trill. The Indians that were with him walked slowly back across the clearing.

“We help cut down trees.” He smiled again. “No big trees. They be spirits.”

Samuel spent the rest of the day with Indians at his side cutting down trees or pulling up small ones and pulling out all the brush in between to make a road up to the top. When they were done, the Indians took turns pulling up the cart as though it were a game, seeing who was the strongest. They finally decided three of them could pull it up the last quarter of the way while others pushed behind.

Then Longshanks confronted Samuel with an open hand. Samuel instinctively knew what he wanted.

“Ye vant to be paid.” Samuel sighed. “V'I hafen't no money. No schillinks.”

The Indians all gathered at Samuel's cart and were trying to tear the tarp off. Samuel

growled at them and shooed them away.

Longshanks stood next to Samuel and asked, “What you got? We want gift.” His smile beamed.

Samuel growled again but threw the tarp off. “Ye see vat I got.” He wouldn't let them rummage around in his things, so he started handing out some tins of food, bottles of whiskey, a knife, a hand ax he gave to Longshanks, a few odds and ends from the boat, and a shovel. “Now v'I got to go to Kingston ant get more supplies,” he grumbled.

After the Indians left, he saw that one of them remained. It was Longshanks. He smiled and said, “Longshanks like you. You brave and much strong.”

“Vill ye haft bread wif me?” Samuel didn't want companionship, but the Indian wouldn't leave, so he had to be polite and offer him a meal.

Longshanks left and returned with a venison stew and cornbread. Samuel had already set up camp and thought the Indian hadn't wanted anything, so he had just settled down with some tea and hard tack which the Indians hadn't wanted when he saw the Indian again. Instead of an arrow pointing at him, it was a bowl made of clay.

Night turned into a black fog that blinded men's eyes. There was a glow about the small campfire where Longshanks lay asleep, but beyond two yards was outer darkness. Samuel imagined himself walking underneath tar in which walked slimy souls of the damned. They oozed around him trying to snatch the small chest of gold from his hands.

He lay the chest on the ground next to his foot. He could feel the pressure of it on the side of his boot. That way he could keep track of it and not lose it. He removed the sod with his shovel and dug a hole quietly until it was as deep as the length of his arm. He placed the chest of gold into the bottom of the hole and carefully covered it up, not wanting to wake the Indian. He replaced the sod so as to make the hole disappear.

Longshanks stood in the darkness looking at him. He stood beside another Indian with white hair who wore a vest covered in eagle feathers. As Samuel sneaked back to the campfire, chills ran over his back and down his arms as he passed the two Indians who remained unnoticed. When he reached the camp, he saw that Longshanks had gone. He thought nothing of it for awhile, thinking that he simply went back to his people, but after having put more wood on the fire and laying down, getting himself comfortable on the canvas pallet, he jumped up and ran back to the place of burial. He felt around on the ground. It had not been disturbed.

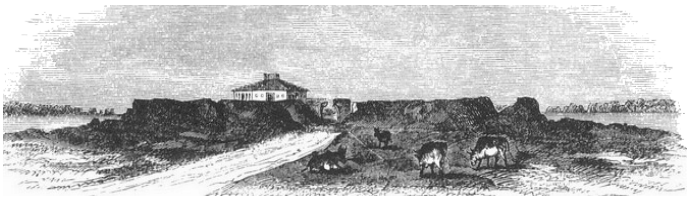
He would build his cabin on top of the gold. Then it would be safe.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Samuel's log cabin had been built overnight. He told Longshanks it was only temporary. He would build a proper house later. After securing all his luggage inside, he headed for Kingstown for supplies. His cart had held up better than he had expected, so he pulled it along behind him. Longshanks walked next to the cart and was quite talkative.

“I show you way to Kingstown. I protect you from robbers. There is bear over behind tree. Don't bother him. Your cart make too much noise. It too wide for path. We go this way. My village be that way. Many brothers in these woods. Don't bother them. They take bear's coat for winter. Plenty of squirrel, rabbit. Brains tan skin. Plenty porcupine. Good for make symbol on vest. Good for sew clothes. Many berries. We eat corn. We grow much corn. Berries good with corn mush. Many turkey. Make good soup …”

Samuel didn't see any other Indian or bear or any large animal. But he did hear something rummaging around in the woods. He did see a lot of deer, conies, and squirrel. Whenever they saw deer, Longshanks would talk of their many uses. “Antlers for knife, spear, tools, medicine. Skin for shirt, leggings. Entrails for medicine. Many uses, many uses.” He would repeat himself every time they saw a deer.



Kingstown sat on a small knoll and was surrounded by a log palisade. One corner supported a turret or lookout to spy out the surrounding countryside. It had a swinging gate that was left open during the day. As Samuel rolled his cart in, he could see two rows of houses with the main street stretched out before him so he could see the other end after about eight buildings. The trading post/tavern, barn, and blacksmith were near the gate. He pulled up to the trading post and parked his cart.

Samuel noticed his environment and contemplated the people. Men and women moved in and out of the trading post with packages, sacks of flour and other goods. Rough men dressed as Indians brought in their beaver pelts. There were Negros and Indians carrying out heavy sacks and wooden boxes to put in the wagons. Children ran around screaming and laughing. Horses were tied to stakes and oxen to wagons. There was considerable traffic up and down the street. Indians lounged in front of the businesses, and there was a trickle of traffic in and out of the fort of people, Indians, horses and wagons. The place smelled of fresh manure outside, but he could smell the distinct odor of a distillery inside. He had come on market day. It must have been instinctual, for he also had come to trade.

An old man sauntered up to him, looking at the cart and then at him. “Dot cart or der boat?” he chuckled, holding his chin with his thumb and forefinger.

“Best I do,” Samuel grumbled.

An elderly woman came out of the trading post with a black servant carrying several packages in his arms. “Manuel! Do not bot'er ter mahn.”

The old man joined his wife, throwing his thumb over his shoulder. “It twer a boat. Now a cart. Hump!” He chuckled again and looked back for an instant then helped his wife onto their wagon.

Samuel sniffed hard and held his breath to control his emotions. He stared hard at the elderly couple as their wagon passed by on their way out. *T'is me pappy and mammy.* They hadn't recognized him.

He was stunned.

What were they doing here? He had left them in Portugal. He knew they would eventually move, probably go back to Holland. They were too old to be moving into the frontier. Even New York he wouldn't call civilization. Not like Europe.

He breathed heavily, bringing the back of his hand up to his mouth. He had faced hardened men in battle, but how could he face his parents? He wasn't the gentle boy that had left them to seek adventure and fortune. That he had had up to his neck … in blood.

Maybe it was a mistake to settle in this area. He should travel further west and live with the Indians.

Longshanks had disappeared. Samuel found him arguing with the tavern owner who was tending bar.

“Give Longshanks drink. Black liqueur. He pay for'em.” Longshanks pointed to Samuel.

The man behind the bar, bald with a full black beard and too much weight around the belly was dressed in a white shirt and long apron. Washing the bar down with a wet rag, he stared at Samuel who crossed over to the bar.

Samuel slapped onto the counter a gold round that had become small by trading post owners or bar tenders carving off the edges. “Tent dollar Spanich.”

The bartender stopped and noticed the gold. “Ye can't efen ket drunk on dot! Too small.”

“Not tall of dot! Koes to surpplies ter lift on. Lifin' in der woods.” Samuel jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

“Not tent dollars now,” the bartender laughed.

“Vast ven I had it.”

Longshanks commanded, “Whiskey!”

Samuel turned to him and slammed his hand on the bar. “Kif us der hardest.” He knew Longshanks was trying to stop a perfectly good argument. But the Indian was right. He would forget it and have a drink with him.

The tavern owner served the drinks in small ceramic beakers and obtained a list from

Samuel of what supplies to retrieve from the stores.

As Samuel drank, his heart filled with dark foreboding, thinking of his parents. His big question was, would they accept him? Would they even believe him? He hadn't expected to ever see them again. It would have been a lonely peaceful life without any thought of them. Now, that's all he could think of.

Samuel felt someone's eyes drilling into his brain. He turned. It was Longshanks staring at him. Samuel frowned and stared back. “Vat is dis?” he asked.

“You heap strong. Why so sad?”

That was the point wasn't it? Would he be strong inside enough to face his parents. He had to be. He looked at the beaker held by his fingers. This wasn't the strength he needed. It had to come from inside himself.

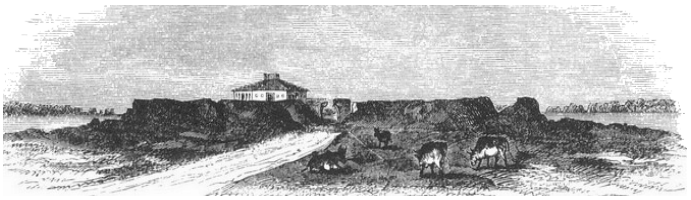
“Ches!” He said as he put the beaker down and moved away from the bar. “Heap stronk.”

Samuel noticed his supplies in a pile near the door. He paid the tavern owner another gold piece and a few schillings and turned to Longshanks. “Comp. Ve ko. Help load der cart.”

As Samuel and Longshanks loaded the cart, Samuel almost ran over a girl with his big feet. He said, “Parton, Ma'am,” and tipped his hat. The man with her, probably her father, growled and pulled her away.

“Hump!” was all the response Samuel could come up with. He went back to loading, but every time he came out of the door of the tavern, he caught himself looking for the girl. She was handsome to be sure, but what did an old man like him need of a young girl?

After loading the cart, they were out of the gate and headed back to the hillside overlooking Samuel's valley. Now, he couldn't stop thinking of the girl. He hated it. Why couldn't God just leave him alone?



Samuel felt comfortable with Longshanks. He hadn't expected to ever have a friend, and he didn't know if he could call this Indian in those terms. He didn't know what to do with him or what to think of him. Maybe he was a friend like a dog would be a friend. Maybe that was it. He followed him around like a dog, but he wasn't quite a pet, but not quite a friend either. Maybe companion would be the word, a comrade in arms.

Longshanks continued to describe the country they walked through and the things in it and what to do with them. Halfway home, Samuel stopped and grunted, “I taught Indiants be silent!”

Longshanks stopped, looked at Samuel, smiled broadly, and slapping him on the back

said, “Longshanks like Sam!”

Samuel had told Longshanks his name was Samuel, but he seemed to not understand and called him Sam instead. He said that his brother-in-law's sister had married a Sam from another village down south where he, Longshanks, had originally come from. Sam had asked if he were Minnessink or Esopus, but Longshanks said he was Delaware.

“Vy are ye lifink wif der Minnessink tin?” Sam had asked.

“Longshanks have many friends,” he had told him.

So, Samuel had his name shortened to Sam, but Longshanks would not have his own name shortened, such as Sam calling him Long.

After the time-consuming trek home, Sam and Longshanks put things away and drank themselves to sleep. The next day would be a new life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

There was great excitement in Kingston. Building stone was found two miles northeast of the settlement among “many many hills,” as the Indians called the large outcroppings. The large rocks could be seen from a roundout where one could overlook the trees. Most everyone was anxious to have their houses made of stone which would give them greater protection from the Indians, if ever another uprising started. The town would look more civilized. This frontier outpost had started as a roundout, a round or octagonal shaped fort, several of which were placed along the old road for protecting travelers going down to the Delaware.

When Samuel first arrived in Kingston, some of the houses had already been replaced by the gray brown limestone. The city fathers had to manage the buying and selling, for government ownership of the land had not yet been given up. Little by little, though, the land was sold to private entrepreneurs, and the quarries were a good source of revenue, for the English loved to find different kinds of things to tax. Eventually, there was even a tax on windows because the glass had to be imported from across the Atlantic.

Then there was the argument of the purpose of the palisade around the town. It was too small for the population and would not be practical, or it wouldn't be a defense for those building homes outside the town. Some said to leave it there, for everyone could come into the palisade during an Indian attack. Some said to expand it to include the new town. Others argued that because of the new stone houses, a palisade would be out dated and should be torn down.

“Af course,” Samuel said to his brother Manuel, “a stone hoose wif class vindows can be kutted bit fire.” He sat on a padded chair, smoking his clay pipe, in the parlor of his parents' new house.

“Ye alvays hat a gloomy vision, Sam.” Manuel puffed on his pipe and blew smoke rings that matched the elegance of his high boots, fluted sleeves and vest shaped like armor. His thick black hair was as long as his beard, and his black eyes pierced a person's pride.

“Mit days at sea, I tell ye,” Samuel said, tamping his pipe, “kave t'e mahn gray hair. But he do not keep it vitout peerink t'rough der fog.” He shook his head for emphasis.

Their papa sat in a third chair as they warmed themselves by the fireplace. Samuel had his feet on the hearth, while Manuel had one leg crossed over the other. Papa Gunzales had both feet on the floor. Mama served after dinner tea and apple tarts in her blue dress with a wide lace collar and full length apron.

“Mit hoose been outside der palisate, Sam.” Papa Gunzales pointed with his pipe in the general direction of the main part of town. “Vill ve built a vall arount it or no? Vill ve built a new town, t'en? Ve do or don't. Der decision in der town has to be mate. I vote to protect mit home.”

“Papa,” Manuel smiled. “If t'er be ant uprisink, all us folk be too many, ant our

muskets blow t'em to Kingdom Comp.”

This one family, as with most families in and around Kingston, argued the fate of the town on a long winter's night, waiting for Sinter Klaus or the Indians to come. In arguing the point Samuel became reacquainted with his family.

“Mit been in many a fight,” Samuel said sternly, gripping the stem of his pipe with his teeth. “Ye cannot depent on palisates. T'ey burnt 'em down. Can be! Stone roundout best defense.” Samuel nodded his head.

“Dim kint of fortress,” Manuel nodded back, “Kingston cannot afort.”

“True, true,” Papa Gunzales confirmed. “Best pay fer powder.”

Mama, having washed the dishes and put away all signs of dinner, sat in her plush chair near Papa. “Men folk, alvays argue politics. Vhat I vant to know is mit hoose safe. Cannot I fight off der Injuns? No. Ye fight off der Injuns. No hidink behint a vall.” She shook her finger at them. “Be a mahn! I say.”

Mama had never allowed her men to be shamefaced or cowards. Nor did she let them be lazy except just after supper or just before bedtime.

Helena and Rebecca came through the front door, letting in a hurricane of snow, from a merry time throwing snowballs and sledding.

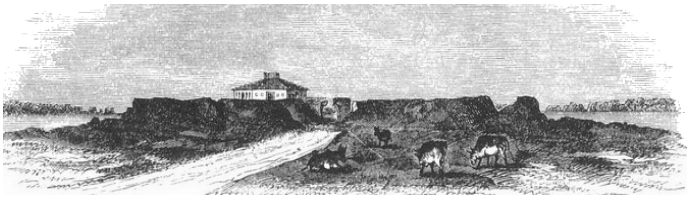
Papa shouted as he turned 'round. “Mit bloot ist upon me; t'e duval take ye!”

Upon shedding their furs, the girls, half grown now, surrounded their papa and kissed his cheeks. “Cannot we put our choes out now, Papa? Cannot we put our choes out?”

Mama tried to shew them away. “Ko! Ko! Sinter Claus will brink you sticks tonight! Ye put yer choes by yer bet. Now go. Ye stayet up too late!”

They hugged their mother and kissed their father and brothers, saying, “Goot nickt brooders!” and ran up the stairs, their feet jostling their petticoats.

Samuel watched them ascend and sighed, “Fat'er Davidts hast a daughter, Rebecca. Ist it not so?” He wistfully thought of family for himself as he puffed on his pipe.



One of the arguments which came up in Kingston was whether or not to allow another trade shop into the community, one without a brewery. This idea was proposed by the upstanding people of the community. Then there were others, not so upstanding, demanding more breweries and ale houses to be established. The arguments were taken to the town council, and the owner of the original trade trading post who had a bar for liqueurs in the back was the main objector. He stood by the majority for the new shop, but everyone knew what his objection was. He wanted to protect his own enterprise. One incident was the impetus of the controversy.

Samuel was not the only pirate that took to the land. There was one instigator of riots and riotous living, Sweeney McLean who continually stirred up trouble with his uncouth communications with the local citizenry. His partner in crime, Smittey Dougal, was right behind him, and as usual, drunk.

Rebecca Davidts, the most beautiful girl in all of Kingston, had a Roman nose, sad puppy dog eyes, and long curly locks. Her lips were firm, but when she smiled, she glowed like a beautiful angel. She had perfectly white teeth, all lined up in a row. None were rotten or crooked. That's what Samuel admired.

She was the focus of the trouble the day she came into the shop to buy flour and fabric for a new dress, along with other accoutrements.

Sweeney took a swig of ale and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. In doing so, he caught sight of an angelic woman coming through the door. The sunlight hit Rebecca just right to make her whole body shine. Sweeney rose and placed his hand on his chest. “Me heart has been torn.”

“Ye canno' bed t'e lady!” Smittey placed his hand on his friend's shoulder and stared at the light coming through the door.

“I will mend me ways.” He strode forth, leaving his friend staggering behind.

“Mister Van Haagenstrought,” Rebecca called, placing her pink parasol on the counter.

As the proprietor came forward and walked behind the counter, Sweeney approached the girl and bowed, swinging his hat through the air.

“Preety girl,” he said, approaching stealthily. He held his hat to his heart. “I pray ye good day.”

“Get avay, Sveeney,” Van Haagenstrought growled. Then turning to Rebecca, he said, “Goot day Miss. Mit I help ye t'is day?”

“I voult like …” She didn't get to finish her sentence when Sweeney twirled her around.

“Comp wit' me fer a stroll. Ta sun, t'is shining bright. Ter birds be singing.”

Samuel had just walked through the gates of the town. When he entered with Longshanks and saw a man accosting the girl he had in mind for a wife, his actions were swift. He grabbed Sweeney by the collar and shoved him out the door onto the street. Longshanks then threatened him with his tomahawk.

Father Davidts saw the scuffle in the trading post from the wagon and his daughter right in the middle of it. He jumped down and ran to rescue Rebecca. Entering, he saw his daughter's hand in the hand of a ruffian. He didn't know Samuel.

“Villt ye be safe now?” Samuel was saying.

Father Davidts grabbed his daughter. Surprised, Samuel drew his fist back. Rebecca covered her father with her body and screamed. “He ist mit papa!”

Samuel, taken aback, grabbed his own fist and slightly bowed. “Forgive ant old fool.”

Angered, Father Davidts dragged Rebecca by the arm and out to their wagon.

Samuel stepped out the door slightly, holding his hat in his hands. Shyly he asked, “Mit I comp ant visit?” as the wagon tore away.

Rebecca barked, “Animal!”

He turned back to face Longshanks. “Dot did not go vell, did it?”

“You like girl?” Longshanks asked, sliding his tomahawk back under his belt.

“Yah. Fetty much, I do.” Samuel stared at the wagon leaving the town. “I vant her for to marry.”

“Longshanks have many wives,” the Indian smiled. “You can have Little Turtle. She sweet like candy.”

Samuel lay his hand on his friend's shoulder and smiled. “Let us trade for supplies.”

They turned and went back into the general trading post.

Sweeney gave a hard look at the two as he stood across the street rubbing his chin. Then a light dawned in his little brain. *T'is ta pirate fer sure we are looken fer.* He grinned.

After Samuel and Longshanks had packed the wagon full and paid the proprietor, they left the town with two rascals trailing behind them wondering just where they lived.

That night around a campfire under the stars, Sweeney and Smittey lay on the ground slightly drunk and dreaming of the gold they would find, when someday, the pirate and his Indian friend would be gone from their cabin. They would then go in and search the place and take whatever they wanted.

“Surely,” Sweeney said with an almost toothless smile, “T'at is where t'e gold went. T'at is what we found was gone. Remember? In t'a tavern up t'em sta'rs. We did search and search and found not a little pebble nor a coin. T'is in ter cabin fer sure.”

“Surely t'is,” Smittey agreed. “Surely t'is.”

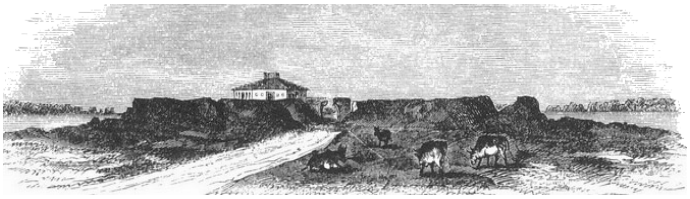
Deep into their cups, they didn't see the two Indians staring at them, watching them, and pondering the significance of these two renegades.

One stood tall with a single feather sticking straight up behind his head. It was held in place by a leather band around his head. He held a blanket around him with a peace pipe in his grip. He was an ancient man. He went by the name of Konki. He turned to his friend Longshanks. “And so it begins.”

“Yes,” Longshanks agreed. “And so it begins. We will protect the book made of gold. We will get people to look for Samuel's gold instead.”

“Misdirection.” Konki smiled in the starlight. His eye glistened as he winked.

“Yes,” Longshanks chuckled. “The white man will be misled and never find it.”



It was as though fate had pulled these two together. Every time Samuel and Longshanks came to the trading post, there was Rebecca and her father. Samuel would bow, taking off his hat, and say, “Ma'am, Sir,” and Rebecca would stick her nose into the air and walk past him. This happened several times in one year.

Then one day she became so exasperated at seeing Samuel in the trading post she exclaimed, “Papa! Can you not do somet'ink? Mit trouble ist too heavy.” She lifted her skirts and hurried out to the wagon. “I cannot trate vit'out dot mahn beink in me vay!”

Father Davidts stared at Samuel, and seeing the perplexed look on his face, took a puff from his pipe, nodded, and went out to talk to his daughter.

“Daughter.” He put one foot on the wagon step, resting his elbow on his knee. He took his pipe from his mouth and pointed it at her. “It hast comp to me attention dot ye must invite t'is fellow to dinner.”

“Papa!” She covered her face so no one would see her tears, then she wiped her eyes with her kerchief and blew her nose. Without looking at him she said, “Das not vhat I meant.”

Father Davidts stood, stashing his pipe into his pocket. “T'is done. I will load der supplies.”

Rebecca bravely descended from the wagon and from her pride. She walked over to Samuel who stood at the door of the shop. With bowed head, she said, “Please comp to dinner.”

“Vhat?” Samuel couldn't quite hear.

Rebecca looked him straight in the face and yelled, “Please comp to dinner!” She stomped away back to the wagon. She jumped on, tearing her skirt and screamed. Then she turned herself halfway around so her face couldn't be seen.

Samuel took his clay pipe, filled it with tobacco, tamped it down and lit it from a coal. S*he be very obedient, that girl.*

Father Davidts handed Samuel a fifty pound bag of flour, saying, “Give a mahn a hand t'en,” whereupon Samuel started loading his future father-in-law's wagon.

Arrangements with Father Davidts were made as to when and where dinner would be.

Samuel found Longshanks at the bar in back of the shop. “Stayink in ter town t'is nickt.”

Longshanks turned, downed a whiskey, and said, “Longshanks find three friends. We go off into the woods.”

With his hands on the bar, ready to push himself away, Samuel said, “So be it. I go back in ter mornink.”

Samuel then loaded his supplies and took the wagon to a barn where he paid the care taker to look after his wagon and provisions. The man covered everything with a tarp of sailcloth and assured Samuel everything would be kept tight.

Samuel spent the rest of the day bowling and won several pound sterling. He had come across a green where the game was being played. A group of men stood around as a man, with a ball a little larger than his fist, aimed his eyes onto six squat pins, rolled his arm back, and throwing his arm forward, let the ball go at ground level. Then each man took his turn knocking down the pins and setting them up again. As Samuel approached, someone handed him a ball and dared him to knock all the pins down at once. Samuel surprised everyone as he made a strike. He was encourage to play against the champion of the town so they could lay down bets. Samuel won most of the games.

That night, he slowly made his way to his appointment with Rebecca and her family. His nervous stomach growled all the way there.

The Davidts' home, one of the new brownstone houses within the palisade, had been built from one of the original cabins when Kingston barely had a name. Father Davidts had lived in Kingston long enough that he was now on the city council, and most everyone sought for his opinions. People would stop him on the street and ask about zoning their property, if they should buy this plot or that, what the law said about roofing or windows, or if they could park their wagon in the street or not. The list went on. He would always tell them, “T'e council meets in sevent days.”

Father Davidts owned farmland on the outskirts of town like everyone else, but his was a size larger than most, so he was quite wealthy. He had two sons Joris and Jan who worked the farm with their sons.

When Samuel arrived at the Davidts' home the entire family was there. The brothers especially wanted to get a look at this new suitor. Would Rebecca run him out also? That is what they were discussing when a knock came at the door.

Jan, a burly, muscled giant went to the door asking, “Yah?”

Samuel took off his hat and crinkled it against his chest. “I comp to call on Rebecca.”

Jan offered his hand, and with a broad smile, said “Welcome” in Dutch. They shook hands and Jan ushered him into the dining room where a multitude sat around a very long table. Rebecca sat at the far end. Jan seated him at the only empty chair, the opposite end so he could stare at his soon to be betrothed.

CHAPTER NINE

The old church was a barn in which people met only for weddings and baptisms. Religious meetings were held in the home with the father acting as minister. They read the scriptures, prayed, and sang hymns. There was no one ordained to preach the Gospel in Kingston, but there were councilors and people who visited the sick, called krank-besoeckers, traveling from town to town. Ministers showed up occasionally two or three times a year to marry couples and baptize infants or anyone who wanted to confirm their faith.

There was a rumor that a minister was coming as soon as a proper church was built, so people took up a collection to build one at every gathering in the barn. When Samuel was courting Rebecca, a wooden church was being constructed, but it wouldn't be finished for another year. There were arguments among the fourteen Dutch families in town about the grade of lumber, what shape the church should be, how to collect the funds, the distribution of the funds, the labor, who should do the carpentry, whether or not the workers were sinners, and the management of the labor.

Samuel approached the councilor in charge of the construction at the building site, “Mit been a chip's carpenter twenty years.”

“Ye been a pirate fer twenty years, I say,” the councilor said with his hands on his hips and nose in Samuel's face.

“Beent a seaman.” Samuel raised his nose. Then he put his face down into the councilor's. “Best carpenter ye kot!”

“Kot carpenters.” The councilor waved his palm at those working on the foundation. “Need chinkles. You can cut chinkles?” He stared Samuel in the face. Their noses almost touched. The councilor turned, spat tobacco, and confronted Samuel again.

Samuel smiled, put his hands on his hips, and spread his chest like a cock. “Best chinkle cutter arount.”

The two grabbed each others hands. “Ye haf ter chob, by der kads, indeet,” the councilor swore. “Comp up wif der chinkles in a mont' ant ve do business.”

That was how Samuel became the local supplier of shingles. It became a thriving business for him. On the weekends though, he visited his beloved Rebecca. Her father read the scriptures, the family prayed and then sang hymns. Afterward, the family talked together as they sat around the hearth.

“How ist t'er business comink alonk?” Father Davidts asked, puffing on his long clay pipe.

“Cuttink der trees needed,” Samuel said after having blown puffs of smoke through Jan's smoke rings. “Choppink der branches off. Kot logs plenty now.”

“Church tis near finiched,” Joris cut in. “Ye and Rebecca soon to be marriet.” He took

a deep drag on his pipe and let it out slowly. His eyes had a look of satisfaction.

Rebecca served a plate of sweet buns all around, passing the plate from one man to the other. “Von't be marriet t'ere. Be marriet in New Ampsterdam.”

Father Davidts touched her blue cotton dress as she passed. “New Yoik now, little kiddy.”

Rebecca turned around to face her father, holding a nearly empty silver tray. She stomped. “I vont to be marrit in der bik church downt der riffer.”

“Hmmm,” Father Davidt intoned.

Jan talked to the air being filled with smoke. “Vhy built a church den, vhen overyone goink to der bik church?”

“Vill ve vait?” Samuel spoke with his pipe making clacking sounds against his teeth. “Church almost finiched. Not too small.”

Rebecca stared at him for a moment. “In ta bik church or not at all.” Then she walked away with a snort and her nose in the air.

Samuel said under his breath, “How ve goink to live toket'er … be compatible?”

“Vhat?” Father Davidts asked with his hand to his ear.

“Vy not ve go down to New Yoik?” Samuel asked with his palm up. “Tis only a small trip down ter riffer.”

So it was decided they would all go to New York City. It took a couple of months to make ready. There was a dress to be made, invitations to be sent, schedules to be checked, and food to be planned and made. There were friends and family in Fort Orange, there in Kingston, and in New York that had to be consulted so they could choose a wedding day. Rebecca wanted to have as many people at her wedding as possible. She wanted to show off.

Ship listings were checked at Van Haagenstrought's store and with the advice gathered from others up and down the river a day for traveling was set. On the day a ship was scheduled to arrive, they took wagons to the wharf. The distance was only about five miles. The original settlement had been by the Hudson River, but Governor Peter Stuyvesant ordered the colonists to move to higher ground and build a palisade around the settlement which they called Wiltwyck. The name was changed to Kingston after the British took over to honor Governor Lovelace's mother whose family seat in England was of that name.

Kingston Wharf sat on the north side of Roundout Creek. The original roundout was turned into a store and tavern on the ground floor with rooms and warehouse above. There were out buildings which consisted of a barn, blacksmith shop, other storage bins, and some

old barracks for workers.

When the wagons arrived, they sighted a schooner moored, unloading and taking on stores. The Gunzales, Cool and, Andriesen families had accompanied the Davidts. Arrangements were made at the barn to keep the wagons and horses until their return. Samuel bought passage for everyone, but he couldn't convince the captain to take on all the luggage the family required. This started some arguments among the men and tears from the women.

It was explained to the captain that “Ve are goink to a veddink. Ve need dis stuff. D'ey be fillt wif plates ant sliver, meats ant cakes … dresses ant coats for der veddink.”

The captain then exclaimed, “Me stores be fillt to der brim. No room fer it all.”

If Samuel had his way, he would have shook the captain, but he knew that if he even touched him, he would have three or four pistols pointed at his head. So he said, “If ye vill, Captain, ve vill tie der rest of der lukache against der kunvale.”

The Captain grabbed his hips and pushed his face forward.“Unbalance der ship?”

“Bot' sides!” Samuel shot back.

Captain Savant whispered, “If it vere just yoiself, I voult slit der t'roat and feet ye to der fich.”

This was the same ship Samuel had come up the river on when he was spying out the land, so the captain and crew knew him.

Samuel offered his hand. “Ve brink it allt aboart t'en?”

The captain growled and shook hands with Samuel and then ordered, “Brink it aboart!”

The three families cheered, waited for the crew to pick up their baggage, carry it aboard, and then followed up the gangplank.

The mood was cheerful, both among the passengers and the crew who expressed their love for weddings.

“I be at me parents' vedding. 'Twas bootiful.”

“Me sister just married.”

“Ter dancing ant liquer. Das vat I like.”

“Makes me teary-eyed to see der brite valking down der aisle.”

Sailing down the Hudson was smooth, and the atmosphere was delightful. Father Davidts brought out his violin, and some of the sailors brought out a flute and a drum. There was lively music, so everyone danced. Among the men, a little liquor was passed around to make everyone cheery. The captain went into his cabin and smiled. He hummed the tune

that was being played and after chiding himself, he mumbled, “Let dim be happy fer a chanche.”

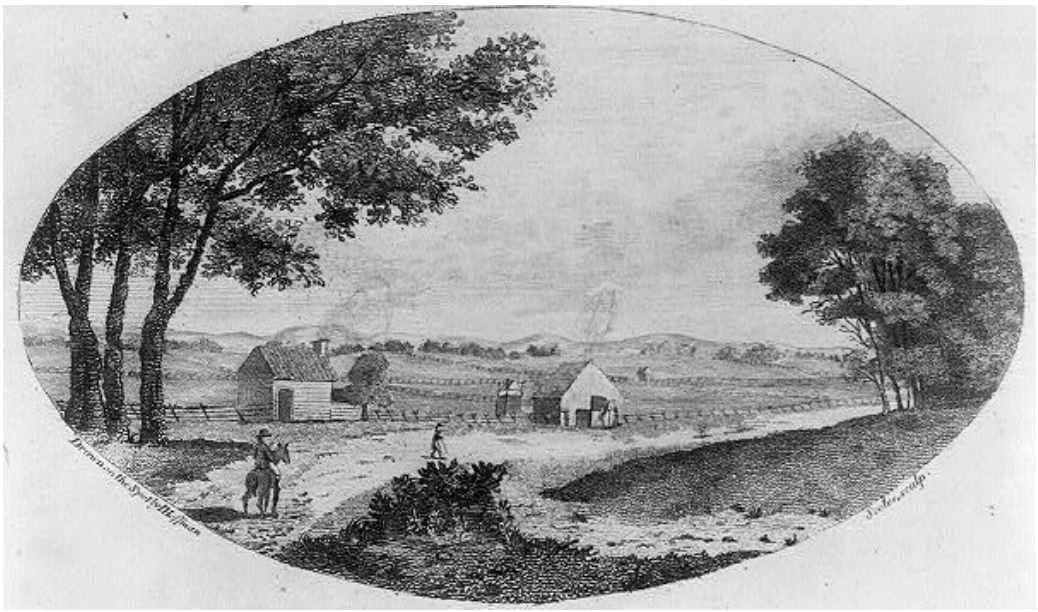
While Mama Gunzales was busy talking with Rebecca and her mother along with the other women, sounding like the cackle of hens, everyone talking at once, Samuel, Father Gunzales and Manuel stopped dancing to lean against the gunwale and lite up their pipes.

Father Gunzales spoke first. “Aye, der music ist bootiful.” He took a puff from his pipe, and blew it out along with the words, “Ye vill marry into a goot family. Ven dare be music, as bootiful as das, t'is a goot family.”

“Yea, I agree,” Manuel said. “Goot music t'is fine fer der soul.” He slapped Samuel on the shoulder and smiled. “Alas, mit broder vilt be marridt. She vill take der meaness from him.” He laughed softly.

Samuel stared ahead into the dark night and the stars, puffing on his pipe, blowing smoke rings.

“Do not, I say,” Father Gunzales spoke with a father's wisdom, “be too shy vit Rebecca. Women like a man to be present. If ye be missink, she vill take dat as der bat sign.”



“Aye,” Manuel continued the thought. “She vill eater run home to Mommy, er become der boss.”

Samuel turned his head to his right and to his left to look at the two and continued his stare forward. “Rebecca be a fine kurl. She kot der soul of der angel.” He sighed.

They talked for a long while and then Samuel found himself standing alone. Leaning against the luggage tied to the gunwale he lit his pipe again. Feeling someone approach from behind, he turned quickly to behold Sweeney.

“Aye, Cap.” Sweeney saluted with one finger. “Hear ye 're getten married.”

“Aye, ketten marriet.” Samuel blew smoke into the little man's face.

“Ye got a beauty, I tell ye.” Sweeney winked. “Better keep'er close to ye. These lands be wild wif savages behind every tree and bush and around every corner.”

“Ye be a savage, t'en, Sweeney?” There was a stern look on Samuel's face.

“I just be sayen, ye keep yer eye on'er. She be safe t'en.”

Sweeney slinked back into the shadows.

“Humph!” Samuel spit over the side of the ship.

The dancing stopped when the giant orange sun melted into its mother earth and settled down to sleep. Father Davidts played a nocturne for the myriad stars to dance to. After a couple of hours the passengers had settled down to whispers, napping, and walking the promenade, the schooner slipped into the New York docks. The sleepy passengers disembarked into the night being led by Samuel. “Ve vill go to ter Het Hooten Paard.” Everyone carried their own baggage. What they couldn't carry would be sent for in the morning.

Light streaming into Samuel's room through glass windows woke him. It showed the dust in the air. He had slept in. He must be getting old.

His room seemed to be the same one he rented the first time he came to the Het Hooten Paard. He scratched his head and sat up, placing his feet on the floor. He wondered where Rebecca was and what she was doing. A most beautiful woman, she was very stubborn, making everyone travel down river for what could have been a simple wedding.

Samuel laughed softly to himself. He was getting married.

He shaved and dressed in the fancy clothes they gave him and went downstairs for breakfast. There was a crowd of people around the board eating and talking, walking around and mingling with folks who seemed to be the family type, not the same crowd he had seen here before. He didn't see Rebecca, but he found Father Davidts. He sat down beside him. Jan scooted over to make room.

“I do not see Rebecca,” Samuel said matter-of-factly.

Father Davidts turned and said, “Ye vill see her at Church.”

“Did she eat breakfast?”

Father Davidts stuffed a bun filled with meat into his mouth, took a bite and said, “Can not see ter brite before ter veddink.” He took a piece of gristle from his mouth, looked at it, put it on his plate, and looked back at Samuel. “Ches. She ate.” He laughed a little. “But very little. She vas very noivous.”

Samuel peered into the air before him. “I understant dot!” He turned to his father-in-law to be and said, “I be very noivous too.” He rubbed his hand over his fist.

Jan sat on Samuel's right side. He handed him a tankard. “Here. Drink dis down. 'Dis

mint ale. Vill calm der stomacht."

As he had risen very thirsty, Samuel guzzled down the ale and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. Then he exclaimed, "Ho! I forkot. Vedding jacket."

"Not'ink to matter wif." Father Davidts smiled and slapped him on the back. "Ye must eat. Ye can not ket marriet on der empty stomacht."

Samuel had his plate filled with bread, sausages, spiced eggs, and minced meat pie. Jan filled Samuel's mug with children's ale they serve for breakfast. Eating calmed his mind for sure, but only to the outside world was he a happy man just eating breakfast with no cares to be noted. No one could tell he was shaking inside. But the food did help. He smiled afterward.

Everyone withdrew to walk to the church which was in the middle of Fulton Street in the town of Breukelen on the east side of the Hudson. Those that saw the procession plodding down the middle of the street and crossing the bridge clapped. Some whistled or sent blessings to the bride and groom. The bride was at the head of the procession with veil drawn, riding in a black carriage with her mother and Mother Gunzales. She was adorned equally well as the bride. The fathers and groom were somewhere in the crowd walking together and talking.

When the procession reached the church, and Rebecca lighted from the carriage, she gasped. "It be too small," she whispered. "I vanted a bik church. Ve came all dis vay fer not'ink."

Her father came and stood beside her. "Ve be not Cat'olic. T'ey have ter bik church. Dis is our own church."

Tears streamed down Rebecca's face which she covered with her hands and leaned against her father's chest. "Ve go home now?"

Father Davidts comforted his daughter the best he could. Embracing her, he said, "Dis church be built. Our church at home be not built. Ye vant to be marriet in der barn?"

"I vant not to be marriet," she cried.

"Stant upright daughter. It be time ye are marriet." He patted Rebecca on her back and

then took her by her shoulders and confronted her face to face. “Daughter. Ye cannot come home any more. There be not a place for ye now. So sober up. Go into der church. Ve vill see dis t'rough.”

Rebecca melted into her father's arms as he marched her into the church. It was a square building with a large bell tower above, and on top of that was a weather vane which pointed in all four directions. The families and friends that came barely fit into the edifice. Many had to stand.

The organ played a hymn while Rebecca and her father walked down the aisle to the minister and Samuel, who waited for them expectantly. When Rebecca passed Mother Gunzales sitting with her clan, she nodded respectfully. They nodded in return. But when she passed her mother, she searched her mother's eyes wanting some notice that this wasn't real and that her mother would grab her up into her arms and take her back home.

Father Davidts brought Rebecca up to the podium, placed her hand into Samuel's, who smiled, and then stepped back, joining his wife.

The minister admonished the bride and groom to love and care for each other and then he asked, for it was the law, “Is t'ere any who can see dot dis union should not be? Let him speak.”

“T'is groom,” said a high pitched tenor voice, “he be a pirate who killed many a men to steal gold and precious jewels and t'e like. T'e law will have him for sure.”

Everyone turned to see who it was. But when the minister asked the man to stand forth, he was not to be found. A little man was seen running down the street, laughing.

There was a solemn silence in the church. Then the minister cleared his throat and said, “Since t'ere ist no von to object, Rebecca Davidts, do ye take t'is mahn to be yer lawful vedded huspant?”

“I do.” Rebecca sniffed.

“Samuel Gunzalez-Duk, do ye take t'is maid to be yer lawful vedded vife?”

“I do,” Samuel said gustily.

“T'en I pronounce ye two to be mahn and vife.” The minister unveiled the bride and put his hands on both their shoulders. “Ye may kiss der brite, and may ye haf happiness, healt' ant strenkt', ant many childrents.”

Samuel leaned over and gently kissed his bride for the first time.

Everyone sang a hymn as Samuel and Rebecca marched down the aisle to the carriage waiting outside. The procession went back to the hotel where there was eating, dancing and much drinking. Many of the neighbors joined in for a long night of merry making.

CHAPTER TEN

Samuel and Rebecca spent their honeymoon visiting their parents. The first week they stayed at the Davidts' and then the next week at his parents, so they each could get to know their in-laws. Samuel helped Jan and Joris on the farm, harvesting barley, pumpkins and other Indian gourds. They had a big feast on the weekend, a Sunday, and then moved over to the Gunzaleses the same evening, so they enjoyed two worship services. Work at Samuel's parents' was more fixing up the old place, a mere cabin, and adding a few finishing touches on the new stone house and building a barn. At the end of the second week, Samuel and Manuel loaded up the cart made from a boat, had a prayer service with the family, and then the two newlyweds waved goodbye.

The trudge through the woods with Samuel was a hardship, but Rebecca was determined to walk all the way to his cabin. She was tempted to ride in the cart, watching that empty seat with nobody on it, but she made up her mind not to show any weakness. This was a hardened and tough man she had married. He needed a strong wife. She wanted to be that wife. Every time he asked her, “Vouldt ye like to rite?” she would say, “No, no, dere be no room fer t'e bote of us.” If he was going to walk, she would to do the same.

When they came to a little valley with a hill at the other end and a cabin to their left, he stopped, and said, “T'is be mit landt.” He puffed out his chest and put his arms out as though to embrace the landscape. The Sun was setting between the far hill and a mountain beyond. Then Samuel turned and saw Rebecca heading for the cabin which hadn't been there before. *Some squatter planted himself right in the wrong place,* thought Samuel. He scratched his head. He would deal with it in the morning. Tonight, he had to get Rebecca home.

“Rebecca!” Samuel shouted in a loud whisper. “No, no. Tas is not mit place. Mit place is up der hill dar.” He pointed to the hill at the end of the valley.

“Oh, my! Samuel, mit darlink.” She put her hand up to her head and staggered.

Samuel rushed to her side and lifted her up.

“Mit not takink anodder step,” she sighed. “Mit be so sorry. Can not climbt dot hill.” She pointed to the hill in the distance and dropped her hand, wrapping it around Samuel's chest. She leaned her head on his neck and closed her eyes. Samuel deposited his new bride on top of the luggage and provisions in the cart.

Walking across the valley, pulling the cart with Rebecca asleep in the back, was easy for Samuel, but when it came to taking the cart up the hill, he had to use all his strength. If it were just his stuff, he could almost run, but he had to pull what little baggage he had, some provisions, all her trousseau, and herself.

When he arrived at the top, he parked the cart in front of his little cabin. He stood for a moment to take a breath and looked at it. The fiery setting sun turned the cabin orange and then gray as the sun slipped down beyond sight. He rested his chin in his hand. *Not big*

enough, he thought. *Will work on it tomorrow.*

Suddenly, an Indian came from behind the cabin. “Ah, friend! You return with bride.” It was Longshanks. He had a broad grin on his face. He came up to Samuel, and they grabbed each other's arms. “Plenty bear out back. Smoking. Hide inside. Nice coat for bride.”

There was a little shriek from the cart. The friends turned and saw Rebecca rising with her arm covering her mouth and her eyes wide open. Samuel saw she was biting her arm.

“No, no. Longshanks be mit friendt.” He rushed over to her and lifted her out of the cart. He didn't get to put her down before she grabbed his neck with both arms and wrapped her legs around his middle. She held her face away from the Indian and would turn it where ever Samuel walked so she wouldn't have to look at the red man.

Samuel apologized to Longshanks. “She be very tiredt. Valked all der vay.”

“Bear meat make her strong. You see.”

Longshanks put his hand to his mouth for Samuel to be silent and motioned for him to put his wife in the house. Samuel did so, laying her on his bed, covering her with the bear coat. A fire was burning in the fireplace, so he didn't need to light a candle. Longshanks must have set up things for a welcome for the new bride.

When he came back outside, Longshanks motioned him to come around back.

“I come with my brother and we catch two white men in the cabin.” Longshanks walked to a tree and pointed to a man hanging in it. One end of a rope was tied to his neck and the other end to a limb high enough to lift him the height of a man. “They turn everything upside down. They looking for something. We hit them with tomahawks. One escaped. He not hurt bad. That one, he dead.” Longshanks pulled on the dead man's leg to show Samuel who it was. Of course, it was hard to see him in the dark.

“Cut him down,” Samuel commanded.

Longshanks ran up the trunk of the tree using the limbs as handles. He cut the rope with his knife, and the body hit the earth with a thud. The the Indian jumped down, landing near it.

“I put everything right in the cabin,” Longshanks said as he kicked the corps. “My brother, he no good. He do no work. He left.” He grinned. “Longshanks like Sam.”

Just then, they heard a woman's voice. “Samuel?” Rebecca had come outside and was approaching the two men. “I heardt somevon.” Samuel went over to her.

“Vomen should stay in t'e house when Indian be here,” he said gently. He put his arm around her and escorted her back to the front yard. She looked at him worriedly. He comforted her with, “Ko. Ye do not vant to see,” nodding his head. She hesitated by the door. “Ye vill be safe. I am here.”

Samuel pulled the corpse into the moonlight. It was Sweeney. He must have been looking for the gold when Longshanks and his brother caught him.

Samuel, accompanied by Longshanks, hauled the body down the hill and buried him in a clump of underbrush. If the body started stinking, he didn't want it to smell up the yard. Of course, if anyone found out, Longshanks would be in trouble, and maybe himself.

“T'ank ye fer der velcome, Lonkshanks.” They clasped hands. “Mit voman needt a man now. She be in an unfamiliar place.”

When Samuel climbed back up the hill he found Rebecca unloading the cart.

“Mit do dat. Ye rest in der cabint.” Samuel went to take the bag she was carrying, but she turned away from him.

“Ve husbant ant vife now. Ve do it toket'er.” She continued to the cabin.

Samuel grabbed a heavier bag from the cart and took it inside.

After everything was put away, they both sat on the bed looking at each other.

“I built ye a chair tomorrow,” Samuel said, sniffing the air. “Right now, ye shall eat somet'ink. Bear stew, I t'ink.”

He rose and walked over to the fireplace. Indeed, there was a large pot of stew Longshanks must have started cooking before they arrived. Suddenly, Rebecca was at his side.

“I be der vife. Ye sit down, ant I serve ye.”

Rebecca's presence made Samuel turn to jelly. She had that effect upon him. He didn't have to wait long before a large plate of stew and some Indian corn bread was set before him. It had a pungent odor that made his mouth water. Rebecca sat on an upturned bucket with her plate. Samuel said grace, imitating the prayer he had heard Father Davidts say every weekend for months. Both of them ate ravenously. Then they went to bed.

Samuel crawled next to Rebecca and caressed her arm. It was very soft. He was about to ask her something when he heard her snoring. She was fast asleep. Samuel lay back down and thought to himself, *Well, maybe tomorrow*.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

One tomorrow led to another and another while Samuel added to the cabin room by room until it was a fully built house. It had an upper story with two bedrooms, a lower story with kitchen, storage room, and a parlor. He added a chimney to the left or west side for the kitchen. The original shaft served the parlor and the two upper bedrooms.

The hill could now be called a knoll, for it was bald on top. Samuel cut down most of the trees for lumber and shingles, which he added to the roof. Wooden planks covered the sides of the house, and grass, the bald portion of the hill top.

There were a number of settlers filling the valley. When each one came to build a house or cabin, Samuel went to them with his papers and said, “I have t'e landt patent. Ye vilt owe me t'e rent or leeft.” So, Samuel became a landlord. He made the laws and stood as mediator between quarreling factions. Years later when the valley became a town, it was given the name of Minisink after the surrounding land and Indians.

From the top of the hill Samuel and Rebecca could see the Delaware winding its way to the sea. All the hills and mountains were covered with forest, and one could imagine with Indians too, which, in most cases was very real. Most people traveled along the roads.

In these settled circumstances, with Samuel making shingles for all the new settlers in the Minisink Valley and the surrounding towns, collecting ever increasing rent, and Rebecca having one child after another, no one would think about robbers and gold diggers bothering their peace. They were too busy for that. Yet, there was a rumor sneaking its way into the underground of Ulster and Orange counties, like a snake in the grass. It was, “An old Indian told me that the rich man on the hill has gold buried somewhere up there on his property.” The main character in this story used to have a partner by the name of Sweeney who was killed by Indians. The one that remained alive from the Indian attack was Smitty.

He would sit in the taverns weaving his tales and getting people thirsty for gold.

“We tracked t'e pirate to Minisink,” Smitty said, taking another gulp of ale. “We all spied'im when he first arrived in t'e harbor at New York. He sneaked off such a ghostly ship, it were, flying t'e Jolly Roger.” Smitty grinned a toothless grin, and with eyes wide, ducked down, marching his fingers along the counter, watching to see if anyone was listening. “He hefted such a chest on'is back … had to be filled wit' gold'nd treasure. You see, he was a pirate fer sure. When he left t'e next day, Sweeney and I snuck up dem stars in t'e Het Hooten Paard. We found'is chest … 'twas halft empty. He had took it wif him fer sure. We follyed'im to Kingston and watched. We watched careful-like and follyed him into der woods. We kept an eye on'im 'til he left again. Danged Injuns ruined ever t'ing. We discovered t'e hiding place of t'e gold when we were attacked.” Smitty would pause here in his story to spit on the floor. “Damned Injun lover he is. Taken up to trompen wif dern Injuns all over t'e place. But it's dare, fer sure. He spilt some doubloons on t'e floor afore he left. We almost had it, I and Mister Sweeney.” Smitty would cackle as he took out a gold doubloon from his coat pocket to show everyone. It sparkled, exibiting the Spanish S

covered by two Greek columns. One time in telling his well worn tale, a man slowly brought forth his finger to touch the, but Smitty withdrew the coin, cackled, and slid it back into his pocket.

People of both counties heard of Samuel's gold. His neighbors teased him whenever they saw him, saying, “Kolt to be shared, kolt a plenty, kot a nickel, dollor, ant a penny,” meaning, they had but little, and he should give them what he had. Sometimes they would just outright ask him, “Vars der kolt, Samuel? Kot any in der pocket?” Or they would try an old fable, “Ye know vhere der miser goes! To der place vhere he hops on his toes,” referring to burning in Hell.

Samuel grew agitated and would have shaken each one of them out of their wits. It strained the relationship with his family whenever they asked him about the gold. The first time Rebecca heard it in the town when she was down to buy supplies, she confronted him.

“Ye kot kolt?” she asked with a serious eye to eye contact and a tilt of her head.

“Spent it on der veddink,” he said. Then he fixed up a bundle of food and powder, took his gun and left for the woods.

His children would often dance around him and sing, “Daddy's kot der kolt! Daddy's kot der kolt.” He would raise his hand to strike and hear a “Samuel!” coming from Rebecca. She would frown, point at him, and he would be off again. Sometimes he was gone for three weeks at a time.

On one of these excursions, he met up with Longshanks. The Indian had a worried look on his face, as his forehead had more wrinkles than usual. He didn't see that it was any of his business so he didn't ask. They were good friends, but they didn't share the personal marrow, but when Samuel jerked his nose upward, meaning, “What's up?” Longshanks confessed.

“Longshanks in big heap trouble.” He drew a mound with his hands.

“Cant mit help ye?” Samuel offered.

“Come.” Longshanks motioned him to follow.

Longshanks took him into a wooded glen where he saw a man tied to a tree. He was slumped over and had a bullet hole between his eyes.

Samuel knelt down to see if he could recognize the man. He was a stranger.

“White man shoot him,” Longshanks said, pointing to the direction the bullet came from.

“T'ey shot him tied up?” Samuel asked, looking back over his shoulder.

“Longshanks come help him, untie him. Gun fire … miss me … hit him.” He pointed to himself and then to the stranger tied to the tree. “I run. Men run after me. I come to you, lead you here. Men still after me.”

“Humph,” Samuel wondered. “Do not have der shovel to bury t'e man.” He stood up. “Ve go and get one.”

“Smell white men. We go.”

Samuel left the dead man and hurried back through the woods. When they got to town to refresh themselves, everyone hushed as they passed by as if they were talking about them. They overheard people accuse them of torturing and killing white men. When they entered the tavern, all the men stared at them. No one moved as if they expected something from them.

Samuel asked for whiskey. The bartender gave them each a shot. They drank it down and turned. The way to the door was blocked. They knew they were in trouble, but they thought they could handle it. All of a sudden, everyone was upon them, punching and grabbing, trying to get hold of them. Samuel managed to get to the door, leaving bodies slammed against the wall, against turned over tables or on the floor. Longshanks was right behind him. When they reached the door, they ran out and down the street.

Rebecca saw her husband and his Indian friend running up the road to the house. She gathered all the children like a little hen and took them upstairs to their bedroom. When Samuel came inside, he called, “Rebecca?”

“Ve are all up here in t'e bedroomp.”

Samuel turned to Longshanks. “Vat vill ye do?”

“Longshanks go visit sister and third wife up north.” After saying that, Longshanks departed down the other side of the hill.

Samuel sat down by the hearth and waited for the sheriff.

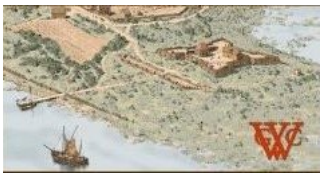
Eventually, Sheriff Oostendorp arrived. He knocked and Samuel said, “Comp in.”

The door slowly opened. The sheriff looked around and spotted Samuel calmly sitting by the fireplace. Their eyes met and Samuel rose.

“Squire Gunzalez-Duk,” the sheriff read from a paper he held before him, “I hereby arrest ye in the name of the king for the murder of the gentleman called Gunderlandt of Shawangunk, Orange County.” With his nose in the air, he stared at Samuel with authority.

Samuel simply walked over to the man, took him by the shoulders and shook him. He shook him so hard that the man could not stand on his legs for some time. When he did get up, he walked out the door and down the road, swaying like a drunken man.

Samuel watched him, said, “Humph!” and closed the door. Then he announced, “Ye cant all comp down now.”



The little village of Minisink grew large enough to have a church, and Rebecca was excited to have the family attend each and every Sunday. Samuel, too old fashioned for such a thing, resisted the idea.

“Ve cans holdt Sunday Soivice here at t'e home,” he kindly complained when

Rebecca wanted him to drive the wagon down to the town. When he saw a scowl on her face, he lifted up his hands and said, “Ve alvays did it t'at vay.”

As she marched all the nicely dressed children out of the house, he said, “Ye cans drive der vagon. I vill stay home andt read and pray wit' mit self.”

Rebecca turned a sharp face toward him and said, “Ye vill do no such t'ing. Now come and drife der vagon like a proper gentleman.”

Samuel grumbled and grabbed his coat and pipe. He had assembled the wagon and horses earlier, thinking of a nice afternoon without the family noises. Now, he stuck his pipe in his mouth, helped his wife and kiddies aboard the wagon, hopped up himself, grabbed the reins and snapped them on the horses' back. The horses jumped and started running.

“Take care, Sam!” Rebecca shouted, holding on to the seat for dear life.

The children laughed with glee as the horses started racing down the hill. Samuel had to reel in the reins to keep the wagon from turning over. He turned to his wife to apologize, but she looked angry, so he just lifted his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders.

Rebecca took a sidewise glance at Samuel with the unlit pipe in his mouth. “I know vhat ye vill do now. Sit outsidt in der vagon andt sulk.”

Samuel paid her no attention. He drove up to the little wooden church with its high pointed steeple and helped everyone out. He kissed his wife and each child on the cheek as he lifted them down.

“Vant ye come insidte, Sam?” Rebecca asked softly.

“Mit vait out here. Der preacher says notink new.” Samuel looked away and let everyone go in without him.

He leaned against the outside wall, poked his pipe into his upper coat pocket and stuffed a little tobacco in it with his forefinger. After lighting it, he hadn't taken two puffs before he was joined by several men with their pipes. He had some jolly conversations while they waited for their families.

After two hours, the church let out and Rebecca with her brood walked over to their wagon. It appeared that Samuel had put the feed bags on the horses, so she took them off and stored them in the back. She looked around. Samuel had spotted them and was headed their way. All the men said their goodbyes and headed for their wagons.

Rebecca was straining under the burden of laughter. She almost let it out when Samuel lifted her up onto the front seat. She stared at him and started giggling. As they drove away, she let it out with a full belly laugh.

“Vhat ist dis?” Samuel looked at his wife and she laughed harder. He wrinkled up his face. The children also chimed in. “I am der brunt of der yoke?”

“Oh!” Rebecca was finally able to talk. “I half to tell it now. I cans not vait 'till ve ket home.” She giggled some more, staring out the corners of her eyes at her dear husband.

Samuel glanced at her. “Ko on den, tell it.”

The horses trotted around a corner and they were out of the town. Rebecca looked at her surroundings and felt it safe to tell the story.

“Der preacher taught in Sunday School after der main meetink. He talked about God and his grandt vays. Den he asked der question, meanink God, 'Who be der stronkest man int all der vorldt? Mrs. Hampersham spoke up. She said, 'Samuel Gunzaljie!'” Rebecca burst out laughing and had to wipe tears from her eyes.

The children in the back called out, laughing, and pointed to their father, “Dadda, Dadda, Dadda.”

“Samuel Gunzaljie!” Rebecca repeated and laughed harder. The more she said it, the more she and the children laughed.

“Humph!” Samuel grunted. “Tis ist vhat koes on it ta church.” He slapped the horses with the reins, and they were up the hill in no time.

After he lifted everyone out of the wagon and put the horses into the barn, he went back to the house. Rebecca stood in the doorway. He squeezed past her to get in.

“Every onte knows vhat ye did to der sheriff.” She turned in and slammed the door and then started laughing all over again.

Samuel had wished for a soothing Sabbath day at home, in his nice leather chair near the hearth, resting from the labors of the week, but he didn't know how to handle laughter, so after dinner, he spent the evening in the woods with Longshanks.

CHAPTER TWELVE

` Longshanks, pretending to be drunk, lumbered into the tavern, almost knocking a man over.

“Watch it, now!” the man said. “This is no place for a drunken Injun.”

Longshanks pounded his fist on the counter of the bar. “Give me whiskey!” He turned to face the crowd of men sitting at their little round tables smoking their clay pipes and guzzling down beer. “Looking for man who shoot me,” he yelled.

“Mit shoot ye againt,” called a man from the back. Stocky with a white beard, he stood and walked forward. “Kit me der gunt!”

Longshanks stared at the man for a moment to memorize his face. Then he let out a war cry, a whoop and a hollar, ran out the front door and down the street.

When he met with Samuel that evening, he told him what he had done.

“Ye show him ta me,” Samuel said, “andt ve vill take him to der sheriff.”

“Sheriff, he arrest you,” Longshanks said, ducking, as though he had been fired at. “He shoot you.”

“Humph!” Samuel grunted, leaning on a tree to light his pipe. He took a puff and said, “Ve take dis man to der judge. Tell him vhat ye saw. Dat he shoot der man in der headt.”

“Judge, mayor, sherrif, like this.” Longshanks made a fist. “They make the town angry against you.”

“It be mit town. Who collects der rent?” Samuel pushed his lower lip out and frowned.

“Sam sold patent to town. They pay you rent in fear.” Longshanks smiled. “Sam good man, brave. No one bother Sam.”

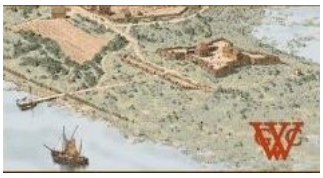
“Hmmm. No koodt. Ve ket der man and pop him on der headt. He vill leave town dent.”

“Man have a brother. We get him too. Make both leave town.”

Sam slid down the tree trunk and sat on the roots. He took a puff of his pipe and blew smoke rings. Longshanks sat down beside him and took out his pipe. They sat in silence for a long time, smoking.

“Come Mondtday,” Samuel said, gripping his pipe with his teeth, “der two ment be out of der town.”

Longshanks nodded his head.



The town of Minisink was in an uproar. Everyone had a complaint against Samuel Gunzales. He was a tyrant, a thief, a land pirate, and an outlaw. He couldn't be taken by one man, not even a gang of men. Everyone was afraid that he and Longshanks and possibly other Indians were dragging people out into the woods, torturing and killing them. The prime example was an old man and his brother-in-law who they had been found on the edge of town beaten and bloody.

Two gentlemen of the town were walking near the outskirts when they saw the two crumpled up on the side of the road. They gasped, ran over to them and stooped down to examine them. They were still alive, just out of breath, as they were panting.

“'Tis Mister Rooservelt,” one of them said. “Ko to der sheriff.” Then turning to the old man, “Who is it t'at did it?”

The stout old man with the white beard replied, panting, “'Twast Gunzales and Longshanks. T'ey ambushed us by der vay.”

Mr. Roosevelt sat up and placed his hand on his brother-in-law's shoulder. “He be near to death.”

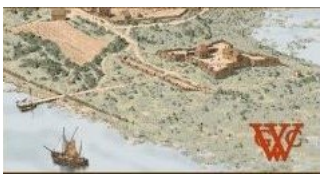
The sheriff brought a wagon, and the two men were transported to the nearest tavern where a doctor examined them. The mayor and judge joined the sheriff there, along with a growing crowd.

The three town authorities tried to calm the distracted crowd while Mr. Roosevelt passed a gold coin to the doctor and winked. The doctor groaned and slipped the money into his vest pocket while saying, “My, my. T'ese men needt a roomp upstars.” Whereupon the proprietor brought in an old door from the back and directed two bystanders to lay the bloody men upon it one at a time and carry them carefully up to a nice room. They were laid side by side on a bed.

Samuel and Longshanks had not yet put their plan into action to get rid of Roosevelt and his son-in-law. The two crooks had not known of Samuel's plan, but they anticipated it.

When they were alone they winked at each other, and Mr. Roosevelt said, “T'is villt turn der town against t'e man and his Injun fer sure.”

“Didt ye have ta cut mit body so many times?” the brother-in-law complained. “Cut yer ownt body next time.”



Roosevelt turned on his elbow and smiled. “Ven dis be ober, ve live on der hill, not Gunzales.”

A mob, carrying torches and lanterns, marched up the hill to the Gunzaleses that night. Mr. Roosevelt, who seemed to have miraculously revived, led the mob. When they arrived, he banged on the door with his staff, yelling, “Gunzales! Coom out andt meet yer maker!”

Another yelled, “Der judge be here, and der sheriff come ta arrest ye!”

Rebecca opened an upstairs window, and putting her head out, yelled, “He be not here! He vent avay into der voods.”

Sheriff Oostendorp stepped forward. “Ve got ter vorant.” He shook the papers at her. “Opent up in ter name of der king. Ve vill search der house.”

“Please don't all comp in. Mit kiddies are vit' me.” Rebecca held her husband's gun out of sight. She caressed its barrel as if it could save her.

“Ontly four of us compt in. Mit promise be sure.” The sheriff nodded his head.

Rebecca came down, placed the gun in the curtains next to the door to hide it, and unbarring the door, let the sheriff, Roosevelt, and two other men enter.

All of a sudden, Indians stepped out of the shadows of the room and from behind the furniture brandishing tomahawks. Samuel stepped down the stairs with his hands in a grabbing position, and Rebecca took her gun from behind the curtains.

The four men ran out of the house screaming, “Murder!” and “Injuns!” Fearing for their lives, the crowd dispersed, some dropping their torches or lanterns as they ran down the hill. The Indians chased them until they cleared the hill, then they dispersed back into the forest.

Longshanks had stayed at the house yelling war whoops in the front yard and laughing.

Samuel and his Indian friend grabbed each other's wrists. “I t'ank ye, Longshanks. I villt laud ye brodders andt say gut t'ings about t'em.”

“T'ey be alvays velcome,” Rebecca added, standing in the doorway.

Little faces looked out the upper window as little cherubs looking down from Heaven.

After Longshanks departed, Samuel turned to his wife. “Ve vill have to leaf dis home.”

“Andt vhere vill ve ko?” she asked with her hands on her hips.

“Downt to der Delervare country.” He pointed to the river. “Mit boat be near finiched.”

“Vhat boat?” Rebecca drew her head back in surprise.

“Mit boat in der voods.” Samuel scratched his head. “Beent vorking on it.” He shrugged his shoulders.

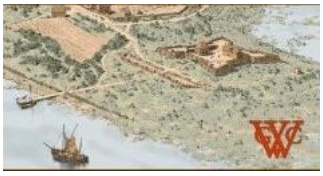
“I t'ought ye been huntink er somet'ink wif der Injuns.” She stamped her foot.

Rebecca decided to get the children into bed. They had had enough excitement for

one night. As she put them to bed, all they could say, is “Dadda's got der boat. Dadda's got der boat.”

In bed with her husband, she cuddled up to him and whispered into his ear, “I don't approof of all ye do, mit husbandt, yet, I feel safe wit' ye.”

Samuel smiled.



Samuel had to hand carve the pulleys to use in the line and tackle. He had finished the boat and now had to hoist it into the wagon to take it down to the river. He did it in the middle of the night. Of course he was accompanied by Longshanks.

“You take family away from us, yes?” he asked as they rode toward the river.

“Down to der Delervare, jes.” The horses didn't seem to appreciate this late night escapade and were slower than usual. So Samuel snapped the reins and they began to trot.

He and Longshanks avoided the docks, hiding the boat in the brush, so people wouldn't know they were leaving.

Samuel had to attach an extra wheel on the end of the boat and tie the front to the wagon so it wouldn't slide off. When they found a place to deposit the boat, they first loosened the horses and tied them to a tree and then took the extra wheel off. With Longshanks on one side and Samuel on the other to steady the wagon, the boat pulled the wagon down in the back. Blocks were pushed under the front to hold up the wagon. Then untying the boat, they let the end of the boat down the water. The next thing was to remove the blocks until the weight of the wagon and the sliding of the boat separated the two with the wagon jumping forward with a bang. The horses jolted with their eyes almost popping out of their sockets.

Samuel and Longshanks pulled the boat all the way onto shore and covered it with brambles. Reattaching the animals, they left the boat in God's hands and went home.

The next night, Samuel, Rebecca, and the kiddies loaded the wagon with all their possessions and tied everything down with a canvas and ropes. The children were placed on top of everything with Rebecca and the baby sitting next to Samuel in front. They said a prayer for safe passage and with a snap of the reins, left for a new life in the Delaware, setting a precedent for many pioneers.

When they arrived at the place where the boat was hidden, they found that it was flatter than most boats. It was more suited for the smaller, shallow river. Longshanks showed up and helped Samuel, Rebecca and two older sons shove the boat into the water. It took hours for the boat to be loaded and the passengers to find somewhere to sit. Everyone was nervous, tired and sleepy, and that made everything more difficult. The little children were tied in place along with the luggage, most of it fore and aft, with Rebecca and the boys in the center. Longshanks untied the rope holding the boat, and threw it to Samuel who then

waved goodbye to his Indian friend. Taking a long pole, Samuel shoved off and poled his way into the middle of the river where the currents took over. He settled down on the stern to control the rudder. His hand patted the small bag tied to his belt. It was what was left of the gold. The family moved off into the night.

Longshanks and old Konki stood on the banks of the Delaware River watching the family of Samuel float away.

“They will become a legend,” Konki said.

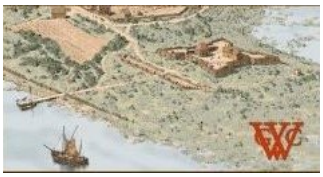
“Yes,” Longshanks agreed, “a legend.”

Longshanks looked at the wagon and horses. “Good horses.”

Konki said, “Good wagon, too. You keep'em.”

Longshanks smiled.

When the folks of Minisink found that Samuel and his family had left mysteriously,



and that they left a fine empty house and barn, everyone was in a quandary as what to do. It was decided that the property would be put up for auction. Mr. Roosevelt made the highest bid. The first thing he and his family did when they moved in was to look for the gold.

Instead of keeping up the property, the Roosevelts spent their time tearing up the floor boards and walls of the house and digging holes outside and in the barn in the most likely places a person would hide a stash of gold. Within a week, Mrs. Roosevelt noticed other holes she was sure the family hadn't dug.

“Marjie,” she asked her girl. “Did you dig der hole?”

“No, Mama, mit not do it.”

Father Roosevelt yanked the ear of one of his sons, “Henry! Didt ye dig der hole?”

“Papa, mit not do it.”

The next night the family watched as they saw people sneaking all over their new property digging holes. When one person actually found a gold nugget, the place turned into a gold mine, not by definition, but mostly rumor. It caused a lot of dissension in the town resulting in fist fights and the Roosevelts having to guard their home with guns. But the mine didn't pan out. What gold was found had been mere alluvial debris caused by the erosion of an ancient mountain already gone. It didn't make anyone rich, it only paid for a loaf of bread. The digging didn't stop until a hole was found near the hearth with an empty box in it. The story of the diggings grew into a legend that Samuel Gunzales had a gold mine.

THE END

Book Four

THE GOLD PLATES

CHAPTER ONE

The Schuylkill River flows down to the southeast from the Appalachian Mountains and joins the Delaware River at Philadelphia. It is the largest tributary of the Delaware. After the Battle of the Brandywine, General George Washington escaped General Howe's troops by crossing the Schuylkill at Matson's Ford, marched through Philadelphia, and headed northeast. He left Brigadier General "Mad" Anthony Wayne's Pennsylvania Division at Chester, Pennsylvania to harass General Howe. But Wayne miscalculated the British knowledge of his presence, and was attacked at Paoli's Tavern, routing his troops. It was said that those who surrendered to the British were hacked to pieces or bayoneted multiple times for laughs. Seventy one soldiers were captured.

Two Continental soldiers escaped the British attack but lost track of their division. They ran into the woods near a farmhouse, sunk down into the bushes and relaxed against the trunk of an old tree. The two looked at each other. They were out of breath, but neither of them were hurt. Scruffy in their blue uniforms, unshaven, unbathed and smelly, they at least had the repast of a flask of whiskey which they shared.

“Careful, now,” John Stewart said. “Just a swig. We won't see another tavern for many a day.”

“I'm glad ye brought it, John,” Charles Bridgestone said as he scratched his leg. “'Tis a bright spot in t'e life of a soldier. Here, ye can have it back.”

“What's that paper stickin' out o' yer coat?” John pointed with his nose and a nod of his head.

“'Tis a map, me boy, 'tis a map.” Charles pulled it out and opened it up.

“Does it tell where the British are, then?” John took another swig and put the whiskey flask back into his coat.

“No, somet'ing more important. Aye.” Charles pored over it to annoy his companion.

John clasped his hands around his legs as he sat there, screwed up his lips and lifted his nose to the air. “Then what do ye have if for, and where did ye get it?”

“Won it back in t'e tavern, Paoli, I did, in a game of chance.” Charles rolled it up and slipped it back under his coat. He looked at John and smiled.

“Is it a guessin' game, then?” John asked.

“I'll tell ye if ye can promise to keep a secret.” Charles lifted his pinky into the air, and John grabbed it with his own.

“I won't tell a soul,” John promised.

Charles grabbed his toes, rocked back and forth on his buttocks and snickered with his tongue poking his bottom lip out. “'Tis a treasure map, to be sure.” He snickered again, squinting his eyes. “Old Sam's gold mine … or maybe a chest o' Spanish doubloons.”

John swiped the air with his arm. “Yer off yer noggin!” he said, nodding his head. He turned and stood on his knees. “Let me see!”

Charles took the map out again. They sat on their haunches and viewed the mysterious thing.

“Looks to be buried,” John pointed to the markings on the map, “just this side of the Schuylkill.”

“Aye!” Charles said with a great exhalation of bad liquor breath.

“And how do ye know it to be true?” John asked, pointing to the map.

“T'e man said an old Injun tol' him.” Charles rubbed his week growth of beard. “So he wrote it down.”

John lowered his eyebrows resulting in a serious look. He said, “Now I'm gonna tell ye. What Injun was it?”

Charles thought a moment. “'Twas Longshanks, chief o' t'e Esopus.”

“That scoundrel? Last I heard, he took up with the British and is fightin' fer them.”

The two Continentals heard a noise that only a troop of British make as they march down a road with their drums and bagpipes, sounding to the whole world who they are. Orders were being yelled out and scouts began searching the farm.

“We had better head out,” John whispered.

As they started out, they split up, whereupon Charles whispered, rather loudly, “John! 'Tis this way … where t'e gold be.”

John, correcting his course. “To be sure. To be sure.”

An old pirate with long white hair, wearing a tricorne hat, came across two dead bodies. Each one had many stab wounds in their blue Continental Army coats. Axes and shovels lay strewn about their bodies along a slue coming down from their diggings into the hillside. They must have been surprised or were not paying attention.

“Shame, shame,” said old Smitty. “It do no koot to dik fer kolt.”

As Smitty went through the pockets of one of the men, a rolled up paper dropped from the dead man's chest. He picked it up and examined it. A bloody bayonet hole ran through it.

“Hmmm,” Smitty thought to himself as he rubbed his scruffy chin. “Der map is to dis place.”

He studied it again. “Not dis place. Different place.” He stood up. “D'ay mistook.”

Smitty checked the ground again, finding many footprints. “Der British fer sure.”

He collected what the dead men had in their pockets; two powder horns, letters from

home, a few dry cartridges and extra flints for their muskets, a flask of whiskey, a few coins, and food in the form of small loafs of bread and chunks of meat rolled in brown waxed paper. There was also a clay pipe and a twist of tobacco, a pencil and a small diary. The diary gave more information concerning where the map came from and the places they had prospected. If the two Continentals had had wallets, they were missing.

He found two back packs near a burned out campfire. They contained clothing, a locket holding the picture of a woman and a child, and a box for dentures which held pebbles of gold. He could sell most of what he found.

“One of t'em held out from ter ot'er. Vonter if he knew.” He searched the camp and found no other signs of gold or silver.

Smitty took the map along with all his gatherings and scouted the areas on the map. Because of the blood stain, he had to interpret the locations with what was written in the diary. After a couple of months of searching, he found nothing, but he thought that if he could tell a good story or two, he could sell the map and diary for a lot of money. Of course, he wouldn't accept any of the Continental paper. It was worthless. He would only accept genuine coin.

CHAPTER TWO

Smitty sat at a table of cards in Paoli's Tavern weaving a tale of cold blooded murder. The lone candle on the table seemed to twist and contort the already scarred faces and long beards. Some wore a tricorne hat, one had a bald head and wore large earrings, another had an eye patch, and one had a hook on the wrist of his left arm. Some of the cards had holes where the hook would grab them from the deck. They spoke a rough language not heard by wives and children. The room was dark, and everyone drank large tankards of ale and smoked long clay pipes, filling the room with tobacco vapors like swirling eerie ghosts. They saw their cards by the lights of other candles on the tables behind them.

Smitty said, “T'ere mit be, runnin' fer me life true der voots. The Spaniard Sam Gunzales be on me tail, and his Injun, Lonkshanks. T'ey koink to scalp me fer sure.”

He couldn't outrun them, so he hid in the bushes until they were out of sight, and then he ran back the other way toward Kingston.

The story went that Smitty's hand had been within reaching distance to that chest of gold doubloons as he lay hidden under a bush near midnight. As Sam hefted the small chest to rebury it, he had left one gold coin reflecting the star light. It was near the bush Smitty lay under. He reached out and grabbed it but was seen by Longshanks.

“Lonkshanks criedt out,” Smitty continued, “A t'ief! T'ey both vere after me. Mit run andt run. T'ey not catch me. Mit leaf der voots andt cross opent kroundt to Kinkston. T'ey not foller me. T'ey too afraidt to be seen unter der full moon.”

Smitty went on to tell of how he followed Sam's family to the shores of Delaware to be close to the gold. He had gathered a few friends to keep an eye on Sam and to watch and see where he buried his treasure chest. Smitty said it was the habit of Sam to go out, dig it up, and gather a handful of coins to buy his sweet little wife precious trinkets and nice clothes. But as he and his friends watched Sam, the friends disappeared, one by one. They always met at the pub, and every now and then, someone would not show up.

“Mit ask 'em, I say, ‘vare's Tub, er vare's Mick.’ No one’t know. Dey been kitnappedt er kilt and scalped by t’at Injun, Longshanks. Mit say to 'em if 'n ye be runnink out on me, nex time mit see yer, ye be deadt, yer troat slit by me handt. Dey all say ‘aye!’ Ve all be brot’ers; t’ey all die.”

“How did ye know they die?” asked the gruff man with the long black beard.

“T’ey bodies al’ays be foundt floatink on der Delavare Riber, near dern docks,” Smitty said as he leaned over the table to put his face in the other man’s.

Suddenly, the hook slamed down into Smitty’s hand.

“Keep yer dirty hands off t’em coins!” demanded The Hook.

“Ooh! Me handt!” Smitty cried out with superlatives the length of his arm.

“Sit down an’ continue t’e game,” said the bald headed man, unperturbed. “Smitty,

yer coin be forfeit."

Smitty steamed and growled, holding his injured hand. He thought to himself, *I must be getting too old to pull the wool over them. After all, I be near ninety eight year now.* He pulled out the map and diary. "T'ese be t'ere veight in koldt."

"What be dat?" they all ask.

"Dat?" Smitty pointed with his palm upturned.

"Aye!" they all agreed.

"T'is koldt, t'is koldt." Smitty smiled his toothless smile.

"T'is a map!" the bearded man said.

"Vort' all t'is coin andt more, me says." Smitty winked and cackled as he circled his pointing finger over the pile in the center of the table. "Ve be brot'ers, ay? Sam's koldt, it t'is. Burydt near here." He tapped the map. "Mit kilt fer it. Mit kill to keep it. But ye be mit brot'ers, no? Ve allt share."

The other men eyed the room to see if any were spying on them. They all agreed Smitty should put the map away. They had sworn to have their throats cut from ear to ear to support Smitty in whatever he desired as they each pulled their thumbs across their throats.

"Der pot be mine, den?" Smitty put his nose in the air and winked. "Ve all share Sam's koldt, den?"

They all agreed with a sigh, except The Hook, declairing, "I keep mine eye on ye, Smitty!"

It was to the hills of Delaware for the gang of cutthroats. Not finding anything, they moved to the shores of Pennsylvania near Philadelphia. Several of the men went back to Delaware and watched Sam's family, but never saw him go out to dig up the chest of doubloons. They never saw him with his Indian friend Longshanks and did not know *he* was watching *them*. Seeing the pirates searching here and there for the gold, Longshanks left for New York and his old friends near and around Kingston, his job of spreading rumors was done.

Being too old to dig himself, Smitty let the others dig the holes and search the map. He just went along to supervise. Every now and then there was more scuttlebutt that others were looking for Sam's gold, which would lead them to a different hill or forest glade. They dare not dig on Sam's land too near the house or he would take them in hand and shake them senseless. He had done that to one of the men. He was silly ever since and couldn't work the ground but went about as an idiot, peering at the men and laughing in a deep voice.

At every turn the gang of gold diggers would find new maps and new information. Sometimes they would steal a map, killing the poor chap that had it, or torture a man to tell what he knew, leaving him crippled. Sometimes they would find natural gold or silver and

would mine it until they got too tired or too restless and drank or gambled away their earnings.

Old Smitty, looking like a walking skeleton with a long white beard, became a hindrance, extra baggage they had to tote around. He still tried to be their leader and tell them what to do. There came a day though, at camp, when The Hook rose in rebellion against the little man.

Smitty crept around The Hook, jabbing him with his complaints. “He be lazy! Look at’im sittink t’ere drinkink and cussink. He care nottink fer ter brot’ers.”

“Enough!” The Hook bellowed. Rising from the cask he sat on, and lifting his hook into the air, he cried, “I’ll kill’im!”

Smitty grabbed the map that sat on another cask, shoved it into his coat and ran into the woods with The Hook running after him and cussing, swearing he would slit his throat with his hook.

Smitty was always good at hiding. The Hook never found him and returned to camp. Smitty’s heart was pounding hard as he rose from his hiding place. He ran through the woods, but never reached the clearing near the farm they had crossed the day before. He fell to the ground, struck down by his own heart. It had stopped beating in mid-stride. He had been holding the map in his hands which lost their grip. As he let go of the map, his last words were, “Koldt. Koldt.” The breath of a fawn softly blew the map out of his hand and into the field of a farmer named Josiah Stowell.

CHAPTER THREE

Josiah Stowell's home near Afton, NY. (2006 Photo by Kenneth Mays)

Josiah, a little overweight with a round face, walked through his cornfield checking the ripeness of the heads. He noticed a piece of paper being blown as if creeping toward his feet between the rows of corn. He stooped down and picked it up. He saw a blood stain on it, with a slit through the stain. He looked at the surrounding scribblings. It appeared to be a map. Murder came his mind. He considered that the previous owner of the map had been killed for it. He slipped the map inside his loose white shirt and wondered if the Lord or the devil given him this map.

He returned to his crop. It didn't look good. The heads should have been larger. He opened one. It was full of worms. "Augh," he intoned. "Worthless!"

Born in New Hampshire in 1770, Josiah Stowell had moved to South Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York. He became a well known and trusted member of the community. He was appointed Deacon in the Presbyterian Church near his home. He was a very devout man in principle and doctrine, but he had one weakness. Gold. He always tried to increase his wealth by searching for gold. He knew that others sought gold in the hills and mountains with their diviners leading them to hidden

treasure.

Josiah heard stories all his life about Indians or a Spanish pirate by the name of Sam burying gold in the surrounding hills and how there was always an Indian spirit watching over the treasure. Now he had a map, and it worried him. When he returned to the house, he buried it in the trunk at the foot of his bed. He felt guilty about having it, and he fought with himself. He wanted to be a good Christian, one who did not look for Earthly treasures. But he had to save the farm.

His interest in the map exceeded all resistance to temptation after losing his crops again and he had to go into debt for next year's seed. Arguments arose between he and his wife Miriam quite often concerning their finances. She knew many families that had become impoverished because of poor use of their capital. Or, they would go off and seek for riches under the earth and not find them. So he would climb the stairs to the bedroom, open the trunk at the end of the bed, retrieve the map, and sit on the edge of the bed to stare at it.

One day Miriam came up the stairs to apologize after an argument and found him sitting on the side of the bed holding the map.

"Are you looking at that map again?" she asked. "It will do you no good. People have been looking for that gold for ages."

"Miriam," Josiah glanced up with sad eyes, "maybe it is our only hope. I need to do something before we lose the farm."

Miriam, a coy expression coming over her face, suggested, "You could visit Simpson up in Manchester. I'm sure he would help us out."

Josiah smiled and rose from the bed. "I do need help to do the digging and financial backing."

"That's not quite what I had in mind," she said as she gathered her skirts to sit on the bed in his stead.

As if in meditation, Josiah said, "I haven't seen my oldest in many a season."

He looked down at his wife and placed his hand on her shoulder. "I will go up to Manchester and pay him a visit." While there, he thought, he would interest Simpson in finding some of this gold he had heard so much about.

Early next morning, Josiah slipped the map under his vest and departed the bedroom. He left the house as he did every morning, but this time he asked his servant Eb to hitch up the wagon. Eb would go with him and do the driving. Miriam stood at the door of their home, shaking her head and praying for their safe return. His teenage daughters Rhoda and Miriam wouldn't let him go without hugs and goodbyes and waving their handkerchiefs. It would be a hundred and fifty mile journey. He would miss them.

Josiah called from the wagon to his youngest son Josiah Junior, "Take care of the farm until I return." He was now as tall as his father.

"I will, Father," he said, waving his hand, vigorously.

Eb, a tall negro who had run away from his master in Virginia, drove the wagon so that it rocked back and forth from one rut to another on the dirt road. Sometimes the road cut through lush forest, sometimes between farmer's fields. They crossed many streams on their way, sometimes through shallows, often across little bridges. At night they rested the horses and bedded down in a dry place away from river mosquitoes. They ate corn dodgers and drank coffee before going to sleep.

One night Josiah had a dream. A tall Indian, wearing a feathered vest, appeared to him and told him he would need a seer to help him find the gold.

Breaking camp, the two men hitched the horses to the wagon, climbed up, and headed north, eating more corn dodgers along the way.

"Mizz Miriam know how to make good dodgers," Eb said with a smile.

"Eb?" Josiah asked, as they neared the end of their journey. "Do you know what a seer is?"

Passing the south end of a long hill adjacent to the Simpson Stowell farm, a lone Indian, wearing a vest of eagle feathers, watched from the top of it.

"Yes'm. He's one who's gots the stone. He can see things with the stone." Eb clicked his tongue at the horses.

"I had a strange dream." Josiah stared ahead. "I am supposed to seek a man with a stone." He turned to Eb, laughed, and asked, "You know anyone with a stone?"

"Know 'bout one." Eb turned his head for a second to look at Josiah and then back to face the road.

"Who?"

"They is a Joe Smiff in these parts. Work wiff his pa ta find things. He's ta one wiff da key. People al'o say he see visions."

"Hmmm." Josiah rubbed his chin. "I have heard of him. Yes. He's that eccentric fellow … claims to have seen God. The minister at home warns that he is of the devil. Even so, I may have need of him. People find water with diviners, why not gold?"

Near evening, Josiah's wagon rolled into Simpson's yard. A dog barked and children came running to see who was there. The house, not so large as the mansion back home, was filled with grandchildren, and Josiah loved that. By the time he descended from the wagon he was surrounded by children and dogs, and Simpson came from behind the house to greet him.

"Father!" Simpson grabbed Josiah and gave him a healthy hug. "It is wonderful you are here. I dreamed you were coming."

Eb hee-hawed to see such a sight … a family gathering. He and another farmhand put

the horses away.

Simpson's wife Mary put on another plate, and they all had a feast of pork and bean stew and corn bread. Later, Mary took two more plates out to the barn to feed the workers.

After dinner, Simpson and Josiah pulled out their pipes, sat by the fireplace and smoked.

"Son," Josiah said, pensively, "you know those tales of Indian gold we used to speak of when you were young, and we made a game of it?"

"Yes." Simpson smiled as he remembered. "We had a lot of fun pretending to look for gold and treasure we imagined to be hidden somewhere on the farm."

"Take a look at this." Josiah pulled the map from his vest.

Simpson peered at it as he leaned toward the oil lamp on the side table. "That is all the way down toward Harmony, is it not?"

"It is." Josiah blew out a puff of smoke. It reminded him of his dream. "I'm thinking of hiring a crew and digging about the place. If there is an old Spanish mine there with hidden treasures, I will find it."

"How's the farm doing, Father?" Simpson pointed to Josiah with his pipe.

"Not good." Josiah blew smoke out his nose. "That is why I came. I am hoping you are in a place where you can help."

Simpson thought a moment. "I have a small bundle. I have thought of investing it. There are a lot of people in this area also searching for gold. I thought of using that money to do a little searching myself." He took a puff from his pipe and let out the smoke along with his words. "The Smiths, for example, across that hill you passed driving up here. They have helped a lot of people to search for gold. Mr. Smith and his son Joseph ..."

"Yes," Josiah interrupted. " I have heard of them." Josiah took another puff and made a huge cloud.

Simpson blew smoke into his father's cloud and broke it up. "You had ought to be careful, though if you want their help. Joe preaches a strange doctrine."

"How so?" Josiah noticed that Mary had left a plate of little cakes within his reach along with a cup of tea. He helped himself. "I mean," he said between bites, "what does he preach?"

"That these Indians around here are of the Lost Tribes of Israel." He took up a cup of tea for himself. "He says their forefathers followed the teachings of Jesus." He laughed, almost spilling his tea. He took a sip and said, "Of course, Jesus was in the *old* world, and no one knew about him until he was born."

"That is all well and fine," Josiah said, "as long as he has the power to find things."

Simpson set down his cup and relit his pipe. "He and his father helped us dig a well. He knew exactly where the water was and bragged about it. Said all he had to do was to ask of God, of all things." He puffed on his pipe and it glowed like a coal from the fire. "There

are a lot of diviners in the state, but I have heard of none that go about perverting the Bible."

The parlor was filling with smoke. Mary, who sat nearby darning socks, coughed.

"I will go over," Josiah emphasized, pointing with the mouthpiece of his pipe, "and introduce myself and see if he is interested in some work." Josiah picked up another cake and recognized it as a honey cake covered with sugar. "I don't have any money to pay him."

"We all are farmers, are we not? We get paid at the end of harvest. I am sure he understands that."

"Yes. I am intending to pay the fellows I hire," he said as he waved the map in the air, "the silver coins or gold ingots the mine contains."

"If that be the case, then perhaps I may join you."

"I will welcome your company." Josiah slipped the map into his vest. He had thought to ask his son for a loan on the farm, but the conversation went sideways again.

"Let us go up directly in the morning. I know the lad and will introduce you."

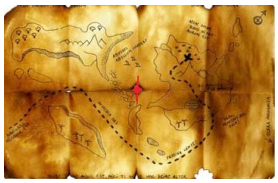
"Thank you." As Josiah reached for another cake, he turned to his daughter-in-law. "Mary?"

"Yes, Father Stowell." She put her hands down into her lap and turned to face him.

"Mary, this cake is fit to feed a king." With that, he popped the cake into his mouth and smiled.

"Thank you," Mary said coyly.

Josiah smiled and took another.



After a breakfast of beans, eggs, bacon, and cornbread, Simpson took his father and his servant Eb on a long walk along the main road that between Manchester and Palmyra. It passed through forest and hills and farmer's fields. The east wind blew frosty air in from the sea, but there was yet the twittering of birds and trickling of fountains. The breath of the moose settled over the land, turning the leaves to red and yellows. It was the beginning of Autumn.

By the time of the noon day when the sun was beating down upon them, they arrived at a humble log farmhouse and barn. Chickens ran loose, a dog barked, and when Simpson opened the gate, it creaked. As they walked toward the door, a man came out and smiled. He was of medium build and height, graying at the temples.

"Simpson," he nodded. He offered his hand. Simpson shook it. "This must be your father, Mr. Stowell." He shook Josiah's hand. "I can see the resemblance." He turned to the black man. "And who is this giant of a man?"

“He is my servant, Eb, Mr. Smith,” Josiah said, using his palm to introduce the third man. “He is a freeman.”

“I am glad to hear it.” Father Smith waved his hand toward the door. “Won’t you come in? I think we can find chairs for everyone.”

Eb stayed in the doorway.

“You too, Eb.” Father Smith ushered in the black man then turned to his wife.

“Mother? Do we have some refreshment for these gentlemen?”

“Yes, Father. We still have coffee left. I will fetch it.”

Father Smith pulled out four chairs from the table. As everyone sat down, he asked, “What brings you here, Mr. Stowell?”

Just then a tall young lad came walking through the front door.

“Mr. Stowell,” Father Smith said as he rose, “This is my son, Joseph.”

Josiah rose and shook the boy’s hand, surprised that the young man who had the reputation of a gold digger had such a bright spirit about him. Joseph pulled up a wooden box and sat on its end while the other two sat back down.

Simpson’s face reflected no emotion, but he looked on as an uninterested bystander, even though Joseph reached over and shook his hand and then Eb’s. Eb smiled, showing all his shining white teeth, as though he had seen something beautiful for the first time.

“So, Joseph,” Josiah said, interested in looking at Joseph’s face. “What have you been doing this fine morning?”

“I was in the barn reading the Holy Book,” Joseph said, folding his hands. Simpson laughed, and Joseph retorted, “It is peaceful in there.” Simpson nodded.

Josiah came to the point. “I have come across a mine, and I need to hire a few people. I know that you and Joe are experienced in looking for gold and such things.” He pulled out the map and handed it to Father Smith.

Father Smith looked at the map, turned it over and handed it to his son. Joseph glanced at it and gave it back to Josiah.

“Not to say he is lazy,” Father Smith laughed, rocking Joseph’s knee with his hand. “He is not, but right now we are not interested in such things. What we need is regular work.”

“Yes, Mr. Stowell,” Joseph said, smiling widely. “What Father means is that we are more in need of taking care of our farm.”

Father Smith laughed and rubbed his fist across Joseph’s skull, making him laugh and duck his head.

“I need several men to help with the digging. That may help you with financing your farm, if that is what you need.” Josiah thought if he could just get Joseph to come with him he could persuade him to use his key to find the gold.

Father Smith smiled, placed his elbows on his knees and folded his hands so he could look deeply into Josiah's eyes. "Yes. Joseph is expert in finding things. But we have decided to retire from that business."

"You know any others that might be in need of work, Mr. Smith?" Josiah asked, rubbing his chin.

"There is a tree in the center of town where workers gather to see if any will hire them," Father Smith said with assurance. "I am sure you will find some men there."

"Thank you," Josiah said jovially.

Simpson, whispered, "I could have told you that."

"I heard, Mr. Smith," Josiah said, trying to keep up the conversation, "that all of your sons are hard working individuals and would help a man in need at any time."

"That is true, Mr. Stowell. That is true. I am very proud of my sons. They are good young men." Father Smith put his arm around Joseph and directed a question to Josiah. "When are you leaving?"

"I only plan to stay a day or two." Josiah put his hands on his thighs as though he were ready to stand. "I will be surveying the area to see if I can find financing for this enterprise."

Simpson turned his head, for he had a grimace on his face. When he turned back, it was expressionless.

Mother Smith brought in cups of coffee with bread, cheese, and ham. Everyone thanked her for the refreshment.

After their small meal, Father Smith stood. "It is a fact we have work to get back to. My other sons are out clearing more land. I imagine they also are just finishing their midday meal which they took with them."

Josiah stood and shook Father Smith's hands with both of his. "I am sorry your boy will not be coming with us."

Josiah, after he had asked around for other diviners and those who were willing to work the mine, stopped by the Smith's a second time and was refused again. After meeting Joseph, he wasn't satisfied with the other diviners in the area. There were two of them, a woman and an older man. The woman was too headstrong, and the man downright evil. Josiah left disappointed. He did, however receive six hundred dollars from his son, Simpson, and so went ahead with his plans of digging for the mine. He returned home with a couple of farmhands he had picked up and found others near Harmony.

CHAPTER FOUR

After the first two diggings failed, Josiah returned to Manchester with Newel Knight, who, having a mill near Bainbridge, was looking for wheat or flour to help finance the mine. If they couldn't find wheat to grind, they could buy flour up north and sell it in Pennsylvania at a higher price. Josiah came along to visit the Smith farm to convince Joseph to help search for the Spanish mine. It was easy to get Joseph to come down with them because the Smith's fortunes had turned bitter. Their main bread winner, Joseph's brother Alvin, had died. The doctors treated his bilious colic with a solution of mercury and chlorine called calomel. It settled in his stomach with deadly results.

Because of social pressure, Lucy had to have a frame house. She thought all the women she was associated with looked down on her for living in a log cabin. Earlier that year, Alvin had gone to town to pay the mortgage and found that the man who was to collect it had died, so instead of paying the mortgage on the farm, they built Lucy a fine house. By doing this, they lost both the farm and their newly built home. They were expecting to reclaim the money from next year's wheat harvest, but the wheat failed. They only lived in their new home a couple of months before they had to move back into the log cabin. They found a buyer for the farm among their creditors. He was an investor and allowed them to remain on the farm, paying rent. Thus, they were in need of further employment.

Joseph became the new bread winner and had the responsibility to hire himself out to bring in immediate money. His father was not young anymore and felt that it was too late in life to make another venture on another farm. He became restless and went with his son and Josiah to Harmony to work at the mine.

As Josiah was leaving the Smith farm, he took Joseph aside. "And do please bring your stone. We will have need of it."

"Stone?" Joseph asked. "What stone?"

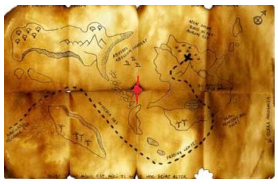
"Don't you have a stone? You know," Josiah jabbed Joseph with his elbow. He looked to see if he was being watched. "The key you use to find things," he whispered. "The one you use to have your visions."

"Oh." Joseph smiled and put his arm around Josiah who craned his neck to see the tall boy. "That stone. I always carry it with me."

Joseph put his left hand into his pocket and caressed the stone as he shook Josiah's hand with his right. "Maybe there is a plan God has for me in going with you."

"Meet me at my son's place in two days," Josiah said as he waved goodbye. "I will be able to take you back with me."

"We will do that," Joseph replied with a wink.



After waiting two days, Joseph and his father met Josiah at Simpson's farm in the early morning. Father Smith shook Josiah's hand as he walked up to the wagon. "I wish it were me helping you instead of the other way around."

Josiah smiled. "Think nothing of it." He glanced around and saw that everyone had brought their own provisions. He himself had the money he had come for. He stuffed it inside his vest and thanked his son, Simpson, giving him a heartfelt "Thank you," a handshake, and then a hug. Two more farm hands Josiah picked up in Palmyra at the hiring tree were also there. Simpson told his father to be sure and check to see if his uncles Calvin and Abishai, who lived in Bainbridge, would also agree to help him. He assured him that he planned to visit them and ask for whatever help they would be willing to give. He then said that all of his sons would have a share in the gold ingots, silver coins, or whatever they found in the mine. He told Father Smith that he would give him payment for the work out of what they discovered. They said their goodbyes with the wave of their hands.

Joseph and his father with the other men piled in back of the wagon with Eb again driving, clicking his tongue at the horses. Most of the men brought corn dodgers, small round baked corn breads, but Joseph and his father brought a bag of Johnny cakes Lucy Mack made, bits of boiled corn meal fried in bacon fat. Other forms of corn bread were brought as well. Simpson donated slabs of bacon to be fried over an open fire. Josiah brought the coffee.

The trip was uneventful for Josiah and Eb. They had made the journey several times over the years. All the scenery had been memorized. Joseph, on the other hand, was continually asked questions by the men concerning the rumors they had heard, and about his religious views.

"Are you a preacher then?" asked William.

"No, I am not," Joseph answered. "I know a lot about the Bible, and I believe that God has a work for me to do, but I, at this time, have no more authority to preach the gospel and to administer its ordinances, as do the ministers of the other churches around here."

William's voice became a staccato as the wagon went over several bumps in succession. "What do you mean they have no authority? They heard the call, went to college and, got a degree along with laying on of hands."

"They had not Peter, James, and John to lay their hands on them," Joseph said.

"They would wait until Christ comes before that would happen," William said in rebuke.

"Why do you go about trying to preach the Gospel if your not a preacher?" asked the one called Charles.

“What happens,” Joseph explained, “is that I share my beliefs because people corner me and ask me questions, as you two are now doing.”

“What do you believe, then?” Charles scratching his head, bewildered.

“I believe a man must believe in God and study the scriptures for himself.”

“You can read?” William asked.

“Yes,” Joseph said as the wagon ran over more bumps. “I went to school when I was young, like most people. I love education, but I have had to occupy my time with the labors of my hands.”

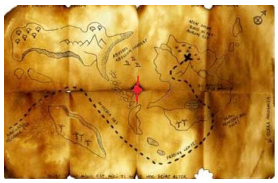
“I would not say that most people have gone to school, nor enjoy study, especially women,” Charles interjected.

“No,” William agreed. “Women do not need to go to school. They have their men to take care of them.”

“I am sorry to disagree with you, gentlemen.” Joseph paused to see their reactions. “I went to school with several girls who learned to read. One was particularly smart. She could out-figure anyone in the classroom.”

“Who was she?” Charles asked, picking his nose.

“My sister, Sophronia.” Joseph sat with his arms around his knees, wobbling back and forth with the wagon.



When it got too dark to drive, they stopped and built a campfire where more questions were asked.

“You know how to find gold?” Eb asked. “I hear you got a key to look with.”

“I do have a key, and it bothers my eyes some, but I would know more how to find the gold in someone’s heart,” Joseph responded. “Do you not think that is more important?”

Eb thought a moment and then smiled. “Oh. You mean the *goodness*.”

“Yes,” Joseph said. “The goodness.”

Charles, sipping coffee, interrupted. “People say you are in league with the Injuns and know where their gold is hidden.” He pointed at Joseph. “Is that true?”

“I have not met very many Indians since I was a little boy up in Vermont,” Joseph said, pushing his hat up. “there are a lot more Indians up north or out west … not around here anymore.”

William said, “This land used to be filled with Injuns when I was a little boy.”

“I am sure it was,” said Joseph. “It is a shame that God had to give their land to

another people."

"How come you know so much about the Indians?" Charles asked, stuffing his mouth with a corn dodger.

Joseph thought a moment as he sipped his coffee. "It is all found in the Holy Scriptures. Isaiah said that the Children of Israel would be scattered to all the lands of the earth for their iniquities … for rebelling against their god and going after idols. He said they would be on the isles of the sea, which I understand are not only the small islands found on the oceans, but the great continents also."

"How do you know these Injuns are Jews?" Eb asked. "They don't look like Jews."

"If you could see the remains of their once grand buildings," said Joseph, grabbing one of his Johnny cakes from the fire, "and temples, and how they dress in their robes and turbans, you may change your mind."

"How do you know all this?" Eb asked, getting out his pipe.

"I have seen in vision," Joseph winked, "how they brought with them the dress of the Arabs."

Charles lit his pipe, blowing a cloud of smoke across the fire. "There must be a lot of Injun gold buried around these parts."

"Yes,"Joseph said, taking another sip of coffee, "Since they didn't have banks, they buried their money, but those who didn't hide it up unto the Lord, the Lord cursed, and it will never be found again."

Charles, in a voice almost a whisper said, "I hear that their gold is watched over by Injun spirits."

"Yes," Joseph said. "It is."

After two nights of traveling, Josiah's homestead peaked above the hill and grew larger to the eyes of those in the wagon as they rode up a low slope. The road curved up to the front of the mansion.

"You three," Josiah said, turning around, "will find accommodations next to the barn." He pointed to an out building. "That's where Eb lives. He will take you over there.

Josiah stepped down from the wagon and headed for the front door where he was met by Miriam and the two girls. Eb clicked his tongue, and the horses headed for the barn.

Josiah spread his arms and ushered his three women into the house, saying, "Come in and let me show you what I have obtained." After they were all inside, he sent the colored maid away and pulled out the letter from his vest. "Mother, I have a gift for you. It is from Simpson." He handed the sealed letter to Miriam. She opened it and gasped. The girls

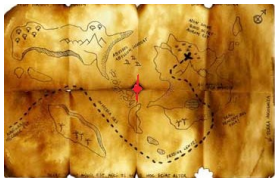
squealed like little pigs as they saw the bills drop out of the letter.

Miriam sat in her favorite rocking chair and asked “What is this? How much is there?” as she fanned herself with the letter.

Josiah stooped down to pick up the money. “Six hundred dollars.”

Miriam fanned herself a little more, and then pointed the letter at her husband. “Isaiah.” She called him by his other name when she wanted to say something important. “You will take that money and pay off our creditors.”

“The thought had crossed my mind,” he said as he stuffed the bills back inside his vest. “I told everyone they would be paid with the gold ingots or silver coins we find in the mine, so I do believe I can use this money to save our farm.” He reached over and squeezed her hand.



The next day Josiah traveled north to Bainbridge to the bank to pay his debts. Miriam wanted him to go the day before, but no matter what she said or threatened, he would take his rest. Now that he was debt free he felt he had the courage to look up his brothers, Calvin and Abishai, who lived near the town. He took his three new hirelings with him to back him up.

Both Calvin and Abishai became enthused about the mine and agreed to help finance the venture. Abishai’s son Elihu was there. He became interested enough to help with the digging. But having brothers finance anything usually turns sour, especially when the undertaking comes up empty handed. Although this was what happened, Josiah’s brothers did not blame him, but testified that Joe Smith put him up to the whole thing to defraud their brother out of money he said he owed him.

Josiah was ready to go down to Harmony, just over the border into Pennsylvania on the Susquehanna River. In South Bainbridge he ran into a couple more to add to his crew. One was Elihu, and the other was David Hale who lived in Harmony, but had been in the town on business for his father Isaac Hale. He was glad to have company on his way home. David tied his horse to the end of the wagon and joined them.

All the towns of Bainbridge, South Bainbridge, Colesville, and Harmony were located on or near the Susquehanna. The Stowell Farm sat between South Bainbridge and Colesville. It was a fifty mile ride to Harmony from there. They traveled along the river, making three crossings before they reached their destination. It took a day and an afternoon.

Near Harmony, they ran into a cold, miserable deluge that soaked them to the bone. Joseph and David paid it no mind, too busy in their conversation.

Harmony was located on the “big bend” of the Susquehanna where it came down from the north and swerved to the west. Much shipping occurred by boat along the river, which was a boost for the Harmony economy. Many shops sold anything a person would need.

The crew went to the camp which was just north of the town at a hill located on Josiah’s map near William Hale’s place. The men at the camp had started another hole. The new workers, besides the Smiths, were William Wiley and Charles Newton.

David Hale and Joseph had became good friends during the ride down, so David invited Joseph to stay with his family while doing the digging. William and Charles joined Joseph and David, as David said that his father was a Christian man and very hospitable. Most of the workers either lived at the camp or had found accommodations with others in the area. Josiah stayed with Newel Knight’s family, his business partner.

CHAPTER FIVE

When the citizens of Harmony heard rumors spread by store owners and workers of the digging outside of town, up Flat Brook beneath Oquago Mountain, many people became interested and made visits to the site, asking questions. From these visits, as well as from workers, a committee of people wanting to be associated with the mine met at the Knight home for a discussion and to draw up an affidavit. Of the people who came, those who actually signed the affidavit were: Isaac Hale, David Hale, Charles Newton, Joseph Smith Sr., Joseph Smith Jr., Peter Newton, Isaiah or Josiah Stowell, Calvin Stowell, who was eager to help his brother (there being many who were interested in digging for gold), and William Wiley.

They agreed to give Josiah Stowell, Calvin Stowell, and William Hale two-thirds of the gold ingots and silver coins, and Charles Newton, William Wiley, and the Widow Harper, one of the financiers who gave room and board to the workers, to take the other third for rent owed her. Then they decided to give Joseph Smith, Sen. and Joseph Smith Jr. two shares, that is, two elevenths of all property that may be obtained, the shares to be taken equally from each third. Seeing that John Shephard, Elihu Stowell, and John Grant went to a lot of the expense, not only to finance the venture but to labor with their own hands, equal shares in the mine were to be given to them out of each share after all the coins and ingots were obtained by the signers of the affidavit. After the mine opened, the expense would be equally borne by each of the proprietors.

When everyone was satisfied, the meeting was adjourned, and those not interested in coffee and conversation left.

Joseph was leaving with David Hale when Josiah asked him to stay. “I want you to meet Mr. Knight,” he said. Joseph’s father also stayed.

Josiah led Joseph by the arm to meet Newel Knight. “Mr. Knight,” Josiah said as he placed the two together facing each other, “this is Joseph Smith whom we held in conversation the night before.”

Newel shook Joseph’s hand while addressing Josiah. “This is the boy you said had keys to see invisible things?”

Josiah placed his hand on Joseph’s shoulder. “Yes sir. He has that reputation. He helped my oldest find water, and he has had a number of visions he can tell you about.”

Newel then ushered Joseph over to a group of chairs arranged around a low table. “Come and sit down. I would hear of your experiences with the spirits.”

Joseph sat across from Newel and was given a cup of coffee by Mrs. Knight.

“Josiah here,” Newel said with an upturned palm, “said you have seen a vision.”

“Yes, Mr. Knight.” Joseph took a sip of his coffee, “I have seen a vision, a quite remarkable one when I was a lad of fourteen.”

“People are saying,” Newel said, glancing at Joseph Sr. sipping his coffee and sitting next to his son, “that you saw the Divine Being.”

“I did, Sir, and have been hounded by people for so saying.”

Newel took a sip from his cup and sat it down. “What did you see?”

Joseph spent a few minutes telling his story of wanting to know which of the churches was right, reading from the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.* He went on to tell how he obtained the courage to pray aloud for the first time in his life and ask. He then made his plans and went to the woods where he knew he would be alone. He described the struggle he had with sin, which nearly overpowered him, and then the glorious rescue by a heavenly personage from within a beam of light.

“Did he say anything?” Josiah asked.

“He said that my sins are forgiven me and that I should join none of the churches hear about.” Joseph looked at Newel and Josiah who seemed to wait for more. “He also said that he had a work for me to do.”

“What work is that, Joseph?” came the voice of Simpson Stowell behind him.

Joseph turned and found Simpson and David Hale sitting together.

“The answer to that, Sir, is that I had to wait a few years to discover what it was he wanted me to do, as I was too young for that responsibility at the time,” Joseph answered. He turned half around in his chair so he could address both parties. “A few years after this heavenly vision, an angel named Moroni, an ancient prophet of God who had once lived in this land, and was now resurrected, came to me and showed me a record engraved on plates which had the appearance of gold. He said I was to translate that record.”

“Have you got the record, Joseph?” Newel asked.

“No, I do not.” Joseph paused. “I wait for the date. It is, I am sure, very soon. He will let me know. Although, I will be meeting him again come September.”

“Who is that?” Simpson asked, leaning forward.

“Moroni,” Joseph said as if it were inconsequential. “He will meet me at the place where the plates are hidden.”

Simpson turned to David. “Look at the king sitting on his throne. I would dethrone him as we did King George.” They both laughed, rose, and left the room, taking their ill mannered conversation with them.

Josiah saw in Joseph’s eyes a small trace of hurt, but it went away, leaving an aura of nobility in the youth. Chills passed through the old man’s back and neck. He had to take a deep breath. *This boy is not of this world,* he decided.

As the evening grew late, and the coffee cups and conversation became empty, having exhausted spiritualism, everyone rose and walked toward the door. As Josiah shook Joseph

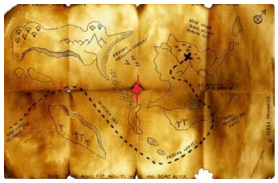
Sr.'s hand, he said, "You were unnaturally silent tonight, Sir."

"I like to listen to my son," he said, squeezing Josiah's hand. "He speaks for himself quite eloquently."

"Yes he does," Josiah agreed.

Newel Knight took Joseph Jr. aside. "I hope you will frequent our home. I will like very much to hear more of your views."

"I will be glad to do so, Sir," Joseph said, and left with his father to stay at the Hale's residence.



Before his homeward journey, Simpson visited a local tavern to obtain passage on a stage back to Palmyra and a morning meal to break his fast. After purchasing a ticket, he sat at the table to eat pork, navy beans, and cornbread with a mug of child's ale, an import from New York, which he was glad to get.

Behind him he heard, "I hear that Joe Smith is in town to dig for gold."

"Yep, I heard o'him," another man responded. "Toldt the preacher he seen God."

"I would like to get my hands on some of that gold." Eating utensils clinked against plates and a mug thudded against the table.

"What would ye do wif so much gold?" A slurping sound was heard.

"I would be rich like the man on the hill, I would."

"Why do rich men live on da hill?"

"So they can look down on all the poor folk."

After listening to the two cursing the rich, Joe Smith, and God in one breath for some time, Simpson wiped his mouth and turned around to join the conversation. "What about this Joe Smith?" he asked.

He faced two characters who looked like regular farm hands, not the filth one would find on the highways. The man who spoke more eloquently was tall and broad with well set hair, braided in the back. The other, short, thin, and balding with long hair past his shoulders, sat directly behind Simpson. He spoke first.

"Daaa … He be a rascal," he said, turning his chair half around. "He take himsel to be a big man, preachin' the Gospel, he says."

"No one has seen God," the larger man said. "He does not know the scriptures. It says that God is a spirit … and that no one has seen him except the Son."

"Yeah, no one," agreed the little scruffy man. "Seen 'im drunk onct." He gave out a squeaky little laugh. "Totally lights out. Makin' an uproar 'bout Christ and God bein'

amongst the savages."

"He has the whole countryside in a contest of words," Simpson said, "making arguments for and against strange doctrines, taking away the peace rightly established by the clergy."

"Da clergy all upset," the little man remarked. "Go ta church an' all ye hear now is how Joe Smith be in league wif der devil."

"He aught to be arrested," the big man insisted.

"But then," Simpson said, scratching his two day old beard, "there is the question of the gold."

"He know where ta gold tis." The little man grinned, crossing his legs and arms and squirming.

"Yes," Simpson said. "He told me there is Indian gold is up north between Palmyra and Manchester. That is near my farm."

"Glory be!" The little man rubbed his hands together. "Ye know the man?"

"He and his father are my neighbors." Simpson smiled broadly, squinting.

"Are you returning to your farm?" The large man asked. "I saw you at the desk for the stage line."

"Yes," Simpson replied with a nod. "I am returning home this morning."

"And will ye be lookin' fer ta gold?" asked the little man.

"If you want the gold," Simpson put his forefinger against his nose, "I would keep an eye on this Joe Smith. Watch him. He is very deceitful, but he will lead you to it."

After discussing the bad character of the infamous Joe Smith, the three arose and introduced themselves. Shaking hands, Simpson declared his name, "Simpson Stowell." The big man was Samuel Lawrence, and the other, Willard Chase. They agreed that if Simpson was ever in town again they would meet and finish their conversation. With that, the stage driver called "All aboard!" and Simpson was out the door.

CHAPTER SIX

The mine beneath Oquago Mountain used the water of Flat Brook to clean the tailings. The stream, diverted into a sluice, washed down buckets of soil and rock into a jig made of wire mesh which was continually shaken by two men. The top of the sluice was near the hole in the hillside where the diggers threw in their tailings. Another sluice came down from the brook above and to the north of the mine to feed the first one. The angled sluice made a triangle with the brook.

Joseph spent his time digging in the hole which went horizontally into the hill and turned slightly to the south. He used a pick to dislodge rock that got in the way. A couple of men walked up and down the sluice, chucking the larger rocks to make sure the water flowed freely. Josiah often picked these up from the ground and examined them for gold or silver, then toss them and waggle his head in disappointment. The shakers traded off with the sluice patrol, for they claimed theirs was the hardest job. They, along with Josiah, examined the minerals for gold and shoveled out the tailings.

Several holes had been dug into the hill. Josiah would consult the map and change his mind where to dig, and when the Spanish mine was not forthcoming, he would consult Joseph.

“What does your stone tell you, Joseph?” he often asked in private.

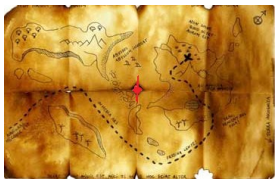
Joseph would reach into his pocket, fumble the stone, walk around, spying out the landscape, and upon intuition alone, would say, “Dig here,” pointing to an outcropping or a place between two outcroppings of stone. The whole contraption of the two sluices would have to be taken down and moved.

Evenings were spent around the campfire for those who stayed near the mine. Others traveled in Josiah’s wagon back into town to the Hale’s place or to Widow Harper’s. There were times that Joseph stayed at camp instead of going to the Hale’s. He said he loved the lively singing and telling of tall tales. There were always wrestling matches in which Joseph was champion. He obtained a reputation of amiableness and comradery and great strength. Josiah told everyone that it was because Joseph’s heart was pure.

About the middle of the month, Josiah began to have doubts and asked Joseph, “Are you sure there is gold here?”

Joseph would then say, “Brother Stowell, I have pled with God much, and he assures me that there is gold here … only, I do not believe it to be a mine of any sort. It was buried by the Indians of long ago.”

Josiah responded, “Then I am sure to find it … even if I have to dig the whole mountain down.”



One day David Hale's sister, Emma came with him to behold the mine. After David introduced her, he told Josiah, "I could not keep her away. She had to see it for herself … noticing all the men coming and going every day."

Josiah approached Emma. "You are a very curious young girl."

"I wanted to see how my brother is spending his time. I am sure his wife would like to know also." She drew a striking picture with her ruffled blue dress and long dark curls caressing the sides of her neck.

"We came across information that gold or silver is to be found in this hill," Josiah said with a wave of his arm. "We even have a diviner to help us locate it."

"Joseph?"

"You have met him?"

"I see him every day." Emma smiled coyly. "We cannot prevent ourselves from getting into each other's way."

"Watch your step around here," David warned. "It is dangerous. I suggest you watch from a distance over by the trees."

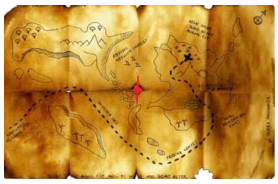
"I can take care of myself. Thank you."

"I will not be able to take care of you, Emma," David explained. "I have to go to work."

Josiah said he would watch her, which he did all during the morning. David took her back to their home at lunch time. But there was another that came to be with her and Josiah. Joseph walked amiably along with them, showing her around the site, warding her off dangerous places such as the shaker. When Josiah had to leave to see about a mishap, Joseph took her by the hand, helping her over the rocks lest she fall, or showing her the holes that had been dug. The two eventually wound up with David at the buggy. Josiah returned, but stood aloof and watched.

David confronted Joseph. "I will help my sister into the buggy, sir," he said gruffly. "You would be better getting back to your tailings."

Josiah could hear Emma talking rather sharply as they drove away.



Emma became a common sight at the mine. She didn't come every day, but when she could, she was there at lunchtime with Joseph. They walked around holding hands, and she pointed out this plant or that one, talking incessantly. Eventually they would eat lunch and then leave in the buggy together. Joseph would drive her home and come back alone. When she came with one of the servants instead of her brother, Joseph helped her in and out of the buggy. Josiah could see a dear relationship forming. He worried about the woman being out in the cold, as it was deep into November. He reasoned though that love has a way of warming the air.

Josiah and Emma also formed a friendship. When Joseph had to leave on some errand, she spent her time with Josiah and talked with him.

"What do you think of Joseph?" Emma asked as she and Josiah strolled along the brook.

"He has proved to be a man of integrity, though abnormally spiritual," Josiah said as he helped Emma to cross on stepping stones a little stream flowing into the brook.

"What do you mean abnormal, Mr. Stowell?"

"It is not that he has his head in the clouds. No, he is quite practical when it comes to the vicissitudes of life." They entered a small grove of saplings which filtered the sunlight, speckling their clothes and faces. "Joseph is noble in some ways, but has strange ideas which makes a Christian either cringe or stand in awe."

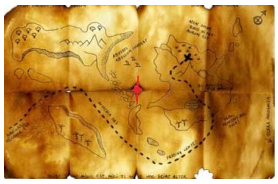
"Do you mean his vision in which he was visited by God?" Emma stood still and breathed the crisp air, holding her gloved hands together near her heart.

"Yes," Josiah replied. "There have been people, such as Cotton Matther, who have been looking for a prophet of God for near two hundred years now. Some have said that the modern churches have no authority to administer the gospel and its ordinances and look forward to a restoration from God. Has he talked to you about his visions?"

"Like his knowledge of the ancestors of the present savages who once inhabited this country?"

"Yes." Josiah slipped his cold hands into his coat pockets.

"He said they were once a highly civilized society."



On another day, the question of Joseph's Indian gold became the subject of conversation.

Josiah told Emma, "When I asked about the Indian gold he knew of, he told me it is more than gold, that it is the word of God written on gold plates. It was written by prophets of God, just like the Holy Bible, only these prophets were Jews that were scattered to this land of America. You see, the people of Israel were scattered to all the lands of the Earth, he said, even here. But they rejected their god and degenerated into savages. Their record was written on gold because gold does not tarnish. It had to last for several hundred years to reach us. He said that he will translate it by the gift and power of God. That is what the angel told him." Josiah paused and stared at Emma. "Do you believe that?"

A tear formed on Emma's cheek. She sniffed, wiped her face with a handkerchief, and said, "I do … with all my heart."

They continued their walk until they reached the buggy waiting for her.

"You love him, Emma?" Josiah asked, taking her hand.

"Some people as you and I cannot help but love him, Mr. Stowell."

"But with you, my dear girl, it is more than that, is it not?"

She smiled, and Josiah helped her into the buggy. He waved as she left.

On another occasion when Emma visited Josiah the conversation took a difficult turn. Joseph had proposed marriage, and Emma was heart sick with the decision she had to make.

"Do you not love him, Emma?" Josiah asked.

"Yes," she said, turning her head, "but I cannot marry the man, Mr. Stowell."

"And why not?"

Emma faced Josiah with flames in her eyes. "Mr. Stowell! I cannot set aside my family relationships. I honor their opinions. David has strictly forbidden me to marry a person of such low estate, and that is that." She crossed her arms and turned her back on him.

Josiah gently turned her around. "My dear. I do not want to interfere with your family. But why are they so against Joseph? I cannot understand. They can see what a decent boy he is."

Through her tears, Emma said, “They call him a liar and a deceiver. They say that his foolish ideas and visions are from the devil. All the preachers say so.”

Josiah took her hands and pressed them against his heart. “I know, Dear. My son, Simpson, also calls him a deceiver and has warned me against him, but I cannot believe that. In your innermost soul, what do you believe?”

Emma’s face became radiant. She raised her chin slightly and said, “That he speaks the truth.”

“Then what else is there?”

Emma pulled away from Josiah. “There is my family.”

She returned to her buggy and left.

Neither Joseph’s pleadings nor Josiah’s could dissuade Emma’s decision to not marry the visionary man.

CHAPTER SEVEN

There came a day of reckoning. It was a blustery day. A storm had moved in, thrashing the men with rain. Everyone either stood in the holes of the earth or in the oilcloth tents, the workers saying that it was the Indian spirits that had stopped them. Josiah was depressed of heart. He stood with Joseph at the door of the tent peering out, holding his overcoat around him to keep warm.

“What shall I do, Joseph?” he asked. “You promised me gold, and all we have for our labors is mud.” He turned around to face his friend. “What does the Lord say to you? Will he lead you to the gold today?”

“Josiah. Have I not warned you that digging for gold is beneath a man of your stature?” Joseph put his hand on Josiah’s shoulder. “I think the Lord has warned you enough.”

“Ask him one more time. Will you Joseph?”

Joseph retired to an empty corner of the tent and prayed. The men in the tent became quiet. For a moment, it seemed that the tent turned into the Tabernacle in the Wilderness of the ancient Israelites. The Spirit of God burned in Josiah’s heart.

Joseph rose and walked over to Josiah, placing his hand again on Josiah’s shoulder. “The Lord has told me that there is gold here, but that it is his to give or to hold back, and that the gold he has for you is his word which is written upon the gold plates up near Palmyra. He said that his word will come forth from Palmyra from me to you in the form of a book, and that if you accept of it, you will be led to salvation, and that Josiah, is gold enough. Is it not?”

With tears flowing from his eyes, he admitted that it was.

The next morning, Josiah struck camp and put the tools and tents up for sale. He promised the men that worked for him that he would use the money from the sale as well as his own to pay them. It was agreed by most of them, but there were others that turned against him and complained to the authorities. One demanded the map, and Josiah gave it up willingly. He repented of ever thinking it could save him.

Josiah took Joseph back home to work for him. Joseph Sr. said goodbye and returned to his farm up north. Josiah paid his way. Both men had to prepare the ground for winter wheat.

Josiah could see a joy come into Joseph’s countenance as he worked on the farm. Working on the mine had eventually made him become morose. Now, Josiah could see

Joseph's natural self. He became a joyful comrade to all the field hands and the family.

Josiah's son and daughters welcomed Joseph, but especially the daughters who continually flirted with him.

Josiah could see that Joseph enjoyed the company of his daughters, but in the back of his mind, the old man had not forgotten sweet Emma. One day at dinner, Josiah had occasion to take a sharp word with the girls. He knew in his heart that they were not right for Joseph. It was the Hale girl that would be a better wife.

Dinner consisted of turkey and all the dressings, beans, turnips, pumpkin with cinnamon and sugar, bread and other sweets and pickles, plus a large smoked ham. The celebration was a nice harvest, a good home, and no gold mine.

Joseph imitated a minister near his home. "My Dee'er Sir. Me thinks upon the night afore past …" His face became hilarious to the group as he contorted it, coughed, and re-created the minister drinking out of a bottle. The girls couldn't eat because of the excess of laughter.

Josiah became upset. "Rhoda! Miriam! Please. This is not a public house. Let us enjoy our dinner and our company with congeniality, but with soberness."

The girls bowed their heads, and each one said, "Yes, Father." But Rhoda began giggling. She constrained herself, but smiling, asked, "Please forgive me, Father."

Joseph also said, "Please forgive my frivolity. It is one of my greatest weaknesses."

"I forgive all three of you," said Josiah, stirring the gravy boat. "I am glad that we are all happy."

Miriam, the mother, said, "Josiah, it is a jovial time in our lives. We should be rejoicing. Although," and she looked at Joseph, "we need not do it at the expense of others."

Joseph nodded his head and smiled.

Josiah looked at his daughters and raised an eyebrow. They went on with their conversations, but his thoughts were with Emma, hoping that Joseph would somehow get back with her.

During the last three months of the year Joseph went to school with Josiah Junior, but in September, he left to go back to his father's farm. He said that he had an appointment with the angel Moroni. He told the Stowells that ever since Moroni first appeared to him, he met with him each year at the place where the records were buried on the twenty second of September. So, when Emma showed up unexpectedly at the Stowell home, he was not there.

Josiah was disappointed. "My dear Emma," he greeted her at the door. "How good to see you. But I am afraid that Joseph has gone back to Manchester."

She greeted Josiah with a kiss on the cheek as she entered and shook Miriam's hand. "Can I not visit a friend just for himself?"

"Welcome," Josiah said. "Come in and warm yourself."

They escorted Emma to the fireplace in the parlor. Miriam took her coat and gloves. As she sat in the soft chair Miriam offered her, Josiah asked, "Where is David, your brother? Did you come alone?"

"I told my dear pet that I can take care of myself. Besides, he didn't have the time to drive me all the way up here. We had a slight difference of opinion, but I won. So here I am."

Emma had a nice visit with the Stowells. She stayed the week, getting to know the family. The girls were only cordial. They acted a bit cold towards her, especially when she talked about Joseph.

On the day Emma left for home, she and Josiah strolled toward the barn. He told her, "Don't pay them any mind when they tease you or give you a cold shoulder. They consider Joseph to be a proper suitor. They are so jealous with each other that it is hard sometimes to have peace in my own home. They are constantly quarreling over him."

"I understand the female heart," Emma answered. "It is hard when one is afraid of being a relict."

Josiah paused, took Emma's hands in his, and with frosty breath asked, "Do you still love Joseph?"

Emma smiled and nodded, then sighed. "I don't know what you expect I can do."

"Marry him, Emma." He bent his head and peered into her eyes.

"You know I cannot do that." She frowned, turned her head and bit her lip.

"I know that you can. You want to. So do it."

"How can I?" She stood stiffly and tense. "You know my family's stand on that."

Josiah took her arm and smiled. The two friends walked into the barn arm in arm. It was a bit warmer inside due to the decomposing of the horse dung whose acrid smell battled the sweet smell of leather and fresh hay. Eb made her carriage ready. Before Josiah helped her up to the seat, he put his arm around her like a father would and said, "You just return to our happy home soon. Joseph will be here then. You talk with him and tell him how you feel. I will help you two from that point on."

The family stood on the porch of the house for a moment, waved as Emma left, and hurried back inside.

Joseph arrived at the Stowell farm in a sleigh with jingle bells attached to the horse. It

was snowing, adding to the foot of snow already down. Everyone came out to greet him, even the farm hands from the barn. The girls didn't even bother with a cape to cover their shoulders, they were so happy to see him. Josiah immediately sent a message to Emma to come and visit.

When Emma showed up in her buggy, it was a sunny Sunday afternoon, and the snow was melting enough to make black tracks up to the barn. The snow was almost blinding. She met Josiah at the barn who led the horse inside to Eb who took charge of it.

"Whew!" exclaimed Emma. "The sun is bright enough, is it not?"

"You have to squint a lot," Josiah said as he helped Emma down.

"I have heard of people wearing dark spectacles." She gave Josiah a kiss on the cheek. "Maybe that is what we need this day."

"I am sure."

Josiah took her by the hand to escort her to the house when Joseph entered the barn.

"Emma," he said cordially, tipping his hat.

"Joseph," she said in greeting.

Josiah thought a moment. "Oh, Joseph. Will you be coming in for an early dinner?"

"I told Eb I would help him repair the wagon. We almost had to turn back this morning from Church."

Eb stepped up. "The wagon is finished, Joseph."

"Then that settles it." Josiah put his arms around Emma and Joseph. "We will all have an early dinner. I am sure Emma needs some refreshment after this long and arduous journey." He looked at Joseph. "And she could use some jovial company."

As they approached the house, Emma and Joseph looked as though they were angry with each other, but they were only squinting.

At dinner, Miriam and Rhoda were disheartened as they stared at Joseph and Emma. They saw the love in their eyes as they looked at each other. They sighed as they ate their beef and cabbage.

Joseph and Emma spent time with each other every day she was there. They strolled through the orchard, picking apples, or sometimes they sat beside the barn on barrels enjoying the warmth of the sun, speaking about gospel topics.

Joseph didn't get much work done that week, but Josiah explained to others that work was slow in the winter months.

When Joseph was needed either in the barn or the field, Josiah tried to persuade

Emma to marry Joseph. She wept many times. But when she was confronted with both Joseph and Josiah, all she could do was look at Joseph softly and not respond. It took three days of this confrontation for her to finally consent.

When it was time to leave, Joseph said he would go back with her and ask her father one more time. As they left, Josiah had high hopes they would return to him husband and wife.

How Josiah persuaded Emma to marry Joseph was a miracle lost in the annals of history. The only thing we can count on is that Emma's testimony of the American prophet, given her upon the wings of the Spirit, is what turned her heart. She and Joseph appeared at the door of Josiah's mansion in the middle of a rainy January 1827.

It was Josiah that opened the door to them.

"Josiah," Joseph asked, covering Emma with a blanket to keep the rain off, "will you help us get married?"

"Come in! Come in out of the rain." Josiah ushered the couple inside and took the wet blanket, handing it to Miriam.

Joseph and Emma were ushered into the parlor and seated beside a warm, raging fire.

"I must have the news,"Josiah prodded as he sat across from the shivering couple. "What happened with your father and the rest of the family?"

"When Joseph asked the family for my hand," Emma said as she was handed a warm cup of coffee. "Thank you, Miriam." She turned back to Josiah. "David was upset," She glanced at Joseph who took her hand. "Jesse was more agreeable, but Father was dead set against it. But being a Christian man, he offered Joseph work, and said he could stay the night in the house, but that he would have to move and stay with one of my brothers the next day."

Miriam sat next to her husband and asked, "Then what happened? How did you wind up back here?" while their two daughters Miriam and Rhoda tipped-toed down the stairs halfway to listen.

Joseph responded, "I came to Emma's room after everyone had retired. I dare not knock for fear of waking someone. I whispered her name and she opened to me."

"I was distressed and could not go to sleep," Emma continued the story. "As I sat on my bed in thought, I was moved to approach the door. I thought I might go to Joseph's room, but I dare not. I stood at the door for a long time with my hand on it. Then I heard his voice and opened the door."

"And?" Josiah asked anxiously.

Joseph smiled. "We looked at each other, and without speaking, nodded our heads. We each got dressed and met downstairs, then went out to the barn as quietly as possible. I readied the buggy, we boarded, and here we are. She brought a change of clothes that are still in the buggy."

"Is the buggy in the barn?" Josiah asked.

“Yes,” said Joseph.

“Then we will wait until the morning to fetch it.” Josiah turned to his wife. “Miriam, would you find Emma a bed? Joseph can sleep with the men in the outbuilding.”

“He will do no such thing,” Miriam said. “He can sleep on a pallet here by the fire.”

There was a patter of naked feet running up the stairs. Miriam smiled and then placed her hands on Joseph’s who still held Emma’s hands. “My dear, are you in need of refreshment before you retire?”

“Thank you, Miriam,” she said. “I could use a cup of tea if you have that.”

“Yes, coffee is not good late at night.”

Miriam went to the kitchen.

“You will be all right, my heartsake?” Joseph asked.

Emma nodded.

The two lovers kissed, and Joseph stood.

Josiah also rose. “I will take you to Reverend Tarble in the morning. I have previously spoken to him about a dear couple I know, and he has agreed to marry you … if that is agreeable to you both?”

Joseph peered into Emma’s eyes, and they both nodded their heads.

Josiah walked Joseph to the stairs. “I will show you the cupboard where we have extra blankets.”

“Thank you, sir. We are in your debt.”

“Think nothing of it. We love the both of you.”

Next morning, Emma and Joseph were married in Zachariah Tarble’s home next to his church in South Bainbridge. It was January eighteenth.

Joseph was in his work clothes. Emma was in a flower patterned calico dress she wore on weekdays with a dark cape and bonnet. The ceremony was solemn, the preacher’s voice, monotone. Emma said she would give herself to Joseph and love him in health and in sickness. Joseph said he would take her to himself with the same promise of love. Each said “I do” to the promise of “until death do you part.” The preacher’s wife stood as witness. She was not tearless, and expressed, “What a lovely couple.” All involved signed the marriage record, Josiah paid the bill, and Josiah led his newlyweds back out into the cold.

On the way back to the Stowell farm, Josiah asked. “What will you do now?”

“We can’t go back to my father … not just yet. He will not understand,” Emma

replied.

"We will go to Manchester," Joseph said. "Father needs help on the farm I am sure."

"That is settled," Josiah said, as he clicked his tongue at the horse, glancing at the newlyweds. "What will ye, that I do with this buggy?"

"I am ashamed," Emma sighed, her breath steaming in the air. "Will you return it to my father, Mister Stowell?"

Josiah smiled. "I will have my son take it today. Eb can follow in our wagon."

"I am afraid, Josiah," Joseph said, "that your wagon will be in use today."

"That is right, Joseph. I had forgotten."

"I will take Emma down to Newel Knight's home," Joseph suggested. "Perhaps we can get him to accompany us to Manchester. He often has work up in those regions."

Emma and Joseph did travel to the Knight's home, and Newel took them all the way to the Smith farm.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Josiah hadn't seen Joseph and Emma since the day they were married. As he frequented the Knight's mill for flour, Josiah received word from Joseph through Newel Knight. Joseph and Emma were doing fine and he had put his back to farming. Come next fall, he would receive the plates of gold from the angel Moroni. He told Newel that it would be September twenty second, and Newel suggested to Josiah they travel to Manchester and visit the Smith family at that time. He could arrange to have business in Rochester. Perhaps they would be able to get a peek at the plates.

When the day came, both Newel and Josiah were elated. They bundled themselves against the raw cold, put the supplies and tent in the back of Newel's wagon, and boarded.

Josiah asked, "Do you not feel the weight of this moment upon your soul?"

"Yes, Josiah. I do … very much so." As Newel took the reins, he added, "I feel chills down my spine and my mind enlightened by the Spirit." He slapped the horses with the reins, and they were off.

Coming up from Manchester, on the Canandaigua Road, Josiah and Newel passed a long hill parallel to the road. They noticed an old Indian running down the face of the hill. He was wearing a feathered vest and a lone feather in his hair. He waved them down.

Newel brought the horses to a standstill, and Josiah leaned over, asking the old man, "What is it, sir? What is the cause of your agitation?"

Josiah expected the old man to be out of breath, but he spoke in a relaxed manner. "Tell Joseph he must protect the plates at all costs. God will require it at his hand or he will be destroyed."

Josiah turned to Newel, who shrugged his shoulders, and then back to the Indian, but he was not there. They looked to see if he had run back up the hill, but there was nothing, only a lone eagle above, screeching and flying in circles.

"What did it all mean?" Newel asked, taking up the reins again.

"Was it the spirit guarding the records Joseph talked about?" Josiah's eyes went wide, and his face dripped sweat in the cold air.

Newel slapped the horses with the reins and the wagon lurched ahead. He cleared his throat and said, "I dare not say, lest the spook appear again."

The Smiths welcomed Josiah and Newel with open arms at the farm. Father Smith opened the door, giving a cry of surprise. Lucy and Joseph rose from their supper. The two guests were embraced by both Josephs, and Lucy made room at the table for the two guests. Carlos was the only other boy there. He smiled from the other side of the table. Then Josiah spotted Emma and sat by her.

“How are you doing, Emma?” Josiah asked, taking her hands in his.

“As well as can be expected in crowded circumstances,” she said, “and the excitement of what is to happen tomorrow.”

“Then we are not too late.” Josiah turned to Lucy and said, “Thank you,” as she placed potato stew on his plate.

Joseph sat by Josiah. “We are filled with anticipations enormous.”

“I expect,” Newel said from across the table, sitting between Emma and Carlos, “that everything is prepared?” He commenced eating his stew, his eyes on Joseph.

“We have been waiting for the Lord’s answer, dear Newel,” Joseph said, “and now that you are here to witness, and perhaps give support, things are in place for the great event.”

No one knew of the agitation in Father Smith’s mind until the next morning at breakfast.

“Where is Joseph?” he asked. “I want him to eat breakfast with me!”

Lucy served him his bacon, bread and milk. “Shouldn’t he be eating with his wife? You have kept those two apart for too many days. Let them be together this morning of all mornings.”

Joseph, hearing his father, came from another room and sat down at the table.

“Naw,” Father Joseph intoned, “git back to your wife. I’m a selfish old man. Even though I need your comfort, you are the man of the house now that Alvin is gone. Go on. Emma is waiting.”

Joseph rose slowly from the table with a pitiable look on his face, turned, and walked across the front room to the bedroom.

Josiah felt a pang in his stomach. How could Father Smith abdicate his responsibility to his sons? He used to be jovial and self confident. Now he drank wine throughout the day and just sat around. But Josiah smiled and placed his hand on Father Smith’s. “You must be patient with your son, Sir. I am sure he has a lot on his mind.”

“We all do, Mr. Stowell.” Father Smith returned the smile. “We all do.”

The next day passed too swiftly with rumors brought by passersby that Samuel Lawrence and some other men waited to take the gold plates from Joseph's hands as soon as he got them.

Joseph sent his father to the Lawrence place to spy it out, but he returned at night with nothing to report.

Supper was late which made everyone grumpy.

"I have tried to find a box to put the plates in," Joseph complained at the table. He rose and paced the floor. "Mother, I thought you said you had a box with a lock and key. My stomach is all in knots."

Emma rose and tried to comfort her husband. "We can make one."

His mother also rose and put her arm around him. "There is a carpenter in Macedon who made some furniture for Sophronia when she got married. I am sure he can make a box for you."

"Mother," Joseph said, "how will we pay for the box?"

Father Smith turned his chair around to face his troubled family. "I was in Macedon recently. There is well digging there."

"Then all will be right. Tomorrow," Joseph said, tapping his chin in thought, "I will go there and get some work."

"Tomorrow is the twenty second," Newel said. "Is it not the day you receive the records?"

Joseph turned to Newel. His face lit up as though he had an idea.

Lucy said, "That often happens when he receives revelation."

"Emma," Joseph said, turning next to his wife. "We will go to bed now."

Joseph and Emma retired to their bedroom, and everyone looked at each other in surprise.

"What revelation did he receive?" Josiah asked.

Lucy put her hand to her mouth. "It must be something cryptic." She paused and looked at her guests with a puzzled expression. "He gets these sudden urges and disappears … goes out to the barn or out into the woods, perhaps to pray."

Father Smith scowled, "He just wants to be with his wife. Leave him alone."

"Father," Lucy said, sitting down again and putting her hand on top of her husband's, "you have been distressed for days."

Father Smith sighed. “It is all this business. I wish we were rid of it and it be over, and our lives get back to normal.”

“I am afraid,” Lucy said softly, “that it will never be the same again.” She gazed at the bedroom door through which Emma and Joseph had passed.

Newel was restless and could not sleep. He wrapped his coat around him, got up from the pallet he had been sleeping on, and stepped out the door. A cold wind swept across the floor and blew the flames in the fireplace. Carlos was told to watch over the guests and was awakened by the cold blast. He saw Newel leave, so he raised himself from his pallet, dressed, and followed.

Outside, Carlos found Newel pacing about. “Where is my horse? I cannot find my horse.”

“Sir,” Carlos addressed him, placing his hand on his guest’s arm. “Did you check the barn?”

“Yes,” Newel said, blowing into his cold hands cupped over his mouth. “He has the habit of running away, but I am afraid someone has taken him.”

“We have horses doing that all the time, sir. They always return in the morning.”

Both men were dancing around in the cold.

“Are you sure?” Newel demanded.

“Yes, Sir. I am sure. We should go in before we catch our death.”

Newel grumbled, but he agreed to return to the house.

After they were inside, Lucy was up and made sure Newel was comfortabley back in bed. She asked Carlos in whispers what had happened.

“Newel thought his horse had been stolen, Mother, but I believe that is not the case.” Carlos approached his mother closer, whispering, “I saw Joseph and Emma leaving after everyone was asleep. I am sure they took Mr. Knight’s wagon and horse and went for the plates.”

“That is right, Carlos. I saw Emma in her bonnet and coat pass through the room and leave in the night. I heard the wagon.” She told Carlos to go back to bed.

Josiah pretended to be asleep. He had been witness to the whole escapade. He smiled. Perhaps tomorrow he would see the plates.

CHAPTER NINE

Morning came late. Everyone sleeping on the floor woke bone tired. They blinked, rubbed their eyes and greeted each other with “Good morning.” They rose, got dressed, and folded their blankets, putting them in a pile in the corner of the room.

Lucy moved slowly to the kitchen and put a pot of coffee onto the coals, placed more wood on the fire, stoked it, and started on the biscuits.

Emma came out of the bedroom appearing exhausted. She went to the kitchen to help.

“Where is Joseph?” Lucy asked, taking a breath after rolling out the biscuit dough.

“Is he not back yet?” Emma looked around as if not knowing what to do.

Just then, a cold wind blew through the doorway, Joseph entered and slammed the door.

Everyone’s eyes were on him. Father Smith had just come from upstairs and asked, “Joseph? Where have you been?”

Joseph put his hand on his father’s shoulder and looked over to his mother. “Last night I went out and got the plates. They are safe.” He sat down heavily into a chair and looked back up to his father. “I thought it better to go just after midnight so I could spend the day at work.” He lowered his head and took a deep breath. “Samuel Lawrence was indeed there. I had to fight off his men. I knocked several off the wagon as I rushed to get back home. After I got away from the men, I hid the plates in the woods. I will have some breakfast and go back for them.”

“What is that in your lap?” Josiah asked, almost shaking with curiosity.

Joseph, not answering, rose and went to his mother who was visibly quivering. She entered her bedroom where Emma and Joseph had been sleeping. Josiah followed and listened at the door.

“I thought for sure you would not obtain the prize and be destroyed as the angel had warned.” Lucy let a tear drop onto his shoulder.

“Do not be uneasy, Mother. All is right. See this? I have got a key.” Joseph held up something covered in a large white handkerchief. She felt it.

“It appears to be old spectacles, but with something attached.”

“It is the Urim and Thumim.” Joseph hugged his mother. “With these I can see everything. It is marvelous.”

Lucy looked puzzled.

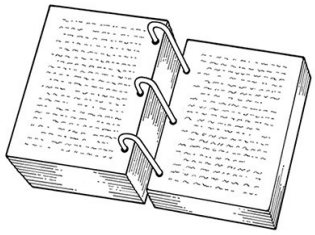
“Mother. The plates are covered with characters. I want them translated.” He looked up to Heaven.

Josiah moved away from the door and rubbed his hands in joy and anticipation.

“What have you heard?” Newel asked him.

“Joseph has a key to see all things,” Josiah sighed. “That makes him close to God himself.”

“Almost God,” Newel said.



After breakfast, Joseph left. Josiah and Newel Knight wanted to go with him, but he said, “All will be right. It is my responsibility and calling. I will be back shortly. I want everyone to stay inside until I get back. It will be too dangerous for me otherwise.”

After a couple of hours, Joseph walked through the door. He looked devastated as though he had lost his best friend … or worse, had lost the plates. He collapsed into his chair completely fatigued, holding onto the plates covered with an oil cloth. His family and guests gathered around him.

Lucy started sobbing. “What happened, Joseph? Did you lose the … ?” She gasped when she saw what was in his lap.

“Mother, be calm.” Joseph reached up and took her hands. “I can do all right without a box for the present. All is well. The plates were hidden in the woods. But I have got them now. I have to be careful. I ran into men on every turn trying to get the plates. One man struck me with a rifle, but the Lord gave me strength. The angel visited me again and told me that every plan and scheme will be laid by evil and wicked men to get those plates from me. He warned me if I should ever lose them. I feared damnation if I would fail, but I fought with all my soul and won.”

Father Smith reached down and placed his hand on his boy’s shoulder. “Do not worry, son. You have your whole family here and friends to help you.”

Josiah asked Emma, taking her hands in his, “Where were you during the night? Did you know that Joseph went to get the plates?”

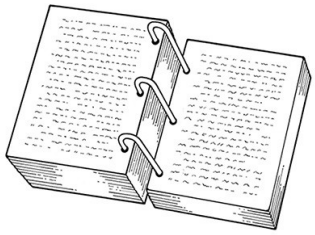
Emma placed her arm around his shoulder. “Dear friend, I was out with Joseph last night. We both were there when the men attacked, but we eluded them. Joseph took me home and went back to the woods to hide the plates.”

Carlos was sent to fetch Hyrum who lived on the next farm over. He arrived carrying with him a box made of cherrywood. After warm greetings, Joseph took the plates over to the fireplace and placed them in the box. He took up one of the flagstones. “Carlos, please fetch me a shovel.”

After digging a hole, Joseph was handed the plates wrapped in an oil cloth and deposited the plates in the earth. He covered them with dirt and replaced the flagstone.

Eventually, after a lot of talk, and giving Hyrum all the news, Joseph asked Emma for

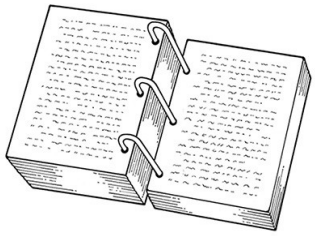
some breakfast. Father Smith started to open his mouth, but Lucy raised her voice and said defiantly, “Will you let Joseph eat with his wife *this* morning?”



The day Joseph left for Macedon to find work to pay for the box, Samuel Lawrence and Willard Chase accompanied by ten to twelve men, came onto the Smith farm and started looking around, asking for the “gold bible.”

Samuel Lawrence had the reputation of being a fortuneteller, a necromancer, an astrologer, and a soothsayer. He banged on the front door of the log cabin and demanded to be let in. Willard Chase claimed Joseph and he were partners in money digging and demanded his share in the “gold bible.”

Emma, in the barn with Josiah, saw the men and Josiah immediately sent her in the buggy for Macedon to retrieve Joseph. Meanwhile, the men searched the house and the barn and could find nothing.



Joseph returned and found the men gone. Everyone with one voice told him what had happened. He inspected the flagstone near the hearth and found it untouched. But later that day, another attempt to find the plates was made by Lawrence, attended by Alva Beaman, a rodsman, and Simpson, Josiah’s son who lived nearby.

While Simpson argued with his father, Beaman pointed his rods towards the house and told Lawrence, “The plates be hidden under the hearth.”

Lawrence demanded to be let in. “I and the rest of us have a right to part of the gold, as we are partners in trade.”

As Josiah argued with his son, he saw Joseph escape out a back window carrying the box which contained the gold plates.

Luckily, Simpson must have been too intent on the conversation to notice, for he said nothing about it. However, he did say, “Joseph is a deceiver. He deals in black magic and conjures up evil spirits to persuade men from the truth in the Bible. You know the Bible as much as me. It says there will be no more Bible. We cannot have another Bible. God has done his work and has given the management of religion unto men.”

“I just cannot believe,” argued Josiah, “that God would leave the management of his creatures to men.”

And so the argument went on while Willard Chase came back with his sister, Sally. She had a glob of molten glass with which she would find things. Josiah finished with Simpson. His son had to have the last word and leave the scene, so Josiah followed Sally around to see what she could do. He wondered if she would find the plates.

“They are in the barn,” she proclaimed.

As the men gathered in the barn, Joseph appeared from behind Josiah and said, “Let us leave. These are ruffians, and we had better let them alone or someone will get hurt.”

Joseph urged his friends Newel and Josiah and the rest of his family into the house where they stood peering out the windows, pistols in hand, to watch the men outside ransack the farm.

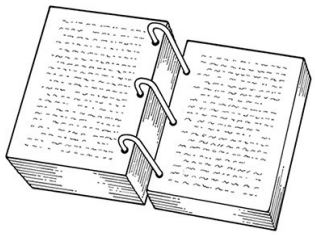
It wasn’t long before a gang with hot tar and a bag of feathers approached the house, shouting all kinds of blasphemes at Joseph and his father.

“Joseph, my dear brother,” Hyrum said, “You must leave to save the rest of us. I am sure you can get to a horse, can you not?”

“Yes, Hyrum. I will hide in the woods until all this is over.” As Joseph slipped out the back window, he gave Emma a kiss. “I perceive we will have to go back to Harmony. I would rather face your family than this mob.”

“Be careful, will you?” Emma pleaded anxiously. As Joseph departed, she reached out her hand and touched the hem of his shirt. With tears, she turned back into the arms of her friend Josiah.

The family heard a horse gallop away and angry shouts from the mob. Returning to the front room, they saw the mob run away, presumably, after Joseph.



Joseph returned that evening and ran into the house asking, “Have they got the plates?”

“Where did you hide them,” his mother asked.

“In the barn.”

“Then,” she said, placing her hands on his shoulders, “do you not think it wise to go and take a look and see?”

“Yes, Mother, I will do that.”

Everyone followed Joseph out to the barn. They found some of the floor boards ripped away and the box smashed.

“Oh my God!” Lucy exclaimed.

Emma covered her mouth and was about to faint, but Joseph caught her and said, “Do not suppose they are taken. I put them up there in the flax.” He pointed to the loft. “I had stored the empty box under the floorboards to confuse the evil spirit. You see, some people use glass as a key, but be sure that it is done only by evil. A good key is made of stone, as it comes from God himself.”

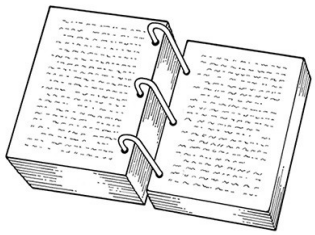
Joseph climbed the ladder and opened the barrel of flax. He dug his hand down, and his face lit up with joy. “The plates are safe.”

Everyone clapped their hands. Lucy covered her face with her kerchief and bawled. Father Smith comforted her.

When Joseph came down, leaving the plates there, he put his arm around his mother. “Emma and I will leave for Harmony tomorrow. I cannot expose my dear family to such cruelty.”

Newel came up beside Joseph. “I can pay for your passage back to Harmony. I have my wagon, and Josiah and I can take your things back with us.”

Joseph put his other arm around Newel. “Thank you, my friend.”



The next morning Emma and Joseph boarded a stagecoach after having said their farewells. All the women shed tears and the men gave manly hugs.

Josiah and Newel started on their way back down the long road with Joseph and Emma’s luggage and furniture.

“Emma told me,” Josiah said as he wrapped his coat tighter against the wind, “when she and Joseph came up to Manchester she wrote her father and asked for her trunk. Now, after only a short stay, the trunk goes back again.”

“It seems to be the American way of life,” Newel said, slapping the horses with the reins to keep them awake. “Ever since the settling of the colonies people never settle down. They are always roaming to and fro.”

“That is correct,” Josiah said. “Look at me. I have a comfortable home and cannot stay in it. I find myself always traveling.”

“Did you ever get a peek at the plates, Josiah?”

“No. Did you?”

“I held them,” Newel said meditating on the memory, “while Joseph dug a hole in the hearth. They were heavy enough to be gold.”

EPILOG

The winter was harsh. Snow piles covered the entrance to the Great Bear cave. Outside, the north winds howled, and the snow flew sideways. The Great Bear was roaming the sky. Konki sat by a comfortable fire. He had grown fat during the year, and like a bear, retired to his cave to hibernate. He woke occasionally to eat berries and wild rice and read the Bible. He especially liked Isaiah. Over the centuries he had taught himself to read. He reminisced about the time he had received his Bible.

It was winter then and snowing. He walked with a descendant of Bear Cub who whined. “I cannot see! The snow blinds me.”

“There is a building ahead,” Konki said, placing his arm over his eyes to protect them from the snow. “We may find shelter in there.”

The building was a church. After walking in and slamming the door, there came a voice from the front right corner. “You can’t bring that animal in here.”

“We are cold,” Konki complained. “Do you have a fire?”

The minister wearing a long black coat, ran down the aisle toward them, shouting, “Shoo! Shoo!” Then he minister looked again and recognized the old Indian. He had liked him, called him a noble savage because of his air of nobility. If he had been a white man, he would have been a member of the royal house.

“Does he bite?” the man said.

“Not always,” Konki said. Then he smiled. “How are you old friend?”

The bear barked and then whined.

Konki rubbed the bear’s head and said, “This is the Reverend Maynard, Benjamin.”

“His name is Benjamin?” The man held his hands together almost in prayer fashion, with his back bent so as to give the impression that he was bowing.

“Come, come,” he motioned. “It is warmer in the parsonage.”

As they passed though a short dark wood hallway, the reverend said, “What brings you out into the snow? I thought you hibernated with the bears.”

“We are searching for the cave of the Great Bear. The snow came upon us unexpectedly. It is blinding to bears.” Konki ruffled the bear’s ears. It yawned.

“Here, sit.” The reverend pulled up a chair close to the fireplace, but Konki sat on the floor next to Benjamin, so the reverend sat in the chair.

“I sometimes get lonely out here in my little chapel in the woods. I am glad you came. But when I get lonely, I just open this good book here.” Reverend Maynard handed Konki a Bible.

“You are a missionary to my people.” Konki handled the book, opened it, and flipped through the pages. “Words of The Book.” He let his eyes rest upon the eyes of his host. “I am looking for a gold book … written on leaves of gold. I have spent my life protecting it.”

“I gather you have never seen it, yet you say you are protecting it. How is that?”

The reverend reached into the fireplace and unhooked his coffee pot. He poured coffee into two cups, hung the pot back onto its hook, handing one cup to Konki as he waited for the Indian to answer.

“When I was a little boy, I was visited by the spirit who watches over the book. He told me since then to ward people off or to lead them away from it. So I made allies to help me. We spread rumors there was gold here and there to keep them away from the true gold.”

The reverend patted the Bible that Konki held in his hands. “That is the true gold, my friend. It tells of the Master who leads everyone to the Great Creator from whence all life sprang.”

“Will he lead a drunken fool to the white man’s god?”

“Yes, especially a drunken fool.”

Konki returned the book to the man. “Read from it.”

The reverend read about the birth of Christ.

“NO, no. read something else.” Konki listened intently.

The reverend read about the death and resurrection of Christ.

“NO, no.” Konki snatched the book from the reverend, closed it, then opened it to a random page. “Read that.”

The reverend read:

“WOE to Ariel, to Ariel, the city [where] David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, [and] shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones [shall be] as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry [man] dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, [he is] faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

“Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with

wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which [men] deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it [is] sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near [me] with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, [even] a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hid. Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

"[Is] it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase [their] joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

(Isa 29:1-24)

"Is not this my people?" Konki asked, cocking his head. "Your people have truly laid siege against my people and raised forts against them. Their words will surely come from out of the ground. They are written on gold plates, and there is a spirit watching over them. A young uneducated lad will translate them."

"I believe," Reverend Maynard replied condescendingly, "this is speaking about the House of Israel."

"That is what I said. My people."

The reverend sighed, smiled, and handed the book back to Konki. "How did you find that scripture? Can you read?"

Konki smiled. "Taught myself English. Taught myself to read English."

"You have done well." The Reverend Maynard leaned back in his chair and lit his pipe. "But you need more knowledge of the white man's religion. You should not be guessing at what the scriptures mean."

Konki and Benjamin talked into the night until the reverend went to bed. In the morning, the storm had passed, so the Indian and his animal friend left before the reverend rose.

Konki turned to Benjamin who was in the cave with him. “I told that old fool … and friend, that I could read many languages. He could not believe me, but he gave me his Bible as a gift.”

Benjamin huffed through his nose and laid his head down.

“Yes, my friend, it is time to return to sleep.”

Konki rolled up in Benjamin’s fur and dreamed. In the dream a young lad searched for gold. A spirit watched over the gold plates and appeared to the lad each year at the sacred hill where the plates lay hidden. The boy grew into a handsome man who held a book he had translated and printed. He saw him teach about his people from the book. Then the Master came with a sound of wings whipping the air. They touched the face of Konki.

“Do you know what the book meaneth?” the Master asked.

“I have seen that it is a record of your dealings with my people long ago,” Konki answered. Konki folded his hands. “I thank thee for letting me witness the coming forth of this book.”

“When you wake,” the master said, pointing with his hand, “go to the lad. Witness the book. Then you may rest.”

Konki bowed his head. “Thank you, Master.”

Konki slept for three months. Then it was spring, the time of the fawn.

“Now you stay here at home,” Konki told Benjamin. “It is not safe for you among the white man.”

Benjamin whined, “Aaaaah want to come.”

“What they may do to me, they will do to you. They may even shoot you with their thunder sticks. So stay here.”

Konki left the mountains of his home and went to the nearest town. He asked everyone he met about Joseph and the gold plates. People laughed at him, calling him a drunken Indian and derided Joe Smith, calling him a false prophet and everyone associated with him dupes.

“Why do you want him?” they would ask. “Why do Injuns want to talk to the deceiver unless they are drunk also and just as much a fool as his followers?”

“We don’t allow Indjuns in this town,” another said. “Where is the tar and feathers?”

“Get that Injun. Tie him to a rail, and throw him out.”

When a mob of six ran toward Konki, they heard the screech of an eagle and the flapping of wings, but there was no Indian to pursue. They raised their fists into the air and yelled, “We will have no magic here in this town. We are all good abiding Christians.”

An eagle circled above crying out twice before it left.

Konki traveled from one town to another. Some people were polite enough to tell him they heard Joe Smith was in Bainbridge or Colesville or several other places, but each time he went into a town to look for him, Joseph had just left or hadn’t been there in months. Some said he went up north around the finger lakes area.

As Konki traveled up to the lakes, he asked the Master, “Why do you send an old man, who is tired of this life, on such a useless journey? I have not been able to find this young man of my dreams anywhere. No one knows where he is.”

Konki heard a voice whisper in his heart. “It is my will that you spread the name of Joseph Smith in all the towns and cities you come to. It is not my will that you use magic. The day of magic is gone, but the day of my Spirit is always here. Go to the Ohio. There you will find him by the sea east, called Erie.”

Konki, traveling along a beautiful stretch of road, enjoyed the autumn colors. A cool breeze came from the North. "The Moose is spreading his breath," Konki said.

His old eyes couldn’t see the distant scene, but the sweet smells of drying leaves and grass reminded him of home and the cave of the Great Bear. He longed to return, but he must find Joseph and behold the “Gold Bible.”

As he strolled along, a wagon loaded with supplies came down the road going his direction. He had noticed a town up ahead, rooftops seen among the trees. He would see if he could catch a ride with this man. He turned and hailed the wagon. It stopped.

“Hey, old man,” asked the lone occupant. “Where are you headed?”

“I am looking for the young lad, Joseph,” Konki said. “He has a record of my people. I want to see it.”

“That is my aim too,” the man said. “Brother Joseph is in that town up ahead. Kirtland.” The man extended his hand. “Climb aboard. We will both see him.”

As he helped Konki aboard, he said, “My name is Newel Knight. May I have the pleasure?”

“Oh,” Konki said, as he settled himself on the seat. “You want to know my name. It is Konki of the Esopus.” Konki thought a moment and said, “Of the Lenape.”

“Joseph told me that means the original people. Am I right?” Newel slapped the

horses with the reins, and they were off.

"That is true."

Konki smelled like an aviary with all those feathers on his vest. Newel turned to him and said. "I remember seeing you before. Is it not true?"

"I remember you also." Konki looked straight ahead as he talked. "You and another man traveled to the house of Joseph to see the plates. I look for Joseph also to see the plates."

"Josiah and I were passing a steep hill, and you came running down it to warn us about something." Newel looked at Konki and then back at the road. "Joseph gave that hill a name. He called it Cumorah."

"Cumorah," Konki intoned. "That be the old name." Both men contemplated for a moment. Then Konki continued. "The Lenape killed all the white man there … long time ago. Great battle." Konki clicked his fingers. "Snuffed them out," he said, imitating a white man. Konki laughed. He looked at Newel. "Then new white man come. He snuffed us out." He snapped his fingers again. "Just like that."

Newel looked at Konki as if he didn't know what the Indian was thinking. He didn't pursue that conversation except to say, "It's all in the *Book of Mormon*."

As Newel drove Konki through the center of town, people turned and stared. They seemed unused to seeing many Indians. Newel stopped at the Whitmer store and yelled for help. A couple of boys came out and began unloading. He asked one of them, "Have you seen Brother Joseph today?"

"I believe him to be at the Morely farm," he said as he hefted a bag of corn onto his shoulder.

Konki got down from the wagon and asked, "Where is the farm?"

Another lad pointed down the street. "Just outside town that way."

"Thank you." Konki turned and headed down the street.

Newel, wiping sweat from his brow with his kerchief, ran up to the old Indian. "I'll take you there. I just have some business to attend to first, and then we will leave."

Konki put his hand on Newel's shoulder. "It will be better for me to meet with him alone."

"Ho! You want him all to yourself, do you?"

Konki smiled, turned, and walked away.

Newel shrugged his shoulders and walked back to the store. "Indians."

Joseph heard a knock at the door. “Emma,” he called, “will you answer that. It is an old friend of mine.”

Emma hesitated after opening the door. She obviously was not used to seeing an Indian. *My dear husband*, she thought. *All manner of friends come and go all the time*. “Won’t you come in.”

Konki ducked as he entered, smiling at the young lady. He took her hand and said, “Blessed be all this household.”

Just then, Joseph came from a back room. “Old friend. Emma, will you get him a cup of water?”

Emma returned with some water and gave it to Konki. He drank and said, “Thank you.” He smiled pleasantly, returning the cup to the beautiful lady.

Konki apprized Joseph, looked him up and down. “So, this is the man who made magic from a stone and found gold.”

“I am not so much into magic now-a-days. I have been given a more sure work of prophecy through the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

“You indeed have grown,” Konki said, placing his hand on Joseph’s shoulder.

Joseph smiled, turned, and picked up a book from a small table next to him. “I have the record of your people.”

Joseph handed the old man a *Book of Mormon*. Konki lifted it to his nose and sniffed.

“Fresh off the press,” Joseph said.

Konki flipped through the pages and saw the names of Nephi, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Mormon, and others like Nephihah which was very Indian sounding. He looked up at Joseph who returned Konki’s joyous smile. “My ancestors.”

“You may have that copy,” said Joseph.

“You are a hard person to find,” Konki remarked, gripping Joseph’s shoulder to make sure he was real and not a dream. “I have walked for many months, and now it is time the moose spreads his breath. I must get back to my lands before snowfall.”

Joseph walked out the door with him. “I was not ready to see you until today. I have been very busy lately. I have a little time to catch up on my work of translating the Bible and came home to do that. Will I see you again?”

“The time of my magic is past, I was told.” Konki pulled Joseph to his bosom and gave him a bear hug. “It is your time now.”

“I will miss you,” Joseph said as Konki’s grip loosened. “I will always remember you.”

“You will keep my secret?”

“Always.”

“Good. Now I must go home.”

Konki waved at Emma as he left. She waved back.

Joseph came back into the house, and she asked, “Who was that?”

He put his finger up to his lips. “Some mysteries must remain.”

Back in the bear cave, Konki settled down by a fire, leaned against Benjamin who complained, and read about his ancestors. The night was long. It snowed outside, covering up the entrance to the cave. Finishing the book, Konki rose.

“It is time to say goodbye, my friend.”

Benjamin turned his head around and said, “Aaaaaah! Humph!” and returned to his sleep.

Konki slid through a hole in the rocks on the backside of the cave. As the cave took him down into the bowels of the Mother Earth, his memory took him on a journey to the past. He was a little boy again, running through the hills, smelling the flowers, finding all kinds of animal friends to bring home, but he was grabbed by the shoulders by an old shaman, Wey-cho-kay. Konki jerked and woke from his dream. He looked upon a pile of old bones as tall as himself.

“Hello, old man,” he said. The last leathery figure to lay upon the pile, having died centuries ago, seemed to smile as Konki held the torch above his face. “Now I will join you and all the medicine men before you. I am the last. Your secret will die with me. No one will know of the magic we held in our hands. But this,” he said as he held up the Book of Mormon Joseph had given him, “is what we have all been waiting for. It is now the time of the Gentiles. We will wait until the epoch of the Gentiles is finished. Then, as this golden book says, we will crawl out of the holes of the rocks, retake our lands, and welcome the Master who will join us.” As a warning to the world, yet there was no one to hear him, but reaffirming to himself, he said, “And to all those who will not join us, they will be ashes under our feet.”

Konki crawled up to a rocky ledge and carefully stepped down onto the pile of bones, laying on top of his old master, Wey-cho-kay. He pressed the golden bible to his heart. The torch dropped from his hand and landed on the cave floor to burn out its life. At first, Konki felt the cold, but as he exhaled, he saw men of light standing around him and felt their warmth. They said, “Welcome home.”

The End