

Big Woods

L. M. Stamm

1996

and

Sid Stamm

2010

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Preface

In 2001, I was cleaning out my box of old computer parts and discovered a small black three-and-a-half-inch floppy disk that had the words “big woods” written on its label in small handwriting. Curious, I popped it into my computer and a story about a young Sioux woman and a white gold prospector unfolded before me. Tearing through the pages as fast as I could read, I eventually reached the end of the files where the story abruptly ended, leaving me wondering what happened to these wonderful characters.

I came across the same files again in 2010, while once again cleaning out my box of old computer parts. Re-reading the detailed account of the characters, I rediscovered my fascination with these creations of my father. Armed with an outline that accompanied the unfinished story, I wondered if there was a way for me to give these characters peace and started to plan out their futures.

Preface

In March 2010, my father was diagnosed with a rapidly progressing form of cancer—a fork in the road that abruptly brought his, and my dreams to the forefront. Knowing he had become distracted from his writing for the past ten years, and driven by the pride I've seen him take in his stories I've had the joy of hearing, I set out to put his enchanting words into print. He died two months later, but lives on in his written words.

This work is published with the sole intention of seeing his words finally in a finished form; this story's content is provided to you under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-ShareAlike license that allows you to freely share this work and any derivatives you might want to make, so long as they're distributed for noncommercial purposes. All I ask is that you acknowledge the part of my father that is reflected on these pages and retell this story to those who will listen—as would be done in the Old Ways.

Any royalties received from sales of this book will be donated to cancer research funds in hopes that other fathers out there with a story to finish will someday get their chance.

Sid Stamm
June 2010

Big Woods

Part I

Old Ways

1 Defiance

“**D**O not touch me!” The finches in the black ash tree behind her are startled by her protest and fly away chattering their warnings.

“Why? You are the one I have chosen. It is time you accept this as your place in the family of the Sioux,” he asserts the inevitability of their tradition.

“Why do you insist on tormenting me in this manner? I am like the water, the air, and the sky. You cannot own me.” She stands facing him with the strong features and straight back of an equal to this warrior she is rejecting.

The veins in Cetan-wicakte’s forehead feeding the scars around his left eye, clouded with a pink film, begin to swell with anger. “A-han-zi, it is my purpose in life to be your mate. Your refusal of the truth will only make you miserable. It is our ways that make this true.” He is using all of the physical control the Sioux ways allow him to make her give in to his demands.

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A-han-zi looks into his face and cannot help seeing him for his bulging pink left eye, framed by the scars; scars fed by veins that move as snakes in the sand, slithering beneath his skin rhythmically with his cold heart.

“No, never will I give in to you Cetan-wicakte.” She shakes free of his grasp and walks defiantly away from him, hurriedly into her father’s village. A-han-zi’s father is standing outside, and she rushes past him into their tipi. He knows she is unhappy. Soon a loud yelp is heard and a dog runs out of the tipi, limping in obvious pain.

Nape Shuha’s eyes reveal the pain in his heart for his daughter, a sadness in their deep color. In his heart he is proud of her strong spirit but her actions challenge the Old Ways.

“Her name means Shadow and that is what has come over her heart since you first made your claim to her as you are the bravest warrior of the Nape Shuha Sioux,” he tells Cetan-wicakte. The old chief’s life has been in turmoil since and no solution has found its way to his heart.

“This must end soon or you will not be able to marry her. If you cannot control her now, what makes you think she will respect you tomorrow?” The old

chief's wisdom daunts the young warrior. Cetan-wicakte's eyes drop to the ground and he turns away to disappear into the woods.

The sun is setting on the Big Woods. The old chief joins his daughter in the tipi and sits with his back facing the east as he watches the fire at the center of the floor and prays that his ancestors, the 'Old Ones', will calm his heart and offer the answer he needs to this crisis his daughter has created. The smoke curls up towards the sky, twisting in the subtle drafts created by the folds in the fabric and the evening breeze.

Never before has a chief's daughter challenged the Old Ways. "It is Ho-tan-inku," he mumbles to her. "He has turned you away from Cetan-wicakte."

"No, father," she responds softly. "It is the Old Ways that have set me against Scar Face. I must care for you and learn the medicine that Ho-tan-inku has to teach me.

"That is what the Old Ways have set down for my place in the family of the Sioux." Her eyes fall upon the old chief and are welled with the tears of respect and frustration.

"When the sun rises we will seek out Ho-tan-inku and ask him for medicine to make peace with Cetan-

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wicakte.” The chief slowly eats the food Shadow has prepared for him. After deep thought and silence, he reclines onto the bearskins that are his bed and dreams of his life in the Big Woods. Shadow watches the proud chief fall peacefully asleep and then retires to her own bed on the opposite side of the tipi.

* * *

As the bright orange light filters through the woods from the east, Shadow follows her father through the forest to the river’s edge to find Ho-tan-inku bathing in the cool water with a bear. They watch as he slowly swims around the bear, chanting a slow song that tells of the bear’s devotion to her family and the bravery she exhibits in battle for her cubs. As the song ends, the bear swims to the opposite shore and lumbers into the woods. Ho-tan-inku crawls up the bank toward Nape Shuha.

“You come seeking peace in your heart,” the mystic says in greeting. He walks to his medicine bag, shaking the water from his skin and long silver hair. The line of crow feathers braided into his hair glisten in the sun.

“Evil grows in the village when the Old Ways do not answer our questions,” Nape Shuha offers.

“You may not like the wisdom of the medicine I have to give you. The spirits have alerted me to the path of your life and have told me of the shadow that darkens your heart.” The mystic looks into Shadow’s eyes with his one good eye.

Shadow has spent many hours with Ho-tan-inku during the last three years and has always found his wisdom of nature and the spirits to be precious. Whenever she looked into his eyes, she learned more from the eye he called his Dark Eye. It is clouded with a blue haze and is always wide open, as if it is watching the magic spirits circling the natural life seen by the other eye. “What do your eyes see?” she asks.

The long silver hair with its black feathers shake from side to side as he turns to walk back to the village. He laughs to himself as he follows five paces behind Nape Shuha.

“My eyes do not see. It is what I am given by the spirits to see in my Dark Eye.” His voice emerges from his whole body as he speaks the words. “It is the spirits that guide A-han-zi’s heart and make the trouble in yours, Nape Shuha.”

“Then we must have strong medicine to rid her of the effects of these evil spirits,” the chief proclaims.

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Ho-tan-inku stops. Nape Shuha and Shadow both turn to see why he does not follow.

Ho-tan-inku's expression becomes serious. "They are not evil spirits. They are the spirits of our ancestors. They speak in new words about your daughter. They tell me she must have her way. It is through her actions that our lives will be guided." As the old mystic speaks, his skin begins to grow ashen and his knees begin to give way.

Shadow reaches for his arm as he falls to the earth.

Nape Shuha rushes to reach them as the medicine man collapses onto Shadow's lap. His Dark Eye looks deep into her as he says, "Take the bag I carry and learn its secrets. It will help guide you and protect you from the evil within men's hearts."

* * *

That night A-han-zi speaks with her father, Nape Shuha, about the mystic. "He needs my help. He is an old man with many secrets that could help our village."

"He is just that, an old man whose time to die has come." Nape Shuha answers. "He must be left to die in peace."

"No!" She startles herself at her unmeditated reaction.

The chief turns and faces his daughter. “You have a spirit that causes me pain, more now that you challenge me. It is one thing to challenge Cetan-wicakte, but when you challenge the chief of the village, you are going against all of the Old Ways, the life that gave your ancestors and their ancestors knowledge of the world to bring us to this point in time, our time, your time. Do not challenge me on this!”

Silence follows Nape Shuha’s logic. A-han-zi knows she cannot challenge him without risking his wrath. A moment more passes as she thinks her way through this impasse—she has not spent her life in the shadows of Nape Shuha without learning the power of his beliefs and the strengths in his wisdom.

“Father,” a term she has used in the past to soften the blow of her will upon his wishes, “Our village is small. We need the medicine and wisdom of many people to survive. Ho-tan-inku has wisdom and powers that no one else of the Santee has.” Passion begins to flow out of her heart into her words.

“Without the medicine he possesses and the knowledge of our ways, we will be like a sparrow in the winter wind, sure to die in its tempering will. His knowledge must remain with us if we are to survive. Let me be the vessel he fills with the Old Ways. Let

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me be the one to receive the knowledge of the Old Ways, to carry on the ways of our ancestors.”

The chief's mind is worried with the feelings and thoughts that swim in his head. He feels his way is right, but he knows in his heart what his daughter tells him is true. As he fights to understand the path his heart is taking him down, his face twists from the battle going on in his head. At long last he groans.

“Yes, what you say is true, this old mystic is a vessel filled with the knowledge of our ancestors. If he dies without passing on that knowledge, all we will have left of our ancestors is memories. The knowledge will be lost. But what of Cetan-wicakte and my promise to him?”

A-han-zi looks up at the man she holds in awe and smiles the smile that has always melted his heart with its naive truths. “You can convince him that I would not make a good mate to him. I am too strong willed, he would be miserable.”

“Yes.” He says, smiling at her. “You would do that if you were forced to accommodate him.”

They laugh out loud, together, at the truth of their words.

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Later that day, while A-han-zi tends to Ho-tan-inku's needs, she hears her father and Cetan-wicakte talking in the forest behind the mystic's tipi.

"No!" Cetan-wicakte shouts. "She has been promised to me and that is the way it will be."

"But, Cetan-wicakte, she would not make you a good wife and you know it."

"No, I do not know that. Why do you say that?"

Nape Shuha's voice is controlled and conciliatory. "You know she does not want you for a mate, she has told you this many times to your face, in front of me."

Cetan-wicakte glares hard at the chief, his Evil Eye glowing, almost red, "Since when do her wishes matter? Have you thrown our Old Ways aside because your daughter is a stubborn, spoiled woman?"

Nape Shuha's face rises from its former peaceful self and takes on the fierce look of the strong warrior he has always been.

"You know that she would be miserable as your wife, and so would you." Nape Shuha walks closer to his old friend and looks down into the shorter man's face, his own face red with rage. "She is learning the ways of our ancestors from the old mystic. She will be our village healer and mystic. This is my will; this

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is the way it will be. I have spoken and you will not challenge me on this!”

His last words were spoken with such force that spit sprayed with them as they flew out of his mouth. Cetan-wicakte backs off at the force of the chief's words. He turns to walk away and shouts, “NEVER! My spirit is that of a warrior, I will defeat her.” And then he walks slowly into the forest.

* * *

Ho-tan-inku remains in Shadow's company for another twenty moons. During that time he teaches her all of the medicine he can remember. The days fly by for the apprentice, and the old man is pleased with her attention and enthusiasm. It is after the tenth moon, however, that he notices a change in her spirit and is pained at the confusion that he sees in her.

“What is it that worries you A-han-zi?”

She is always startled at how this old, weak man is able to see her moods even when he isn't looking at her. They are sitting, facing each other in the center of his tipi, late in the night. They are both restless as the full moon lights up the forest, as if a new day has already begun.

“It is Cetan-wicakte. He has it in his mind that I will become his mate.”

“And you don’t trust him, you see evil in his bad eye.”

“Yes,” she admits, somewhat surprised at his perception, “But Nape Shuha and I cannot seem to change his mind about me. Whenever I go to the river for water, Cetan-wicakte watches me. When I was gathering berries yesterday he followed me, just watching. He knew I saw him but he continued watching.”

“Hmm,” is all the old man says. Then, he takes three small pebbles out of his medicine pouch and rolls them on the ground in front of him. He continues this game in a mesmerizing rhythm for a long time, until the moon has fallen behind the trees and it is once again dark in the village. Finally, he lets out a sigh and looks back up at her.

“What you feel in your heart, from this night on, will always be the truth. You must follow it, no matter what the consequences.”

He stands and walks back to where his bed is made up and curls into a ball. Moments later, A-han-zi hears him snoring.

The next morning A-han-zi wakes to find Ho-tan-inku standing over her. His face is painted white. He

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has painted circles of black around each eye and a black stripe from his chin to his chest.

“It is time to open your eyes. Follow me,” he says to her.

They walk quickly as they both leave the tipi and head north, into the woods. The sun is high in the sky when Ho-tan-inku stops. He sits on a log at the edge of a marsh and begins chanting, a chant that A-han-zi has never heard. In it are words that make no sense to her. When the chant is over, the old man turns to her and looks into her eyes. She can see something swimming behind his Dark Eye, as his good eye begins to water.

After a short while she begins to feel uneasy, no, fearful, as if her life is being threatened. Abruptly, she turns to see a rattlesnake crawling toward them. She jumps up and attacks the snake with a fallen branch. The snake disappears into the woods.

“He he!” Comes a chuckle from the old man. “You are a fast learner. I knew you would be. You have already begun to accept your feelings and, in a small way, begun to act on them.”

They sit at the side of the marsh for three days. In that time Ho-tan-inku speaks of things he learned as a child from his teacher.

“How do you know these things you teach me are truth?” she asks one night.

The old man closes his eyes, as if to think about her question. “These are teachings from my father and grandfather, taught to them by their fathers and grandfathers. What is truth can be seen with the eyes, but can also be seen with the heart. When we sit at campfire at night, we do not see the trees or the creatures in the forest. Does that mean they no longer exist? When you doubt these teachings from the past you are saying they do not hold in them truth because they are not part of what you see with your eyes. My teachings are for your heart, not your eyes.”

He tells her of mysteries that she never knew existed and what they mean to the Sioux. Her heart is filled with wonder and her mind reels with the stories he tells her. He speaks of mysteries of the sun and clouds during the day, and gives her mind a thrill at the mysteries he reveals about the night, the moon, the stars and the creatures that can see in the dark. Fables of the past are recited by him and etched into her mind. When at last he finishes, they sleep in the open beside the marsh.

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It seems to A-han-zi she has slept for days. When she wakes, Ho-tan-inku is nowhere in sight.

“Ho-tan-inku!” She calls out.

“Ho-tan-inku!” Comes a call in reply, in the voice of the old man.

She looks out beyond the marsh, far out onto the lake and sees the old man walking toward her. She knows the water is deep, as fish had been jumping at insects while they talked yesterday.

“I am behind you, A-han-zi.”

Startled, she turns around to see Ho-tan-inku standing behind her with a large fish in his hands. She turns back to the lake; he is nowhere to be seen. The flapping of a fish is behind her.

“We have a nice fish to eat. It is time to nourish our bellies and then I will teach you some wondrous things.”

For several days more Ho-tan-inku talks, teaching and making A-han-zi do things she never thought possible. From the words of the old man come secrets that explain how her life is connected to the earth and sky; from the experiences he leads her through, she sees and does things few humans have ever dreamed of. When he is finished, she walks out onto the lake to catch fish on her own.

“It is time for us to return to the village. Before we go, I will tie crow feathers in your hair. Always wear these feathers in your hair, they will protect you from the evil of men. Also, wear this dress.” He hands her a dress of deerskin that is soft to the touch. On the front of the dress is a beaded thunderbird that glistens in the sun.

“It will let the evil spirits know not to challenge your powers.”

2 Ambush

BRANCHES of ash and maple trees whip his face as he races through the woods. The horse he rides careens from side to side to avoid large trees; blood begins to seep out of the right flank his rider beats with the reins, froth of fatigue drips freely from the steed's metal bit as the rope pulling the pack horse behind him is released.

The white man is in a race for his life. Three months ago he set out from Fort William after his wife and son were slain in a Chippewa attack. Eager to escape Ojibwa territory, he began moving southwest to Santee Sioux country. Once again the Chippewa renegades that have trailed him for a week chase him. "Just one more river," he thinks to himself, "just one more stream and maybe they will see we are out of their territory."

Ahead, he sees a river, its banks steep from the low winter water, the covering of ice shining in the sunlight. He aims his fatigued horse to the bank

2 Ambush

and plunges straight to the river's icy edge. Reaching the middle of the river the front hooves of the horse plunge through the ice, into the frigid water, throwing the rider forward onto the surface of the river beyond. In a flurry of splashing and screams from the doomed animal, the rushing water beneath the surface pulls the horse under the solid ice. Disoriented, the man watches as the splashing and screams disappear downstream.

The three Chippewa raiders appear on the bank and he begins scrambling across the ice to the opposite shore. The attackers race across the river on foot; one of them crashes through the ice and quickly disappears. The remaining two chase their quarry up the bank and into the maple forest. Slipping and falling on the shallow snow that covers the bed of fallen leaves, the white man's escape is slowed and his attackers spot him from the top of the riverbank. Without the rifle that washed down stream with his horse, his chances of fighting off these hunters are dim. Reaching for the hunting knife he keeps in his boot, he prepares to defend himself.

The slippery bed below him drops suddenly, down the ravine he slides as the warriors charge over the edge after him. One of the attackers flies past as

the white man reaches the bottom on his back. The second attacker lands on top him, driving a knife through his coat into the flesh of his left shoulder and rolling him into a maple tree.

He breaks free of his attacker and lunges at the surprised warrior, slashing at the throat. The painted white face with a black handprint across the left side is suddenly still as the warrior realizes his life is about to end. Blood sprays out of the neck, painting his white face and the snow around them with red.

Quickly, the white man stands and finds the other Chippewa. The warrior's fall down the ravine was cut short by a log that broke his left leg. Now he stands, balancing on his right leg, facing his prey and brandishing a gleaming knife. In a surprisingly agile move, the warrior is on top of the white man, slashing at the coat that covers his white skin. He struggles to control the knife that could end his life and manages to keep the blade from doing its damage. The warrior breaks free while swiping at the sandy brown hair on the white head. The blade opens skin from the left eye to the ear. Blood floods into that eye, leaving the blurred vision in his right eye his only hope.

2 Ambush

He stands again, only to have the warrior fall on him and drive the knife into his chest. In response, a white hand spattered with blood thrusts a knife at the attacker in a last desperate attempt. He feels the knife drive into the right eye of his attacker. Blackness covers his good brown eye and he collapses under his attacker, unconscious.

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“They are all dead,” Nape Shuha tells the others, “except for the white man, he lives.”

“We should kill him,” Cetan-wicakte says as he pulls his knife free of its sheath.

“No,” the chief says as he holds Cetan-wicakte’s knife arm, “he is a brave warrior. See, he has killed two Chippewa warriors. We must take him with us. If he dies, it is his destiny. If he lives, his spirit will be stronger because of his battle with our enemy, the Chippewa.”

A travois is made and the white man is loaded onto it, along with the deer that Cetan-wicakte shot. Had the deer not lived long enough to reach the ravine, the Santee hunters would never have found the severely wounded white man.

It is decided, back at the village, that the white man will be kept in Ho-tan-inku’s tipi. Shadow is

given charge of the white man's care, as she is the new tribal healer and mystic—having taken over for the ill healer. It will be the first time she is tested in the ways Ho-tan-inku taught her.

Removing the white man's clothing, she examines his wounds; a knife stab in the left side of his chest, several deep slashes and a stab wound in his left arm and shoulder, and most alarming is a slash from his left ear to his left eye. "The eye is damaged, perhaps he will be blind in that eye," she thinks to herself.

Shadow begins his treatment by applying wild plum tea to his wounds to cleanse them. Next she packs a hemlock poultice to his deep, bleeding wounds, to stop the flow of blood. After wrapping the rest of the wounds in bearberry leaves to keep them from getting infected, she makes a tea from chickweed and keeps his left eye soaked with the tea. "It is good he is still unconscious," she thinks to herself as she finishes her treatments, "the pain from these wounds will be great when he awakes."

Patiently, Shadow administers to the white man's wounds as the days pass. Through his deliriums she hears his words but cannot understand the white man's language. Several times he screams out loud as if fighting off his attackers in his dreams. One

2 Ambush

night she wakes to hear him crying in pain. It is only after covering him with another bear skin blanket that he is quieted. After five days of fever and delirious dreams, he finally wakes.

3 Family

THE searing pain in his chest and shoulder becomes worse as he slowly opens his eyes. He feels a warm dressing covering his left eye, as he smells a wood fire and hears someone singing a song, using words he doesn't understand. Disoriented by the pain and strange scents, he wonders how he ended up in this place.

He turns his head to see who is singing and sees the fire and a shadow beyond the light. Lifting himself up on his right arm, he focuses on the shadow and makes out the form of an Indian. Fear grips him as he reels in pain and panic at the sight before him; his mind flashes back to the confrontation with the Chippewa, causing him to reel in wonder if he has been taken prisoner. Why would they have kept him alive? He lurches his body away from the Indian but immediately collapses back to the ground, weakened and in pain from his wounds.

3 *Family*

The Indian silhouette turns and emerges from the shadow towards him with a smile, gently speaking words that he doesn't understand. She is a young woman with straight hair that reaches her waist with several black feathers woven into a braid that hangs on the right side of her head. She is wearing a dress made of skins that ends in fringes just above her ankles. The front of her dress is decorated with a large figure of a bird woven in blue and green beads. Around her neck is a collar made of snakeskin and rattlesnake tails. Her eyes are black, bright and perfectly clear as they look into his. He gives in to her soothing words and approach as she hands him a bowl of steaming food, urging him to eat.

Without taking his eyes off of her, he reaches for the bowl and brings it to his lips. It is hot and bitter, but the hunger fed by his pain drives him to consume the contents greedily, scooping the small chunks of meat with his fingers and slurping the broth. He sets the emptied bowl down and rests on his back to savor the food, hoping it will fight off the pain in his chest and arm. His full stomach calms his mind and he slowly slips away into sleep.

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The next day the Indian woman brings him clothing made of skins and fur to wear as protection against the cold air outside the tipi. Painfully, he dresses and follows her out into the early spring sun. He is weak, and leans against her strong shoulder to steady his pace as they walk across the center of the village. As they approach another tipi, he sees a tall, mature, regally-clothed warrior standing in front of the tipi. His hair is long and black as coal, woven into thin braids with eagle feathers, giving his posture a raptor-like stature. Beside him stands a shorter man with only two feathers woven into his hair and scars that accent his left eye, causing it to droop as if the eye was misplaced on his face at birth.

The two men exchange words with the woman. The shorter of the two men, the one with the scarred eye, seems upset and talks in quick, loud tones to the woman. The woman returns short, calculated answers to him until the taller man lifts his left hand. All talking stops and the woman faces the white man and points to herself, saying "A-han-zi". She repeats this several times. After a while, he realizes what is happening and puts his hand on his chest and says "Call me Jefferies".

3 *Family*

A-han-zi smiles and points to him. “Call,” she says. She then points to the taller man and says “Nape Shuha”. The shorter man scowls, and then stands with his chest thrown out, then barks out “Cetan-wicakte”. It is at this point Call’s pain and weakness sweep over him like a rushing river, and he collapses to the ground.

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The following morning he wakes to the sound of coughing—a dry hacking that recurs persistently with exhausted pauses in between fits. His unbandaged eye slowly becomes accustomed to the dim light in the tipi, and he sees the Indian woman on the opposite side of the room sitting in front of a pile of skins, seemingly talking with someone buried deep inside them.

“Who’s there?” he asks.

The woman turns her head and looks back at him, as if to check on him. She says something to him and turns back to the skins and begins to talk again. Call hears another, quieter voice in response to her words.

He rises, painfully, and crawls over to the woman to see whom she is talking to. There in the animal

skins he sees an old man, his skin dried and weathered, clinging to the bones of his face like the skin on a winter apple. The eyes of the old man look up at Call. A sudden rush of warm emotion strikes Call's heart and rushes through his body, a feeling he has never felt before. His attention is drawn to the old man's left eye that begins to brighten under its cloud of blue haze. He feels it gazing into his face, momentarily piercing more than it should, deep into his thoughts. A flash of a smile crosses the old man's face just as Call turns away from the old man to see the woman smiling at him.

Call returns to his bed and falls asleep again, this time a peaceful and restful sleep. When he finishes sleeping, he wakes, feeling he has had the most peculiar dream, though he is unsure if the old man's piercing gaze was real or part of the dream that he can't quite recall in detail.

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Throughout the next two months Call slowly grows stronger and learns the language of the people that are caring for him. He learns from A-han-zi that her name means "Shadow". She is the village healer and her father is the chief, Nape Shuha ("Does not flee").

3 *Family*

Cetan-wicakte ("Hawk that kills") is a warrior her father would trust with his life.

It is a bright day, the end of spring, as Call and A-han-zi take a short walk into the woods. Call is slowly healing, and she waits patiently for as he rests on a log to regain his strength. As he sits, she watches him with eyes bright and deep brown. He is drawn into her eyes through a curious and undefined attraction, until he realizes he has been staring at her for a long time. Looking away momentarily breaks the spell she seems to have on him and he begins to speak.

"Who is that in the corner of the tipi?"

"He is my teacher, Ho-tan-inku, which means Voice Heard in Returning. It is because of his knowledge that he has given to me, you are still alive."

She gives a quick glance up at the sun. "It is time we went back to the tipi, Ho-tan-inku is weak, I must not be gone too long."

Slowly, they walk back to the tipi, moving at a pace comfortable for Call. His curiosity continues, though, and he spends much of the walk asking more questions, falling into the rhythm of their language.

"Why haven't you married yet?" Call asks Shadow.

“Because I have all the status I need in the village. I don’t need to marry “Scar Face”.

“Scar Face?” As they reach the tipi, Call catches her using a nickname for the only person this could fit, Cetan-wicakte.

Shadow is silent for a moment as she looks into Call’s hair and slowly follows it down to his forehead, to his eyes and then to his lips.

“He is the one my father wanted me to marry. Yes, I call him Scar Face because it is the only way I can cloud his eyes with hate to replace the lust for me between his legs. There is too much violence in his heart for me to ever become his wife. I do not trust him and I do not like him, so I make it possible for him to dislike me too.”

Call thinks this over for a while as he watches her gathering baskets and skins in the tipi. She finishes gathering and sits in front of him to check the scars that have covered the wounds in his chest and arm. He looks deeply into her eyes. They are framed by the black braids that hold crow feathers. Her skin shimmers and he can smell the smoke of the fire and oils she uses in her hair. When she looks up, she catches his eyes watching her.

3 *Family*

“And, what do you call me?” he asks while looking into the face he has become comfortable near.

She looks back into his eyes for a long time as if to find the answer to his question. As a grin grows on her face, her eyes brighten and she breathes out her answer more than speaks it, “Call”.

The old man in the corner of the tipi coughs, and Shadow shifts her attention to his needs. Kneeling beside him, they exchange a few brief words to each other that Call cannot hear clearly. Shadow is silent for a moment, and then Call hears her tell Ho-tan-inku “Yes.” She then returns to Call, and takes his hand.

Smiling at him, she slowly stands. “It is time you earned your keep and started helping with the gathering. Come, I will teach you how to find food.”

As Shadow teaches Call about the food nature provides for them, they talk about their past. He tells her what it was like for him growing up in his small village; she compares it to her village, which has many similarities, but different customs.

One warm early summer day she tells him about the encounters with white men in the past and her mother’s death, when a fever killed many of the village elders.

“It was three winters ago. Father missed her for a long time after that and went hunting often to escape the pain in his heart.” Her gaze drifts off into the distance as if she can see what was to happen next.

“One day, while hunting, not far north of here, father and Scar Face came upon a Sioux village that had been destroyed. They found the bodies of two white men and many Chippewa warriors. In the village all they found were the bodies of the Sioux men and boys, their ears and scalps taken.” Her eyes begin to fill with tears and she bites on a root she was washing in the river. She gazes up the riverbank to hide her sadness and continues the story.

“Along the lake shore Scar Face found the bodies of women and children, all drowned. Scar Face says it was the work of white men, he doesn’t trust or like them. Father said it was the Chippewa.”

“Which do you think it was, Shadow, the white men or the Chippewa?”

After wiping dry her eyes with her hand, she looks at Call with a look of hatred he is to see only one more time in his life. “I think it was both. The Chippewa and the white man can both do things to the Sioux that we would never imagine doing to another human

3 *Family*

being.” She reddens with fury at the thought of the needless death of so many of her people.

“No more questions, no more answers,” Call says abruptly. “Now is the time for swimming.”

With that, Call quickly strips off all of his clothing and plunges into the cold water of the river where they have been washing vegetables. He makes whooping noises and grunts as he endures the shocking but refreshing cold. These noises are his way of strengthening his body against the elements. He taunts Shadow to join him but she is not ready to brave cold water this early in the year. She sits on the bank and laughs out loud at the noises he makes, while admiring the muscles that have grown over his body as he has healed.

Sitting on a fallen log beside the river, drying in the sun with his clothes back on, Call begins telling Shadow of his family.

“My son was two years old when it happened. I was out hunting deer for the winter. It was in the fall, cold enough to hunt far from home but not cold enough for the snows to start. I shot two deer and began feeling uneasy, sort of restless, so I headed back home. My wife and I had been together just three years and the thought of being alone in the

wilderness scared her.” His head hangs heavily as the rest of the story rushes into his thoughts.

“When I returned I found the cabin burned to the ground. Outside, by the stream that ran by the house, I found my wife’s body.” His eyes lift to the treetops to see something he can’t forget. Tears flow down his cheeks as he continues his story.

“She was laying face up, horror was in her eyes even as she was dead. They killed her as she watched them attack. God, I should have been there for her.” His head falls and shoulders begin to shake. He pauses to collect his thoughts and clears his throat. After a few minutes, he continues.

“I never found my son’s body. He probably perished in the fire.”

Shadow and Call sit side by side at the river with just their shoulders touching for a long time, watching the sun begin to set. When the shadows become long, they slowly make their way back to the village.

When they return to the tipi, Shadow finds that Ho-tan-inku has died. As she begins chanting a death chant for him, other members of the village arrive and help her carry his body out to the center of the village. There they build a funeral pyre for him and

3 *Family*

then ignite it, watching it consume the old mystic in it, as they solemnly chant prayers for his spirit.

After the pyre has been reduced to ash, all the members of the village retreat to their tipis. Shadow slowly walks into the ashes of the pyre, as if looking for something. Suddenly she finds what she is looking for and bends down and picks up a clump of ashes the size of her fist.

“What is it?” Call asks.

Shadow cradles the hot lump of ashes in her hands as if it is a sacred object. “It is his heart.” She whispers, seemingly unaware of the hot coals in her hands, she is distracted by a more essential finding.

Quietly, she walks off into the woods with Ho-tan-inku’s heart in her hands. When she returns, she is quiet and avoids Call’s eyes and ignores his questions.

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The next night the feast of the Moon of the Buck is under way. The dance for a strong herd of deer for the winter is attended by all of the members of the village. The men, dressed in deerskins and with painted faces of red, are adorned with antlers and breastplates of deer ribs. The beat of drums paces

the dancing in an exact beat with stories told as prescribed through the Old Ways. Shadow attends in her capacity as a ceremonial leader. It is her place to assure the dances and prayers are done in the proper sequence and with the proper reverence so that the spirits are pleased with the celebration and, thereby, the deer herd will be bountiful.

Call is offered a seat with Nape Shuha and it is during the last of the dances that the chief reveals a promise he made to Cetan-wicakte.

“I have promised my trusted friend, Cetan-wicakte that A-han-zi will someday be his wife.” The chief says. “It is the Old Ways that make this true.” He pauses and looks at Call. “My heart is troubled at the ways A-han-zi makes it impossible for this promise to be fulfilled.”

Call is aware of his own feelings for Shadow that have become more intense over time. Knowing Shadow’s feelings toward Cetan-wicakte, he is concerned the chief would be insulted if he knew Call’s affection for her.

“Does A-han-zi want to marry Scar-, I mean Cetan-wicakte?”

The chief’s look is piercing as he hears the start of the name Cetan-wicakte hates, especially when he hears it from A-han-zi.

3 *Family*

“No, but it is not necessary. The Old Ways only require me to give permission for Cetan-wicakte to marry her. He has that permission.” Then, with a determined look in his eyes he adds, “She has resisted him and me in this.”

As they sit and eat, a fog of despair seems to hang over both Call’s and Shadow’s spirits. Call feels the darkness of the night smothering his spirit like a fire starving from oxygen, and he becomes restless. Shadow, too, feels his restlessness and they both set out into the forest together, to walk off their feelings, to finish a dance of love that had commenced earlier at the river. They walk for hours as the stars become brighter in the skies, making them shimmer differently in the blue sheen of the night.

“What was it Ho-tan-inku had to say to you earlier? Your words together were too soft for me to understand?” Call asks in the silence of the woods.

“He said that I should remember my heart will guide me in the truth. I told him my heartaches when I am with you. I do not know what this means. He told me pain in the heart is a good omen, which hurts only so I will listen to it.” Shadow raises her head to face him as they walk.

“When he asked me if I love you, I wanted to leap into the air and shout.”

Call stops walking and turns Shadow toward him, holding her gently by the shoulders, feeling the softness of her braided hair against his hands and the trembling in her body. Talking no longer seems like enough. As the owls hoot out their warnings and the full moon moves above the tree tops, the two slowly undress each other in the warmth of the summer night and fall to the dimly-lit forest floor, releasing words of passion with their eyes, their bodies shaking, yearning for comfort, for reassurance that their past lives were lived by different people and their future is a world yet to be made together.

From a distance, Cetan-wicakte watches.

4 Confrontation

“**W**HAT are you doing with my wife, white man?” Cetan-wicakte surprises Call and Shadow as they lay under the sapphire moon’s glow.

“I, I am in love with Shadow. We are here together.”

“I am not your wife! Why have you followed us?” Shadow’s face rages with fury. “What do you wish to gain by following me?”

“You have been promised to me and now I find you in the woods, late at night with another—a white man.”

“Promised to you?” Shadow reaches to the necklace she is wearing and pulls the string of rattlesnake teeth from her neck. “I do not trust you, you have a mean spirit.” She is almost out of control as she throws the necklace at Scar Face, hitting him in the chest.

Call stands frozen, watching the battle in front of him, when suddenly Shadow runs away from both of the men, into the woods.

4 Confrontation

With the object of his anger gone, Scar Face turns toward Call and threatens him with a knife he slowly draws from his side. Call backs away into a fallen tree and tips backwards over it onto the ground. Just as Scar Face is about to lunge, a resonating voice calls out from the woods.

“Cetan-wicakte, do not harm him.” It is Nape Shuha, whose presence gives the assailant pause. “Put away your knife. A warrior does not enter into battle unfairly. He is not armed.”

Call lifts himself from the ground, thankful for the chief’s intervention. Nape Shuha stands at his side as Cetan-wicakte reluctantly puts his knife away.

“I found him with A-han-zi,” he says, refusing to address the white man directly. “Here in the woods, alone.” Scar Face thrusts his shoulders back and stands with his face inches from Call’s, continuing his challenge. “He was here with the woman who is to be my wife. It is promised by you. I was only trying to protect her honor.”

“And your own reputation,” Nape Shuha adds.

With that, Cetan-wicakte backs away from Call and stands akimbo, looking straight at Call. “I challenge you to a fight to claim A-han-zi away from me. We will meet at sunrise.”

Turning his back, Scar Face walks off to the village, Call's mind is spinning with anger and fright.

"What does he mean, a fight?" Call asks of Nape Shuha.

"Just that, white man." The chief says as he walks away from Call toward the village.

"I don't want a fight with Cetan-wicakte," Call shouts after the chief. "I love her, she loves me. Why isn't that enough?"

Nape Shuha continues walking away. "Paint your face, white man. Then you will understand some of our ways," he calls over his shoulder.

Shadow has returned with paint, which she begins applying to Call's face, chest and arms. "Love is never enough, Call." She paints a series of red stripes, drawn with three separate fingers across his forehead, eyes and cheeks, and down the length of his arms. She picks up a handful of dirt, and scrubs the paint off her fingers. With clean hands, she begins to weave his hair and ties three owl feathers in the knot on the back of his head.

"Here, wear these," she says, showing him a necklace of rattlesnake tails. "It will bring you luck and protect you from harm." The rattlesnake tails hiss as

4 Confrontation

she ties the tight collar around his neck. He continues hearing the hiss as they walk back to the village.

“He will try to kill you, you must believe this. You must fight him as a Sioux warrior would fight. Forget your white ways, they will only harm you.” Her voice is less than a whisper, playing with the sound of the singing rattlesnake tails in Call’s ear. Now she looks into his eyes again. Call can see fear deep in her liquid black eyes. He turns to Scar Face, who is painted in black with three white stripes across his face and chest, standing at the edge of a bare field in the center of the village. All the people have gathered with him to watch in silence.

The two fighters’ right legs are linked together by an eight-foot length of raw hide, bound at their ankles. All weapons have been taken from both of them; just their bare hands are to be used in the battle. As they begin, they face each other, each waiting for the other to commit himself to a course of action.

Call waits for Scar Face to make his first move. “It is his fight, let him make the first move,” he thinks to himself. As they wait, the sky begins to release a few drops of rain.

After a few intense minutes of staring, Scar Face makes a move. He drops to his knees in front of

him as Call watches, confused. Scar Face scoops up dirt with his hands and tosses it into Call's face. Like a cat springing on a mouse, Scar Face lunges at the blinded Call. His right hand loops the raw hide that binds them together around Call's neck as Scar Face's left hand slams into Call's nose.

Call falls to the ground with Scar Face on top of him, unable to see his attacker. He hears the grunts of effort from the Indian as Scar Face tightens the raw hide at their ankles around his neck, cutting off Call's breathing.

"What am I doing? He's going to kill me if he keeps this up. Why am I here fighting an Indian over a woman I just met a few months ago?" Call thinks to himself as he turns onto his side and lifts both of them off of the dusty earth.

Scar Face holds on but Call, determined to break free from his attacker, slams his fist into the front of Scar Face's neck.

"There, that should even things up a bit," Call thinks to himself as Scar Face releases the raw hide and falls to his knees, gasping for air.

Both men face each other on hands and knees, gasping for air and watching the other for signs of strength and weakness. Again, Scar Face makes the

4 Confrontation

first move, a sudden shove that drives Call backwards onto the ground. His attacker is once again sitting on Call's chest, choking off his air supply, only this time with his hands. Call finds himself helpless, the cord tied to his ankle is also wound around his arms. Slowly, the clouds in the sky turn gray and his vision begins to dim as he gasps for air.

"I'd better do something soon or I'm not going to make it out of this mess," he thinks to himself.

With the last of his strength, Call reaches with his legs for Scar Face's head. They reach their target the first time and clamp down on Scar Face's neck. Pulling with all of the strength he has left, Call manages to pull Scar Face off him and, surprisingly, ends up on his opponent's chest.

Call doesn't think, he just reacts. Before he realizes what he is doing, he has his hands around Scar Face's neck and is gripping with all of his might. Scar Face is thrashing and clawing at Call's arms and head but is soon helpless as his air is depleted. Limp, Scar Face's eyes begin to yield to Call's grasp.

"What am I doing? I can't kill this man," Call surprises himself at this thought. "He saved my life. I am the outsider. Shadow is promised to him, not me." Slowly, Call relaxes his grip on Scar Face and

looks up toward Shadow. The thunderbird on her chest seems to be illuminated by the distant lightning and the rain drops on the beads.

“Kill him or he will kill you.” She is mouthing to Call.

“No!” Call exclaims as he releases Scar Face and stands up to regain his breath.

As he stands, bent over from the fatigue from the fight, Call can feel a cold rain beginning to fall harder on his back. He lifts his head to let the drops fall onto his face and refresh him when the top of his head seems to explode.

“Darkness. I’ve got to wake up and find out what happened to me.” Call says to himself as he opens his eyes just in time to see Scar Face sitting on his chest again, lifting a large stone above his head.

Call manages to move his head out of the way in time to miss his assailant’s strike. He feels Scar Face’s hand brush against the side of his face as the stone is being driven down into the ground with a deep thud, right where Call’s face was just a moment ago. In response, Call drives his right fist into Scar Face’s left ear, throwing him off of his chest and onto a large rock that happens to be near.

4 Confrontation

Call jumps up onto his feet to fight off Scar Face. To his surprise, his attacker has stayed on the ground, a pool of blood is beginning to form out of the dirt crusted hair above Scar face's left ear. Call looks down at Scar Face for a moment and then looks around at the crowd watching them in silence. The rain is falling harder and water begins dripping from Call's nose, onto his lips. Water, colored blood red from the paint on his face, sprays from his lips as he holds out his right hand toward a man watching. "Give me your knife." He demands.

The man looks around him at the others in the crowd, frightened that he is being asked to supply the weapon that kills his friend, Cetan-wicakte. Looking up at Nape Shuha, though, he sees a nod from his chief that he cannot ignore. Slowly he takes his knife from its sheath and hands it roughly to Call, looking away.

Call raises the knife and brings it swiftly down on the raw hide binding him to Scar Face. In defiance, he throws the knife to the ground next to Scar Face and turns, walking through the rain back to his tipi. Shadow chases after him, splashing in the mud with her hasty steps on the way to the tipi. Inside she confronts Call.

“Why didn’t you kill him?” Her eyes burn with fury. “He saved my life, I was fighting him because of you, because of a promise your father made to him that I was trying to break.” The rain has washed the paint off of Call’s face and it is beginning to run down his chest, seemingly in remorse for the violence.

Shadow begins to calm as she sees the integrity in Call’s actions. After a few moments of silence, she returns to the doorway of the tipi where Call is still trying to regain his breath from the brawl.

“He would have killed you. He knows what you don’t: that you are both bound together, like the raw hide used to tie you together. Until that bind is broken, there will be no peace between you.”

“The fight we just had broke that bind.” Call gasps, trying to catch his breath. “That debt is paid. It is over between us!” He lets out a shout, grabbing his hair with his hands in frustration and turning away from Shadow.

She looks at Call. Her eyes fall from his hair, along his forehead and into the eye, clouded from the first Chippewa attack, and then to his chest. She walks to him and places her hand on his bare, painted chest, above his heart, and sighs.

4 Confrontation

“He knows the ‘Old Ways’. It will not be over until one of you is dead.” She lowers her hand and leaves the tipi, into the rainstorm outside.

5 Escape

FATIGUED from the fight with Scar Face, Call sits on his animal furs, thinking over the events of the last few hours.

“This is crazy,” he says to himself. “Here I am, in an Indian camp, fighting someone who saved my life.” Call shakes his head in utter disbelief. “Now he wants to kill me over a woman who has been promised to him by her father, the chief.”

After recounting how he ended up in this predicament, Call realizes there is no good way out of this fix he is in. “If I kill him, the chief will never forgive me for killing his friend. If I don’t kill him, he will continue trying to kill me, and, someday, succeed.” A few minutes more of this confusion leads Call to the conclusion that the only way out of this is to leave the village where he has spent the last many months.

As the rainstorm continues to build outside, Call dresses in the warmest clothes he has. With a knife

5 *Escape*

and a large skin Shadow gave him, he walks out of the tipi and into the forest.

The storm outside has built itself into a fury. All around him, lightning thrashes at the trees and thunder pounds the earth. The rain hammers at the ground like a frantic drummer, driving him deeper and deeper into the woods. Soon, Call is making his way through the woods toward the river, where he will follow the riverbank to the southwest, away from the Santee village.

The rain soaks the skin on his shoulders, and mud under his feet makes the going slow. Ahead of him, in the light of the bolts of lightning overhead, he sees the river and decides to wait out some of the storm under a fallen tree that he and Shadow used to sit on in the sun after swimming.

6 Storm

IT seems the storm rages on for hours as Call huddles under the fallen tree, resting and waiting for fair weather to return. During the storm, he manages to escape into dreams of the past months when he and Shadow learned about each other's lives. So different from each other, and yet, so much alike in the context of suffering and pains from their past. They had become friends who could share thoughts and emotions, sometimes without even exchanging words.

Call remembers one time while they were out gathering berries, when he found Shadow standing under an old oak tree. She was motionless, facing the tree's trunk, talking in low tones. After watching her for a while, he approached her. She seemed not to notice him as he placed a hand on her shoulder. Suddenly, she spread her arms out to her sides and, then, fell onto a small pile of stones that had been placed at the foot of the old tree.

6 Storm

Call was confused about what had just happened. "What is it," he pleaded, "who were you talking to?" She lifted herself off of the stones and stood, still facing the tree, with tears in her eyes.

"Before you came I was taught by the mystic, Hotan-inku. He taught me the songs of our people that tell of our past, the Old Ways. He showed me how to see the life the Thunder Bird Waukheon makes for each of us. He passed on to me the knowledge of healers and mystics that had been passed down from teachers before him."

She paused and stared down at the pile of rocks. "Today he told me I would not live in my village much longer. I must leave my father's tipi with you and one other he called 'The Eagle'."

Call remembers sitting next to her as she wept. Only their shoulders touched the first of their intimate moments together, as her tears quietly fell on the stones below her.

In his sleepy stupor under the storm, Call can feel her warm shoulder touching his, warming his heart and giving him a sense of well being. The roar of a thunderclap startles him from his memories and he wakes to the spattering of the rain in the mud around him.

“It will be dawn soon,” he thinks to himself, “then I can make my way further south, along the river.” He crawls out from under the tree trunk and looks at the sky. It has turned dark and heavy looking, but the rain has let up, at least for a while.

Just as Call leans back into the dry nest under the tree, he hears it. A low, heavy roar at first, then the sound of wind and a violent crashing noise that makes him cover his ears. The crashing noise turns into the sound of a large roaring beast that shoots pain through Call’s ears, even with his hands covering them. He opens one eye just long enough to see a large maple tree on the other side of the river ripped out of the ground and thrown across the river toward him. The maple lands just twenty feet from his shelter with a deafening crash, and branches and leaves are thrown toward the sky.

As suddenly as the wind and noise began, it ends. Call waits in terror until he is sure, whatever it was that caused this disaster, has passed.

Crawling out from under his refuge, he surveys the damage. What he sees are trees that were, moments ago, standing tall in the woods, now uprooted and swirled as if they were sticks being stacked for a camp fire. Large root systems are exposed to the air,

6 Storm

their tentacles reaching for the sun, with clumps of soil clinging to them that slowly fall as they dry.

As he looks around at the damage, the silence of the woods is ominous. No wind is blowing the leaves, and no birds are heard overhead. Only the silence of the woods greets him.

The sky begins to clear as Call looks over the devastation and the rising sun reveals the true extent of the damage. Moist air, heavy with the smell of wet earth, slowly lifts through the woods, above the remaining standing trees. A few crows shout their caws as they swoop overhead through the new opening in the woods. Looking toward the sound of the crows, Call realizes the path of the storm leads back to the Santee village.

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The way back to the village is layered with the shadows of broken youthful branches from ancient trees that once hovered in the sky over the woods and now lay on the forest floor. Call's progress over and through the broken trees is slow and cautious. The distance he and Shadow covered in an hour now is a course of broken obstacles that takes Call three hours to traverse. Torn branches and huge tree

trunks block his way as he climbs over and crawls under them.

Crawling under one tree that is blocking his way, Call finds the remains of a tipi, flattened under the weight of the giant tree that, not long ago, provided shelter and food. He sees a leg, motionless under the trunk. Call's heart aches as he realizes he is crawling through an immense funeral pyre that has not yet been torched.

The sun's fingers of light through the debris display an eerie scene. After climbing out from under the tree-grave, Call lets out a loud shout and then listens for an answer.

Nothing. Crows lift out from a distant downed tree and echo his cry in their own voice. Call listens and then lets out another cry.

"Shadow!" he shouts.

He thinks he hears a voice in the distance. A cry in response—perhaps to the west. He shouts again.

"I am here—" The voice is so distant, he feels it in his mind more than he hears with his ears. He stares into the brush to see if he can spot the source of the human voice.

"I am here, with you—"

6 Storm

He hears it again and starts to scramble over brush and limbs as big around as his chest. Quickly, he tears through the brush and trees. “Shadow!” he shouts.

“Caw, caw!” He hears the cry of a crow in the distance echo towards him.

As the crow’s noise reaches him, he sees the body of Laughing Bear, one of the village’s oldest storytellers, hanging from a branch of a fallen tree that had impaled him as a giant spear thrown from the vicious sky in battle. Call’s stomach rises to his throat. He fights on to find the sound of the voice in the distance.

Covering what seems like a mountain of brush and trees, Call comes upon a clearing. Out of breath and tired, he rests on a rock that he recognizes as the one Scar Face had fallen against during their battle.

“Shadow!” he cries out breathlessly. All he hears is the sound of a large bird’s wings flapping in flight behind him.

“Here, Call,” he feels a hand on his shoulder. “I am here.”

He turns around to face the glowing of the thunderbird on Shadow’s dress. Tentatively he stands and embraces her. Deep in his mind he wonders how

she appeared so quickly by his side, while his guilt for leaving without telling her leaves him unsure of himself. As he holds her, he feels her wet deer skin dress. It feels waxy, like the feathers of a bird. She rests her head on his shoulder as he clings to her. He studies the crow feathers in her hair as they reflect the sun's rays.

"Where did you go?" she asks. "I went looking for you in the woods last night but couldn't find you. When I returned, after the big wind, there was nothing left." Her eyes are filled with tears and fear grips her as she begins quaking in agony over the loss of her father, and it overwhelms her.

"I have found my father and some of the others, all dead."

The two stand silent in the calm, surrounded by destruction, holding each other and gathering strength from each other.

"It is all gone, my village is no more. All have been killed in the storm." Her fast breathing begins to dissipate. "I couldn't find you."

"I was in the woods," Call hesitates to continue, but eventually explains, "I wanted to be alone." He feels he must lie about leaving.

6 Storm

“I had a vision.” Her eyes search his face as she speaks. “I saw you alone in the woods. Rain was beating down at you but you were under a tree. When I saw what had happened in the village, I knew what I saw in my vision was your death.”

“I was under a tree, but safe from the storm.” Call looks over the devastation and wonders what kind of storm could do so much damage.

“What was that I heard?” Shadow whispers as she turns to the West.

“I don’t hear anything.”

“There, in the woods, to the West.” She runs over to the edge of the clearing.

Call hears a loud screech. He knows from the sound it is a screech of excitement, not fear, and he races to see what has excited Shadow. Shadow is embracing a young boy of about ten years. She turns toward Call as he approaches them.

“Look, it is Little Eagle, he is safe and unharmed!” Her face lights up with excitement and wonder at Little Eagle’s pristine condition.

“How did you escape the storm?” she asks.

“I don’t know,” says Little Eagle, looking around at the downed trees and roots pointing into the air. “I remember hearing it, the storm, but all I remember

is seeing trees flying by me. All went dark and, when I woke, I was in the forest.”

Call and Shadow look at each other in amazement. “Are the others near?” he asks.

Shadow looks down at Little Eagle with tears in her eyes. “No, Little Eagle. All are gone. You and I are the last of our village.” She sighs heavily and looks over to Call for comfort.

Call sees her plea and searches his heart for the comfort they are asking from him. “We should take care of the dead, then we will talk about what to do next.”

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They search for other survivors throughout the two hot days that follow. No other survivors are found amidst the ruined tipis and twisted trees. The village ruins look like a scattered pile of sticks on a magnified scale; the three survivors search through the rubble like ants crawling over dry brush looking for others buried in the mess.

Bodies are found in all sorts of strange places: in trees still standing, under fallen trees, and some have been torn apart from the flying branches. There are several people that Shadow and Little Eagle knew

6 *Storm*

that had disappeared without any trace. One of the missing, Shadow notes to herself, is Scar Face.

For three days they build funeral pyres for the dead that are found and burn them into the nights. Acrid smoke from the burning bodies and green wood covers the clearing that once was Shadow and Little Eagle's home. As the shadows of the burning pyres flicker in the night, they all three witness the dancing of spirits against the dark forest that still remains standing.

7 Migration

THE search through the rest of the devastation from the storm ends on the fourth day when no new bodies are found. The three survivors make their way back to the river and collapse in the shelter of a haphazard pile of fallen trees.

Shadow and Little Eagle manage to find some berries and roots to eat during the day, while Call begins fashioning together branches and brush for a more organized shelter in case it rains again. Shadow tries to convince him the shelter won't be needed for at least another seven sun rises, but Call needs to make the shelter as a way to take his mind off of the experience of the devastating storm. The physical work and the focus on construction keeps him optimistic and concentrating on the future instead of the disastrous past.

Completely unprompted, Little Eagle manages to kill three squirrels shortly after the sun begins to fall in the sky. As a distraction, he offers to help Call

7 Migration

with the shelter. He is able to offer Call several suggestions on how to strip cedar bark to use as a rope to tie branches together and points out what type of tree is best to use for various parts of the shelter construction.

As they work together, Call and Little Eagle talk in short bursts of conversation. Little Eagle begins referring to Call as White Call and continues with this practice into the future. Call knows Little Eagle needs to keep white people and the Sioux separate, even in conversation. He noticed this among other members of the village before and feels no threat or shame from the practice. Now that the others who did this are gone, it is a comfort to both of them to continue what was learned in the past.

Busying herself with the food preparations, Shadow cooks roots and berries into a flavorful broth, and roasts the three squirrels over a fire. After three days of not eating, the food seems like a fitting feast to honor the passing of her village.

All during the day of the feast Shadow chants prayers that Ho-tan-inku taught her, not long ago. Some are praises of ancestors, some chants are stories about animals that give her comfort in the continuity of life among the Sioux and the world around

them. Her greatest comfort comes from a new chant she creates from what the old mystic had revealed to her about her own future. She repeats this chant several times, memorizing the words and rhythm to teach to her children someday.

Away from where the village once was, the three of them go about re-establishing a rhythm in their lives. This feast day seems to be a day for each of them to regain some peace in their spirits and rest for their bodies. When the sun finally sets, they all fall fast asleep.

Little Eagle's dream is of an eagle, flying over the woods, searching for food. As he swoops down through the forest canopy, the eagle spots a squirrel on the ground chewing on an acorn. Quietly he glides through the brush toward his prey; he is attacked by a white crow that forces him back into the sky without his food. Again and again this same scene plays out in his dream. In the end, the eagle succumbs to his hunger and falls to the ground, too weak to hunt.

Call, too, dreams during the night. He dreams of a large brown bear poking through the woods, turning up tree stumps for food and sniffing the air. As the bear lumbers through the woods, he smells the odor

7 *Migration*

of rotting flesh. Curious, he seeks out the source of the smell. He finds an old man with his throat slit and dried blood pooled around his head. While peering over the dead man, a hawk-faced man wielding a knife attacks the bear, slashing at his throat and face. The hawk-faced man is vicious and relentless in his attack and mortally wounds the bear. Call sees the attacker in his dream, but all he can see clearly is the glow of one of the hawk's eyes. It glows red with hatred and bright with intensity.

Shadow dreams of water flowing through the forest. She is a crow, flying along the river's banks with an older crow that gives her guidance and comfort as they glide along the water's edge. A smile is on her face as they share the experience of exploring the forest together in her dream. The warmth and happiness of their experience makes Shadow want to fly in the forest forever.

As they are flying over the river, Shadow sees an arrow fly into her companion's body, its gleaming tip protruding from the back covered with blood red feathers. She watches, helplessly as her companion falls out of the sky and into the river, where he floats lifelessly among the brush.

Shadow awakes from the dream with a start, shaking from the vision in her dream and disoriented by the blackness of the night. Rolling over on her side, she can see the river flowing past and hear the water lapping against the shore. In the distance she can hear something splashing in the river. Shaking her head clear, she rises slowly to see what is making the noise. In the distance she sees the shadows of four men on ponies slowly crossing the river. As the dim moonlight strikes them, she makes out the silhouettes of what she thinks are Chippewa warriors.

Her mind races from fear and panic as a hand reaches over her mouth and muffles her surprise.

“Shhhh—” Call whispers in her ear.

They watch in silence as the shadows emerge from the river on their side of the riverbank and make their way toward Call and Shadow. Silently Call pulls Shadow down to the ground and they lay motionless as the warriors approach.

Call risks the motion of his head as he seeks out the location of Little Eagle. He spots Little Eagle hiding in the brush, some twenty feet away. The band of Chippewa makes their way to where the boy is hiding motionless. The horses slowly walk through the opening between them and Little Eagle and then

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begin to spread out as they reach the center of the clearing. Slowly, one of the horses walks through the brush just past where Little Eagle is laying, unnoticed by the Chippewas.

Shadow and Call lay still long after the band of warriors disappears into the forest. When all sound of their ponies is long gone, Shadow rushes over to Little Eagle. In the brush she sees him laying still, his eyes open in fright and sweat pouring from his face.

“My foot,” he says, “one of the ponies walked on my foot.”

Shadow looks down at Little Eagle’s left foot to see it crushed with the outline of a horse hoof around it. The horse had walked over his foot and continued on when Little Eagle did not move, did not cry out in pain.

“You must be brave some more while I treat your foot,” she tells him. Expertly, Shadow wraps the foot and leg in a brace as Little Eagle winces in pain without crying out.

“We must leave this place,” Call reports. “Chippewa will be crawling all over here soon.

“I don’t think he can walk far tonight,” appeals Shadow.

“We must leave, though, there is no other way. If we are found, our lives will be short and miserable.” Call searches the woods as he tells Shadow and Little Eagle of his fears.

Call and Shadow lift Little Eagle to his feet and begin walking with him between them.

“STOP, STOP!” Little Eagle protests. “The pain is too much, I cannot walk.” He looks into their eyes as the sweat returns to his face. “Leave me here.”

“No! There must be another way.” Shadow says as she searches the riverbanks for an answer.

Call’s eyes follow hers as they both search for the answer. “There..” He says, pointing at some brush. “We can lash some brush together and float it down the river with Little Eagle in it.”

Call and Shadow gather a large pile of brush and begin lashing it together with strips of cedar. After pulling it into the river, they help Little Eagle lay in the center of it, hidden from view. His face and chest stay out of the water while his legs and back are about three inches lower. Staring up at the stars, Little Eagle begins his trip down the river with Shadow and Call following along the bank, out of the water and away from brush and leaves that may give away their presence.

7 *Migration*

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The river takes them southwest until it empties into a large lake. From there, the three of them begin traveling south on foot. Little Eagle's foot and ankle begin healing but progress is slow as they make their way through the woods for a month. When they eventually reach a settlement of white people on the west side of a small lake, they all survey it in quiet reflection.

"A settlement." Call's eyes are transfixed as they watch people walking into and out of the settlement in the bright daylight.

Remembering the vision of Ho-tan-inku telling her that the three of them will be the only ones left of the village, Shadow studies the faces of Little Eagle and Call. Little Eagle's face is filled with fascination of the first white settlement he has ever seen. Call's face is lit up with an excitement she has never seen on him before. With his good eye he scans the layout of the settlement while his left eye strains to take in the shapes. In her heart she knows this place, she has been told of it before. When Call first came to her and was recovering from the attack of the Chippewa warriors, she was given a vision of this place by the spirit of Ho-tan-inku. She was told this was the vil-

lage that would be her home and where she will die.

“What are we going to do?” Little Eagle asks with apprehension in his voice.

After a moment of silence, Shadow looks at Little Eagle and says, “We are going to live on the northeast side of the lake and call this place our village.” As she spoke, Call knew what she said was true and felt in his heart that this has been where he was headed all along. He looks at her with excitement in his eyes.

“This will be our new home, just the three of us,” Call promises her.

With a smile on her face, Shadow returns his promise with news of her own. “No Call, the four of us: Little Eagle, you, me and, this winter, our son.”

Part II

New Ways

8 Lust

FRANCOIS Bebau's voice reflects his body, especially when he has been drinking, which today began at about ten thirty in the morning and continued throughout the day. When he speaks, his voice is loud and rough. The thin, kinky hair on his head grows down his back and peeks out the front of his shirt in coarse mats. Thin wisps of hair make up the black beard on his face, invading the orifices in his head, sprouting from the tips of his ears and making up a thick strip on his forehead above his deeply set coal black eyes. His body always has a thin film of sweat covering it with a moist, waxy look and sour smell. He is short and thick around the middle from the prosperity of his business, being the owner of the only mercantile in Winthrop.

Through the years Frank, as he is known in the village that rests at the edge of the Big Woods and on the southwestern shore of Winthrop Lake, has established a stranglehold on the village. Two years after

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starting up his own mercantile and shipping business, Frank took over the business of his competitor, Henry Sutter. Henry was forced to close his shop as the result of a fire that burned down his store, taking with it his wagons and a good team of horses. Though he knew Frank set the fire and was the one who blocked the livery with wagons so the horses couldn't get out of the barn, Henry could never convince the sheriff of his suspicions. Henry eventually took over the grain mill, owned by John Herman.

As in business, Frank is extremely territorial when it comes to relationships. If Frank likes you, he will extend his hand and your credit as long as your appreciation will last. However, he has ruthlessly cut off many families' credit, like a butcher cleaving meat, when they questioned the extremely high prices of blankets and clothing in the severe winter months. To his friends, though, Frank is a charming man. In fact, he tries to be his most charming around John Herman's only daughter, Jane.

Since his first day in town six years ago, Frank had claimed Jane Herman as his, even though it was known she was seeing Henry Sutter. She, on the other hand, found Frank revolting, boisterous, and a bore, not to mention ugly. He has been asking

her to all of the church socials, only to be turned down at every one of his requests. While in town she often chats with friends on the street until Frank appears out of nowhere and forces his presence on her, driving her friends away. Many times Jane has politely but firmly rebuffed his attention to her and, on two rather tense occasions, she has refused his rude proposals of marriage.

If anyone can be the opposite of Frank, it is Henry Sutter. Tall and handsome, he carries a voice that is pleasing to listen to and deep blue eyes that radiate sincerity below his sandy brown, expressive eyebrows. He is a mild man but has always been keenly aware of the real person Frank would become in the future. It was the way Henry had treated people fairly as a merchant that led John Herman, a fifty year old widower with a daughter and no son, to invite Henry into his business at the mill. Henry quickly learned the business and won John's confidence, as well as the heart of his daughter.

When Henry Sutter married Jane two years ago, Frank's behavior became even more vicious and intimidating. At the wedding, while the whole town danced and celebrated, Frank pulled Henry aside and

8 *Lust*

whispered in his ear, "I will take Jane from you, no matter what the cost."

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The bags of flour each weigh eighty pounds. Dell carries two of them, one on each massive shoulder, with his unruly shock of red hair and white face freckled with red spots sticking out between them. He thrusts first the bag from his right shoulder into the wagon and then the one from his left. The wagon booms as each bag falls into its bed and dust shakes down to the ground from the cracks in the boards. Startled, the two horses in front of the wagon shake their broad shoulders, one looking back at Dell to be sure everything is all right.

"All s-s-set Mr. Campbell," Dell announces as he begins wiping his face with his shirttail. "Sur-sure is going to be a-a hot day t-day." Dell has always spoken with a stutter, especially when he becomes excited.

"Thanks Dell," Jeffery Campbell says, reaching for the reins and releasing the break on the front wagon wheel. "You are a lot of help to the folks buying goods from that crook you call a boss. Before you came I had to carry the grain myself. Frank wouldn't lift a

hand to help even the women.” Then, as if an afterthought, “Why don’t you come on out to the farm Sunday and have some chicken with the family?”

“Sh-sshure, Mr. Campbell, be my pleasure.”

“We’ll expect you after church then. Git up Ben.” Jeff whips the reins at the two horses and they jerk the wagon into motion, heading west out of town.

With a big grin on his face, Dell watches the wagon twist its way around other wagons parked haphazardly in the road as he brushes the grain dust from his shirt and runs his hand through his hair. Summer is still burning into the morning and the heat is beginning to rise from the bare, dusty road.

“Dell, get your dumb ass in here!”

He hears his boss, Frank Bebau call him from inside the store. Slowly his shuffling feet carry his wide shouldered frame into the store for his next berating.

“I don’t pay you good wages to stand around jawing with the customers. Come in here, I need you to fetch me something.”

Frank is not one of Dell’s favorite people in town but he is the only one who can or will give him a decent job. Pay is five dollars a month and a place to sleep in the storage shed. It isn’t much but it keeps him fed and out of the rain and snow.

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Dell runs into the store, still squinting from the harshness of the bright sunlight outside. Jane Sutter stands at the box that serves as a counter, talking to Frank when Dell returns. Temporarily blinded walking into the dark store, he does not see Mrs. Sutter until he almost steps on her foot.

“Damn fool. Watch where you are going! You trying to hurt the poor woman?” Frank swears at Dell.

“N-n-no” Dell is visibly shaken and confused by Frank’s swearing. “I e-e-am sorry ma’am.”

“Don’t just stand there stuttering like a fool, go back to the smoke house and get a ham for Mrs. Sutter,” Frank blusters.

As Dell passes Frank to go out the back of the store, Frank whispers to him, “Pick out the smallest ham, not a choice one.”

“So, Janie, we don’t see you in town too often,” Frank says, eyeing her from head to foot.

Frank’s odor nags at Jane, even from the distance she tries to keep from him.

He admires the form of her body beneath the fabric of her dress, and the glow of light from her straw colored hair. He continues studying her beyond polite observation and this stirs his interest beyond proper thoughts. A grin slowly emerges on his fleshy lips.

“I’m kept quite busy at our new house,” Jane says in an effort to distract him from some obviously distasteful thoughts.

“As you know, Mr. Sutter is kept quite busy himself, with the new mill stones to be installed by harvest time.” She knows to keep an eye on Frank. His leer and roaming hands have become a disturbing challenge to her every time she comes into the store alone. Unfortunately, his is the only store in town.

“Perhaps I could interest you in some nice yard goods, new from St. Louis.” Frank’s voice softens as he approaches her and his large hands grapple for her elbow.

“Here, let me show you this special fabric. It would look nice draped on those lovely shoulders of yours,” he says, his hand abruptly floating upward on her arm.

An opportunity to be close to her may not arrive again for months and Frank is not one to be timid about going after what he wants. As she studies the fabric bolts, he smells the sweetness of the soap she uses to wash her hair and the lilac water perfume that lingers on her soft neck. His eyes drift down her neck to the top button of her dress that strained against the fullness of her bosom.

8 *Lust*

As his roaming hand reaches her shoulder she shudders and pushes away from him reflexively as his fingers began to drift from her shoulder toward her right breast. Frozen in fear, she can't move and finds herself unable to speak. It was one year ago that her husband had agreed to a loan from this vulgar and exploitative man in front of her. Without the loan, though, they would have had to close the mill and move to God knows where, poor and homeless. She carefully contemplates the fine line she walks in rebuffing his behavior. He possesses the ability to put her husband out of business and, so, she must be careful not to anger him. But his behavior and just looking at him turns her stomach sour.

Dell returns with the ham just in time to see Mrs. Sutter turn and walk away from Frank, pretending to examine some yard goods. He carries the ham out to her carriage and she follows him quickly. Secretly in his heart, Dell feels she is the most beautiful woman in the world and can't help smiling whenever he is around her. Just being near her makes him weak in the knees.

"Thank you very much, Dell," she coos sweetly to him. "It is so nice to have a real gentleman around." She flutters her eyes at him.

He blushes brightly, his smile growing when she calls him a gentleman. Involuntarily, his tongue passes along his bottom lip like a serpent as he concentrates hard on holding her elbow and helping her into her buggy. He would be crushed if she should fall while under his care.

In a near panic she briskly slaps the reins against the horse's flanks and races off to the east, toward home.

Frank appears suddenly behind him as the blush leaves Dell's face and he turns back to the store.

"You better be careful, eyeing the women that way, boy. Some jealous husband might not like it and whip your ass someday," Frank warns, grinning, while his eyes follow the buggy rumbling down the dirt road—a speeding shape accentuated by the dust rising behind it.

"I—I—I didn't mean no harm," Dell stutters.

"Be careful, boy," Frank repeats.

"Come on in here, I want you to watch the store while I run some errands."

Frank recites some things he wants Dell to do while he is gone. As Dell starts on the list, rearranging some shelves, Frank walks out the back door of the store and grabs a large ham out of the smokehouse.

8 *Lust*

Whistling his favorite tune, he walks the back road, east out of town.

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Jane Sutter had started a fire under the wash tub and is in the house preparing clothes for washing when a knock at the door surprises her. Opening the front door, she is shocked to see Frank.

“Sorry to bother you Janie, but that damned fool gave you a small ham. You ordered a large one,” he grins.

“Well, thank you Mr. Bebau. I’ll just take it and put it in the pantry. I won’t be a moment.”

“Oh, no trouble,” Frank protests, walking into the house with the ham under his arm. “I can take it back to the pantry for you, if you just show me the way.” His grin widens and she sees his eyes cutting through her like a knife.

Jane hesitates for a few moments and then decides he is harmless.

“This way then,” she says, leading him through the house.

As they walk through the house, he tells her he is sorry about the way he acted in the store. “It must be the French blood in me, Janie. Sometimes I just can’t help myself.”

She wonders if this is supposed to make her feel better, perhaps believing this is a way she might escape the uneasiness she feels around him without angering him.

“I’m sure I overreacted too, Mr. Bebau,” she says. “Here it is. I’ll show you where the small ham is and you can replace it with that nice large one.” She enters the pantry first and he follows carrying the ham. When she turns to hand him the small ham, she is startled at the wide white eyes with large dilated pupils facing her. She gasps a deep breath as he drops the ham he held and grabs her shoulders. “No! Don’t do this!”

“You want me to do this,” he whispers in her ear as he rips the shoulders of her dress from her.

“Stop!” she yells in his ear. She hears his breathing becoming faster and smells the sourness of the sweat soaking through his shirt. In a rage, she punches at him but her fists feel only the soft muscle under his soaked shirt.

Suddenly, she is thrown to the floor with his knees and large hands holding her down. The top of her torn dress falls away, exposing her breasts. The moment they hit the floor his hands start roaming over

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them. The more she struggles, the rougher and more angrily his hands pawed at her skin.

“No! Stop!” She cries in fear, still struggling against whatever parts of his body she can come in contact with. She is surprised by the fabric of her skirt that she feels cover her face, smothering her and restricting her ability to move. Then she feels him touching her. Her thrashing continues, trying to kick her legs but she feels like she can’t breathe. “No! Don’t do this!” She pleads, half screaming and half groaning in muffled protest.

Frank just laughs and grunts at her.

“Bitch!” He shouts as he enters her. Just then, one of her hands whips free of his hold and flies into his face, jabbing him in the eye. In a rage he raises his right hand and strikes at where her head would be under the fabric of her skirt.

“Stop fighting me and I’ll stop hitting you,” he yells over her screams. Again he hits at her face but she continues her struggle. Using the flat of his hand, he strikes at her face with all of the force he can manage.

He feels her give in to him through the contact of their bodies. After spending himself in her, he rolls off of her faceless body and pulls the skirt back down.

“I bet old Henry isn’t that good,” he boasts, panting to get his breath back. “What’s wrong, did I wear you out, Janie?”

After a moment of silence and just the sound of his own heavy breathing, he turns to look at her.

A strong wave of panic strikes him as he sees her face, red and bleeding through the nose and ears, twisted from the neck in a strange way. Her eyes are open wide, startled by the horror she experienced. She is not breathing.

“Janie! Janie!” he shouts, shaking her lifeless head and shoulders. In the silence his mind begins swimming in all directions. Breathing deeply, he finally collects his thoughts to think straight and coolly. Standing to pull up his pants and tuck in his shirt soaking wet with sweat, he walks out of the pantry to make a plan and cool himself in the outside breeze.

Through the back door he sees the wash kettle with a smoldering fire under it. In an instant he knows what to do and begins stoking the fire.

“Everyone knows it’s wash day,” he thinks to himself. “Too bad Janie was careless with the fire and let the house burn down when she was in the pantry.” He laughs out loud, realizing the cleverness of his story. Soon, the house would be engulfed in flames.

8 *Lust*

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Frank runs into the woods along the lake shore to hide from the inevitable stampede of people that will be coming from town when the smoke from the house fire is spotted. Following the lake but hidden in the woods, he begins walking back to town. As the burning house disappears behind the trees, he sees ahead of him someone looking in his direction. He stops.

“Who is that?” he yells at the distant figure. The figure just stands there, looking at him, motionless.

He begins walking quickly toward it and finally identifies Long Moccasin.

“Long Moccasin, come here,” he beckons in his most friendly tone and continues calmly walking toward her. Abruptly, she is gone, having disappeared into the forest.

Frank stares into the woods, realizing he will never catch up with her. “Damned Indians know this woods like flies know shit,” he laughs nervously to himself.

He continues walking back to town, even when he sees most of the men from town running toward the fire. He avoids the road, and takes trails through the woods to avoid running into anyone. At one point, he again sees the Sioux woman standing in the dis-

tance, and this time he changes his route to avoid her. When he turns to run around her, he trips on a large rock and stumbles into some loose brush. He puts his hands out to break his fall, and when he rights himself again, he sees in front of him again, the same Sioux woman standing a few dozen feet away.

Frank looks back towards where he had seen her before, and she's not there any longer. "What—" he looks back to the woman standing in front of him, but she's gone. A chill runs down his spine, and he quickly restarts his trek into town.

Exhausted from the rushed detour, he finally reaches his store but finds the door is locked and Dell is nowhere to be seen.

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Out on the point that reaches into the middle of the lake, chief Owlout stands watching the fire grow. He sees Frank walking away from the house as the rest of the town rushes to save it.

9 Healing

THE cool days of autumn are still three months away. Alex Purcell has trapped these shores for the last three seasons. He swears to himself that this will be the last season.

The Indians have looted his traps and Frank Bebau has cheated him out of the few pelts he had left to trade last season. He spends his last few months before autumn in the cabin he built the first year he arrived. Not much more than two rooms, one for his horse and one for himself. It provides shelter for the two of them when the winter winds from the Dakotas blow cold and snow through his bones or when the spring rains threaten to drown him as he stands in the mud outside. Summer has been a long, hot rest for Alex. Hunting game and drying meat is a tedious but necessary task if he is to survive the winter ahead.

He decides his hunting today should not take him far. He may connect up with Owlout and some of

9 Healing

his braves so they can hunt deer together. He and Owlout have gotten to know each other well over the last few years. The first winter Alex arrived was hard on him. His Kentucky training didn't prepare him for the Minnesota territory winters. He had stored enough meat for only three months, and it was Owlout who found him, nearly starving, trying to survive just one last storm alone. The Indian chief had carried Alex back to his village on the east side of the lake. It was the chief's wife, Long Moccasin, who cooked and fed him for the rest of the winter. Alex was able to learn their ways and language during that time and developed a trust with Owlout that quickly became a close bond.

As he approaches Owlout's village, Alex's heart jumps with the excitement that life among the Santee has given him. It was not Owlout's braves that were stealing from his traps in the fall, it was the refugees from the north that were squatting at the north end of the lake; he was sure of it.

Alex and Owlout meet each other at their usual meeting place, the north east side of the Santee village. Talking and catching up on the latest news, they follow the trail through the village of squatters, Indians that had been pushed from the north

by the white men who were clearing the forest and the Chippewa who were raiding Santee villages to expand their own territory. As they stroll out from the ever-growing village, Owlout stops talking and, in still silence, freezes, staring at the three figures walking toward them.

A short boy limps but does not seem to be in any pain as he keeps up with his two companions. The tall man is dressed in deerskins with braided hair intertwined with owl feathers. Judging by the man's way of walking and the color of his hair, Owlout knows immediately he is a white man. His staring, however, is not at the limping boy or the white man dressed as a Sioux. His stare is fixed on the woman. By the way she walks, he knows she is not a typical Santee. Her shoulders are strong and straight, her head held high, like a warrior going off into battle. But her dress, the beaded design on the front of it, he has heard of such a design but has never seen one until now.

As they grow near, Owlout notices the crow feathers woven into the woman's hair and the medicine bag tied around her neck that hangs above her breasts—just above the thunderbird design on her dress. The chief's mind spins in confusion. Only

9 Healing

men are allowed to wear their hair in such a manner, and then, only the man of medicine! His confusion grows only deeper when the white man greets him in flawless Sioux.

Alex listens, missing some of the native language that he isn't familiar with. What he can make out seems to be a fantastic story of how the three strangers are the only survivors of a devastating storm that wiped out an entire village. The man's name, he hears, is Call Jefferies, the boy is Little Eagle, and the woman is called A-han-zi. Something is said about the design on the woman's dress, but Alex cannot make out the meaning of the words the two men use. Soon after that, however, the woman begins speaking to Owlout and Alex feels the forcefulness in her voice and the sureness in her use of words that demonstrate that she is more than the man's wife. Watching her speak, Alex discerns a clearness in her eyes and strength in her face that matches the unmistakable grace the rest of her body displays. Little Eagle seems mesmerized with the sound of the woman's voice and cannot be distracted from watching her speak as he listens to her every word.

Owlout studies the woman's face for hints of insincerity and untruthfulness. He has heard fantastic stories from others and knows well the telltale face and body changes, the uncontrollable shakes in one's voice and rhythms of breathing and speaking that change and break as the falseness of the tale unties the darkness of the teller's spirit. This woman speaks the truth. She knows the ways of the medicine men but there are hints of other knowledge too, old and unspoken.

At last, the white man turns to Alex. He is tall and strong, the deer skin clothes he wears do little to disguise the muscles on his arms, legs and back and also several scars in critical areas of his body. How a man could have survived such wounds, Alex cannot imagine.

Call tells Alex that he is the first white man he has spoken to in a year. They commence exchanging the histories of their lives and eventually learn that they both had families that were wiped out by Indians—yet they both find living among Indians easy.

After a few hours of talking and getting to know each other, the two men realize they will remain friends for a long time. For some people this is how it goes;

9 *Healing*

you just know, without reasons, and without excuses, you trust the other person and you just know they trust you in return.

* * *

The travelers stay with Alex in his small cabin just outside Winthrop. He offers his room for the weary three who no longer have a home and willingly bunks with his horse in the back room.

His mind swimming, Alex lies awake, leaning against his companion; the gentle giant breathes deeply with his enormous lungs, slowly circulating large volumes of air in and out like an enormous billows stoking a fire. The strangers in the next room still occupy Alex's mind, and restless, he makes his way outside with hopes that the stars will calm his thoughts.

He comes around to the front of the cabin and sees in the shadows Owlout and the healer sitting and quietly talking to each other in solemn tones.

"We stay distant from the white people, but I worry they will not survive much longer," Owlout hangs his head, telling Shadow what he has seen recently. "Anger and greed fill too many of them, and leads to the fever one of their own suffers from now."

Shadow's interest is peaked. "Tell me more about this fever. How does it affect their spirit?"

“I have only seen it once before, but last time five were lost,” Owlout’s gaze reaches out into the dark forest, where he seems to focus on a source for his memory. “Before there were more celebrations. The large one, the one who trades distant goods, was not always the only trader in the village, and the white people wore smiles on their faces. Almost four winters ago, there was a great fire that burned the other trader’s horses, which caused a great sorrow to fall upon the town.”

Owlout tells Shadow the story of how one man tried to save the horses from the fire and died. His wife was filled with such anger and grief that she contracted the fever. She wasn’t able to recover and died from the illness along with four others in the village.

“It has come around again. Henry Sutter now suffers with great anger, and I fear he will also die from this disease. Perhaps if you can cure his illness, he can overcome the anger and learn to live in peace.”

* * *

When the sun comes up, Alex, Shadow and Call make their way through the woods toward Winthrop. The trails are overgrown, Alex explains, because he has tried to stay away as much as he can. He says that he finds more peace alone in his cabin.

9 *Healing*

“I like listening to the sounds of the woods, and I don’t hear them much in Winthrop. There always seems to be some sort of activity going on.”

Shadow understands. Based on Owlout’s stories, the people of Winthrop seem only to listen to each other and nothing else. They appreciate the woods where they live, but most don’t understand that they are as much part of the woods as the woods are part of them.

After a few more minutes’ walk, they arrive at the house where Sutter is staying, just up the road from where his own house lies in charred ruins. An older woman, perhaps in her sixties, short, and motherly appears at the front door to greet them; Alex introduces the party.

“Hi Mrs. Martin, perhaps you remember me, I’m Alex Purcell ma’am.”

She nods and smiles halfway, wondering who the Indian is and the white-man-turned-Indian with them.

“I brought some friends of mine who recently lost their village — remember the big storm? Well, I told Shadow here,” he gestures to A-han-zi, “about Henry’s condition, and she thinks her medicine can help him out. She was a medicine woman in her village before it was lost.”

“Well, I don’t know if Henry is interested in Indian medicine,” she says, crossing her arms. “Say, who’s this with all the scars that you’ve brought along?”

“I’m sorry, ma’am, my name is Call, er—Pat Jefferies.” He nods at Mrs. Martin politely, then points to Shadow. “The Santee call me Call. They were kind enough to take me in after I barely escaped from a Chippewa attack, and Shadow here nursed me back to health. She taught me to speak Sioux, so maybe I can help talk to Henry.”

Mrs. Martin’s smile fills out as she is comforted by Call’s brief recount of how he met Shadow. She thinks, though Henry might be skeptical, perhaps this Call fellow’s story will convince him to at least give it a try. She’s seen this fever before, and there can’t be harm in trying something new—something at all. “Why don’t you come with me. I’ll see if Henry’s up for visitors.”

She walks into the front room of the house and the three visitors follow. The house is just slightly bigger than Alex’s, having one more room for a kitchen. It smells of freshly-baked bread and reminds Call of his mother’s house.

Mrs. Martin peeks her head into one of the other rooms. “Henry, Alex brought some friends that would

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like to talk to you. They think there may be a way to help out your fever.” An inaudible response comes from within the room, and she turns back to face the visitors. “Alex, why don’t you stay out here with me so we don’t crowd the poor man in that tiny room. You two, go ahead in. He is weak, so maybe you’d better introduce yourself first, Jefferies.”

Call walks into the room first and sees a man lying in a small feather bed, his face red and shiny with fever heat. His arms protrude from the blanket covering the rest of the body, skinny, suggesting that he hasn’t eaten in weeks. Next to the bed is a bowl of water and a cloth that he has been using to cool down his forehead, and a chair that Call sits down on.

He tells Henry stories of how Shadow rescued him and of the others she helped comfort and heal in the village. Call then talks about their narrow escape from the destructive storm. Henry’s eyes move from Call over to the window in the side of the room, and they sit in silence. After a few moments, his eyes turn to Shadow, who steps forward into the light coming in from the window. He admires the thunderbird on her chest, never having seen anything like it before. “She healed those wounds?” he asks, turning to look

at Call, his eyes moving across the scars that are visible outside his clothing.

“Yes,” Call says.

Henry closes his eyes and they sit in silence again for a few moments. He coughs a few times and wipes his forehead with his hand. “Okay.”

Shadow walks over to the bed and kneels beside him, producing a leather pouch she has been holding. She tells Henry about the spirit in the woods and how the plants will bring the spirit back into him. Call translates what she says into English, and Henry just looks back and forth at the strangers as they speak to him, absorbing the story. He watches intently what Shadow prepares as, with Mrs. Martin’s help, she makes a bitter tea.

* * *

Three days later, Alex arrives back at his cabin, returning in a hurry from his daily visit to see how Henry is doing. He is met by Call and excitedly tells him the news.

“Henry’s fever broke!” He wears a huge smile that grows larger when Shadow comes outside to meet them. “He is walking around, and talking to us. He wants to see Shadow again to thank her.”

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While not surprised, Call is at once relived and proud of Shadow. She and her tea have illustrated the wisdom of the Santee ways, healing both Henry's mind and his body.

Alex leads them, including Little Eagle this time, back into town to see Henry. The trip is shorter this time, the group walking at an excited pace to Mrs. Martin's. When they arrive, Henry is sitting in a chair in front of the house, relaxing in the fresh air. He stands, slowly and weakly, to greet them.

"Thank you, Shadow. Your tea, that magic tea, has made me feel so much better!" Alex translates as best he can for Shadow.

She modestly nods and warns Henry that he must continue healing his spirit or the fever may return. "You are angry. What made you angry made you sick. If you find peace, this fever will not return." He sees in her eyes a genuine worry for his future. She does not smile at his compliment, but her expression urges him to address what has put him in such a state. Alex has a little trouble keeping up with everything Shadow says, but he has learned enough Sioux over the years to help the two communicate.

As Shadow talks to Henry, Call begins to notice that the front room of the house is full of guests. He

wanders inside and is greeted by Mrs. Martin amidst the cacaphony of simultaneous conversations. “Well hello, dear! I was telling people at the mercantile about Henry’s recovery, and they just had to come see it for themselves.”

He makes his way through the crowd, feeling like a foreigner yet looking similar to the locals, drifting somewhat, though his hand is shaken apprehensively by everyone he nears. He meets more white people than he has seen in years, and they all speak at him quickly and optimistically about Henry’s recovery. Some are excited and praise Shadow’s wisdom, amazed that they have gone so long without her healing talent. Others are not so appreciative and emit skepticism that Shadow’s “medicine” had done anything at all.

“I bet he was recovering on his own already. I’ve seen these fevers before and not everyone died.” The skeptic was short and round, with unkempt dark hair and a beard that looked like a mangy squirrel.

Some of the visitors huff in agreement at this absolute statement, but others are quick to defend the healer. “Nonsense, Bebau! Did you see how sick Henry was? He couldn’t walk and could barely speak! It’s a wonder he can even talk to us today.”

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Not wanting to get caught in the middle of the debate, and a bit stirred by the rotten bouquet of distilled spirits on Bebau's breath, Call slips back outside to join Shadow and Henry. They are deep in discussion though, Henry with grateful eyes, shimmering at Shadow. Little Eagle sits near Shadow, trying to pick up as much English as he can from Alex as the words go back and forth between languages. He's mesmerized by the differences in the sounds and wonders how it is that Shadow and Henry, two people who look so similar, cannot understand each other.

"Alex, can you bring Shadow and Little Eagle back when they're done talking to Henry? I need to go for a walk to clear my head a little," he motions to the commotion inside the house. Alex is happy to stay a while longer, so Call sets out into the woods, taking a round-a-bout way back to the cabin.

He heads off in the general direction of the cabin but stays closer to the road towards town to get familiar with the area. It is one of the first sunny days in a while, and he takes in the sounds and scents of the Big Woods. A variety of small birds chirp at each other across the tree tops, the sounds echoing in the early spring woods; the trees are only half ev-

ergreen and the rest do not yet have their leaves for the summer—giving a slight echo to all the noises within.

As he walks, he starts to notice the scent of a stale fire; one that finished burning weeks ago but its ashes, floating in the air, still hint at the recent blaze. He walks up a small hill, and as he comes to the top, finds himself on a point that reaches out into the lake. From the point, he can see most of Winthrop, and most obviously, the remnants of a house surrounded by blackened trees. He stops and focuses on the house, thinking it must be Henry's old place—where Mrs. Martin had told Call Henry had lived before it burned down.

Call stands still for a while looking at the sad ruins, wondering what it had been like before. He soon notices something moving near the side of the lot. A small, round figure emerges from the woods and bends down into some of the rubble, awkwardly. As he straightens up, the figure holds something up to the sunlight and turns slightly, revealing his profile to Call. He recognizes the dark eyebrows and ragged beard as the figure struggles to hold the object he found—appearing a bit intoxicated. Call watches the figure rummage through more of the ruins before

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briskly walking back into the woods, hands full of bits recovered from the ashes.

“Bebau?” he says to himself. “Why is he snooping around Henry’s old place?”

* * *

In the morning, Call wakes up in a cold sweat to Shadow watching over him. He finds it difficult to focus his eyes, and his legs and arms feel heavy. She speaks soothing words to him—words he hasn’t heard before and doesn’t understand—until she sees his eyes finally focus on her worried face.

“Drink this tea,” she says, and hands him a small cup of a bitter smelling, hot liquid. He takes the cup from her and inhales the aroma; it smells familiar, and he remembers it from when Shadow was tending to Henry.

The tea tastes acrid on his lips, like unripe potato, but also earthy like the woods in the heat of the summer. It warms his throat as he swallows, and he struggles to concentrate on anything but its taste, letting his thirst run his body through the motions to consume the medicinal tea.

He hands the empty cup back to Shadow, and as she tells him to rest, his eyes unfocus and slowly close, landing him in a deep slumber.

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When he wakes again, Call feels even colder and more damp, though he is nestled in a variety of blankets and furs. It is dark. His eyes blink a few times as a slight chill runs down his spine, and his vision focuses on a flickering fire just out of reach. He follows the flames as they turn into smoke and drift up to the ceiling and out of the hole in the roof of the tipi. His mind begins to spin—where is he? He was in Alex’s cabin last time he woke, and he doesn’t remember seeing a tipi since Shadow’s village was ruined by the storm.

“Timah hiyuhwo.” A soft older male voice speaks calmly in the background. “It is good you’ve come now, he is awake.” The flap on the tipi opens briefly and Call hears someone step inside, but he cannot focus his eyes in the direction of the entrance, only on the flickering fire in the center of the tipi.

Two human forms appear over where he lays. Slowly his eyes bring them into focus, revealing the faces of Owlout and Shadow. He tries to ask where he is, but no sound comes from his mouth.

“Call, you are sick. Shadow has asked the spirits to mend your body, but they do not listen.” Owlout speaks softly, clearly, and slowly. He softly rests his

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hand on Call's right shoulder, which Call notices is painted white beneath his warm coverings.

He glances over at the fire and watches a few sparks rise up through the center of the tipi, swirling in circles and writing unreadable words in the air as they spiral upwards. The tongues of fire spread a wave of comfort over Call as he shuts his eyes and lets out a soft sigh. He feels at peace and in an instant knows that while his time has come, the time for Winthrop to live in peace with the Sioux and with the land has not yet begun.

"Shadow," he says at last, "I cannot be healed, but you must use your wisdom to heal the town of Winthrop."

She nods, realizing his moment of clarity is to be accepted as truth, and asks him to continue.

"Bebau, he started the fire." Call tells Owlout and Shadow about what he saw when he was standing out on the point. Owlout relates his similar experience, and Shadow confirms she felt strange about that man. "But he is not done, he is still angry at Winthrop and what it has become. Be careful, Shadow."

The fire pops and sizzles as Call slowly closes his eyes. The fingers of flame reach up towards the sky,

growing higher and higher, grabbing at the sparks that write in the air. At once, the light winds outside blow the flap of the tipi aside, and they rush inside, extinguishing the fire and carrying a gust of smoke, spark, and Call up through the top of the tipi and into the night.

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“**H**E will be known as Raymond, as Call would have wanted. To me, he will be Seeing Light.” Shadow wastes no time giving her new son the name.

Long Moccasin smiles as she hands the newborn baby to his mother. “He has his father’s eyes.” The light blue eyes blink open and shut sleepily at Shadow, who cradles him in her arms. She strokes his head softly and hums a tune. She isn’t sure where she learned it, but it reminds her of her childhood. Raymond yawns sleepily and dozes off for another nap.

Shadow sighs contently as she looks at Raymond. Over the past months, she had become accustomed to having Little Eagle around, and since he left her to go live with the local Santee tribe, she felt like she needed another boy to look after. Little Eagle had been helpful and comforting, especially as she grew less mobile carrying little Raymond inside her. The Santee tribe was appealing to him though, and she

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understood that he wanted to learn the ways of the Santee men as he had begun learning before their village was destroyed.

She gently rocks the tiny child in her arms and smiles in amusement as Raymond's little hand naturally reaches out and grabs her thumb. She feels a wave of comfort and belonging sweep over her, and at that moment knows. "Raymond will be a great healer," Shadow says to Long Moccasin, who smiles at the aura of happiness around the new mother.

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A few months before Shadow gave birth to Raymond, Alex had come home with a few of Owlout's men and supplies to build a tipi. Down the path towards Winthrop, they cleared enough space for Shadow's new home and erected the tipi which seemed quite large to Shadow, but Owlout assured her that her new son would take up more than enough space to fill it. Shadow spent the first day in her tipi mixing dye and painting a large blue thunderbird to match the one on her dress; Alex asked her about the bird and she had explained to him that the thunderbird would protect her and her son from the natural forces that had destroyed her village.

The morning after Raymond is born, Shadow stands near the thunderbird outside the tipi with him in her arms—his eyes wide open—and tells him about their home village that was destroyed.

“You are part of me, Raymond. This bird has been with me for a long time. It will protect us, and in turn we will help protect people from illness. The one I learned from, Ho-tan-inku, once told me I would have a son and he would be a great healer. That is why he taught me his ways, so that I could teach you.”

Raymond smiles, blinks and stretches an arm out towards the bird, letting out a grunt. His mother smiles at him and continues, “Someday I will teach you, Raymond.”

As they stand outside the tipi, a few familiar figures from Winthrop appear walking up the path towards them. From a distance, Shadow sees two very large white men, but as they get closer, there is a third man in the middle being carried by the other two. The middle man appears to have two broken legs, and he is pale from the injury. His legs are twisted and bound to wooden boards with twine to immobilize them. As they get closer, Raymond’s smile disappears and his eyes get wide as though he can sense

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the pain of the approaching injured man. He gazes into Shadow's eyes and she comforts him. "Do not worry, Raymond. Everything will be fine." His eyes slowly droop and shut, and she rocks him as the men approach her.

"Shadow," one of the large men speaks with a deep rough voice. He's clearly shaken and resembles the injured man—perhaps a brother. "We need your help. John isn't getting better and we don't know what to do." The man being held up by the other two scrunches his eyes and grimaces in pain. His eyes stay shut even though he tries with all his might to stay awake.

She smiles at the men and nods towards the tipi. "Bring him inside."

They spread John out on a pile of blankets and furs in one side of the tipi, gently straightening his legs as he winces in pain. His brother strokes his head and whispers something inaudible into his ear. Shadow lays Raymond down nearby in another pile of comfortable things, and he drifts peacefully to sleep allowing Shadow to focus on John.

Placing her hands on his shoulders, she attempts without words to assure John that he is in good care. She smiles at him when he briefly opens his eyes,

and a corner of his mouth turns up in acknowledgment. She studies the color of his palms and fingernails carefully, turning his hands over and over in hers. Gently, she unties the makeshift splints on his legs, supporting his injured legs in channeled folds of blankets. For some time, she just kneels next to him with her hands on his broken legs, eyes closed, unmoving. The fire in the center of the tipi crackles in the quiet, casting tall shadows of all the tipi's occupants onto its sides.

Eventually his brother breaks the silence. "Well?" he says anxiously.

"Green wood and moist earth," she says at last.

"What?"

"Please go find some green wood, new tree branches, and some moist earth in this," she grabs a small bowl and hands it to the brother. He stands holding the bowl as she still hasn't opened her eyes. As if she had been watching all along, she abruptly opens her eyes and turns her head to the large men. "Go."

The two men leave the tipi in search of ingredients, and Shadow stands beside John. He still lies there, unmoving, with a slight grimace on his face. She walks to the other side of the tipi and returns to

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John with a small leather pouch. She removes some dried leaves from the pouch and places them in another small bowl. Sitting on the fire is a pot of boiling water, and she removes it briefly, tipping some of the hot water into the bowl of leaves. Returning to John, she dips a cloth in the bowl, and begins gently blotting his face with its contents.

John's brother and his companion return with an armful of green twigs and the bowl of dirt, placing it next to John near where Shadow is kneeling and warming his skin with the tea she made. She picks up the bowl of earth and begins gently spreading it onto John's infected, broken legs. Relaxed from the warm tea, he doesn't flinch as she gently massages it into his skin. Next, she picks up one of the twigs and peels long skinny strings from the green wood. When she has a large pile of strings, she weaves them together around his legs to hold the earth to his skin, and support the broken limbs.

When she is finished, she turns to John's companions who are still standing by the door of the tipi. They have been watching her perform the healing techniques, baffled by what she was doing. Shadow motions for them to sit by the fire. "Please, sit. Let

me tell you what causes John pain and how we can help him heal.”

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Through the subsequent years, Shadow’s English improves, and the citizens of Winthrop visit her more and more frequently for help. Though she asks for no form of payment, they begin bringing her roasted ducks and other special foods as well as blankets and various toys for Raymond. They gradually begin showing great appreciation for her help, and by the time Raymond turns eight, he has already begun helping Shadow with the growing number of people who come for help.

As he becomes more and more involved with the healing work, Raymond listens to the white people who come for help and learns about their own healing techniques. Though the techniques seem strange and nonsensical, he learns that the strange practices comfort the ailing—even if they are irrational and ineffective. He and Shadow begin introducing the white peoples’ practices into their own healing to help calm those who seek their help. They in turn notice less reluctance of many of the whites to seek their help.

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One mid-summer day, Raymond suggests a drastic change that he thinks will help the citizens of Winthrop more than anything.

“Mother, we should create a place in Winthrop so people do not have to come to our home for healing.” He boldly asks exactly what he is thinking, knowing Shadow doesn’t like him to use too many words.

“Raymond, that is against everything I have taught you! Ailing people need a place away from where they were sick to become well.” She is not angry, but clearly confused that he would want to change something that has worked so well.

He thinks for a while, and then attempts to explain his thinking in few words. “If we are in Winthrop, then people who cannot walk can be easily carried to us. I also do not like always having sick people in our home.”

Shadow pauses to consider his reasons. Recently, there have been so many people seeking healing that they have barely had any time alone together.

“Let’s talk to Alex.”

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The next morning, they are in Winthrop in a town hall meeting. The city hall where they are gathered

feels like a sauna, hot and sticky in the heat of summer. The storms from previous weeks have saturated the area, and the water hangs in the air like a thick but invisible fog—invading peoples lungs, and beading on the villagers’ faces like sweat.

The whole town has come for the discussion about creating a new Sioux clinic on the edge of Winthrop. The sheer number of people in the small hall is astonishing; in the dozen years that Shadow and Raymond have lived nearby, the town has grown from a few families into a thriving village of at least a hundred people. The town elders credit Shadow with the prosperity brought to the town, and health is clearly important to the people crammed into the roasting little room.

“In the last ten years, Shadow has kept our sick from dying and healed our young. We should give her and her son whatever they want to keep us healthy! There is not a doctor among us, and without her and her son we surely would be extinct.” The sheriff, John, speaks on behalf of Raymond’s idea in front of the town, urging the town to help out and citing his experience under her care. “I can walk! I shouldn’t be able to walk, since my legs were broken and I was close to death when I went to see her. If she could fix

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me, imagine what she could do with an entire hospital!”

A ragged-bearded man stands up to shout his dissent. “I ain’t never been healed by no Injun, and I’m still kickin. We lived this long without it, we don’t need no Sioux doctor. I’ll never support putting an Injun building on *my* property.” Shadow recognizes him as Frank Bebau.

This starts a loud and raucous argument amidst the general feeling of approval. The citizens shout back and forth for the better part of an hour while Raymond and Shadow sit and listen quietly.

Eventually, the argument becomes the whole town against Bebau, who gets very red in the face and explodes. “If you want to build this,” he points at Raymond, “You’ll have to first pry the deed for the land from my cold, dead hands.” With that he turns and stomps out of the town hall, leaving the entire room in silence.

After Bebau leaves, Alex stands up to address the town who stand in silence fanning themselves in the heat. “Bebau doesn’t own the land around Winthrop. The deed he mentions is one he created for himself to lay claim to the land. He still has not built on it and does not use the land even if he pretends he owns

it. I say we build a clinic for Shadow and Raymond. Who's with me?" The room erupts in cheers.

Shadow turns to Raymond and quietly smiles at him amidst the cheerful commotion. "Raymond, this is to be *your* clinic. I am happy in the tipi, but will continue to teach you as long as you stay with me."

Raymond hugs his mother and says, "I've learned plenty from you and from the whites. While I will not leave our home, I want to create this better place for healing, to help out Winthrop. It is my calling."

Shadow's smile grows, and she looks into his eyes, knowingly. "I always knew it was."

* * *

The next day, Raymond and some of the men from Winthrop are clearing brush and trees from a plot of land on the edge of town, far from Bebau's mercantile. The half a dozen men are chopping away at the medium-sized trees, stripping and piling them up nearby. The plot is modest—not more than half an acre—so the men quickly move through and clean it out.

As they take a break for lunch, ten other men appear in town from the far edge, shouting "Land Grab!" and raising various sharp instruments firing rifles

10 *The Land*

over their heads. The uprising slowly makes its way towards the land being cleared for the clinic, and as they approach, Raymond recognizes the man in front as Frank Bebau.

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Shadow is sitting in her tipi, laying out some plants on a wooden rack for drying, when she hears Alex shout her name from outside. She quickly appears outside and Alex is standing there with a couple of other villagers, short of breath. "Bebau is back, and he wants the clinic's land." He is breathing heavily, having ran from Winthrop, and bends over to catch his breath.

Thinking only of her son, Shadow disappears inside the tipi and reappears shortly with a small leather satchel hanging around her neck. She, Alex, and the villagers quickly make their way down the road towards the clinic site; the whole time, all Shadow can think about is Raymond as a little child in her arms.

They arrive at the clinic site to see a shouting match between Bebau's posse and the rest of the village. People from all parts of town have heard the commotion and come out to either observe or join in the argument. Arms flail, sharp tools wave around in

the air, and men are holding axes, rifles, and large sticks.

“Get out of our town!” shouts Bebau. “This is ours, you don’t belong and you never will!”

Another villager shouts a retort. “This is not yours, this is God’s land. Raymond does God’s healing work and should be as much a part of this village as anybody!”

“We gave the primitive Injuns their space, but they’re starting to get too close to Winthrop.”

“They were here first!”

“It’s time to claim what is rightfully ours and take back our land!” Frank shouts at the top of his lungs, a raspy roar with small beads of spit flying from his lips to punctuate the words.

In the commotion, a rifle discharges, and the argument turns physical as the two sects of villagers wrestle and swing at each other with whatever they can grab.

A young, strong man yielding a garden hoe is struck down by the sharp point of an axe that, until recently, was used for striking down trees that would become part of a clinic. He crumples to the ground as the axe-wielder spins around to find a second victim and is knocked on the side of the head by a shovel.

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Through the flurry of swinging weapons and limbs, Shadow sees Bebau taking aim on Raymond, who faces a different direction, with his rifle.

“Raymond!” she cries in terror, and runs towards Bebau, tackling the arm he was using to steady his firearm. The metal instrument barks sharply, and in a puff of smoke, discharges a round into another man, who clutches the leg wound and falls to the ground shouting in pain.

“Injun bitch!” shouts Bebau as he swings the rifle around, twisting it away from Shadow, grabbing the barrel and striking Shadow directly in the left ear. Instantly she goes limp and falls at his feet, while the reverberations in the rifle’s barrel are too much for him and it slips from his grasp and flies over his shoulder. He kicks at Shadow as she lays motionless on the ground.

By this time Bebau’s rage has taken a toll on Shadow, but John and a few other townsmen have begun to separate those participating in the riot. A number of men lay on the ground, writhing in pain from various injuries, and Raymond notices his mother lying motionless at Bebau’s feet. He runs to her side, placing his hands on her face, shaking in attempts to wake her.

“Mother!” he cries.

Little Eagle, who has appeared amidst the commotion, pulls Bebau away from the healers as Raymond looks up from his mother’s body—a tear slowly falling down his cheek. He notices that Owlout and at least ten other warrior men from the nearby Santee settlement standing around, helping to keep the peace. Little Eagle has become strong and easily holds Bebau, though he wriggles around in protest, attempting to break free.

Standing nearby, John fires his rifle into the air causing silence to sweep across the site as everyone stopped to pay attention to him.

Long Moccasin stands tall next to John, clearly angry, and shouts “Ha-ay!” to announce her presence.

“This is our home,” she says. “Our ancestors found this place, rich in rice and fish. We have lived in this place since the time Owlout’s ancestors first came upon these shores. It has been a good place to live, rich in food and game, until the white man arrived. Now we are being forced to change where we hunt and where we live. The once sweet water of the lake is now bitter with the dirt made by the white men on the other shore.”

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In the following few minutes, Long Moccasin tells the history of her tribe and the unnecessary tensions with Winthrop. The villagers listen to her as if it were the most important story they've ever heard.

"Shadow and Raymond brought peace between our two worlds with their connection to nature. This connection is common to all man, no matter what kind, and nature can no longer be ignored. It is only possible to live if we live together, since we cannot live apart."

When she finishes talking, she calmly turns and walks away from the clinic site toward the Sioux settlement, not looking back. Alex and Owlout look at each other, then both approach Little Eagle, who still maintains his iron grip on Bebau.

"Leave town," says Alex. "Never come back. You are no longer welcome here."

Owlout speaks up, for the first time amidst all of the whites. "You have caused much pain between our people and Winthrop. You are the sickness that destroys our healers. Without healers, we cannot survive, so you must go."

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That evening, the Santee bury Shadow on top of the hill overlooking Winthrop. All of the local San-

tee village attend the ceremony, and a number of villagers that had been healed by her over the years stand in a group nearby. Shadow is slowly covered with earth on top of the hill, then Owlout sprinkles seeds over the mound, chanting quietly and rhythmically. A young Santee boy quietly taps a drum with Owlout's rhythm.

"As a healer, she can continue to help life thrive even after life," Alex explains to the Winthrop residents who watch, confused. "They will say some prayers to help her pass into company of the Great Spirit. These are part of the old ways they believe."

The quiet, somber ceremony finishes quickly, then Long Moccasin turns to face Raymond.

He stands stoically, drained of sorrow, numb from the loss of his mother. "Your mother is not gone, she is in you. When you heal, you pass her spirit on to those you heal. Let her ways and your ways pass into everyone who comes to your clinic."

Raymond clutches a flat piece of wood, about the size of his hand. He approaches Shadow's burial mound, and places the wood at her foot. As he backs away, the onlookers see it is a carving of a thunderbird, and it has been painted blue to match the dress she wore.

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Long Moccasin puts her hand on Raymond's shoulder and nods, then turns to the whites in attendance. "This land is not ours. It is not yours. It belongs to the Great Spirit and to all creatures that live on it. Without it we cannot live, and you cannot live. We must learn to live together or we will not live at all in these Big Woods."

About the Authors



L. M. STAMM is the Dad. Raised in Phoenix, Arizona and Madison Wisconsin, he was inspired by the ways of the Santee Sioux. Larry's easy-going, caring spirit and great sense of humor made it easy for everyone he met to befriend him.



SID STAMM is his son. He is a product of the midwest but currently lives in the San Francisco Bay area with his wife Rebecca, the most awesomest editor ever. Sid inherited his dad's sense of humor and good looks.

