

A NEW DAWN (IN AN OLD WORLD)



JAKE GEORGE

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A NATIVE AMERICAN ADVENTURE

By

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DEDICATION

To my Warrior friends that have crossed over.

Bill “Black Otter” Hollopeter, Lakota Sioux, Chief, Cedar Oak
Lodge

Don “Red Eagle” Brown, Blackfeet, Warrior Society, Black
Otter Lodge

Schelly Steelman, Archebooks Author

All other Warriors of the heart and soul who gave their lives
for our lands and way of life...

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(In An Old World)

CALENDAR

January	Strong Frost Moon
February	Raccoon Moon
March	Buffalo Calves Drop Moon
April	Growing Grass Moon
May	Ponies Shed Moon
June	Making Fat Moon
July	Ripe Cherries Moon
August	Geese Shed Feathers Moon
September	Drying Grass Moon
October	Flying Ducks Moon
November	Falling Leaves Moon
December	Popping Trees Moon

Prologue

RIPE CHERRIES MOON, 2007

Sparks erupted from the bark when the log was thrown into the fire pit. Flames crept up the sides, blackening it and forcing the bark to crack and split due to the heat. Sizzling gasses steamed from the new cracks in the wood. Fully engulfed now, the log lit the faces of the men seated around the campfire.

“*Ni*¹ was summoned to meet a man during his vision quest. Grandfather said he has passed the test of the ancients and it was time we talked to him. This *Ni* did last night,” said the Keeper-of-the-Deer.

The fire reflected off his face and coat, giving the impression of one who was half-man and half-beast. The face, although covered in facial hair, was no doubt human, as was

¹ “Ni” is pronounced “knee”

the man's body. His coat was what set him apart. It looked as if it were made of bearskin and if removed a human would be standing naked in front of you. Only, his coat did not come off; he was neither human nor an animal. He was a Keeper, one of many in the Old World.

The dancing light flickered in the eyes of other Keepers. Some had bark instead of fur, while others had scales. They all had one thing in common. They were the Keepers and protectors of the Great Spirit's animals, forests and streams. This they had done. Animals flourished, fish and those that crawl were in abundance; the skies were full of winged creatures, all thriving until the past year or two. The Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl spoke. "You look troubled, my Brother². Speak about what is bothering you."

The Keeper-of-the-Forest asked, "There are so many animals, my forests and meadows are being destroyed. Trees stripped of their bark, left to die. The animals eat the grasses down to the ground and the grass dies. When rain comes it cannot hold the soil and it runs off into the streams, affecting our brothers and sisters, all things that crawl and live in the sea. The stream waters are becoming muddy and fish are dying. All will start to starve this winter if the herd, flocks and schools cannot be reduced. What we are sworn to protect, with our lives, will die slow deaths, as their bodies melt away. Can this man help?"

The Keeper-of-the-Deer nodded his assent. "The Great Spirit said he is the first of the hunter societies to have passed the test of the ancients. Many men died when they were shown the Universe and had it reside inside their bodies. They

² In Native American Culture, the words "Brother" and "Brothers" are capitalized as a proper noun. This convention is used throughout this story.

decided to become one with the Universe and stay with their ancestors instead of returning to their people. He has returned to his people to tell them of our plight, to see if he can guide the remaining followers of the Great Spirit to come to us, to help reduce the numbers of animals, birds and fish.”

Thoughtful nods of the Keepers around the fire indicated their agreement. “You have not been summoned to meet with your society for over a hundred years. Now a man from the Deer Society has passed the test. *Ni* do not understand,” croaked the Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl. Murmurs of agreement were spoken around the fire.

“The *hopoakan*³ used to summon me was broken in a war almost a hundred and fifty seasons ago. But the Keepers of the *hopoakan* did not despair. They continued with the traditions of the society even if they could not summon me. That is why the Great Spirit tested the man who would be the next Keeper of the *hopoakan* for the Deer Society. Men from the other hunting societies did not pass the test—even when they could speak to you—when they smoked the *hopoakan* we gave to them over a thousand years ago. It was the Lenape man, Talking Coyote from the Turtle Clan, who passed the test. He will talk to the members of his hunting society in five days’ time. *Ni* will meet with all of them, at which time *Ni* will tell them of our plight and that we must all meet before winter to get the believers to return to the Old World in order to help keep balance or this world, like the Above World, will fail.”

³ A pipe for smoking

PART 1

The North Wind

Chapter 1

FALLING LEAVES MOON 01

“Perhaps today I will kill that lying bastard,” mouthed the man talking to himself, hiding in the dark of early morning. A voice inside his head spoke, *Yes, my son, he is at fault. Kill him.* Fondling the edge of his flint knife, knowing it would do the job he intended, the man stared at the longhouse entrance as he had done the previous two days. “Walk by me today, Talking Coyote, and you are dead.” He gripped the flint knife in anticipation.

The voice in his head laughed, *Yes, you are right to do so, my son. Kill him— everything is his fault.*

Inside the longhouse, morning light filtered through the smoke hole in the top, illuminating the dirt floor toward the back of the lodge. The Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl pulled the *hopoakan* from his lips and handed it to Talking

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Coyote. “Thinking back to your vision quest, my Brother?”

The Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl was a Xinkwelenowak. In ancient Lenape legend he was a giant spirit, over eight feet tall, having the body of a man while covered in scales like a snake. The Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl was not a legend. He sat across from Talking Coyote, a living and breathing man, at least a thousand years old. In the Above World the people knew them as Bigfoot, Sasquatch or Yeti. They were legends in the Above World, but teachers and protectors in the Old World.

“E⁴”—he replied. Talking Coyote took the *hopoakan* and watched the smoke join the flecks of dancing dust as it swirled up and out, into the world, to be one with the Universe. “Life has been different from that day, has it not, Brother Keeper?”

Things surely have been different from the day he had walked into the woods on his vision quest. Talking Coyote had seen the Universe, become part of it and had it reside within him; only to decide to return and carry out the vision the Great Spirit had revealed to him. To return to the Old World with his brothers and sisters, the four-legged, winged, and those in the seas. It was a decision he did not regret, but one that weighed heavily on his mind every moment of every day. The constant stress of ensuring everyone in the camp was housed and fed made his shoulders rounded as if a great weight was carried upon them.

“Any complaints or problems we Keepers may help you with, my Brother?”

“Some of the other tribes, which came here with us, have asked for an Elder’s council to talk over problems they feel they have since arriving. We have been able to meet every-

⁴ Yes

one's needs except for a few Sioux men. They have been talking to others and stirring up discontent. They feel it is my fault that they came here without their families."

"Do they not understand that it was the Great Spirit who decided? *Ni* can speak with them if you wish," replied the Keeper-of-All-Things-That-Crawl.

"*E'e*, that would be most helpful, Brother Keeper. They will be trouble this winter if we do not get them to understand reason. *Ni* cannot believe it has been a full month since we came to the Old World and people are complaining already."

"What of the woman who cries? Has she been a burden?" asked the Keeper.

"*E'e*, you speak of Crying Woman. She is a white woman whom my sisters were trying to teach the Native ways. She spent the first two weeks in Running Woman's lodge, weeping. Now she goes from longhouse to longhouse asking about everything and why things are done. *Ni* fear she has gone crazy, Keeper."

"Not crazy, for she too was brought here for a purpose. Just as you brought the Native peoples back to the Old World, she has a place in its future, if she can find it," replied the Keeper.

Sure, why not? Wading Bird is a half-breed and the Great Spirit made him Chief of the Unami. So why not have a white woman become important to the tribe? Talking Coyote shook his head to clear the thoughts that had plagued his mind for the past month.

Voices and shuffling in the bedding robes told Talking Coyote that people were beginning to awaken. Awakening seemed an awkward thought to Talking Coyote. Since he had led his people to the Old World he had not found much sleep.

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When he slept at all it occurred out of sheer exhaustion and he did not truly awaken, but come to. He had not the luxury of awakening. He had to come to his senses immediately to deal with whatever problems had surfaced since he had passed out.

Over five hundred people lived in this village. The Keepers had built five small longhouses before the Native peoples' arrival to the Old World; however, that proved to be not enough. Each longhouse could accommodate five to eight families or about thirty people at the most. Twenty were needed to house everyone comfortably. Sounds of hand axes and construction could be heard, even though it was early morning. Winter lay upon the land and more shelters were needed before the ground froze too deeply to set the frames for the walls. Three more longhouses had been built and four more were in early construction. Many families had made smaller hide shelters but it was still a struggle to get everyone housed before the bitterness of winter set in.

The first month in the Old World went fairly well once people realized they had truly left the Above World and that some of their loved ones had remained behind. A ceremony conducted by the Keepers welcomed those who had come to this world to help the Great Spirit maintain balance. Some mothers cried for their children who had left the Native religion and had been left behind, but they took solace in knowing they would see them again after their soul no longer walked the paths of this life. The Xinkwelenowak and the Great Spirit assured the people that those left behind—when Talking Coyote brought the true believers of Native religions to the Old World—would one day meet again with them. The Keepers did not lie, nor did the Great Spirit. Those left behind saw the error of not believing. It was hoped they were trying to make the Above World a better place, to restore

harmony with nature.

There was no illness. The Great Spirit healed all who came. No daily pills or shots to take. No missing limbs or lost sight. Only injury that happened in the Old World remained. The only major mishap happened when a few boys were being taught how to knap obsidian for an arrowhead. Beaver Hat, the Elder, told the youth that knapping obsidian had its dangers. Shards of obsidian were sharper than a scalpel. One boy, not listening, struck a blow to a piece of the volcanic glass, and he had not protected his work with a piece of leather to help catch slivers. A shard shot off of the piece of volcanic glass and struck another youth in his eye. The medicine woman had tried to remove the shard as carefully as she could, but the damage to the eye was too great, and the boy had lost his sight in that eye.

It was this youth who came running into the longhouse looking for Talking Coyote. Bad Eye had to let his good eye adjust to the darkness of the longhouse after being out in the snow. "Uncle? Wading Bird needs your help with one of the Unami's lodges." The youth stood by the fire and stamped his feet to try to keep them warm. He was a handsome boy and showed promise as a cordage maker. Bad Eye had shown no interest in knapping flint or obsidian since his accident, but he had learned quickly how to make rope out of tree bark and hide. His skill was already depended upon by those building the lodges, to tie them together.

"Bad Eye, have you eaten?" the Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl asked.

"No, Grandfather, our lodge is rationing our grain to make sure we have enough for the winter."

The Keeper filled a wooden bowl with corn mush and broiled venison, then passed it to the boy. "This Keeper un-

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derstands your mother's worries. We were told to prepare for your coming by the Great Spirit, but he did not say how many would come. Your people will not suffer for food to eat until the spring. There is plenty of meat to eat, since this world is so overpopulated with your brothers and sisters—the four-legged, winged, and those in the sea. Worry not, my grandson. Eat now, and come join us when you are warm and full." The Keeper stood up and shook his long legs. He was so tall his head was only two feet from the roof of the lodge. "Shall we see what needs Brother Wading Bird has this morning?"

Talking Coyote nodded to the Keeper and went to his sleeping platform. Sitting on the edge of his bedding, he started to stuff dried grass into a pair of outer moccasins that fit over his regular moccasins. The outer pair was smeared in animal fat to help make them waterproof, and to help keep the cold out. White Tail handed him a parka made from elk hides.

"Here, my *Witawemak*⁵. It is cold and you will need this to keep out the cold *Lowanachen*⁶. It is strong out today, my love." White Tail pulled the parka down over her husband and smoothed it out on him.

She is a good woman thought Talking Coyote, amazed that this kind and wonderful woman could love him. In the Above World her name was Bernice. She stood about five foot five, a plump woman with gentle hands. Her hair, mostly white now, was parted in the middle and pulled into a bun at the nape of her neck. "This has been hard on you, has it not, my wife?" he said as he pulled her close to give her a kiss on her forehead. "*Ni* love the smell of your hair. How do you do it?"

⁵ Mate, person who shares my home

⁶ North wind

No matter what, you always find time to wash your hair and to put scented oils in it to give it the smell of a meadow in spring.”

“Go now and see what Wading Bird needs,” she said as she swatted his ass and turned him around. Life in the Old World was extremely hard on her and their children. Only their youngest daughter, Fair Woman, still lived in the lodge with them. By default, White Tail had become the head matriarch of the Turtle Clan. Even though it was her husband who led the people here, the women owned everything. And it was through the women that power in the tribe and councils passed to the men.

Talking Coyote pushed back the heavy robe from the entrance of the longhouse. The camp was busy as a beaver pond in the spring. The three new longhouses were around the outside of the existing lodges. The four that were in the preliminary stages were on the west side of the village. As Talking Coyote walked toward the lodges under construction, he looked around at all that had happened in a month: The newly built lodges shone like jewels in the new snow. Families had already moved into them and the smells of cooking fires wafted out of their smoke holes. Wading Bird and his crew were burning small fires on the ground in the spots where the lodge poles would be placed. “Good morning, Wading Bird. Does this day greet you well?”

“Good morning, my Brothers. The ground has frozen hard and the fires are not thawing it out very fast. The setting of the lodge poles is taking longer than expected.” Wading Bird was pounding in a smoking hole with a sharpened stave. As quickly as he pried frozen ground loose, another would reach down into the hole with a narrow shovel made of a deer’s scapula to dig out the dirt and ashes. Almost as fast, a third

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man put fresh tinder in the hole, and pulled burning embers from the dirt just removed, to keep a fire going in the hole. "Grandfather Winter does not seem happy to see us here, eh?" As cold as it was, sweat poured from Wading Bird's face. As it did, it was freezing on his eyebrows and lashes.

Not now, Prairie Grass, too many people.

Prairie Grass heard the voice as he walked toward the gathered men, the knife hidden up the sleeve of his parka.

When, Father? When can Ni kill him?

The voice in his head did not respond.

Walking past the men, he spat at Talking Coyote's feet in disgust.

"How is it going on the other longhouses?" asked Talking Coyote.

"About the same as us," replied Wading Bird. "Some are hitting rocks and the ground is too frozen to dig them out so they have to change the placement of the poles. It seems *Lowanachen*, the North Wind, is not happy we are here." Wading Bird pointed to a lodge that had two poles closer together and a bigger gap toward the far end. "We are afraid that lodge will not be able to stand a heavy snow without caving in. Crying Woman pointed that out to us yesterday. We did not consider the weight of the snow until she asked if it would support a heavy snowfall on the roof. We had to admit it would probably not."

"Make that into a smaller lodge and the other half can be used as a smokehouse for the meats and to smoke hides," the Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl commented.

Wading Bird and the rest of them walked over to the new lodge. Pacing it off, Wading Bird smiled at them. "That just might work! The back half is larger and can house at least twenty people, or four families. The front half will make a

great smokehouse. Right now we are smoking our meat in our shelters and many are complaining of the smoke and smell.”

The Keeper smiled at the men and said, “*Ni* am glad my idea was acceptable to others. If others run into the same problem, perhaps they can make two smaller shelters or make one for living and a second for storage. Come spring there will be much work to do and many plants and foods to store.”

“*Ni* will tell my wife, White Tail, that the women will have at least one smokehouse and that they will have to find another place for four more families who will not live in that lodge since we are making it smaller.” *One problem solved and another takes its place.* Looking about he could see at least eighty lodges made out of hide in the shape of tepees or wickiups. “*Wanishi*⁷, Great Spirit, for giving us the knowledge to make lodges for our families, for the food you have provided for us and for our Brothers, the bison, who gave their lives for our food and shelter.”

The tribes realized early on that with winter coming wickiups could be covered with hide or tree bark and the plains tepee was a good shelter for cold weather, five hides would provide a lodge big enough for two families. There was quite a hodgepodge of lodges in the valley. Some Clans decided to make the tepees because they planned on moving to their old homeland come spring. Tepees could be dragged behind the people or on the backs of the camp dogs. Easily put up, easy to take down and traveled well. The dogs were another blessing the Great Spirit had bestowed on the people. Almost overnight when the human beings came to this world, the dogs sought them out, desperate for their companionship.

As with all the other creations of the Great Spirit, all could talk to one another when they went into their lodges at

⁷ Thank you

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night. When the dogs entered the lodges and removed their fur cloak they were men and women in miniature. Not mid-gets, nor dwarfs, but men and women who happened to be, at most, three feet tall. Once in the lodges they could speak with the humans and they would plan out the next day's work. The humans were surprised at the intelligence of the Dog men. Some also expressed great shame to the Dog men for how they had treated their Brothers in the Above World. They did not truly realize that all things are related and some had treated their dogs poorly. They asked forgiveness, and it was given. Tribal bonds between the Dog people and the human beings grew daily. While in their dog form they could not speak, but then they did not need to. The human beings understood what they wanted or needed as they planned the next day out the night before.



“Running Woman, you are kind to have taken me in, but I am still confused,” Naomi, known as Crying Woman by the people in the Old World, cried. “Why did I come and not my daughter? We were raising her Native like Will and I agreed to, so why didn't she come with us to the Old World?” she said, sobbing.

“Little One, the fact that you are here proves the Great Spirit thinks of you as one of us. You have been learning to follow our ways and our religion. That is why you came,” replied Running Woman, holding Naomi's head against her chest.

“But why didn't Tewa come? Will, I can understand; he was against this all from the start, but we were raising Tewa Native.”

"I asked one of the Keepers why she stayed in the Above World. He said your husband and his mother had Tewa baptized Methodist; since she was too young to make the decision to come live with you she was left behind."

"That can't be the truth, Running Woman. He promised me and Tewa's mother that she would be raised Native American. He has to be wrong, Running Woman. He has to be. Will would not do that behind my back."

Smoothing Crying Woman's hair, Running Woman looked as though she dreaded what she had to say next. "It is true, Little One, the Keepers cannot tell a lie. He told me that Tewa's mother asked Will to have her baptized, because she wanted a better life for her daughter than life on the reservation. Tewa's mother only pretended to want her to be raised Native, so her father and mother would go along with the adoption. If they knew, they would never have let her go with you and Will. Grey Fox talked to Will alone and made him promise to have her baptized or she would not allow the adoption."

Knowing what Running Woman said was true was too much for Crying Woman to bear. Pulling away from Running Woman's breast, she ran from their lodge in tears. Running though the village with no direction in mind, she ran and cried until she was tired and fell to the ground. People walking by looked away to spare her shame in her actions; they knew she was a white woman who was trying to learn. Much can be forgiven the ignorant.

Half-crawling and walking back to Running Woman's lodge, she entered and collapsed by the fire. Running Woman picked her up and carried her to her sleeping platform and covered her with furs and bedding robes as if she were a child. "Sleep well, my love." Running Woman said as she kissed her

mud-streaked forehead.

Waking to the smell of breakfast being prepared, Naomi—Crying Woman—lay in bed and listened to Running Woman prepare their food. Rolling over to prop herself up on her elbow, Crying Woman said, “I am sorry about last night, Running Woman. I cannot believe Will did that, but I have to accept it as true. Didn’t the Keeper say if we followed the old ways, we would be together again after we die?”

Running Woman nodded. “He said if we followed the old ways, and those in the Above World changed theirs and went back to the old ways, then, yes, we would meet again after we cross over.”

“Will knows now that he made a mistake. He will go to the reservation with Tewa to learn the old ways. I know he will. Then when we die we will all be together again. I know he will do that. Running Woman, teach me Lenape. I want to know everything I can learn. I want to make sure I can see Tewa and Will again.”

“All right. We have been here a month. What can I answer for you?”

“How did the people know how to build new lodges and to clean and fix hides? I mean, they haven’t done that for centuries, have they?” Crying Woman’s eyes now showed interest in her surroundings, not her usual red eyes from crying.

“Did you not notice the longhouse on the reservation in the Above World? We still taught our young to live in the old ways. We thought we were just teaching our history. Now we know we were being tested to see if we could survive if we ever came back to the Old World. We still hunted in our old ways on occasion. Our children learned to clean and cure hides, to decorate with porcupine quills, instead of beads. We were keeping our culture alive. Now we know why.”

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“Didn’t Talking Feather tell me the youths had to make a new longhouse every few years to learn how? Now I remember! She said she taught the stories as she learned them, because they were told in that way. She said they long ago forgot why some stories were told, but a chosen one learned them all nonetheless. Now I understand, Running Woman. What can I do to help? Teach me.”

Chapter 2

FALLING LEAVES MOON 01

The morning drew clear, like water taken deep from a pristine lake. There were no hints of the wisps of fog that Standing Bear had woken up to a few hours before. Just a glorious morning of cold weather that caught on one's breath. *It is a good day.* "Ni do not know if Ni will ever get used to the smell of the world with no pollution," he said aloud, while shaking his head as if to clear his mind of the memory of smog. Beaver Hat and Crying Woman walked up to him by the stream.

"Does this morning find my Brother, Standing Bear, well?" Beaver Hat walked like a man half his age. In the Above World, Beaver Hat would have been dying of cancer.

The Great Spirit had healed all who came to this world, so they might start a new life whole and healthy. Beaver Hat greeted Standing Bear with the smile of one who was given a second chance at life, whose every breath tasted like a new sensation.

“*Ni* am well, my friend, and *Ni* am glad to see you,” Standing Bear replied to Beaver Hat, slighting Crying Woman by not addressing her as well. “How many others are in your area and are they getting along well?”

“By ‘others’, do you mean people of other tribes, or not Lenape?” asked Crying Woman, ignoring the slight.

Beaver Hat quickly answered her, “When the Great Spirit brought the people to the Old World, they were brought to the camps that were nearest to them, or they found their own way to the camps after a few days, as the Chippewa woman did.” Looking at Talking Coyote, he answered his question, “There were fifteen tribes and at least double those in Clans. It makes for an interesting gathering, does it not, my Brother?”

Crying Woman injected, “All of us speak English, but here it was decided all would speak their Native tongue. They speak English to me, only when necessary, to facilitate the planning for the coming winter. The sounds of Lakota are mixed with Chippewa with smatterings of English, and I can understand only every twentieth word, or so. All I want to do is learn the language, and Running Woman is so busy; she does not have time to teach me all I need to know. Talking Feather is teaching me stories when we can get some time together.”

All knew that the Old World offered much and a tremendous amount had been lost when they left the Above World. Speaking with the animals was an altogether new experience. The animals spoke their old languages fluently and now the

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animals became the teachers. For many people, it became a humbling experience.

Beaver Hat said, “We could use a larger lodge for the young warriors. *Ni* have twenty-two youths that Black Otter and *Ni* are teaching the ways of the warrior. We do not have a man to cook for them, so we are using an elder woman who is Chippewa. She lost her grandchildren to the Above World. She treats the youths as her children, instead of future warriors, but her heart is good and the youths respect her.”

“Do you suspect we will need warriors?” asked Standing Bear in disbelief. “We all have come to the Old World to follow the old ways. Not to fight and kill our fellow man.”

“Brother Standing Bear, did we not fight in the old days? Was a youth considered not a man until he met a warrior from another tribe and killed him in a fight, or struck coup on him and lived? *Ni* think man has not changed and we will need warriors. Maybe not soon, but need them we will. *Ni* can assure you, we are teaching them what we can. Black Otter has some different methods that are most intriguing. His teaching will be an asset to the youths who learn from us.” As they were walking along the stream and talking to each other, they approached the large river that the stream fed into.

A fish rose up in the stream, his head just breaking the clear, smooth surface, and bid good morning to Standing Bear and Beaver Hat. “Come spring can you feed our children the leftover maize from your stores so that they may grow fat and breed again next fall.”⁸

Talking Feather came to the men and Crying Woman as they were talking to the salmon. “Your children will be looked after,” said Talking Feather. “Is there anything else we

⁸ Fish could speak English while still fish since they could not become human underwater

may do for you?"

The old male salmon replied, "There are many beavers and they have damned up most of the tributaries of the stream. Some are too high to jump, so we must spawn in areas that are not the best for our survival. The streams are too low to spawn in. Could you remove some of the dams in the spring? It would help us to make it farther upstream to spawn."

"We will do what you ask," Talking Feather spoke. "*Ni* will tell stories this winter to the children and the others about what you have asked for this day."

With those words in his ears, the elder salmon swam off to talk to his people and tell them of what had been agreed.

"*Ni* am old and this will be my last winter," Talking Feather said to the gathered men. "*Ni* want to teach the stories to at least three young ones. Little Coyote is one, *Ni* would like two others to learn. Come spring the different tribes will set out to their ancestral grounds, and *Ni* wish to send two of the youths with them when they go. That way they can come back when the tribe settles in their new place and tell us where they are. We will need trading partners in the coming years and we must keep in touch."

Standing Bear spread out a bear hide mat on the ground for Talking Feather to sit upon. Taking her hand, he helped the wise old woman to sit down. "We were talking about how to set up trading paths last night. We know where the natural resources are, since this world mirrors the Above World. Many things will make our life easier once we have a way to get what we need from other places and people." All nodded in agreement with Standing Bear's comments.

"*Ni* am teaching Crying Woman, here, to speak Lenape. One of the Dog women is helping me," Talking Feather said as she motioned for Crying Woman to sit next to her.

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Beaver Hat spoke, "We have built our lodge around a large log that will become a trader's canoe in the spring. We are setting our lodge fires in it so that we may hollow out the center and use the shavings to help other lodges have kindling for their fires. We should be able to make it inland to the Great Lakes, and from there to almost anyplace we will need resources from. One large canoe can carry more than ten men with pack dogs and move twice as fast."

Standing Bear nodded in agreement. "One man in the *Unami*⁹ Clan was a smelter in the Above World and worked with copper. Copper is an abundant resource here and will make better tools than of stone. He has found a small supply and is busy making axes and hoes for the builders. Already they have been able to make new lodges faster with the better tools."

Beaver Hat spat out, "Bah! Once *Ni* finish teaching my skill in making stone tools, you will see that stone is the better tool. Metal has its place in cooking pots, but for the best tools, stone is still best."

"I am grateful for a metal knife, Beaver Hat. At least I can sharpen that if a youth or Running Woman is not around to re-edge my flint knife," said Crying Woman.

The Keeper-of-All-Things-that-Crawl walked up to them and, overhearing Beaver Hat's comment, he laughed. "Is a stone arrow point better than one made of copper? Can you make a better fishing hook with stone or bone than can be fashioned from metal? Or a needle, or a saw? Stone has its place, Brother Beaver Hat, but metal does, too." With that, the Keeper removed two arrowheads from a pouch at his side. One was made of copper and the other flint. "Notice that both are about the same size and weight," he said as he handed

⁹ Turtle

them to Beaver Hat.

“*Ni* agree that both are about the same weight, but feel the edge on the flint head. It is much sharper and does not need to be reshaped or re-sharpened once made,” he said, as he handed them back to the Keeper. The Keeper placed both of the arrowheads side by side on a flat rock. He then picked up another rock and dropped it on both the arrowheads. Lifting the rock revealed that the flint arrowhead had splintered into a hundred pieces, while the copper one was unscathed.

“Brother Beaver Hat, can you re-sharpen the flint now? The flint is of no use, but the copper arrowhead is still usable. One day your life may depend on a copper arrowhead or ax. Do not be against them, Brother. Each has their place, and your place, as a teacher of flint knapping is not in danger. There will always be a need for that skill.” The Keeper picked up the copper arrowhead and tossed it back to Beaver Hat. “Keep that as a reminder that all is not as it may seem here. Sometimes it is better to be soft and flexible to what hardship comes your way than to be crushed because you could not bend.”

Chapter 3

FALLING LEAVES MOON 01

Running to catch up to a Keeper, Prairie Grass called out, “Keeper-of-the-Deer, I desire to speak to you.”

Turning to see who called after him, the Keeper-of-the-Deer stopped and waited. “Your name is Prairie Grass, is it not?”

“*Ha*¹⁰, Brother Keeper, it is. May I seek your counsel?” replied Prairie Grass. He stopped to catch his breath. The wind was cold on his face and his leather parka stiff from the cold as much as from its poor tanning.

“What may this Keeper do for you, Brother Prairie Grass?” asked the Keeper-of-the-Deer. Seeing Prairie Grass

¹⁰ The Lakota word for yes, not to be confused with the Lenape words for yes

shiver, he asked, "Would you like to speak in my lodge? It is warm there and we can speak in private as well as in comfort."

Watch what you say to this one, my son. He, too, is to blame for your problems.

Prairie Grass stamped his feet and flapped his arms to help generate some warmth. "Your lodge is an excellent place to speak, Brother. Some tribal members and I are unhappy."

The Keeper nodded his head. Switching to English he said, "I see. Come, we will go to my lodge."

Prairie Grass had to run behind the Keeper to keep up with his long strides, until they arrived at a tree with a large hole in its trunk. The Keeper ducked into the hole in the side of the tree that was five feet in diameter, and he disappeared.

I must remember all things are not as they appear to be in this world, Prairie Grass thought to himself. Ducking and entering the hole in the tree, he stood up inside a room that was at least twenty feet wide and thirty feet deep. The hole behind him turned into a hide-covered doorway at least seven feet high. "Brother Keeper, how do we enter a tree, and have this lodge reside in it? Do we shrink when we enter?"

"Ho," laughed the Keeper. "No, Prairie Grass, we do not shrink. My lodge is a three-day walk from your camp, in what you knew as the Shenandoah mountain range. Any Keeper can walk into a hole in a tree or walk into a body of water and arrive at their lodge. It is one of the wonders the Great Spirit has bestowed upon us. All we have to do is think where we wish to be when we walk out of our lodge and we are there when we step through the door."

"Keeper, why was my family left behind?" Prairie Grass blurted out. "They were good people who lived life following the good red road. They honored our ancestors. They honored our traditions." Grief started to make Prairie Grass' shoulders

quake.

Gesturing toward a bearskin robe next to the fire the Keeper said, "It was not that simple, Brother. The Great Spirit wished to bring those who followed the old religion, the old ways—not just our ancestors and traditions. He wanted those to come who still believed in him as he was, not as how the Christians thought of him. After all, he is their God, too."

Prairie Grass was shocked to hear that the Great Spirit was also the Christian God. "But, Keeper, my family belonged to the Native American Church. The church honored the Great Spirit and yet they were left behind. I do not understand."

"In the beginning, all religions were the same. They all worshiped the Great Spirit. Each knew him with different names, but the worship was the same. Treat each other as you wish to be treated. Honor your parents. Honor nature and all his creations because we are all related. If you damage one thing, it has an effect on another that you may not see. The religions of the Above World have left the path that was laid before them to walk and discover. The personal plans of man took place of the respect for nature and mankind. When this happened they began to kill or hate others because they did not believe the same way. Animals that were Brothers to man were no longer respected. They were used for food with no regard to their spirit, to be used as beasts of labor instead of working together to make things better for both of them. Man lost his vision. He lost his ability to see the Universe and all that were in it, reside within himself."

"But my family believed," cried Prairie Grass. "They should have come with me."

"No, Prairie Grass, they did not believe. If they had believed, then the Great Spirit would have brought them to this

world, too. In their hearts, they believe in God in the Christian sense, abandoning the Native belief that all things are related. The Old World has become overrun with animals the Great Spirit saved. The Above World now knows that they were wrong. The Great Spirit spoke to all in a way that they cannot deny it was he who spoke. Some had visions, others dreams, and others still saw miracles. He told them they had left the path and that the old religions that treated nature and all things as equals were the correct path. He told all that changed and returned to the old ways would be reunited with their loved ones when they crossed over at the end of their lives. If your wife and children return to the old ways, you will see them again, Prairie Grass. They are not gone forever. You will see them again, later. It is a matter of faith.”

Rage built up in Prairie Grass as he listened to the Keeper talk. The blood pounded in his ears and his vision turned to red.

He lies, Son. He is an evil spirit to have taken your family away.

When Prairie Grass spoke, it was through clenched teeth and sweat dripping from his face, “You are no spirit, Keeper. You are a demon, a trickster, just like Talking Coyote and his kin. You speak of compassion and treating another as you wish to be treated, yet you take my family. Would Talking Coyote be as compassionate if he lost his family here and could not see them again?”

Standing, Prairie Grass started to run toward the lodge door. *I must speak to Five Bears*, he thought as he ran through the door. As soon as he was through the doorway, he ran through the fire in Five Bears’ tepee and ran into the opposite wall of his lodge. The force bounced him back into the fire pit, smoking and singeing his parka. As Prairie Grass rolled

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out of the fire, the men started to pat out the flames and cinders on his clothing.

Wonder showed in their faces—one moment they had been talking about the Above World and their loved ones, and the next, Prairie Grass had materialized in the lodge and ran through the fire. Five Bears spoke, “Where did you come from, Prairie Grass?”

“I will tell you tomorrow morning. Tell the others that we must speak at sunrise tomorrow morning. I will only repeat this story once. Then I wish to forget it forever.”

Chapter 4

POPPING TREES MOON 01

Black Otter saw the demonstration the Keeper had shown Beaver Hat. *That is a good lesson to remember. One must be willing to change here, or one may find they cannot survive.* Black Otter was one of about thirty Sioux, who circumstances had placed in this village growing around him. He, like most of the others here, had left family members behind in the Above World when the Great Spirit brought the believers here. Most of the Sioux were happy and content to be here and were planning on heading for their ancestral grounds come spring. In preparation, they made their lodges out of buffalo hide and cultivated a friendship with the dogs, so the dogs would help

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carry their lodges and gear to the *Mako Sica*¹¹, as soon as the weather broke.

Five Bears sent word the previous night to meet with all the Sioux men to talk about a few of the men who were unhappy. They could not bend to the circumstances and thus blamed Talking Coyote for their loss and pain. Black Otter stood outside Five Bears' tepee. The early-morning frost on the grass beneath his feet crunched under his weight. The melting frost had already started to seep into his outer moccasins and wet the insulating grass stuffed around his regular moccasins. *Damn, I hate winter. I wish I were still wintering in Florida.*

Feeling the tension mount in himself like a geyser ready to spew hot steam, he exhaled into the cold morning air.

The wind whisked away his frosty breath and left no trace of its passing. Black Otter took nine more deep cleansing breaths, as he had taught the young warriors to do. By breathing ten times, it gave one time to think and to be prepared when facing the unknown. He scratched on the side of the buffalo hide lodge to let those inside know of his arrival. Feeling slightly more relaxed after the deep breathing, he waited for the offer to enter the lodge.

"Enter, friend, and warm yourself by my fire," called Five Bears.

Pulling back the lodge flap, Black Otter bent to enter and was met by blessedly warm air from the fire in the round dwelling. Once inside, he let the door flap close behind him while one of the men secured it shut with a leather thong. Nodding to the assembled men, he worked his way around the lodge moving clockwise, as was their custom, until he came to an empty spot next to the fire.

¹¹ Literal translation, Badlands

“Welcome, Black Otter. We were discussing our loved ones who were left behind in the Above World.” There were nods of agreement among the gathered men. “Each of us has left behind a wife or child when we were brought to this world. I will say again, Talking Coyote is at fault for our families’ break-up,” Five Bears bellowed.

Prairie Grass nodded. “My wife and my children belonged to the Native American Church. They were left behind, yet they were believers.” Other men grumbled in agreement.

Pipestone called for quiet. “My Brothers, we have been given a chance to live as our ancestors once had lived. We have been given this chance because we refused to follow the new ways, while our families tried to adapt the church to our religion. This could not be done. It is not Talking Coyote who is to blame. It is the fault of our families. They have left the old religion and so they did not come. Prairie Grass, you are mad at the wrong person.”

Prairie Grass felt his face flush as the voice spoke in his head, *He is wrong. You must stop him from speaking.* Reaching inside his parka, his hand came out with a flint knife. Lunging at Pipestone, he tried to stab him in the belly, knowing that a belly wound, even if not too deep, would surely cause Pipestone a long, slow death.

The man sitting next to Prairie Grass grabbed him by his tunic and pulled him back from Pipestone, just as Pipestone had started to react. Prairie Grass’ jab missed its mark but caught Pipestone a solid blow on the side of his hand, which he was raising to block the knife.

The others jumped on Prairie Grass to help calm him down.

Pipestone looked at his hand in disbelief. Where once five fingers were on his hand, only three remained. His little and

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ring fingers lay on the buffalo mat, cleanly cut off at the third joint. Picking up a burning stick, he touched it to the bloody nubs of flesh on his hand to help cauterize the wound and stop the bleeding. The stick sizzled on his flesh, and he gritted his teeth at the pain.

Horse Walker grabbed his hand, wrapping a rabbit fur around it to help stop the bleeding. "Brother, are you hurt anywhere else?"

"No, just my hand. Why did he do that?" Pain was evident in Pipestone's face. "Why did he try to kill me?" Blood was seeping out the edges of the rabbit hide and created rivulets down his arm as they dripped off his elbow.

"My Brother, you have reminded us that what has happened to our families is their fault alone," said Five Bears. "It is a truth that seems hardest for Prairie Grass to hear. We were blaming Talking Coyote. After all, we all know the Coyote to be a trickster. Only there was no trick. The Great Spirit alone decided who came and who stayed. We cannot blame Talking Coyote."

"I will kill Talking Coyote," came a muffled shout from beneath the mass of men lying on top of Prairie Grass. "He ruined my life; he took my family. For that he shall die by my hand."

Black Otter took Pipestone's arm. "Come with me to see Running Woman. Your hand needs to be tended to. Horse Walker, run ahead and tell Running Woman that we are coming. Tell Standing Bear what has happened. He will have to convene a council to decide the fate of Prairie Grass."

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