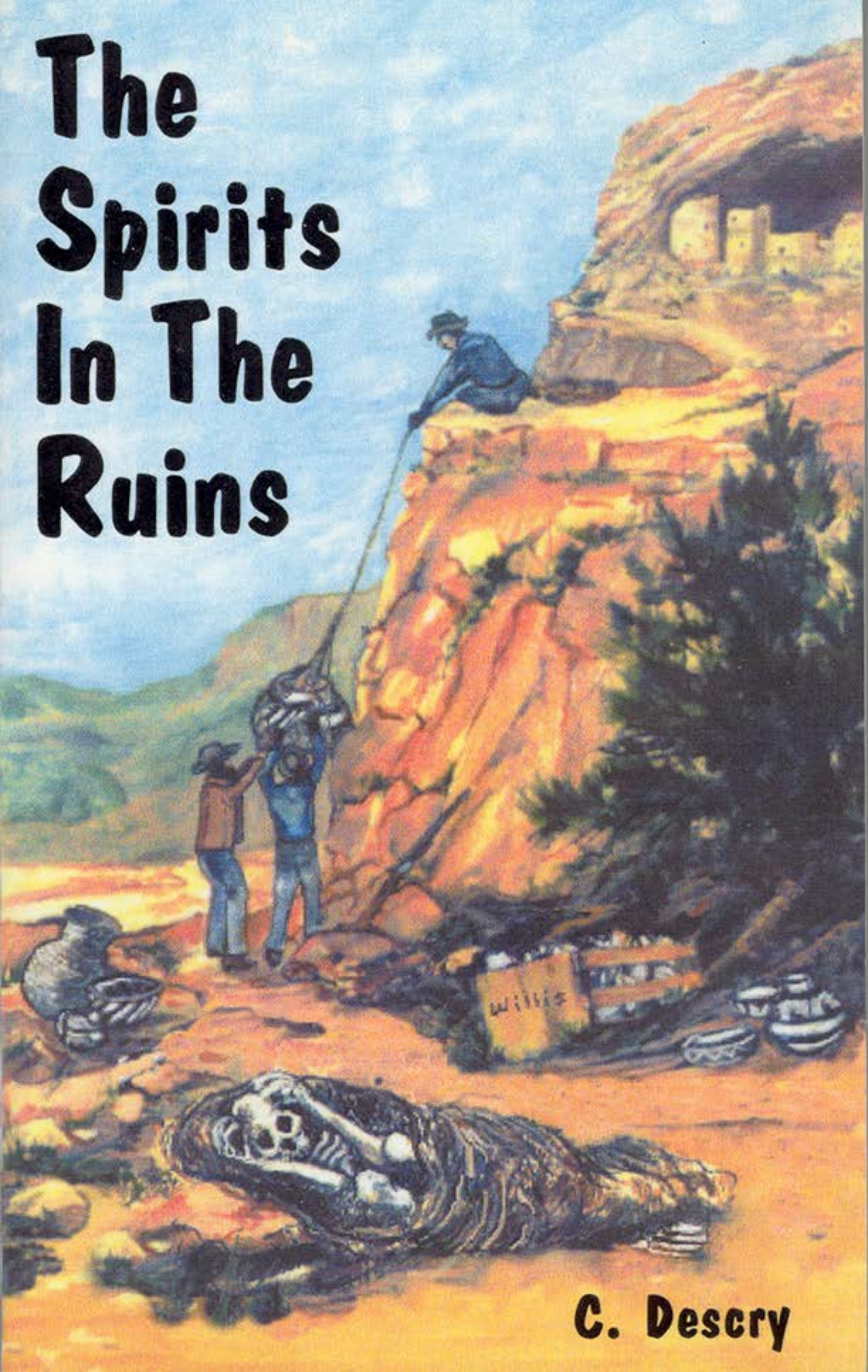


The Spirits In The Ruins



C. Descry

***A SEDONA
MYSTERY***

***THE SPIRITS IN
THE RUINS***

***A SEDONA
MYSTERY***

***THE SPIRITS IN
THE RUINS***

by

C. Descry

Copyright © 2000, 2013 by C. Descry
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the author.

Well written! Well researched! Hold your emotions!!! History and mystery combined!

About the Book

Arnie Cain, called to investigate the body of a Native American found in a shipping crate in an old Sedona trading post. The trail leads Arnie, and his wife **Susan**, from Arizona to southwestern Colorado and the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation. Forces are organized to stop the telling of history that may come to light as a result of the investigation. Cain's probing exposes the horrors of the antiquities trade---including the trade in mummified bodies.

Norman Beardancer, dynamic spiritual leader of the Ute people and, his wife **Regina**, work with the tribal elders to recreate the history of the Weminuche Utes. They try to find out who the man found in the shipping crate was. They are opposed by forces that do not want the Ute history told.

Doctor Ferner Getts, grandson of an early 20th century grave robber and antiquities trader. A pompous academic who has "edited" historical records to protect major museums and antiquities collectors.

George W. Avery, now Advisor to the President for Indian Affairs, his stereotypes and bigotry reflect U.S. policy toward the Ute Tribe.

Anasazi Bill, one of Sedona's 'underground people,' has been trying for years to learn who killed his father. Now, Cain's investigation leads him back to the reservation to help recreate the times when his father traded with the Utes.

The Willis Clan, pot hunters, antiquities traders and grave robbers! They formed a trade network with Sedona, Arizona as the outlet.

Grateful acknowledgment is given to the following:

Lois Eggers, The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, UMUT CETA Students, UMU Elementary Education Program at Crow Canyon, Southwest Research and Education Services, Inc., Cortez Public Library, Sedona Public Library, America West Center at the University of Utah, Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, the Great Mandini, Jo, Alex, Nate, Lew Davis, and myriads of supportive friends.

This is a work of fiction set in the environs of Sedona, Arizona and Towaoc, Colorado. Names and descriptions of humans are solely the creation of the author unless they are historical figures. No connection to living persons is intended or implied. References to historical data and tribal or other entities is used with artistic license and does not imply permission of the agencies, tribe, or officers of government or law enforcement. This mystery is a work of fiction with a historical basis.

A special note to those who know the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, Sedona, Arizona and other locations used in this work. The author has intentionally changed or made-up locations to create this work of fiction.

Descry, Conun born: 1939

THE SPIRITS IN THE RUINS

- 1. Mystery-thriller**
- 2. Historical mystery-Arizona & Southwest Colorado**
- 3. Adventure/suspense/action**

Edited by: **LEW DAVIS**

Cover by: **Eljay**

Chapter 1

I knew the history of the sacking of Pueblo ruins. It is one of America's more disgusting stories.

A LOCAL SIDEWALK SUPERINTENDENT told me that the rock building had been built in the late 1940s as a trading post and then, in the '60s, had become a fruit storage shed. Whoever built it went to a lot of trouble for apples and peaches. The old structure was built with attention to detail...the way one might build a home for the family to pass down through the centuries.

The contractor who was doing the renovation of the building was a fine craftsman. His crews were preserving the rock work and the rough-hewn timbers. When I arrived, I stood with a group of locals who were perusing every move the contractor made.

I looked around for my architect friend, Dean Arbor. Susan had received his urgent call. He told her he wanted me at the remodel project right away. She relayed the message. I gathered my gear and got over there.

I owe a lot to Dean. He helps keep bread on our table. He employed me after I quit working for the sheriff's office last year. He has me do investigative jobs; not cloak and dagger stuff, but boring things like researching land abstracts and finding survey markers. My work with Dean, and Susan's part-time work at Friendly's Café, have allowed us to earn enough to live comfortably. I love the life.

Dean arrived on his bicycle as I knew he would. His long hair was worn Indian fashion. His handsome, lean features and muscular intensity let him move

through the crowd as a Moses opening the sea. Others sensed his energy, knew that it was good, and let him pass. He was a vital man.

“Arnie! Thanks for coming on such short notice. Follow me!”

He was off. We ducked under the yellow tape required by the city around all construction sites, and into the back of the rock building.

“This structure housed one of the first trading posts, and later galleries, as far back as the late 1940s, we figure. Owner wants to make it into a gallery again... For a time it was used as a fruit sorting shed, then it sat empty. I’m trying to get a more complete history together... Arnie, come over and take a look at this! We found something awful!”

The interior was littered with splintered wood, broken laths, chunks of plaster and assorted debris. I stepped where Dean did, avoiding boards with rusty nails and jagged wood splinters. He led me across the room to a long, built-in counter that he said had been used to sort fruit. Parts of the counter were being disassembled. He stopped in front of a wooden shipping crate that had been built into the structure. He grabbed a catclaw from a nearby tool box and started prying up the lid. The nails squeaked in protest. I helped him lift the lid. Whatever was inside was wrapped in old white tent canvas.

“Arnie, I was here about a half hour ago. That’s when they found the box.”

He reached in and carefully moved the canvas aside. I gasped.

“All I can tell is that it’s a mummified male, Indian... Look how he’s dressed! Faded red flannel shirt. Looks like jeans... This isn’t one of the ancient Anasazi people... Look at the dried blood and maybe

bullet holes... Arnie, it looks like this guy was murdered!"

I didn't say anything. The mummified body told me more than Dean had observed. The left side of the dead man's face showed long scratches...tears, like he had skidded along the earth on his face. His neck showed marks I had seen before on victims of hanging---rope marks! The man had been shot, hung, dragged... I sniffed. No smell of death, the body was desiccated...

"Dean, did you call it in?"

"I called 911. They said they'd send someone to investigate... I thought they would be here by now."

"This man died a terrible death... Look, can we move this crate out a little. I want to see if anything is written on it."

We moved the box so that I could see all sides. On the side that had been hidden, a label was still attached. Dean read it...

To: Rocks and Ruins Gallery
Attention: C.J.W
Sedona, Arizona

"Yeah, and look at the return!"

C.J.W.
Box 6. Mancos, Colorado.

"And the date... Looks like '56... Yes! August 11, 1956. And it was shipped from Mancos, Colorado. I know the place. Its a town west of Durango---between Cortez and Durango---in the southwest corner of the state."

We both turned as Sam Platt, a Sedona cop, came in. Dean yelled across at him to watch his step.

“Hey, Dean, Arnie, what have you got in the shipping crate?”

Within an hour we had the crate on its way to Flagstaff. At Dean’s office, I borrowed the phone and placed a call a Ute friend of mine in Towaoc, Colorado. While I was looking for the number in my wallet and dialing it, I explained to Dean that Towaoc, is the Capitol of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation. “It’s located about thirty-five miles from Mancos. Lands south of Mancos, to the New Mexico state line, are Ute Indian country.” The phone clicked several times. I waited for it to start ringing. “The beaded eagle sewn onto the pocket of the man’s shirt? The blue, green and white beads? They were Ute colors. I’ll bet my pay that the deceased man was Ute!”

“Norman Beardancer. Good to hear your voice! It’s Arnie Cain, I’m calling from Sedona. How are you wintering? How are the kids and grand kids? Did you get through my final report on the oil leases?”

“Arnie? You call to talk or ask questions? We’re fine here. Your report was too long, nobody reads that much. I liked the conclusion... They’re going to pay the Tribe for all the materials they extracted and they gave up their plan to strip mine. Okay, you done good white man! Now are you calling to tell me that you are coming back to the center of the world?”

“No, not yet. You know I hide down here where it’s warm in the winter. Listen Norman, I’m very concerned about something that I think involves the Ute people. We just found a body here in Sedona, in a shipping crate in an old trading post. A man... I think

in his twenties. Body is mummified---been dead a long time---except he's not Anasazi. He's dressed in a red flannel shirt with a blue, green and white beaded eagle on the breast. Has long hair, if it was bound, that's gone. Wearing blue denims...Levis. The man died terribly---maybe fifty or a hundred years ago---maybe even longer. Any ideas?"

"Hey Arnie, another dead Indian? Are you surprised? You think he's Ute? Young Ute man, dead maybe fifty or a hundred years? Maybe even longer? So, a lot of our young men disappeared... You think I might have known him? Or, you think I might know about someone went missing? Well, there are many stories the old people told. I do remember a story about an important man tho'---I mean a story about where nobody knew what happened to a very special young leader. The eagle beaded on his shirt? I got to think on this...talk to a grandmother. You call back, maybe tonight! Okay, so you come see me!"

I called Flag later that afternoon. The medical examiner wouldn't get to the case for a day or so. Dean asked me to do some background work on the gallery, and see if I could find out who *C.J.W* was. I suspected that I would have to go to Flag and the Coconino County courthouse to research filings and papers. In the meantime, I went back to the old stone building and searched for clues.

I dug around and found old newspapers which had been put in the walls for insulation and lots of trash. Nothing I dug out of the shelves in the old counter or found in the walls gave me any clues. I was prying off an old backboard from a long-gone counter when I found a bunch of old invoices and letters which had apparently fallen into a crack

between the board and the wall. I sat on a pile of salvaged beams and started reading.

C.J.W. was Chester J. Willis. Willis came from Mancos, Colorado. I scanned through the letters. Willis was a pot hunter...he dug ruins and sold burial offerings to other collectors. I searched. There was no reference to the mummified man. What amazed me was that, in the 1950s, in the 1950s, Anasazi pottery brought such high prices from collectors. Willis had been in a very profitable business.

In one letter, he bragged about digging an "Aztec ruin on the reservation right under the Ute's noses." I had learned that the early settlers thought the ruins were Aztec. That's why they named the valley Montezuma and the town Cortez. The Anasazi were Pueblo peoples, not Aztecs... So much for reality.

Did Willis kill the Ute and put him in the shipping crate? It seemed probable, unless the death had occurred long before Willis was born. Mummified remains were hard to date. I had seen photographs early ranchers like the Wetherills had taken in front of caves in Grand Gulch, Utah, in 1893 and 1894. They had disinterred mummified human remains---burials. The photos showed the bodies propped up and displayed in a long line---trophies. They didn't look a thousand years old. The looters noted that some of the mummy's eyes were still intact.

I knew the history of the sacking of Pueblo ruins. It is one of America's more disgusting stories. Mancos ranchers like the Wetherills, were the first to go onto Ute lands and systematically rob Anasazi graves. Today, we tell history as if they were heroes.

Last summer, while working on the reservation, I learned that the Native American side of this history had not been told. A state archaeologist I worked with

informed me that "...in these cases we can't tell the true history." She asked me "Cain, do you understand what would happen if the Indians still owned the collections stolen from their lands?"

I called Towaoc again after 8:00 p.m. Norman's voice was low on energy. I could barely hear him.

"Beardancer, do you have any clues?"

"Yeah, maybe lots Cain."

"What's the matter?"

There was a long pause... I heard his kids playing in the background.

"Arnie, we probably know who you might just have down there... We can feel it! Imagine our pain... We would rather not... Well, I need to see your face. You tell them people to respect that body a lot! Tell them to think older...like 1890s or around that time. You tell me when you will come home here! We'll talk about it."

"Okay, but it could be a few weeks... I've got other work and Susan and I need the money. I'll come as soon as I can... I'll keep you up on what we learn here."

"Maybe we hire you. I don't know now, the council may want all of you out of this... Depends on what we learn. You come sooner then, right? You scramble after money. I understand your silly ways. Maybe we pay. You did good last time, got lots of trust. You think about that!"

My next call was to a man who had hired me to do some work when I first came to Cortez. We had become friends. Doc Berner was an educator in his sixties, semi-retired and active in southwestern Colorado, as well as the Sedona-Flagstaff area. More than thirty years before, he had come to the Mesa Verde region and founded an educational research

and archaeological center. He and his wife had also worked with Weminuche Ute children and with Ute economic development. Ted Berner had been one of the few non-Utes involved in planning the Ute Mountain Tribal Park, a 125,000 acre archaeological wonderland on the Mesa Verde. He had introduced me to Beardancer and Ute history. I told him about the find, and Norman Beardancer's reaction.

"Cain, make certain that they treat that body with respect! Tell them not to cut into it or in any way desecrate it...I'm not certain... Well, to put it simply, you may have found someone that was lost to the Ute people... A very special man whose disappearance changed the course of Colorado history. His appearance now could give the Ute people claims to... Well, not over the phone. Anyway, it's too early to tell. Lots of young Ute men simply 'disappeared'. In those days, it was always open season on Ute men. Locals killed them whenever they thought they could get away with it."

My next call was to a friend of mine, a guy I'd met when I was a 'county mountie.' Doctor Fielder, until about a year ago, had been a medical examiner for the county.

"Doctor, sorry for calling so late. It's important. I need some advice."

I filled him in on Dean's discovery and told him what Beardancer and Berner had said.

"Cain, glad you called me. If this is a Native American matter, then Coconino County better be advised right away. Want me to call them?"

"That would get through to them! Before they do that body they had better get in touch with Norman Beardancer." I gave him the Colorado number and

some background on the Weminuche, Ute Mountain Utes.

“Doctor, from what I saw, the man was shot, tied ‘round the neck and dragged. He may be a very important man...or was decades ago. Tell them to do everything right! Get the Forest Service archaeologist in on it. He understands these things. Tell them to call Crow Canyon and have them get one of their top ‘arkies’ down to Flag. Their people care a lot about the Utes... They’ll have info nobody else does. I sense that this murder will shake a lot of trees.”

“Other than that, Arnie Cain, how are you and Susan doing? I understand you bought a patio boat for Lake McPhee. Do you invite friends or are you still honeymooning?”

I laughed. “I think we’ll always be honeymooning. When the ice is off the lake, you and me buddy, we’ll go! Remember that big bass that ate my treble-hook rattler last September? We’ll get him!”

“I’m busier now than ever. I consult for everyone. I’m a celebrity and I owe my freedom from day-to-day drudgery to you. I remember all of your fish stories, Arnie. I’m planning on joining you. That big bass is mine!”

Chapter 2

What it boiled down to was a total disrespect for Native Americans and their cultures. These so-called anthropologists and 'scientists' were acting against their own standards of ethics.

I SAT BACK IN my old typist's chair and let my thoughts sift-out. Using the telephone, I had tagged a network of friends who would work on the case. Amazing! Most detective work is based upon good networking. Susan brought me a cup of bombo coffee and rubbed my shoulders for a few moments. I relaxed. We talked about the mummified man and the reason he was shipped to Sedona. Susan knew a lot about the illegal artifacts trade... She had once dated a guy who bought and sold pots and other artifacts taken from graves.

"It's not just Sedona. Any place where galleries exist and buyers come to find treasures is likely to have at least one group who trade in stolen artifacts. It goes on daily in the southwest---probably everywhere. Stealing funerary offerings from Native American cultures in the southwest has been done by individuals and the biggest museums since day one."

"You mean the museums stole stuff?" I found that hard to believe.

"Sure, Arnie. They had expeditions to the Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. They dug graves and took the artifacts back as collections. They pretended that it was for the public good and research... We all know it was for personal aggrandizement and gain. There was little or no consideration for the people whose ancestor's graves were robbed. There was no need to collect more

ceramics and grave offerings for research. The collections bolstered the museums' images. Now, years later, the Native Americans have demanded that the bodies removed from the graves and the bones and mummified remains, be returned and interred again. They are asking for the return of sacred objects. This is considered a major threat to museums and collectors who think of this stolen property as their assets."

I had never thought about that. I went to museums and visited private collections and assumed that the stuff on display was obtained legitimately. Now that I thought about it, I knew that no people would willingly let strangers from an alien culture dig up their ancestors, desecrate their graves, and take the stuff away for display. I also knew that the museum collectors and others knew that the ruins they were mining were the ancestral sites of living people. What it boiled down to was a total disrespect for Native Americans and their cultures. These so-called anthropologists and 'scientists' were acting against their own standards of ethics. They chose to rob graves and steal because they coveted the artifacts. They stood to gain financially from them.

The phone rang and Susan handed it to me. "At this hour, it's got to be for you."

"Cain? You know who I am! We met last in Pick's Café, about a year ago. I want to hire you to get to the bottom of this thing they found in my gallery." I held the phone away from my ear and gave Susan a screwy look. I whispered, "I think its Doc Connely."

"Look, I own that building. I owned it years ago, sold it, and recently bought it back. I want to make it a gallery again. Hired the Conception Group to do that. Now, something that SOB Willis did is going to cause

me trouble. That's what I want you for. You investigate this dead man thing and get it out of my hair!"

I held the phone away and smiled. Susan asked me who it was. I told her that it was Doc Connelly. Connelly was an energetic centenarian who had been a major player in Sedona's history and development. He owned a lot of real estate and had earned a reputation as an unscrupulous shark. He was a man who claimed that he had found the Fountain of Youth in a remote canyon near Sedona. His state of preservation and my own observations suggested that he had. He was a character with little character, or so I had come to believe.

"Doc, sure you must be concerned. Just what is it that you want me to do?"

"Cain, that SOB Willis rented from me back in the fifties and sixties. I knew he was trading in stolen artifacts, but what the hell, everybody did back then. He had a direct line to sites on the Mesa Verde. He dug graves and sold the pots and stuff...yeah, even the mummified bodies of Anasazi people. He sold bodies, bones and grave offerings. Big money! Had clients whose names are well known... museums and... Well, you get the picture. That SOB Willis evidently had that mummy and was trying to hide it. Only, from what Dean tells me, that Indian was not an Anasazi. Willis retired, and if he's alive... I think... If I could get evidence that he was connected with the murder of that Indian... Well, that SOB and I have some old scores to settle. I'd love to see him behind bars!"

We discussed my terms and clarified what, "...and expenses," meant. He said he'd cut me a retainer for

\$5K in the morning. He hung up before I could discuss anything else with him.

I smiled at Susan and smacked my lips. She knew that something good was happening and gave me a smile back that melted flesh.

“Arnie, how many people can you work for at a time?” Susan sensed what was on my mind.

“Connely wants me to find out if Willis murdered the man in the box. I’ve agreed to take that on. The Utes may want me to find out who he was and what happened. I can take that contract if they offer it. I think that as long as I’m retained to do different things I can take different contracts. What do you think?” I trusted her sense of ethics.

“You’ve got to make certain that you aren’t getting paid twice for the same work... Remember, Dean called you and got you into this project. No double billing. It would be wrong to charge twice for the same thing. If it’s separate and they all know you are working for the others, then I guess it’s all right.”

“I agree. You’ll have to help me decide whom to bill for each part of the work... If the Utes retain me, I’ll tell them about Dean and Connely, and vice-versa. At least we know my time will be covered on this one.”

The phone rang again. It was after 10:00. “Arnie, you need a night secretary!” She handed me the phone.

“Hello, I’m calling for Mr. Arnie Cain, does investigative work?”

“I’m Cain. How can I help you?”

“My name is Phil Long. I’m the Director of the Pre-Historic Society in Denver. I understand that you’re involved in tracking the mummified remains of a NA male.”

“I am.”

“Any connection to C.J. Willis?”

“Looks like it.”

“Are you working on the case?”

“I represent some of the principals. What is it that you need?”

“Cain, up until twenty years ago, Willis was one of the primary suppliers of Native American artifacts from the Southwest. A lot of fine collections owe their existence to him. We want to retain you to find out what Willis’s involvement in this find means. In fact, we are willing to pay you to keep us up-to-date regarding where the investigation leads... A lot of very fine folks are concerned. You understand, things have changed in the artifacts business. A lot of trouble makers, most red power fanatics, have made it difficult for legitimate collectors to share their collections with the public. That is bad for public education and bad because the collectors put their artifacts in storage or sell them in Europe and Asia and they are lost to the scientific community and to those of us who value past cultures.”

I went along with his assertions. They wanted someone on the inside to tip them off if the investigation exposed Willis’s illegal dealings. The question that nagged at me was how had he found out about the mummy? It had only been discovered this morning.

“Mr. Long, the body was only discovered this morning. How did you find out about it?”

“Oh, nothing happens in the antiques business without all of us knowing about it. I had two calls from Sedona before noon. I obviously can’t tell you names, but we are all concerned businessmen and women.”

I thought about that and didn’t like the implications.

“You want me to let you know if something Willis did endangers people who purchased collections from him?”

“Well, that’s putting it in a hard light! Really, what we want is time to protect ourselves from the press and radical groups. We are legit! We need to make certain that we are not falsely attacked.”

“Mr. Long, I can’t see any way that I can help you. It’s unethical to divulge privileged information about an investigation.” I was stretching, hoping he would buy the ‘privileged info’ argument.

“Not really! It’s done all the time. We’re good people, important people who want to protect museum collections and private collectors ...”

I cut him off. “Sure, and if you good people did the right things when you bought from Willis, you have nothing to fear, right? If not? Well, then you may have problems, right?”

“I’m sorry you feel that way Mr. Cain. Our people always did the right things. What has changed is the perspective of the times. There are those who want to judge past actions by today’s standards. That’s unfair and dangerous. A lot of damage can be done. We want your help in avoiding undeserved and unnecessary attacks and claims. With your help---or with the help of many others---we will get the information we need. If you will not help us, that may make it a little harder. But we will get what we need! We have powerful people behind us. We must do what is necessary to protect the public interests. Will you reconsider?”

“Ethically, I cannot.”

“Ethically? That’s simply your definition of ethics. Besides, the issue is so unclear. Since when do any of us have the luxury of situational ethics? You sound

naive, Cain. Maybe you are! For now, I won't accept your refusal to help us. This is all new to you... I'll call back in about a week. By then, you will have a better handle on what this involves. Thank you for listening. Check us out and...well, until later."

Susan knew that I was irritated by the call. She waited for me to organize my thoughts and cool down. I lifted the phone and switched the ringer to OFF.

"This case is beginning to scare me." I didn't want to alarm Susan, I wanted to process my fears with her help. I sensed that she knew that. She remained quiet and let me talk.

"That guy represents powerful groups--- museums, universities, private collectors, probably federal and state agencies. He wants to make certain that whatever we learn is not used against those who possess antiquities that were obtained illegally. If the mummified remains Dean found today have something to do with the illegal excavation and sale of artifacts, we can count on these forces to block any information we obtain. They will use any means to protect themselves and those they represent. Sadly, many he represents are anthropologists, museologists and historians---they will be exposed for having falsified history and blocked the truth because of what they perceived as the damage the truth could do. I can only imagine how ruthless these 'good' people will be as they cover their asses."

Susan stared at me. "He said that? He actually told you that if new evidence came to light, new history, that they would block it?"

"In so many words."

"Then, whatever you find out..."

“They will try to stop me. I think their first move will be to try to discredit me. Then, they will move to block the investigation. They will try to rally Native American forces and get them to demand that the body be left untouched and interred immediately. They will steal evidence...destroy evidence, if they can. Then, if that doesn't work, I think they will use the courts. I can only guess what the National Park Service will do if it feels its museum collections and history are questioned. The NPS has almost unlimited resources... Add-in the legal actions initiated by major museums and universities... These guys can probably block any new information or findings.”

“Arnie, you find one mummified man and you have jumped to all of these conclusions? Don't you think you should slow down... I mean, the way you're looking at the case now... Well, it's as if you assume that you are opening a door into hell! Are you overreacting honey?”

“Maybe... In reality, I don't think so. Look how quickly fear spread about Dean's find. I think some of these guys know a lot of history that we don't. Some were probably living in fear that new evidence would come to the surface. I'll bet that Willis has the dirt on a lot of them... They know deep down that somehow his records or deeds would become public some day.”

“Don't you think you should sleep on it? Let some time pass before you jump to too many conclusions?”

“You're right honey. *If* I can sleep. My mind's going a hundred miles an hour. I've got to beat them at their game... There has to be a way to get to the truth and to get the historical record out there where it belongs. I get the feeling that if I can get ahead of them, I can be effective. You know, the first thing they will try to do is get that body...”

I tried to sleep. Susan was snuggled against me and everything was physically perfect...only my mind was on fire. I processed so many game plans that I forgot whatever it was I had decided to do. I told myself that without more information I could only compute in circles... that did it. The next sound I heard was the steam hissing up through the coffee grounds in the Italian espresso maker. I waited until the smell of freshly brewed coffee wafted into the bedroom and then got up. Susan came in and handed me a cup of the strong brew. My mind cleared. I grabbed the telephone.

“Fielder! Listen! There are forces organizing now to stop the investigation into the death and activities of the man we found yesterday. All I can tell you is that if we don’t move fast, they will take control of the body and...”

“Jeeze, Arnie, slow down! Have you been laying awake all night worrying about this thing?”

“I know I sound out-of-it, but Doc, I need help. I got a call last night. There are powerful forces that don’t want history to come to light, if you know what I mean. They will move fast... Can you get to the medical examiner in Flag and prepare him for the onslaught? Maybe get some preliminaries done on the body? I know I told you to warn them to go with caution... But, I’m assuming that we will lose access to the body by mid-day today... Is there anything you can do? Do you think you could convince them to send the body to Towaoc and the Utes?”

“I doubt that they will release the body... One thing I can do is head for Flag and get next to the medical examiner. We’ve worked together before. I’ll cancel my appointments and fly up there. Can you pick me up at Pulliam Airport? About 9:30?”

“You bet! I can fill you in and go with you...”

“Cain, have I ever told you that working with you is a weird experience? I love it! See you in a little while.”

I sat naked on the edge of the bed, coffee in one hand, telephone in the other. Susan came in and gave me a “what gives?” look.

“Arnie, I heard that Winston Churchill worked in the raw. I know that you do your best work naked, but don’t you think you are pushing this detective thing too fast?”

I nodded and dialed a Towaoc number; Beardancer’s number. He wasn’t up for the rising sun. I knew he slept late. Norman wasn’t a morning person.

“Norman, sorry to get you out of the blankets... Listen, I wouldn’t call you at this hour if it wasn’t very important. You there?”

“Oh sure, I was up doing a dance for the rising sun. If I don’t do it, nothing happens all day. So, why are you interrupting my sacred duties?”

“I got a call last night from a powerful group who want to make certain that this investigation into the death, life and times of the man we found in the crate is stopped. They fear that if history comes alive, they will lose a lot. Compende?”

“That’s not news, that’s what happens. We have a history that embarrasses a lot of folks. They won’t include it in ‘our’ American history. So, what’s new?”

“What’s new is that they are going to try to get the body and stop the investigation. They will probably use some Native American group to do that for them. If you get the tribe to move fast, you will be able to stop them. Can you get to the tribal chairperson and have the tribe officially demand possession of the

body? Then, can you get someone to Flag who will officially stay with the body?"

"You smoking something?"

"Can you do it?"

"I got nothing else to do, right? Okay, Cain if you ask, I go to work."

"Norman, one other thing. The only outfit strong enough to fight these guys is the tribe. Can the tribal council meet and declare that it has taken control of all aspects of the case... Know what I mean? The Ute Tribe must be the repository for all information, all evidence, etc. Can that happen?"

"I think so. If not the whole council, at least the officers... Yes, I can get them to do that. What if the man you found is not Ute?"

"Then the tribe can give the case to the Navajos or whomever. And Norman, have the tribe notify all federal and state agencies, The NPS, the FBI and others, that they are taking charge of the investigation...that it is a Native American affair, a Ute Mountain Ute affair, and that they are investigating it."

"Whatever you're smoking, it's strong stuff. I think I can get that done. I suppose you want it done today?"

"Norman, if the Tribe isn't first, then all is lost."

"Okay white man. If this backfires, we hang you from a pinon tree."

"Fair deal. Oh, and retain me! I like to work for the organization that holds the best cards."

"Sure, we pay you with beads and rubber tomahawks. Maybe we can trade you something you already own. Like in the past, that's the white man's way we had to learn, right? You better come here! You could learn a lot."

“I think I will be eating your stew before long... I’ll call later to see if the council went along with the plan.”

I could tell that I hadn’t convinced Susan that I was acting rationally. She made sure I was dressed, reminded me that it would be cold in Flagstaff, and asked me to help her put together the contract with Connely.

“I can take it over to him and get his signature and the retainer, honey. He knows you are helping Dean. I think we should tell him that you will also be working for the Utes, if they offer. Okay?”

I nodded. As a cop I had developed some tolerance for paper work and with Susan’s help had devised a boiler-plate form for contracted services. I finished another cup of brown soup and ate a bagel, hole and all. We finished filling in the details of the contract. I gave Susan a hug and was out the door. I wanted to be at Pulliam when Fielder’s Mooney touched down, but first, I wanted to take one more look at the crate Dean had found in the old gallery.

Dean came up to my old F-250 as I pulled into a space on the street in front of the gallery. He looked distressed. Behind him I could see several men in dark business suit uniforms. I opened the door and got out.

“Cain, good to see you. They came early this morning. Feds. They won’t let anybody in.”

“Feds? You mean FBI?”

“No, some other agency. Maybe BIA? They won’t say. That ape over there, hiding behind reflective glasses, told me that this was a crime scene and that no one was allowed in until they completed their investigation.”

I could see into the building where the remodelers had removed an add-on wooden foyer. A suited man was digging inside under the supervision of more suits. "Dean, what if we call the cops?"

"Good idea. At least we may learn who these Feds are and why they're here." He took out his cell phone and dialed. I stared across the street as he explained to the dispatcher what was happening. In minutes, the chief was on the line. Dean was explaining the scene, and assuring the Chief that he was serious.

"He's pissed," Dean announced as he snapped the tiny cellular shut and put it in his pocket. "No one informed him of any investigation. He's on his way."

Within minutes the chief's car arrived. Seconds behind, two Sedona police cars pulled up. The big guy in the reflective glasses looked around and yelled something to his men inside. I could see the four of them gather together, trying to hide in the shadows.

The Chief walked to the curb and motioned for the big goon to come over to him. The man shook his head slowly, side-to-side and yelled across in a guttural voice, "You may not cross that line. Local law enforcement has no jurisdiction here!"

"Say's who?"

"Can't tell you. Direct orders, I'm just following orders. "If you weren't informed, that's not my problem. You will be. Now leave us to our work!" The big man's voice broke a little betraying the bluff.

The Chief had been joined by three officers. They stood in back of him, obviously surprised by the goon's announcement. The chief turned and conversed with them and then faced the goon again. "Let me see your written orders. Now!"

The goon turned back toward the building and gave a back-handed brush-off to his men. They were

prepared to run, and scattered as they left the back of the building, knowing that Sedona's finest couldn't chase and catch them all. The chief moved forward quickly and apprehended the goon. One officer waited until he was certain the chief had the upper hand and then went around the back of the old trading post, ran down the side street, and got the license number of a car as it sped away. The other officers had not been quick enough to collar their targets. The men had disappeared into the surrounding business district. One gave chase, the other came back to protect the chief.

"Who are you? Let me see your orders!"

The big man gave a hangman's shrug and announced that he wanted to call his lawyer. The Chief spun him around and cuffed him. "Sergeant James, read this man his rights and take him in." As the chief snapped the cuffs, the Sergeant removed a snub-nosed 38 from the goon's shoulder holster, and patted the guy down looking for more weapons and an ID. He found neither. The chief turned toward Dean and me. "What the blazes is going on here? Yesterday a mummy. Today a bunch of goons trying to excavate the place or something. Cain, you part of this?"

I nodded. "Dean called me in when he found the body in the crate."

Dean was shaking his head in wonder. "Chief, whatever they were looking for...whoever they are, it seems like we opened Pandora's box yesterday."

I asked the chief how long it would be until they could identify the goons.

"Hours, I think. They're not Feds. The big guy won't talk...I'll do my best to find out. I have to assume that they had to plan for getting caught. We

may never find out who they work for!” He paused, thinking for a moment. “Dean, I’m taking over this site now. It *is* a crime scene, and I’ll have someone posted here to protect it.”

“Thanks Chief. Can we go in and see what they were up to?”

“Cain, you know the routine. Go in, but leave it undisturbed. Let me know what you find.”

“Nothing!” Dean announced after he had finished a walk-through. “Just an attempt to dig a hole. Who would have guessed that the flagstone floor was not laid on concrete? They must have known where to dig and that they could get through the floor with such ease. But why?”

“Looks like you have another remodeling task, Dean. Now you have to put in a real floor... Who knows what you’ll find buried under this one. “Hey” I said looking at my watch, “I’ve got to meet Doctor Fielder at Pulliam in thirty minutes. Dean, sorry, but I’m out of here. I’ll call...”

Chapter 3

The trunk of his car was jammed with human skulls, grave goods, old newspapers, canvas and rags. His small apartment, over an uptown art gallery, was full of ceramic pots and human remains.

SUSAN CAIN STOOD IN front of the closet door mirror, trying to get her hair to stay in what a glamour magazine called a Swedish roll. She had always worn her hair short. Since their marriage she had been letting it grow. Arnie had encouraged her... He said it made her sexier. No one had ever used that adjective to describe her before, and the wonder of it made her decide to let her hair grow. She was futzing with her hair and delaying getting about the business of the day because she was worried about Arnie. He was not the only one who lay awake last night, processing and creating scenarios. She had told him about the guy she had dated who was in the antiquities business. She hadn't told him all of what she knew.

Susan had been a tall, gangly, awkward girl from sixth grade through high school. She was still too tall and angular-looking for most men but Arnie, at 6'3", thought her 5'11" frame was delicate and coquettish...or so he said. That was hard for her to believe, but she fit him perfectly.

She had always had friends---girl friends, and some guy 'friends', who hung around her because they wanted introductions to her other friends. When she was eighteen she had been approached by a sticky-sweet, mercenary girl at a lodge in Grand Lake, Colorado. They both worked waiting tables. She was hungry for closeness, touching and love. The girl came on to her and she learned for certain that she

was not interested in her own sex. That realization was depressing. She had given up on the dream that she would ever have a relationship with a man.

Susan had tried to shut-down the part of her that related to love and a normal life. "I was ready, willing and unable," she once joked to a friend. She was becoming a loner, drifting, losing hope and self image, dying to be touched and loved, giving away to others all she wanted for herself. Everyone liked her. She took care of those around her. No one even thought to take care of her. Then she met Bob.

She had come back to Sedona and taken a job at a little café on the main drag. Bob was a hustler, a trader. He came in for coffee one morning and then the next and then lunch and then...he asked her out. He was at least an inch shorter, but he claimed that her size and beauty turned him on. He was the first man to feign attraction to her. She was twenty then, and had never been with a man. Bob had problems, she could see through his lines and bull, but she was determined to fulfill all of her pent-up needs and curiosity through their relationship. Beggars couldn't be choosers, she thought, looking back.

He tried to impress her... No, she knew even then that he was trying to impress and justify himself. He bragged about the Anasazi grave goods he bought from pot hunters and sold to collectors at prices that amazed her. He showed her a classical kiva jar adorned with black-on-white geometric patterns of such simplicity and beauty that one could imagine the artist's pride. He had purchased the pot for thirty dollars and sold it to a museum buyer for thirteen hundred. He had a big collection of ancient baskets which he said brought the highest prices. On the

sideboard lay a pile of woven sashes. Some of human hair, most of dog hair, and some, which were woven of brilliantly colored cotton, he claimed came from the Sedona area. The trunk of his car was jammed with human skulls, grave goods, old newspapers, canvas and rags.

His small apartment, over an uptown art gallery, was full of ceramic pots and human remains. He had placed the desiccated remains of a small girl in a corner facing the room. Her skin looked like pork-rind leather, cracking and peeling away from a too-white skull. Her hair was bleached from the elements. He made jokes about needing company. Susan demanded that he cover the obscenely withered body. She was too young and too much into her own personal agenda to deal with the vileness of Bob's desecration.

Bob bragged about his major 'kills' in the antiques market. Over time she began to understand the networks he used to buy and sell. He showed her mimeographed forms provided for him by a friend at a major museum. He filled one out every time he sold a significant artifact. The forms were affidavits of origin, each claiming that the materials came from private land. "As long as I provide these, the buyers will never have to defend their purchases," he bragged. He always had several of the forms filled-out and signed with fictitious names and private places. All he had to add was a description of the artifact. He asked her to sign several of the forms for him... "Make up a name. It'll look good in your handwriting," he demanded.

Why had she gone with him? Curiosity? The need to be touched, to touch, to feel? The need to know what their bodies did, how they reacted, what her

body did and how it felt; the need to be normal and to have love? That's what held her to Bob. It made her tolerate his wrongdoing, his sick perversions, his grotesque business.

Inside, she was confused and damaged. She felt cheated out of a part of life. Her friends, the girls she had been around and grown up with, were so different. Although men chased them, they were the aggressors. They decided what would happen, when, and how. They often told her in advance of a date what their plans were. "I'll have him in bed before we go to the movie..." or, "Tonight I'm going to break that stud!" She had never had the luxury of calling the game... Or even playing it, for that matter. With Bob, at least she had someone.

One evening, late, a scraggly man from Utah came to Bob's apartment. He was groomed like a shedding coyote and smelled of sweat and rotting teeth. He was in his late twenties, she guessed, a creature, barely human. He jabbed his name at her and she didn't like it: "Skullcroft." He had on a long coat although the spring night was warm. As he sat, she saw that he had a pistol jammed into his pants top. He casually moved it so that the barrel wouldn't jab him in the crotch.

Bob treated him like a long lost brother. He had her re-heat the stringy pot roast and potatoes from dinner. The creature ate as if he couldn't chew. Later, he took a straw from the kitchen broom and pushed it through places in his teeth. He removed it often, sucked off the bloody white goo and chunks of meat, and then plied it again, evidently enjoying his second meal.

He had just killed a man. "A damned nosey bastard... BLM maybe, who come up on where I was

diggin'." He had buried the guy, loaded the pots and skulls he had been collecting, and come down here to stay for awhile. He wanted Bob to buy his pots. He had a buyer for the skulls and jaw bones... A guy from a dental college who was studying teeth or something.

"You shot the guy?" Bob asked, somewhat concerned.

"Naw, I clocked 'im wid my shovel. Staved his head. No evidence 'cause I put 'im under."

"Who was the guy?" Bob asked, obviously not the least concerned about the murder.

"Bunch been pokin' around from Church. Claims we's destroying record of the Lamenites. Claims we's destroyed the record they's lookin' fer ta confirm the lost tribe of Israel. If'n Bishop sent 'im, I'd of recognized 'im. Think it was jest one of them archaeologists a pokin' around like they knows more than we do."

"What happens if they find him?" Bob wasn't concerned, just making conversation.

"Hell, they can't. Never found the others neither. They hardly look out there. I ain't worried. It's jist better fer me not to be around them parts for awhile."

Susan was terrified. More by Bob's cold acceptance of the murder than by the visitor. Killing was part of the way they made their living. They desecrated the living as they desecrated the dead. She excused herself and went home. She wouldn't agree to see Bob or come back. Bob was furious, yet he bought her excuse that she couldn't stand the man from Utah who had moved in. They never discussed the murder, or her knowledge of it. It probably never entered Bob's mind to be concerned about what she knew. He found another woman. Susan learned of

her when he brought her into the café and gloated. Susan was dropped as if she were... It took her months to recover from the insult and the lesson. She retreated deeper into herself, while giving more and more to others. Everyone agreed that she was the best waitress in town.

She closed the closet and began gathering her things. Arnie was on his way to Flagstaff. She had shopping to do and... The fear for Arnie came flooding back. Except for that awful episode with Bob so many years ago, her husband was the only man she had ever been with. Arnie was the only man whom she had ever loved and been loved by. She had to protect him. He didn't know that those who played the antiquities game desecrated everything they touched. Bob was long gone, but she knew several of his best customers were still in Sedona.

Chapter 4

I had never heard Fielder speak with such pessimism. I knew that he was right. Humans haven't changed, not deep down. We are only protected from such horrors by veneers of civilization.

THE RED AND WHITE Mooney caught a cross wind and crabbed slightly just as the wheels touched the tarmac. Fielder corrected perfectly and the six-placer came to earth with grace. At the tie-downs, Fielder took his time cooling the engines and letting their temperatures equalize. Cain waited by the terminal door as the retired medical examiner, now a sought-after forensics expert, locked the baggage bay and came toward him.

"Nice landing!"

"Wind surprised me. The bag's hanging still. Been here long? Sorry, I had trouble getting out of a luncheon engagement. Had to find someone to cover for me."

"Good timing. I was late too. Seems there are forces being organized against us even as we speak."

"The evil empire?"

"Maybe. There were some thugs pretending to be FBI or something federal. Tried to dig something up in the old gallery where we found the body."

"You're kidding! How did you know they weren't Feds?"

"Called the cops. Most people don't think to call the cops on the cops. Dean and I did, and it worked out."

"What did they find?"

"Nothing we know of. We learned that the floor of the old gallery is flagstone over dirt, not concrete.

Dean has his hands full now. Old Doc Connely called me. He once owned the building... Now he owns it again and it's his remodel. He'll scream when he learns that the place doesn't have a floor... Or maybe not. He probably already knows that. I think he knows a lot, and from what I recall of him, it will be like pulling teeth to get it out of him. I got a \$5K retainer from him to find out about the body. I'm suspicious of his motives."

Fielder nodded as if processing the information and then changed the subject. "The medical examiner here is a friend of mine. I called ahead. He's savvy and will protect the body. He already had a call from someone claiming to represent AIM. They hung-up when he wanted specifics. You were right, they will try to get the American Indian Movement rallied to stop our investigation. They can only bluff. AIM isn't that easily misled."

We drove to the medical center. As we entered the building and began our way down, the thought hit me. Morgues were always down under. I couldn't imagine the mind-set that would place a morgue on the top floors of a building, closer to heaven. Death was down, always down and cold. Always gray cement, stainless steel and cold white lights.

The body was knees-to-chest. No drawer would hold it. It didn't need much refrigeration so it was placed on a sheet-covered gurney in the back of the refrigerated section. It lay on its side, the one flattened against the ground it had been placed on maybe a century before. The examiner wheeled it out into the autopsy room.

I stood back out of the way as Fielder tied on a green apron. Masked and gloved, he joined the similarly garbed examiner at the table. The recording

device was turned on. Fielder turned as a woman who had been called to assist handed him a VHS camera.

“Get all views on tape,” the examiner said as Fielder began to move around the body, camera to eye. While Fielder filmed, the examiner continued to circle the body, talking slowly and clearly into the mike. He described the overall look of the body. He mentioned other obvious things: sex, apparent age, clothing, hair color, and racial indicators. He went on to describe the marks on the face, the deep rope marks and burns on the neck, and other outward signs of damage. He paused and made more detailed comments about the man’s clothing.

“We call these pants jeans, but they didn’t get that name until after WWII. Note that there are no belt loops, there are suspender buttons. Note the Two Horse Brand leather patch. That tells me that these waist overalls, that’s what they were called, were manufactured after 1886. Note that there is only one back pocket. That tells me that they were made before 1902. These are lot number 501 Waist Overalls made in San Francisco by Levi Strauss and Company. Note the rivet at the base of the fly. Very controversial. It got hot near a campfire and...”

As he continued observing and recording his observations he came in closer to the body and began to probe within the folded form. Fielder filmed as he went in.

“We will not autopsy the body at this time. We may not have to, not that we would be the first to cut it. Note, the overalls are open in front, loose now that the body has desiccated. Buttons and rivets are copper. Top button is missing.” He probed lightly with a hooked stainless steel rod, moving the cloth to the

side. "No undergarment showing. Difficult to see due to the position of the legs. Uh Oh! Evidence of genital damage... Dried blood still evident...lots of bleeding. Probably emasculated while still alive. No sign of penis or... Genitals cut away, not evident here. Cuts on lower abdominal wall," he stopped and gave Fielder an agonized look, shaking his head. This was a man who had seen it all, yet he was touched by what he saw. He continued his observations, voice a little weaker than it had been. "Wrists show rope burns, probably tied... Hands cut. Fingernails on first second and third fingers of both hands broken. Looks as if they were clawed-back. Chest area shows three distinct holes... Front left shoulder. Front right shoulder. Both shoulders would have been dislocated or rendered useless by what seems to be bullets. Both shoulder wounds bled profusely. Hole directly over the heart. May be the cause of death. Little bleeding from this wound evident. Let's look at the back again."

I wanted to look away or at least not think about the evidence the medical examiner was bringing to light. After maybe ten minutes, the examiner turned off the recording device and stood back. He carefully peeled out of his latex gloves, removed his mask and rubbed his nose for the first time since beginning his observations. Fielder handed the video camera to the aide and peeled out of his gloves. The examiner motioned for us to follow him into his office. As I followed down the hall, a gurney was rolled past on its way to autopsy. I got an acrid whiff of death that almost did me in.

Fielder sat on the edge of the examiner's desk. I took the chair in front. The examiner, gray hair damp

against his head where his visor had been, sat heavily in his chair.

“Someone brutalized the guy. Roped him I guess. Dragged him. Shot him in both shoulders. Not to kill, to immobilize. Tied him, cut away his genitals, maybe then, shot him through the heart. That’s my preliminary at least. You see anything else Fielder?”

“Boots were odd... Maybe not for that time, but they looked different, handmade, and the heels cut back in, in a strange way. Almost new, but badly damaged from being drug. Dirt on the clothing and in his face cuts is gray, I think it’s called calk-alkaloid. Not from around here. Should help us place him. Hands, I mean the inside, fewer calluses than I would have expected. Clothing should help date him. Eagle beaded on the pocket... You mentioned that Cain. What does it mean to you?”

“Stature and physical look Ute to me. Eagle is beaded in Ute colors, white, blue and green. Captured, dragged, shot, emasculated, shot... Someone hated this guy!” I was out of my league, but I wanted to say those things and get them out of me. “My god, they cut everything off!”

“Cain, you’ve been in this business long enough to know that that’s not unusual,” Fielder said, turning toward me and giving me a questioning look. The examiner nodded.

“Crimes like this, the killers always go for the genitals. Humans and other animals maybe, but mostly humans. It’s what we have come to expect, that’s why I looked for it. It seems that cutting another’s genitals away gives a sense of stopping life... they do it to men and women. It’s always done where the killers hope to destroy the victim psychologically before they kill them. Look at the

atrocities recently committed by the Serbs. Look at the tribal butchery in Africa..."

"And back then? Cowboys hated Indians. Hated them that much?" I got two very strange looks.

The examiner grinned. "Is the Pope Catholic?"

"When Chivington killed the Cheyenne at Sand Creek, his men cut the genitals off men and women and then rode through the streets of Denver wearing them. We're only a few meals away from being like they were."

I had never heard Fielder speak with such pessimism. I knew that he was right. Humans haven't changed, not deep down. We are only protected from such horrors by veneers of civilization.

We talked quietly for a few minutes, each of us adjusting our thinking to the evidence of the horrible crime. Fielder asked me if there was anything else they could do at this time. I started to mention taking samples of the soil, dating the clothing and... They did those things automatically. The thought hit me. "We should go back and check his pockets." Fielder nodded to his colleague and we headed back to the examination room.

Gloved again, the examiner took his buttonhook stainless steel probe and began pulling open the man's pockets. In the single back pocket he found and carefully removed a badly stained square of newspaper, folded and sealed shut by fluids from the body. There was nothing in either front pocket, which surprised me. In the watch pocket the examiner found two coins. He carefully removed them and let them drop into a small stainless steel tray. He stood back and shrugged. "Latest date, oldest possible year of demise."

I bent the tray toward the light so that I could see the coins. One was an unworn Indian Head cent. The other was nickel colored, smaller than a nickel, well worn, almost smooth in places. Fielder was looking over my shoulder. "Flying Eagle!" he exclaimed. He picked it up. "1856, Flying Eagle cent. Wow! This is one of the first of Longacre's famous cents... He designed it...the eagle was considered special. Won't have a mint mark."

"And the Indian Head?" I asked, reluctant to pick it up. He took it from the tray and held it, head up. "1891. Need my glasses to see the mint mark. Longacre designed it too."

The medical examiner was carefully perusing the folded square of stained newspaper, tenderly prodding it with a pair of large tweezers. "Proteins are a great glue. This won't come apart without special treatment... Even then we may not be able to read it." He went to the counter, opened a drawer and withdrew a large magnifying glass. He clamped it into a bracket already mounted on the counter, turned on a light recessed in the stainless steel ring that held the glass, and placed the tray containing the newspaper under it. After a moment, he let out his breath. "We're in luck!"

I stood back and let Fielder get in close with him. " _ _rango. _892. Can't read the next lines...nor the next. Here, Bart_o_ _ _w, then, looks like _ndia_ Age_ _ , then nothing but isolated letters and smeared lines too far gone to read...then, _rreste_ _ . Ink has been smeared or lost. I see a few letters, probably a name, place or thing, it's capitalized... Ac, looks like an 'ow_ _ z' too smeared to tell for sure. Here! Toward the bottom near the fold... Nor_ _ _ _iold." He studied the folded section of newspaper again,

carefully, then turned it over. The back was totally smeared and illegible due to the dark stains. Fielder stood over him, not missing anything. "That's about it. I'll have to send this to the FBI labs, they know how to break the proteins and get it unfolded...they have techniques for bringing out the print."

"You know, Cain," Fielder said thoughtfully, "With this date you can get into the Durango newspaper archives and read the whole article. This guy was probably killed sometime after 1891. What was happening on Colorado's southwestern frontier in those days? And why was the body brought to Sedona sixty years later?"

Chapter 5

I'm telling you what I found... Dead bodies, four or five of them. They weren't old Sinagua or Anasazi. They were the bodies of dead kids, and he said they came from an Indian school graveyard.

SHOPPING ALWAYS TOOK LONGER than Susan planned, especially in the market. She visited with friends as she went up and down the aisles and in the check out line. Everyone had heard about the discovery in the old trading post and wanted to talk about it. Finally, she had her groceries in the car and was on her way home. For the first time since leaving the house she had time to think. Her subconscious was way ahead of her. She knew that as soon as the groceries were put away, she would head to the library. If the man they found was Ute, and the death was somehow involved with artifact hunters and traders, then Arnie would have some homework to do. She'd get the books and have them ready for him.

Sedona's library was unique in that the community built it, not through the government, but directly through donations. All that wouldn't have mattered if the man who ran the library and had built it up over the years wasn't at the top of his game. The library was well run, and user friendly. She didn't have a clue as to the names of books she was looking for, but she knew that all she would have to do was describe what she needed and someone on the staff would have helpful books in her hands within minutes. If the library didn't have it, they would get it for her from interlibrary loan. She looked forward to her visit and began to think of ways to describe the materials she was after.

“Certainly any local history that would give information about the old trading post”, she told the librarian, “Any books that might connect Ute Indians to Sedona. I know you have books connecting Hopi, Yavapai and Navajo. What I need is some connection with the Wemiunche Utes of Southwestern Colorado.”

The librarian was thinking hard, scowling and typing in cues for the computer. “Oh,” Susan continued, “has anyone ever done a study of the antiquities trade? Maybe even pot hunting and...maybe some information about big museums that have collected in this area or at least bought collections from traders here?”

The computer screen filled with bibliographies from the card catalog data base. The librarian scanned them, highlighting several and clicking on them.

Susan wasn't finished yet. “David, did you hear that Dean discovered the mummified remains of a Native American in a shipping case in the old trading post?” The librarian nodded. Everyone in town had heard the story. “Can the library get abstracts...I mean property records? Old Doc Connely claims he owned the trading post and sold it to a guy named Willis. Now he says he bought it back.”

“I can get the abstract for you via the internet. At least you can scan it on the computer and print-out what you want.”

“Oh, and David. There must be records of the businesses in town and those who ran them... Say starting back in the '50s and maybe going up through today?”

The librarian nodded again. “Susan, this sounds like a fun search. How much time do I have?”

“Well, Arnie comes back this afternoon. Will you have some stuff then? Oh, don’t let this screw up everything else you are doing. Tomorrow we could come in and do some more research.”

He smiled again. “For you anything is possible. I’m caught up in this thing now, so I’ll add anything to the pile I can. Here, now, I do have some books you can take with you. He pointed to a list on the screen. Susan scanned it. That one! *Richard Wetherill, Anasazi*, by McNitt, and that one, by Marsh, *People of the Shining Mountains*. Oh, and that one. It’s a BLM report on vandalism of Native American sites in the Four Corners region, and this one, a history of Mesa Verde National Park. Look! This book is about collections. Getts, Ferner. *Southwest Collections: The Definitive Study of the Origins of all of America’s Great Southwest Collections*. Can you get it for me through interlibrary loan?”

Books in arms, Susan made her way back to their small apartment. There was a lot of scanning to do. She called Misty Martel, a friend she had met when Arnie was the marshal working on a major case that had brought them all together. Misty answered the phone with a voice that sounded drained of energy.

“Misty? Are you all right?”

“Susan? No! Terrance and I decided over the telephone last night that we had to move. We can’t afford to live in Sedona. Rent’s too high and we could never afford to buy a house. It’s either Cottonwood or Flag. I’m bummed!” She paused, realized how glad she was to hear Susan’s voice, and pulled her scattered energy together. “What’s up with you? I heard about the mummy and that Arnie is working with Dean...”

“Yeah, strange stuff. That’s why I’m calling. Can you bring the baby and come over here? I’m doing research and I need another brain and another set of eyes.”

“Oh silly,” Misty said titillating glee, “He’s too young to read yet, but he is developing faster than the doctor said is normal. Sure I’ll help. We’ll be there as soon as I can change him and get some split pea puree out of my hair.”

I took Fielder back to Pulliam Airport and headed down Oak Creek Canyon to Sedona. In many ways it didn’t matter now if the body got tied-up in red tape. I had the information I needed and a copy of the video. What I didn’t have was enough knowledge of the times the man had lived in, or the activities of the antiquities trade in the Southwest. Well, I thought, narrowing the area of focus, if not the whole Southwest, at least in the Four Corners region and central Arizona.

The settlement called Sedona wasn’t established when the man was murdered. In fact, it was almost impossible in those days to get from southwest Colorado to central Arizona. All passable roads ended at Cortez, Colorado until the Navajo Trail (Highway 160) was built in the 1950s. That’s interesting, I thought. The body must have been shipped to Sedona from Mancos, a town about sixteen miles east of Cortez, soon after the Navajo Trail made it possible to drive to Flagstaff, and then on down to Sedona via the twisting, steep, often impassable Schnebly Hill Road. Did that mean anything? Why not ship the body by rail from Mancos? No, the Galloping Goose Railroad was closed by then, 1954 I

remembered, and the box was shipped in 1956. Willis could have shipped it by rail from Durango about 35 miles away from Mancos, but he probably had it shipped by truck because Sedona was about as remote as one could get in those days... Remote, yes, I thought, maybe that's a clue.

Willis came from Mancos and did his digging around there, mostly on Ute land. So what was his reason for buying Doc Connely's building and opening a trading post in Sedona? In those days there was little tourism and no Scottsdale retirement community scarfing up every art object they could find. In the '50s, who bought antiquities? Susan had said museums and private collectors. If so, why did they come into remote Arizona to buy stuff for their collections? Especially stuff from Colorado. That suggested that it was a way to avoid detection. Was the government policing the antiquities trade in those days? I had a lot of research to do. I wondered if the Sedona library would have access to the books and documents I needed. I decided, just as I came out of the canyon and rolled the old F-250 through uptown, that I would go to the library first. Then I'd have the entire evening free to read and research. Susan would probably help.

"Sorry Mr. Cain, someone was already here and cleaned out all the materials of the type you're looking for." David's eyes sparkled and I sensed that he was up to some fun. Yet, if someone else was on this trail I should know about it.

"Can you tell me who it is?"

"I can, but I don't want to betray a trust."

"Really? You mean libraries have identity protection ethics?"

“Well, sort of. This person was on an urgent mission. Said that your life might depend upon what was learned.”

“Susan was here? Susan? My wife? You know... tall, dark hair...” I stopped. He was laughing harder than I had ever seen him laugh before.

“She anticipates your every move, right?”

“She sure did this time!” I was grinning, but I wouldn’t let a laugh come out.

“Arnie, something else you might be interested in...” He was serious now, but his eyes shone wet. “The Doc is in!”

I thanked him and crossed the room to the small cubicle that Doc Connely used whenever he held court at the library. The door was ajar. I tapped. I could see that Connely had been watching me through the partially opened door. He gave me a smile like a giant Mr. Potato with stuck-on lips. His black-rimmed glasses had slid half way down his nose. “Come in, you work for me now, don’t you?”

“Yes Sir, and the more information you can give me now, the more money you’ll save. May I sit down?”

“Look Cain, you know I’m not happy about finding that dead body in a building I just bought. Would you be? I don’t want any delays. Time is money...”

“Look Connely, I’m sure you’re pissed about finding the body. But this thing goes back long before that doesn’t it? You and this Willis guy, you have a history and I need to know it.”

“Maybe you do. Maybe not, that’s for me to decide. Willis is the one who left the body for me to find. If he’s not dead, I want a piece of him, understand?”

“If you just bought the building from him you know where he is... Put me on to him, okay?”

“When you’ve got over one hundred years on your carcass, *just* is different. In this case, *just* was several years ago. I *just* got around to doing something with the place. He’s *just* got a ten year lead. I think he’s dead, and that’s just!”

I tried to ignore his word games. “And do you know where he lives? If he’s alive, how old would he be?”

“Did. Scottsdale. Moved there from here about that time. He’d have to be hiding out now, lots of folks want him. Early eighties, no older. He has... Well, I’ll just say that lots of records he may have could embarrass a lot of people who want others to believe that they are fine and dandy sorts. Truth is... Well, forget that! Willis could make some upstanding citizens face their conniving ways... Publicly, I mean.”

Connely was hard to figure out. When I analyzed what he actually said, comments like: “Truth is... Well forget that!” I knew that he was lying to me, lying by omission. I probed for more information. “Like?”

“Like key players in the antiques game... museum directors, politicians, big corporate moguls... private and public, they succumbed to greed and theft. Big names, big galleries, big museums, big universities... government agencies. You name ‘em, Willis sold to them and they thought he didn’t keep records.”

“His records... There were goons digging at your building this morning. Dean and I caught them. Were they looking for records?”

“That and maybe more bodies... How the hell should I know?” The way he said it indicated that he knew all about it. “Of course they’d send goons.”

Imagine the damage! I could give a javelina's tail! I want Willis and I want my building free and clear of any of his crap."

"So, why do you want Willis? Be straight with me Doc, I'm on your side."

"You are, aren't you?" He puffed-out his thick lips. I could tell that he had already decided to tell me something, but still intended to test the wisdom of telling me, one more time. He paused, evidently running it by, and then continued. "Okay, detective or investigator, or whatever you call yourself now that you gave up being a cop." He pointed a fat finger at me. "You never repeat this, it's nobody's business but mine. Okay?"

"I work for you, Sir." He gave me an 'are you kidding?' look.

"The original building was mine. I rented to Willis, then I sold it to him. He couldn't make the payments and I took it back in '55...for awhile. He raised some of the cash and I backed away and let him take it back. Does that mean anything to you? Does that sound like the businessman you know me to be?"

I thought about it. "No, it doesn't sound like something a greed-driven businessman would do. You could have kept his equity and kept the building...but, so what?"

"So, when I took it back I found that he had things buried under the floors... Well, under the boards that served as a floor in those days."

"Buried treasure? His records? So what, it couldn't have been worth much or he wouldn't have missed his payments." I was getting tired of his not getting to the point.

"Wrong, they were worth money! Dead bodies, can you believe it? I'm telling you what I found... Dead

bodies, four or five of them. They weren't old Sinagua or Anasazi. They were the bodies of dead kids, and he said they came from an Indian school graveyard. Willis had buried them in the dry dirt to preserve them, or so he said. It looked to me like he had hidden them there. He told me that they all died naturally of 'milk disease', which is what the government called it. He was keeping them to sell, had a buyer, and that's where he got the money to take the building back. I kid you not... Sorry, unintentional, tasteless pun."

He was glaring at me, angry and radiating vengeance. The information didn't compute. It sent my mind reeling. I stood, sat down, moved my butt around the seat of my chair, and stared at him.

Connely shifted his bulk and squinted at me. "Hard to believe? I was going to the law, but then I realized that I'd lose if I did... I mean, I owned the place and had. I couldn't prove he buried the kids there. Willis was quick to point that out to me. He'd say I buried them there. Besides that, if he was taken out, the building would be tied up in his affairs... Most probably taken by the government. I was a different man then, money and property meant a lot to me."

I let that last explanation pass. "So... So, nobody ever reported it?"

"He promised the bodies would be gone. Said he had bought them recently and that he would get rid of them soon. I checked back in a week. The floor was opened up. No kids. He said he would lay flagstone. It was then I realized that he should be stopped. Then I realized I had no proof. Then I started feeling guilty! You see, I've got a score to settle with the man. I don't like to feel guilty, and I have for over fifty years."

“Sure, and so you bought the building back from him. Why didn’t you settle scores then?”

“I never dealt with Willis, only his attorney. Know what?” He was about to tell me, so I prepared myself for more horror.

“Hundreds of Indian kids were taken from their parents and sent to Indian schools run by religious fanatics and government perverts. They fed them lard and flour. The kids got sick and died like flies. ‘Milk disease’ they called it or ‘milk sickness.’ There’s stacks of letters in the government files this thick,” he held up his hands, spread about four inches apart, “notifying parents that their son or daughter had died from milk disease. I’ve seen them in the archives. Willis showed some copies to me. The letters exist, Cain! Proof they murdered the children they stole from their parents. Bastards knew that they were killing them; intended to. The kids were killed, buried, then right away someone stole their bodies and dried them, so Willis said. In time, he got them. ‘Don’t make any difference,’ he told me, ‘them’s Indian remains, not people’s. The law doesn’t apply in this situation.’ That’s what he said, and he was right, but I got the distinct feeling that he was scared of having them. Otherwise he would have displayed them like everything else and not buried them under the boards. I don’t know what he did with them. His records, if found, might tell us... Or better still, Cain, find Willis alive!”

“Doc!” I was still reeling from the information. “This man we found in the crate? Was he trading him?”

“No, I don’t think so. I think he was hiding him. Don’t ask me why. I knew Willis a little, he’d do that. I suspect that the man was collateral for some kind of scam... Probably blackmail. When you find out who

that Injun was, you should be able to work from that end to find out.”

I got up, shaken and I'm sure my face was ashen. He gave me a sad look... Sad and guilty. Somehow that made me feel better.

“Cain, one more thing... That's our history... The true American history about our Christian ethics and the winning of the West. It happened in my lifetime and my father's before me. It's what you could call, 'A fresh kill;' the most recent look back at our culture. Now you know what you're up against. There's still lots of folks alive who will do anything to protect their not-to-distant relatives and their proud family names. There's lots of historians who don't want it known that they edited history; left out the whole other half of it. Expect strong opposition from the academics, the antiquities crowd and the close descendants of the beasts.”

I felt sick. “But... Who would want mummies... Dead people?” I had to say “people,” just to affirm these were the remains of human beings.

“Dumb question Cain. Museums and perverts. Even the National Park Service museum at Mesa Verde displayed human remains until the Native Americans made them stop. They had a naked Anasazi woman there they called Esther. Even had her shriveled and horribly gnarled body displayed on post cards you could buy and send to your friends. What do you mean, 'Who would want them?' Mummified bodies brought in the crowds... They made the ghouls money.”

I left, chilled to the bone by the meeting's revelations.

Chapter 6

I stepped carefully across the room to the end of the counter, bent, and touched one of the wet spots. Blood!

IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON. The winter day was floating fifty degree air around the red rocks, the sky was deep blue, people were out doing things in their yards. My head was full of information I would never have wanted to know. Martel's CJ-5 was in front of the house. Misty was leaving, carrying their baby in a car seat carrier. Susan helped her to the Jeep as I parked and joined them.

"Terrance due back soon?" I asked as Misty closed the Jeep's canvas flap and started around to the driver's side.

"No, not till the end of the week. He's almost through with the Denver job, but they want him to fly down to Pto. Penasco, Mexico and help with some strange developments there---a water fight brewing or something."

"You doing okay?"

"Sure, thanks to Susan. It sure looks like you have your hands full this time. I helped go through some of the material... It's mind boggling! Any breakthroughs?"

"No, none yet." I lied. I didn't want to go through my day's adventures with anybody but Susan, and I would edit what I told her...

"Dean's been calling. He needs to talk to you ASAP," Susan said, handing me the phone before I could get settled.

“What’s up? Did he say?” She nodded toward the phone and gave me a sweet, silly smile.

“Dean there? No? Well I need to speak with him... Know where he is?”

I didn’t recognize the voice on the other end.

“Do you know when he’ll be back?”

He said that?

Did he take a car or ride his bike?

Okay, I’ll connect with him. Thanks.”

“What was that all about?” Susan asked as I held the phone, thinking I had to do something, but what?”

“He’s with me. Left to meet me about an hour ago. Meet me? Did you tell him I’d meet him?”

I looked around the room. Susan and Misty had left the books from the library on the coffee table, carefully stacked, with white paper markers at the pages they thought pertinent. I was tired and ready for dinner, a quiet evening and bed before 9:00. I put the phone down and grabbed my coat.

“I’ll go to the building and then his office. If he calls, take a message and tell him I’ll be checking in with you...”

I gave Susan a hug, pointed to the books on the table, said “thanks,” and headed out the door. The look on her face was one of angst, mixed with fear. Mine betrayed the same concerns.

At the old trading post I noted a Sedona police car parked near the corner where the officer could see two sides of the building. As I parked, I looked for Dean’s bike. No sign of it.

The officer on stake-out was Sam Platt, the man who had responded when Dean called in the discovery of the body. He knew me, but was still uneasy and suspicious. He was a good officer. I told him about the calls from Dean and the strange

message I had received when I returned his call. He got out of the car and stood next to me, both of us staring at the building.

“Cain, I haven’t seen anyone around the place. Still, last time I did a walk-around, maybe fifteen minutes ago, I saw a bike leaning against the fence of the next building. I don’t know if it was there all the time... But now that you mention it... Let’s walk over and see... Damn, it’s like having a subconscious clue or message that doesn’t come forward until something connects to it.”

Dean’s bike was back there in the shadows leaning against the grape-stake fence around the neighboring building’s yard. We stood looking at it and both of us must have had the same thought.

“He could have come in the back way and I wouldn’t have seen him.” We both turned toward the trading post at the same time. Sam motioned for me to go around to the right, and in through a gaping doorway. He went forward toward another stripped-out entry and waited for me to get into position. Then we entered the place at the same time. I let my eyes adjust from the late afternoon brightness to the dim interior. The floor was littered as it had been yesterday when I first entered the building. A three foot high stack of hand-hewn beams salvaged by the remodelers divided the floor into two littered and dirty sections. The fruit sorting counter where the shipping box was found jutted out into the room. Something glistened like pieces of glass on the floor in front of the counter. The reflections didn’t look like they sprang from broken glass... They were too shiny; wet...

“Over here! Looks like something wet...” I stepped carefully across the room to the end of the counter, bent, and touched one of the wet spots. “Blood!”

We stood, studying the droplets on the flagstones. As if of one mind, we came around the counter, following the droplets and...

“Dean?” Platt exclaimed as he bent to identify the body jammed under the counter into the empty space where the shipping crate containing the remains of the Indian had been.

I knew it was Dean as soon as I got close enough to see. Dean dressed casually but with taste. I could see his long hair... Note his strong, lithe physique. Sam was feeling for a pulse.

“Strong pulse. He’s alive. Bleeding from... I can’t see where. He ran his hands over Dean’s neck, down his spine, feeling for injuries. In seconds he had run his hands over both arms and both legs. “Nothing broken... Let’s pull him out!”

We laid Dean out on the flagstones, and carefully cradled his head on my coat. I searched for signs of bleeding... Nothing. The officer turned back and lifted something from the floor inside the counter space. He held it up with a nail he had found on the floor, sniffing at it with tiny intakes of air.” Ether or maybe chloroform, I can’t smell the difference.”

I made another observation that explained the blood. “Look at his knuckles. Blood smeared on them...not his own.”

Dean made a sound like a man enjoying a hot bath. He moved his arm and brought a hand to his nose, rubbed it, and opened his eyes. Then, before we could react, he tightened into a ball and sprang to his feet, ready to continue fighting. He looked around

and recognized us, smiled sheepishly, and leaned against the counter.

“I almost got the big one... Broke his nose. The other held a gun in my back, then he put that thing to my face and... They put me out, didn't they?”

“Why?” I asked. “What did they want?”

Dean took a minute to remember and organize his thoughts. He gave the officer a knowing look and said, “Two things, I guess. One, to scare me off this job. The other was to know what else we found in here.” He paused again. “They kept asking questions about where I had put the records, and they threatened that if I didn't stop tearing down the building they would find me and do me... They didn't seem to know much, just that they were to get hold of whatever I had found, and scare me off. That phone message wasn't from you, was it Cain?”

“No. When I got home I called and someone at your office told me you were with me. Were those the same two guys that tried the stunt earlier?”

“No. Well, maybe the ones inside we didn't get a look at, it could have been two of them.”

“Damn,” the officer said, his shoulders slumping. “I was right out front. I was watching! I had patrolled the area maybe fifteen minutes before... Saw your bike, it didn't register.”

“I must have been out cold by then. They probably watched you, waited until you went back to the car.”

“I can ID them... The big one should have a nose spread all over his face.”

“Hey Sam, you did your best. They knew you were there and knew how to get in here without being seen.”

“So did I. Dumb, huh? I came in from the back like the message said and they grabbed me.”

I took out my cell phone and called home. “Hi honey, we found Dean and he’s okay. I’ll be home in ten... Love you!”

Dean stayed behind with Sam Platt. In the real world there’s an hour of paperwork for each half-hour in the field. Sam called-in for a replacement stake-out. When that base was covered, he and Dean would have several hours work back at the department.

Chapter 7

He's a crazy man. Old, but he can not die. He got tangled-up with the spirits of the dead he disturbed. He hides from them and they come and torture him at night and on dark days.

IN TWO DAYS, A grisly find had turned into a major case spanning two states and more than a century. I called Dean as soon as I got up. He said he had recovered from his ordeal and was feeling fine. He reminded me that he had retained me to search for some survey pins on lots and do some work reestablishing property lines that had *accidentally* moved as neighbors fought to expand their holdings into vacant lots by a few feet or inches. He assured me that those jobs could wait...all but one, which was going to be taped-off today. That meant that the pins had to be located and verified before the city's inspectors came out to approve the taping-off of the site prior to construction. I assured him I could have that done in an hour or so. Then Dean urged me to go full-speed on Connely's project. He had a timed contract with Connely. Delays now could cost the Conception Group a lot of money. I told him briefly about the preliminary autopsy results and what we now knew. He was blown-away.

"Cain, I'm going to remove the flagstones and take a hard look at the ground under the floor. Thanks to the chief, the local archaeological society has agreed to provide some experienced volunteers to scrape it down and excavate any disturbed places they find. That should happen tomorrow unless the chief has other plans, which I don't think he does. Until then, Connely has agreed to hire a guard to supplement the

police stake-out. There's something under there and I want it!"

"Right! Look for records buried by Willis... And Dean, tell them that there may be bodies under there. Connely can fill you in."

"Arnie, any hope of finding Willis?"

"Connely believes he moved to Scottsdale about ten years ago. He thinks Willis is dead. Would be in his late 70's or early 80's now...if alive."

Dean didn't say anything for a few seconds. "Why Scottsdale? Why wouldn't he have gone back to Mancos?"

Dean couldn't see my reaction through the phone. I was glad of that. "You're right! I missed that. Thanks buddy, I'm on it...or at least Susan will be. She can check-out telephone directories. Willis is not a common name."

I dialed the 970 area code and Norman's number. It was almost 9:00, he should be up.

"Beardancer? Are you back from your morning chores?"

"Are you calling to make more trouble? Every time you call, you disrupt my life. What do our conquerors want from us now?"

"Man, you're getting old and lazy. You want to lay back and sleep yourself to death. I'm calling to save you from that fate. Did you get the tribal council to act?"

"Nope. They want proof that the man you found is Ute. There was a long debate, some of the council members think the past is past."

"I think I have the proof. Can they act today if you get it to them?"

“Maybe. Depends on what you call proof... We may not look at this the way you do, you know.”

“Young man, early twenties. Horribly mutilated. Dragged, cut-up, shot several times. Article from a Durango newspaper in his pocket... Dated 1892. Carried two coins. An old Flying Eagle Cent and a new, 1891 Indian Head penny. Wore Levi Strauss blue jeans. ‘Overalls’ is what they called them in those days. Shirt was cotton, red, faded, no collar, slipover. Four buttons down the front, eagle beaded on breast, Ute colors.”

“Okay, that’s part of what they need to hear. Barefoot?”

“No. In fact, he had cowboy boots on with heels that sloped back in, in a way I’ve never seen before.”

“Cowboy boots on? You see the way you dominant white-eyes do us out of our due? Those are Indian Boots you describe. Mexican guy who made them in those days came to Navajo Springs to trade. That’s before we were put up the trail here at Towaoc. We still buy that kind of boot. Utes do. That’s all I need. They’ll believe the boots and the coin with the eagle.”

“And you? Did the grandmothers tell you who the man was?”

“Well, they think they know. I... Cain, you come here and you’ll learn a lot. There are stories that are important and must be told...”

“Important man?”

“Maybe... Was then if it connects. Hearts that were already broken were damaged beyond repair. No more hope. It doesn’t spring eternal if you hurt people enough, and they did.”

“Sorry Norman. Maybe there is some good if all this comes to light.”

“No. No good!” he said in an angry, disgusted voice. He paused, thinking. I could hear children arguing in the background. Seconds passed. “Well, maybe, Cain. The young people should know! All they have now is the lies the criminals tell. They are made to believe that our ancestors were a bunch of flea-scratching savages. Maybe this man who has come back in our time will help tell them the truth about who they are.”

I felt the sadness in his voice. In many ways it was time to bury the past and to put to rest the anguished souls of those whose short time on Earth was filled with suffering because of the conquest. I had talked with Norman and other Utes about this before. Most felt that the past could only be put to rest if the truth were known by the children. Until they knew the truth, the unknown spirits of the past would roil inside them like an angry mountain storm. When they knew who they were and what the lives of their ancestors had meant, the dust would clear and they would see their future.

“Did you ever hear the name Willis? C.J. Willis?”

“The spirits he disturbed got into his head.”

“You know him?” I stood up, holding the phone tightly to my ear.

“He’s a crazy man. Old, but he can not die. He got tangled-up with the spirits of the dead he disturbed. He hides from them and they come and torture him at night and on dark days. He lives above the Mancos River in a cave. You know him?”

“Yeah, and I need information he has.”

“Good luck. You look into his eyes... Well, you can see into another world. They’re black holes. If I believed in your hell, I’d say you could see into it.”

“Make sure he’s still alive, will you? He had the body sent to his gallery in Sedona. Sent it from Mancos, in 1956. He knows...”

“So, you called me and jabbed me with a sharp stick again. Cain, do you call me friend? Do friends do that? You come here, and I’ll see if you are worth having around. Bring that woman you married. I want to talk to someone who is not crazy.”

“Will the tribe retain me?”

“Probably not now. They might if they can look into your eyes and see you. That can only happen here.”

“I’m coming, I’ll let you know. I have some important work to do here... Not the stuff I told you about, I mean work on this case.”

“You are fun to watch, Cain. You white men always go in straight lines. I’ll try to teach you how to think differently. You need to learn how to see the circle. Linear thinking doesn’t work. You got to stop following them straight lines, they lead out, not in.”

“Sure, Beardancer. You want me to think in circles. Well, I’ll try...”

While I was getting the lot survey pins located and ready to tape, I had time to think. I knew that Susan had to work the noon shift at Friendly’s, 11:00 to 2:00. After that, she could pretend that she was looking for a wedding gift and visit some of the older trading post-galleries. I wanted her to look for antiquities: pottery and artifacts from the pre-historic Pueblo cultures that had once abounded on the Colorado Plateau. If I knew which galleries still traded in these grave goods, I imagined that I could narrow my list of locals who were out to stop the investigation. I weighed my assumption, realized that those doing illicit trading probably wouldn’t display artifacts, and

lowered my expectations. Still, Susan could do some detective work and we might learn something. I finished Dean's assignment and went home to explain my plan to Susan. She nodded in agreement as I explained, and called Misty to see if she could go with her.

"Terry, no one is going to suspect two dingy women lugging a baby and looking for a wedding present."

I smiled in agreement. I wasn't thinking clearly. Everyone who had been in town for any length of time knew Susan. Most knew that she was now connected with me. Sending her was a dumb move, but that thought hadn't entered my mind.

Phil Long had called Darrell Kingsley at the Gallery to "bring him up to speed." He said that Pre-Historic Society's members were concerned, of course, but Phil assured him that everything was under control.

"Darrell," Phil had said with certainty, "Willis didn't keep records. His threats were empty, he was trying to blackmail us with a bluff. He never showed us any proof. I don't think he kept anything but the cash everyone gave him for artifacts. He never got a dime from his attempted blackmail. He dropped the matter--that was over ten years ago. Then he died. From what I know of him, he would have blackmailed us if he had the proof." Long had paused and changed tack. "Go easy my friend. There's nothing that could connect our people to him. Tell your friends not to worry. The body they found was not even connected with that trade. They might investigate the Injun's murder, so what? There's no way they can connect with us. We weren't even born yet!"

“I’m not so sure, Phil,” Darrell Kingsley replied in his whiny voice, “Willis bragged to my father about having that body... Something about having the goods on someone in Colorado, someone important, a partner or someone. If he was doing that, then why not assume that he was keeping records to use against others?” He paused, trying to think the issue through. “And, and I know you don’t like to think about this, but did you ever consider that there’s no danger to us trading post guys from the records of pottery and artifacts we bought? In those days, that wasn’t a crime. Willis has proof of the other, that’s the danger to you...and maybe to us, maybe, but only just a little. You know that Phil, right?”

“Look Kingsley, don’t get paranoid and legal-picking on me,” Long’s tone was insulting. “Sure we consider the other possibility... But all *that* evidence has been gone a long time. None of *them* exist anymore, not in this country anyway. No way Cain or any two-bit detective is going to come on anything connected with *that* trade.”

The phone call had made Darrell antsy. Phil Long and his group had only one agenda, and that was to protect their clients. He cared little or nothing about the suppliers. Phil would withhold information... Phil would lie! He wasn’t dumb enough to fall for Long’s line. He had to assume that an investigation would turn up Willis’s records. His Dad had known that records existed. It was the only time Darrell had ever seen the powerful trader scared. D. Paul Kingsley had led a complex and exciting life, yet that one mistake had caused him so much grief. What they had done haunted them all---even after their deaths it could hurt their families...hurt him, even after all these years.”

Darrell sat in his office cubicle processing in circles for almost an hour after Long hung up. He knew that it was up to him to stop Cain. Stop him in a way that would conclude the case of the Ute's murder and go no further. Connely's men had bungled the search for documents buried in Willis's old building, documents that he believed existed. If Willis were dead---he hoped he was---well, the records might never be found. He had to feed Cain information that would lead him to Colorado and away from anything hidden in Sedona... He had to... The intercom buzzed.

"Mr. Kingsley, that man Cain's wife, and another broad are snooping around. They're looking at your display of ceramics... Want me to do something?"

All that he had feared suddenly came into focus. Cain already knew about him... Well, his father maybe? Cain! How had he connected The Ancient Days Gallery to the Indian in the shipping case? No way, they weren't connected! It had to be something else.

He calmed himself. "George, are they...? I'm coming out."

He recognized Susan immediately. There were two of them and a baby in a car seat carrier. Maybe he was wrong.

"Hi ladies, may I help you?"

Susan looked up and smiled. "We came in looking for a wedding present for an archaeologist we know who is getting married. Are these old things for sale?"

Darrell was relieved. He let his breath out slowly through his smile. "No, the things in those cases are only for display. Dad collected them years ago and he wanted to share them with others. No museum wants them, they don't have provenance's. We think they

came from up north. Maybe the San Juan region. I don't know much about the old stuff. Aren't they beautiful tho'?" Susan sensed that he was lying. Misty knew he was.

Misty felt a strange energy emanating from the man. He was saying one thing, and communicating something else with his body. He not only lied about his knowledge of ceramics, he was afraid of them.

Susan went on playing the game. "Mr...?" She paused and he said, "Kingsley." She knew his name, he had been one of Bob's best customers.

"What would you give to an Archaeologist for a wedding present?"

"Oh, that's simple! The appropriate gift is a Navajo wedding vase." He turned and led them away from the case filled with classical Mesa Verde ceramics.

At the shelves which held the Navajo pottery, Darrell turned to the women. His eyes met Misty's and he froze. The woman knew... They both knew. They were here to trap him.

Susan saw him jerk up short and flinch. He was staring at Misty. Then he backed one step, turned to the sales clerk across the room, and in a whiny voice ordered the assistant to come over.

"Jim, you're the expert on Navajo pottery, you help these ladies, will you!"

With that, he turned and went hastily toward his office, turning back one time to see Misty still seeing through him.

He calmed himself; stood near his desk, hands gripping the back of his leather chair for a full minute. He watched the clock and made himself stand there. Then, forcing himself to breathe slowly, he picked up the phone and pushed seven buttons.

“Roger, Darrell here. Cain knows! He sent his wife and someone else in here to check me out.” He paused.

“You mean? They were in here earlier. So that’s what they were doing?”

“They were? No doubt about it then, he knows... But, how could he have put it all together so fast? Roger, that means he found the records... My God, what should we do?”

“Jeeze! Well, Darrell old buddy, I guess...” He was thinking fast. “The ball is in his court now. All we can do is wait for him to make the next move.” Roger paused, trying to think like a lawyer. “And Buddy, we can’t assume that the records tell him anything about... Well, I think they record the pottery and stuff like that we bought from him. If that’s the case, then maybe the big guys have a problem, but we don’t.”

Darrell felt better. He had to pee bad! The pain in his lower back was like electrical fire. Roger was right. “I think you’re right. Should we tell Phil Long and that bunch?”

There was a long pause. “Hey, what do we know? Like I say, we sit tight. The ball’s in Cain’s court. If we react, we give up the advantage. Stay loose man, we have nothing to lose unless... No! if Willis had those records... Well, he would have died a rich man. If he’s dead, that is. Is he?”

“Far as I know. Doc Connely said he died a few years ago in Scottsdale.”

“Okay brother. Stay cool. Don’t tell anybody, not Long or Bob or... Let it take its own course. Those museum and university guys, they have the money and the connections to stop this. We’re just caught up in their wakes. We’re not important.”

Easy for him to say, Darrell thought. He didn't have artifacts on display or cases of stolen stuff in his basement. Roger had decided to get out of that end of the trade more than a year ago. He had made good money selling artifacts, but had claimed that the risks were too great, especially since the Feds had passed the new antiquities laws. Roger was always too cautious. You didn't acquire wealth by being a wimp... But maybe...?

He was in good shape. The Feds had come and looked at the stuff in his 'museum' cases. He had convinced them that the display had been untouched for more than thirty years. They left, convinced, he thought. Besides, there was no way they could tell if he sold a piece off and put a new one in its place. Those classical Mesa Verde ceramics were appreciating at more than 30% per year. He was too clever to get caught. He wasn't going to wimp-out.

What he needed to do was... He needed to do something to stop Cain, or at least re-direct him. Moving on the architect had been dumb. The guy obviously knew nothing. Their people had tried to bluff their way into the building. He had heard earlier that the man in control of the operation had made bail and disappeared as planned. When they discovered that he had a fake identity, the Chief of Police was furious. Darrell had heard it all this morning as the chief ventilated at Toastmasters.

He could stop. The steamer trunk was full of twenties. The big ammo case had room for maybe another twenty thousand, if he saved \$50's and C-notes, but only the new kind. He still had to wash some of the old ones... He'd have to change more of them each day. The bank wouldn't suspect anything. The business grossed more than \$1600 a day, and a

lot of that was cash. He imagined his success. He had over \$800,000 now, tax free. That plus all the property his dad had left him...and the investments he had made... He could stop, should stop. He was worth almost \$3 mil. 'Okay,' he thought, 'it's settled. I'll sell off what's left, won't buy any more. I'm getting out like Roger did. Roger's no fool. With \$3 million I could... No, I'm a trader. It's my life, I love it. So, I need to stop Cain! I've got to have a plan...' He got up and walked around his desk, trying to focus his thoughts. The human remains, the mummies... If Cain and others got involved in chasing the Ute and focused on Colorado... "Great thinking Darrell," he said aloud, "Dad would be proud! Cain needs to find that trail." He reached for the phone and dialed Connely's number. The pain in his back eased, he was able to take big breaths of air.

Chapter 8

Not even modern historians had the guts or academic honesty to go against the institutions and power bases of those who did not want a true historical accounting of the times.

SUSAN COULD HARDLY WAIT for Arnie to come home, and yet, she needed time to organize her thoughts. She had so much to tell him. Arnie came in and flopped down on the couch. She made him comfortable, and began to relate what she had discovered.

“That gallery owner, Kingsley, has a big case he calls his ‘Dad’s Museum.’ I remember he always used that very same case to sell stolen artifacts that he got from that creep Bob. He had storage in the basement and kept the case full. His dad was alive then. They also moved Bob’s stuff through other galleries and trading posts. Bob didn’t have the contacts or the trust of the buyers to sell direct. The big collectors and museums preferred to buy through Kingsley and... That way they could get fake certification and... You know, Arnie, that was a lot of years ago. Willis’ Rocks and Ruins Gallery had already been converted to a fruit storage building. Kingsley senior and Willis were probably competitors at that time... But when I learned all of this, Bob was the main supplier in the area, or so he said.” She paused to get her breath and to make certain that Arnie was paying attention. All of his energy was focused on her.

“Arnie, I think Bob was somehow related to Willis...or at least he got stuff from him. I can’t prove it, something he said maybe... Something about his father and Mesa Verde. It’s been too long, I can’t be sure, but it’s coming together!”

“His father?” I was amazed at Susan’s knowledge. My mind was connecting things she said to things I knew, at an enlightening pace. “You think C.J. Willis was that jerks father?”

“Gad, I said that...It just connected! You know, honey, he may have been Bob’s father, but don’t ask me why I said that.”

“Intuition. We have more dots to connect. I’m beginning to get an idea of the antiquities trade and those involved. The Ute connection is that all but 53,000 acres of land taken by the government for a national park on the Mesa Verde is Ute Mountain Ute land. Most of the artifacts come from sites in that area. Why? What’s so special about them?”

Susan grinned. “Would you believe that I know about that? The classical period... Some call it Pueblo III, was a time when their ceramics were exceptionally well made and beautiful. They were made of gray clay, given a slip of white clay, and then painted with black lines in geometric patterns. The rims were usually ticked with dashes of black, giving them an easily identifiable mark.”

“What were they, bowls?”

“Sure, bowls, jugs, jars, ladles, mugs...beautiful ware with planned geometric patterns. I’ll show you pictures... That pottery was placed in graves with the dead. It’s the most collectable---the most valuable. Most of it comes from the Mesa Verde region; the area drained by the San Juan River.”

“Around Cortez and Mancos?”

“Yeah, the Montezuma Valley is the center.”

Susan fixed dinner as I opened the books she had gathered and turned to the pages she and Misty had marked. I read as fast as I could, trying to get an

overview of the times, and the mining and desecration of Pueblo burials.

I was beginning to understand. Willis robbed sites on Ute land on the Mesa Verde. There were thousands of sites that surrounded the government out-take which is now Mesa Verde National Park. A lot of these sites, the ones from the classical period, contained pots that were in great demand. Along with the pots, the graves, especially the ones in caves and dry places, yielded mummified human remains and artifacts made of hair and plant fibers. There were also tools and sacred objects which collectors wanted. There was a world-wide market for these grave goods.

Starting in the early days, late in the 19th Century, men like the Wetherills and even foreigners like the Swede, Gustav Nordenskiold, mined the sites. Nordenskiold put together a collection, shipped the collection to Europe, studied the artifacts, and later sold the collection when he needed money. From what I had read, at a later date most of the diggers claimed to have mined the sites for scientific purposes. That was revisionist history, not fact. The Swede made drawings and kept records of the digs and the things he took. As the pot hunters robbed graves and destroyed sites to get at the offerings, they put together impressive collections which they sold to museums and private collectors. This was done for cash, not for science.

Of course the museums and collectors were nervous. In the past, their directors and boards knew that they were buying collections stolen from the Ute Reservation and from public lands. It didn't take a lawyer to understand that the stolen collections didn't

belong to them... Wow, I thought. No wonder Phil Long and his ilk are involved. What if the collections had to be returned? The only way to prevent that was to falsify history. If that were true... If the academics and scholars did that, then their deletions would expose them. They had a lot to confess to---or to cover up. Over the years the successors had chosen to cover up the past. They would use any means to hide the truth.

I skimmed through the materials and sat back. My conclusions were too simple... Modern historians, museum directors and academicians wouldn't risk academic scorn by editing out the real history and telling the story only from the perspectives of the thieves... But it seemed they had. I could check that out easily. I picked up a book about the history of Mesa Verde National Park. Certainly this scholarly work would present all sides of the issue. In fifteen minutes I put it down, disgusted. I had the proof I needed. Not even modern historians had the guts or academic honesty to go against the institutions and power bases of those who did not want a true historical accounting of the times.

"Susan, the young Ute man will lead us to those who murdered him and to those who fear that someday the truth of what was done---hell, what is still being done---will come out. They will do everything in their power to stop us. This is a dangerous investigation. Our enemies are the established and the powerful. They have all the resources. They control the press and the academic community. The police work for them! From their perspective they will have to stop us and destroy any evidence we find. My only hope is to work through the

tribe. On the res, they will have a harder time getting to us.”

Susan turned the burner off and came into the small livingroom. “Arnie, there are elements involved who think nothing of killing. I didn’t tell you all of what I learned when I was dating Bob. These guys kill without remorse. They won’t let history be told! They can rally opposition... Oh Arnie, I’m scared! I don’t want to sit here and worry about you while you... And the reservation isn’t safe either. The Feds: the BIA, the FBI, they’re all there. They run the res. They all work for the one’s who want us stopped.”

Her fear got to me. I smiled and said as calmly as I could, “Norman invited you to come to Colorado with me. I don’t want you here alone. Hey lady, I think our next stop should be Towaoc. What about that? Don’t worry honey, the council will protect us...” At least I hoped they would. I didn’t want Susan to know how concerned I was that they could not. My plan was to get in, get the information, and get out quickly. The only real protection I...no, we would have, was to get the information out to so many people that it couldn’t be stopped. I had plans for using the internet to do that.

“Friendly will kill me!”

“He’ll understand.”

“Can we open the Cortez house? Will we be there a long time? Are you sure you want to go there in February?”

“No, I think we should stay on the res. I don’t see that we have a choice, it is winter and we can’t do anything about that...and, well... I need to get the truck serviced, check the anti-freeze... David should have that other stuff for us to read... I need to close out some work... Hey Lady, we could leave in two

days... Say early Friday morning?" She was giving me more than a hug when the phone rang. I reached over and picked up the barbell.

"Listen Cain. Forget a few pots. Focus on the mummy. The answer is in Colorado, not here." The line went dead, clicked, and I got the dial tone. Susan was staring at me.

"The look on your face! Arnie! Who was that?"

Chapter 9

These people don't know what they need or want. We have to do it all for them.

I DIDN'T LOOK FORWARD to our trek across the high Sonoran Desert of northern Arizona. The open spaces can be beautiful, but the lack of vegetation and, toward the northern edge of the desert, the gray, calk-alkaloid soils, create a stark environment that isn't friendly to carbon-based life forms.

We left Sedona, drove up Oak Creek Canyon to Flagstaff, and then on toward Tuba City where I turned east and headed toward Kayenta.

I was prepared to face five hours of high desert driving. It's just that I drive wishing I could pull back on the wheel and fly. It's a long way and I've done it too many times to enjoy it. Susan offered to drive, but I felt better behind the wheel.

After passing the Four Corners Monument, the road dives down and crosses the San Juan River which at that point is also the Colorado line and the southern boundary of the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation. As I drove east across the desolate area, we started looking for Jackson Butte, or Chimney Rock as the locals call it. Finally, we saw it jutting up, overlooking the Mancos River Valley and guarding the southwestern entrance to the Mesa Verde. In another twenty minutes we would enter Colorado's verdant Montezuma Valley. We had decided to check out our house in Cortez before we contacted Norman.

At Jackson Butte, the highway joined with U.S. 666. We turned north. The Sleeping Ute Mountain on

our left, Ute Peak, the uplifted breast of the laccolithic sleeping being, rose 9,977 feet into the clean southwestern Colorado sky. On our right, the layered sandstone escarpment of the Mesa Verde rises 1,600' from the desert floor. We passed the entrance to Towaoc, the Ute Mountain Ute's capitol, then their new gambling casino and the support complex around it. The highway goes between the mountain and the escarpment, following the ancient bed of a long gone river that formed the valley by cutting down through layers of sediments deposited by ancient seas, leaving the Mesa Verde as an indicator of what had been removed to make the valley. The escarpment was now the valley's southern boundary.

Entering the Montezuma Valley from the southwest is always a magical experience. Human-kind has been crossing the bleak High Sonoran Desert and entering the sacred valley through this notch for thousands of years, only they had to do it the hard way, on foot---not an insignificant accomplishment! Today's road is called U.S. 160, the Navajo Trail. It wasn't built until the late 1950s. Prior to that, Cortez was a town at the end of the world.

As I drove into the valley toward Cortez, we sighted Lone Cone Mountain at 12,613', a snow capped pyramid more than sixty miles to the north, clear and beautiful off there in the far distance. We passed the visual barrier of the Mesa Verde, and could see far to the east for the first time. The La Plata Mountains came into view in all their ragged, snow-capped glory. And far beyond them, the high peaks of the great San Juan ranges. To my left, in Utah, I saw the glimmering tops of the Blue or Abajo Mountains. Inside, I felt centered and happy. I could tell by the expression on Susan's face that she did

too. We drove into the ancient cradle of civilization that we had adopted as our summer home!

For about 18,000 people the Montezuma Valley is the center of the world---more important than Washington D.C., New York City or even Paris. Humans have thrived here for thousands of years. It is one of those places on the planet that is truly the Earth's center. We feel connected here. It is the center of our seasonal migrations.

There is something magical about moving with the seasons, so if it's winter, you'll find us in Sedona or Prescott. If it's high summer, try Telluride, Ilium or the Aspen groves of the La Plata mountains. From June until mid-October, we try to work out of Cortez. I never dreamed of a life like this. We stumbled into it while trying to make a living..

Before we left last fall, we winterized the house and shut it down not expecting to see it again until June. It looked abandoned and lonely when we arrived in front and parked. The sun was out and the air was comfortably in the high 40's; a normal winter day. Storm clouds had chased us all the way from Arizona. I could see them billowing to the southwest. We had stayed ahead of them, but the forecasters predicted that the storm would reach Cortez by late evening. I suspected that it would pass over and plaster the La Plata Mountains.

I was happy to be here, yet afraid. I knew better than to underestimate the will of those who opposed our investigation. I had to assume that they knew we were here, and why. For safety's sake, I needed to get Susan onto the Ute Reservation... I looked at our abandoned house and shivered.

“Arnie,” Susan said sadly, “Let the house sleep. It wouldn’t be fair to wake it up and then leave again so soon.”

Norman’s house is a tri-level built from a plan found in a book for suburbia. It looked out of place, standing like a sore thumb in a rural setting with old cars, abandoned trucks, and stacks of canvas covered junk around it. Norman had told me, the first time he had me over, that the house didn’t mean anything to him. In time, I learned that the government agency that had ‘provided’ it had never consulted Norman or his wife about what they wanted. The agency took care of the Indians by doing everything for them. They hadn’t been allowed to put any energy into the place. “We have never felt ownership. We just use this place,” Norman’s wife had said, “It’s theirs and they won’t let us do anything except live in it.”

On my last visit, I had heard an ‘authority’ bemoaning the fact that the Indians didn’t take care of the houses they built for them. I asked him if things would have been different if the people had been involved in design, colors, picking appliances, and... “No!” he interrupted me, his anger coming through. “These people don’t know what they need or want. We have to do it all for them.” Of course! If you make yourself indispensable, you have a job for life.

Regina, Norman’s energetic and competent wife, welcomed us. The house was well worn by children, clean and warm. She looked sheepishly at the floor as she explained that she had never had Anglo visitors stay with them before. “Family, all the time--- that’s different. You are the first real visitors we have had, and...”

Susan put down her bag and gave Regina a big hug. Regina was obviously relieved. She showed us to our room. The bed was covered by a garishly designed comforter, new and bright. She had used designer sheets of the same pattern to make curtains, which were tacked in place around the window. There was a matching, bright orange throw-rug on the floor, and emerald-green towels on the little chest of drawers against the far wall.

“Wow!” Susan exclaimed. “You went to all this work just for us?” Regina was smiling at Norman. “I told you they would like it.”

The women went about the house together, sharing stories and making happy conversation. Norman motioned for me to follow him into the living room. He scooped three stuffed animals off the couch and motioned for me to sit. There was a tension between us... I smiled and made comments about the house and its location. He didn't respond. There was an awkward silence. Finally, acting the host, Norman got up and headed toward the refrigerator. “Got beer. Got pop. You don't need me to get it for you, you live here now.”

I got up off the couch and joined him in the kitchen. I knew the source of the tension. “Thanks Beardancer, a man opens his home to very few people. You honor me and Susan. Our cultures are antagonistic to each other, yet, you and I, we are getting to know each other. I'm learning, and being here gives me a warm and happy feeling.”

He screwed the top off a beer and handed it to me. I caught the foam as it bubbled from the neck. “Cain, we always feel like we are... Well, like we are inferior. We're wrong because we were conquered. We're wrong because we are different. I love

America, but not everything! In Desert Storm I learned a lot. Men are the same inside, but completely different outside. Whoever is in power is right... You come here, into my home and you are comfortable. I hope so. What we must do together requires it. You listen, and I feel like I can talk. It's dumb, but first time, every time, I feel like I'm not right... But not in my home and with my people. You join us and..." He looked down and smiled. "It must be the beer, right?"

"It's a good start. Norm, it's hard for me too. I want to cut through the crap and just be... Well, just be!"

Beardancer took his time adjusting to having us in his home. Later that afternoon, about dusk, he let it out.

"Arnie, where we get crosswise is the way our cultures describe things... like, I mean... Well, you think life is work. If I ask who you are you tell me what work you do. 'I'm an investigator, or I'm a truck driver.' If you ask me who I am, I want to tell you what kind of man I am, but you don't want to hear that... I mean, not *you* necessarily. I'm talking about most Anglos. What gets to me is that if I don't think work is the reason I am alive, you think I'm lazy and a bum. If I try to tell you that I don't live to work, you want to teach me how to get a good job or how to be dependable--- not dependable to my family and people, but dependable to an employer. Because my values are around living each day and supporting what my family is doing, and knowing what is happening with the sky and the plants and animals, your culture defines me as an ignorant savage. If my values don't reflect yours, you want to change me. Your culture is dominant, but that does not make it right. Your economic system is good for some, but it damages a lot of people. It's destroying your families."

I thought about what he was trying to make me understand.

“Norman, our cultures have lots of unspoken, often unknown rules. We do things and assume it is because we have chosen that way because it is best. You’re right. If someone questions our ways, we attack! I know I do that, even though I am consciously trying not to. I can only learn if I am open, and Norman, I really try to know who you are and what is important in your life. I guess I do that in part, because I think I can learn a great deal about living from you. Even if I don’t change my ways as a result, at least I am knowledgeable and supportive of your ways.” I paused and looked up to see his face. He gave me a weak smile and nodded for me to continue. “I also know that the harshest treatment your people have had has come as a result of non-compliance with our economic system. Most of our current religious ethics were developed to control people. The work ethic was a way to create captive work forces---it was a kind of slavery. Yet even now that we are passing into an age of techno-information and a non-factory system, most still hold as true the values inculcated for another time and system.”

“Sure, I understand that. It took me a long time to figure it out. Your system and values have changed, but you are still forcing us to conform to your old ways. You judge us by standards that are proven to be destructive.” He paused and wiped the condensation from his beer bottle. “Man, what I can’t get past is that to be a friend of an Anglo, I’ve always got to deal with the fact that he thinks he has to teach me something so that I can become civilized.”

“You think that?”

"I think I know that. It's the way it has always been between us."

"Between us?"

"No, not necessarily *you and me*. I mean between us NA's and you conquerors."

I played with my beer and thought back about how I had approached the Utes and how I felt..."

"Damn, you're right, Norman. Because of where I come from, culturally I mean, I think I represent the superior culture. I do that...! Jeeze, I don't like that at all!"

"Hey white man, you don't do that much. That's why you're here. But..."

"Yeah, I know the 'but.' Because I am a product of the dominant culture and can move freely within it and use it to get what I want, I think that you should learn about it and conform."

"You do think that, don't you!"

"Yes."

"So do I... At least I have been made to think that way. Where the conflict lies is that I don't accept many of the things you ask me to give-up in order to conform. I tried living my life to work... Hey man, you know I sold myself to the boss. I did it for almost ten years, not counting the military. Then I realized that that was not what I was on Earth for. I had other things to do. Other responsibilities. When I quit, they said I was just another damned Indian who wanted the government to take care of him. That hurt... You know it did, right?"

"Now I do. Norman, can't we make a deal? I mean a sort of contract between us that says we confront this type of bullshit and get past it?"

"You mean...tell the other person what you think is going on?"

“Why not?”

“Probably because we can’t be equals---I mean the way our cultures are...”

“Maybe, but I’m willing to try. I need the friend I see in you. This will make our time together better.”

“Me too. I get mad...”

“Let it out.”

“You are here to investigate the death of... Our feelings are not barbaric!”

“I’ll confront that statement right now, head on! I don’t discount your feeling or your history or your ways. I just don’t know a lot about them, but I never think of you as dumb or savage or...”

“Heathen? Your religions and many of the ministers who have come here to change us have called our ways heathen. Everyone comes here to save us!”

“They must be right then... Jeeze, Beardancer, that ain’t me. I can’t stand those people. To me, they epitomize hate.”

“Sorry. You’re right! I can’t assume that you are like those who have come before. I’m getting a good feeling. You’ll listen and not be judgmental? If we bare our souls, you won’t use that against me---us?”

“That is a terrible fear to have, my friend.”

“It’s based upon what has happened. We share our lives and innermost secrets. The ‘friend’ goes away and soon a book comes out belittling us. My fear... Our fear is real.”

“I know it is. What do you need from me?”

“If you get into this thing that happened... If we tell you, share with you, you will know the vulnerable parts of us. You will have us with our belly exposed. If you use this information to try to make us more like you, you will hurt us. You may destroy us!”

“It’s like the story of the evil man who uses friendship. He wins your trust so that he can exploit you...”

“Yeah, the ministers who come here are like that. They think they get brownie-points from God for bringing us into the fold. You people don’t know what a hateful thing that is... It’s not just us. I read in the paper not long ago that the Southern Baptists are going to pray for Jews during their high holy days, and the Hindu’s during theirs. They want to convert them to their misinformed beliefs. It chilled me to the bone. That form of evil cloaked in righteousness always does. It’s what you people do to those who don’t believe as you think they must... Well, some do. If there is a devil, you see him in their actions. Those actions, more than any others, have caused great human suffering---they have almost destroyed my people.”

What Beardancer felt so strongly cut me too. I knew exactly what he feared. I suspected that a majority of Americans believed as the Baptists did, and that given the opportunity they would focus their hate and fears on those different from them, and try to destroy them. I had read enough American history to know that it was not by accident that the U.S. Government turned the Native Americans’ fate over to the religious fanatics. In the name of God, the Native Americans were forced to suffer and die and get out of the way. It was almost a final solution... Maybe it was final? No, the fact that leaders such as Beardancer were still rising up suggested that the final curtain had not yet fallen. Of course Beardancer was afraid of me...Anglos. For him---for his people---it was a life or death struggle.

The women seem to have ways of getting to the heart of matters of concern that are easier and less dramatic than we men. Susan and Regina had much the same conversation, only agreement had come by sharing innermost thoughts openly and with fewer defenses. Trust had been building since their first meeting more than a year ago. They had come to a women's understanding; a way of relating that Norman and I only partially understood. When they came into the living room where Norman and I had been interlocking our thoughts, they informed us that if we were to work together it would require lots of constant communication and a sensitivity to each other---a respect for each other---based upon love and acceptance, not fear and reaction. Susan sat next to me and added:

“Arnie, you told me that the most significant development of the last century was the freeing of the potential of women. So here is our culture, just launched into the third thousand years of a socio-economic-religious system based upon variations of European Christianity. Yet, less than a century ago, women, one half of the American population, began to be freed from a dehumanizing form of slavery. Today, women are just starting to realize their potential... Yet, when our culture came into contact with the Utes, they found not only a sophisticated form of democracy, but a culture where leadership and power were not based upon sex. A culture which had evolved past the stage of placing all power in the hands of one leader, and had developed a governmental system based upon competence. A culture that had learned how to avoid war and confrontation by negotiating. A... Well, you get my

point! The superior culture was Ute. The dominant culture, the one which prevailed because of sheer numbers and brutality, was American. Now, over one hundred years later, we dominants are finally evolving to a place where we can begin to understand those we conquered.”

Beardancer’s eyes were round. “You think so? We didn’t have gunpowder or iron... We lived a harder way.”

Susan responded before Regina or I could. “That’s just it. Both cultures excelled at things. Together, they could have shared great wisdom. Instead, one wiped the other out.”

Regina was nodding. “It’s the same today. Everybody wants to help us be like they think we should be. No one asks what we have to offer. We are always being saved...”

Beardancer sat erect. “Saved from being Utes. Saved from not looking like Brad Pitt or Madonna. Saved from being a different race. Saved from having customs and... We are always being saved for a God that we are told hates what we are. The Mormons even tell us that we are colored because we are the cast-out children of Cain, being punished by their God for what Cain did.” Norman sat back, fuming; shaking his head.

I thought we had processed the problem and were in danger of reprocessing. “Okay, damit! We four people are not going to fall into those traps. We’ve got to work together and learn from each other. Our base is mutual respect which equals friendship which equals tolerance which...”

“Equals what?” Regina said calmly. “Does it mean that we agree all the time? No! Does it mean that if we don’t like something someone else does that we

endure it and keep shut? No! Does it mean that we agree to be together and learn together? I think so. Not easy, but I'm up for it."

I lay awake a long time trying to imagine what it was like to be Norman Beardancer. When I did sleep, I tossed and turned, sweating. I dreamed that I was trying to lead my people across a black abyss... People on the other side pretended to reach out to us. When we responded, they whipped us with sticks and lectured us with righteous indignation. I awoke and my first thought was that I had dreamed about Moses. Then a coyote called far away on the Mesa. I realized that in my dream I was the young Ute whose life was now the center of our attention.

Regina was half way through fixing breakfast when she saw Susan studying her. "What are you looking at me that way for?"

"Is this the way you always do breakfast?"

Regina looked down, twisted her hands in the paisley apron she had tied on, and gave Susan a 'caught me' smile. "I saw this on TV. You don't eat this way either?"

"Oh, sometimes we do. My dad used to get up early on Sunday mornings and do a breakfast this way. It's nice."

"But at home?"

"I'm usually up before Arnie. I have coffee---I usually don't want anything else. Arnie gets up, rushes around, has coffee and toast, maybe a bowl of cereal. He takes it out on the porch, or eats it at the computer while he checks the e-mail."

"Hey, that's the way we are... Except Norman would rather stay in bed as long as possible. I feed

the kids, they go to school and sometimes I prepare stuff for him, but he'd rather root through the refrig and find leftovers. I was..."

"It's a great example, isn't it? We are trying to do what we think is expected in the other culture. Our information about each other comes from TV or movies or..."

"From left field, right? Susan, what if I asked you what you do for breakfast and tell you what we do. We might find out that we share the thought that cooking three meals a day and generating all those dishes is dumb."

"I have a little confession. I was worried about what you Beardancers ate for breakfast. Somehow I thought you ate ham fried in lard with gooey white gravy and greased Texas toast on the side. I guess I've been in the waitress business too long."

"You're right! My high school counselor took me aside and said that the reason I was short, gaining weight and having trouble with my complexion was my diet. She said that I had to stop eating lard-cooked fry bread and eating candy and drinking pop all the time. I tried to tell her that I didn't eat that way, but she smiled and said that it was a problem all Indians had. I wonder what she would have done if I told her that in my culture I'm considered beautiful? Most Ute women are under 5' 6" and full-formed, even though short, plump women are not acceptable in America."

They were whooping and laughing when Norman and I came into the kitchen. "Hey boys," Regina said as she held back her laughter, "Coffee is on the burner. Root around and find something you'd like to go with it. Oh, do your own dishes when you're

through, okay guys?” With that, they were off to Cortez on errands.

Chapter 10

Cain, you would be like a hungry goat eating everything and growing fat off our dignity!

I HADN'T HEARD THE phone ring. Norman brought it to me as I sat on the morning porch, cold, but fascinated by the patterns of light playing across the Sleeping Ute Mountain.

"Cain? Good! Hey, sorry to bother you... This is Dean."

"I recognized your voice. What's up?"

"Some group that goes around identifying and protecting historic places and putting them on the Federal Register has just laid a stop work order on us. They claim we are damaging a significant landmark and historical site. The court order was issued in Phoenix... We can't do anything to the building... All work has stopped."

"They control all the agencies and do whatever they want. They created the system and they know how to use it. Are you surprised?"

"Yeah, frankly. I am. I heard what you said about them pulling out all stops to end the investigation... I never imagined that they had such a reach."

"Did anything get done before the stop order?"

"Yes, in fact we found parts of another body---at least we think we found a piece of skin and maybe a human finger bone."

"Great, call the chief and report the body. That investigation will have precedence over the stop work order. We need to know what's under that floor... If records turn up while the search for the body is on, great!"

“Cain, I was hoping that you would have a way out of this. I think... What about this? What if I write the chief on my office stationary and notify him of the stop work order and assure him that nothing regarding the search for the body will disturb any historically important parts of the building... Think that will work?”

“Great idea. Anything else?”

“How are you doing?”

“Just getting started here. We plan to meet with some of the elder council members today. They have to accept me as part of this before I can do anything. Good luck Dean... Oh, and Dean? This is just their third shot. Prepare for a barrage.”

“Third shot?”

“I count the call I got from Phil Long, Director of the Pre-Historic Society in Denver, as shot number one.”

Norman asked me to wait in the foyer of the tribal headquarters building while he met with some of the elders. I sat in quiet as the place was almost deserted on this cold February morning. I was uncomfortable. Here on the res, I was in another country. Colorado state and county laws were not in force. State and local police, and other officials were not in charge here. The tribe had its own law enforcement arm, and that was under the strange conglomeration of agencies called the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a part of the Department of Interior, and the FBI. I wondered what rights I had on the reservation? Who had the power, the tribe or the government agencies? Where was the bottom line in the case of the mummified man? I assumed that the federal agencies would soon be organized against us, if they weren't already. How much protection could we expect from the tribal

council? I had a lot of questions that had to be answered. I had a lot to learn before I barged in, attempting to help bring a past to light that might change the way powerful Americans wanted history told.

They spoke to each other ignoring me. It didn't make any difference, they spoke in Ute. I sat as still and relaxed as I could while they studied me. Their eyes seemed able to strip away my facades and penetrate my being. They made no attempt to excuse what they were doing or to make it easy for me. They made comments about me and occasionally laughed at something they saw or that one of them had commented on. Norman sat to one side, head down, avoiding any suspicion that he was prompting me or interfering in any way. Finally, an old woman with the brightest eyes I have ever seen, spoke to me in English.

"You come here to help us? You think we need your help again?"

I smiled and looked down. I took my time responding.

"I don't know. I think maybe together we can understand this thing. I learned of it and suspected that the man that was found in Arizona was Ute. I called Norman so that he could tell you and you would be able to control this thing---be the ones who decide what should be done."

"You can do this for us?"

"No, I can not!" I came back hard. "This is about you---your history: Your people! Before, I helped with the leases because I have skills as an investigator. Now, I offer my skills again, but only if you take the power and the Tribe is in charge of the investigation. I

can help, but I can not do this for you---that is not my way.”

Another old woman cleared her throat so that she had control of the meeting and glared at me. “You don’t understand! How can you help?”

“If *you* understand,” I paused to let that sink in, “And it is important that the man’s story be told, I can be taught and I can help.”

“Gaaa-ch!” The sound was guttural and insulting. She gave me a disgusted look and continued. “Cain, you would be like a hungry goat eating everything and growing fat off our dignity!” She was shaking her head. Then she continued speaking in Ute, grimacing and making harsh sounds. Then she stopped and stared at me. I took a chance.

“You pretend to be weak and you pretend to fear me. How can I hurt you if you are in charge? How can I take away something that you don’t give? I think you are testing me. I have to prove my friendship and... I already have, some. Are you weak? Are you testing me?”

She sat back, twisting her head and pointing to the side with her chin. Her eyes never left mine. “We can probably use you. My nephew says you have a lot of knowledge about this type of thing. You being here makes me angry. What do you want from us? What do you get from this? Why are you here?”

I saw Norman look up at me and caught a warning glance. She was laying a trap of some sort and... I forced myself to grin at her. I relaxed my body and smiling, looked around the room.

“You must pay me... That’s what I want. I work for you and you pay me well. That’s what I do. The fact that I care has to be proven. I’m here because events

led me here. We negotiate, we have a deal, I deliver or I'm gone."

She sat back, still glaring. I noticed that other elders were easing their intense study of me. A heavy man I judged to be in his late thirties, an age when many Ute men died, sat forward over the table, raised his hand and pointed his thumb at me, while looking sideways at Norman.

"Okay cousin, you try to teach him. We can help." He kept his thumb pointing at me and continued focusing on Norman. "Maybe this Cain will not misuse our trust. We shall see. You are the one we hold responsible. You use your judgment and..." He sat, not needing to finish. He had made his point and Norman was humbly grimacing.

Another man, one I had seen sitting on the council when I gave my report on the leasing problems, stood up. "Norman, what must the council do? You asked for many things, now it is time we decided what we will do."

The whole group began talking rapidly in Ute. Norman stood and I could see him counting things off on his fingers, which he held out for the others to focus upon. They argued, nodded and came to some kind of agreement on each point. As far as I could tell, I had become invisible. After about fifteen minutes they were finished. Norman motioned for me to follow and we left the room.

"Boy, I should learn Ute!"

He turned, his face tightened with anger. "No! Language is the only place our culture still survives. Many whites have tried to speak our language so that they could get to the heart of who we are and destroy that seed. Never try to invade our last remaining stronghold!"

I recoiled from the power of his counter. It made sense.

We were in Norman's truck, almost back to his house before he spoke again. "It will take time for them to do the things we asked. There won't be any problems with the council, although I'm sure the BIA guys will go into orbit when they learn that the council is taking charge of the investigation. The council understands that the truth will only come out if they by-pass the agencies, especially the Department of Interior and the FBI. I hope you know the pressures that will be brought to bear." He paused and looked over at me. I could see that he was worried. "I think this will be the first time that the council has taken power over the agencies and stated its intention to control an investigation. If they carry this off, a lot of tribe-suckers will have to find a new host. It's the Ute Council vs. the whole U.S. Government bureaucracy. You know, don't you, that we are marked men!"

"You're worried about your family?"

"I'm already branded as a troublemaker. It's the way the agencies work. They watch us and identify potential leaders whom they can't control. Then they try to undermine those individuals... Usually, they set them up and get them convicted of a crime. I'm a spiritual leader so they usually steer clear of me."

"They're still doing that? I know that killing off the leaders was a part of the conquest, but..."

"Oh, the conquest is over?"

"I mean... Hell, Norman, I'm naive. This goes on?"

"Cain, it's not me I'm worried about. It's you! The way these tribe-suckers think is that all problems are caused by outside troublemakers. They believe that we Injuns are incapable of leading ourselves. They

will target you. You're the troublemaker! You are the white guy who stirred things up. They will try to get you banned from there and..." He turned and looked across the seat at me. "You have a target on your back now, and these guys have all the weapons."

That evening I asked Beardancer what would happen now? He took a long time before he answered. "The grandmothers and others who remember the past are talking. When they are ready they will begin to tell us what they know. We'll get a call to meet with them---probably meet out along the Mancos somewhere. They will tell what they remember of what they were told. It will be in the form of stories; our oral tradition which now, thanks to our man you found, is being remembered. From those stories we will know the Ute side of what it was like back then. Hopefully, we will learn who the Ute you found was, and... Cain, don't expect it to be quick. They will tell the whole story because it is the whole story that makes the parts important."

Susan and Regina joined us in the living room after the dishes were done. I gave them a run-down on what had happened in the meeting with the elders and what we could expect. As I commented upon the forces we had to assume were being organized against us, Susan got angry.

"These people! I don't get it. Don't they have consciences? How can they do what they do and not...not hate themselves?"

Regina nodded and reached across to Susan, gently squeezing her arm. Beardancer wanted to speak, but he noted Regina's focus and let her continue.

“They believe they’re doing good. They have been taught that they are their brother’s keeper, and they are trying to *keep* us. They don’t understand what it would mean to be their brother’s brother. Some believe that they are doing God’s work. The screwy religions they follow have told them to proselytize. They believe they are serving us and leading us to a better place. None of them get up in the morning and think of ways to damage us. Their intentions are good---at least from their perspective. They are the most dangerous people we face.”

“They’re much more destructive than someone who openly hates us!” Norman added.

Another night of tormented dreams. I got up and went to the window, trying to recall the last dream. Out there where the desert meets the Mesa Verde, I could see a procession of vehicles---at least I could see their headlights as they bounced along casting strange shadows on the tops of sagebrush plants and across the ridges of rock and gravel at the foot of the escarpment. The procession moved slowly and then, as if each vehicle was eaten by a giant, one-by-one they reached a point and disappeared. My mind told me that they had come together and stopped. My senses suggested otherwise. I saw a yellow light; a fire, and then the darkness was everything. I waited and watched for what seemed an hour. Nothing. When I went back to bed I slept for awhile. I awakened and became aware that someone had come in the front door of the house. I heard Norman’s voice as he greeted one of the children and coached her back to bed.

The sun was eating away the winter chimney-smoke that came roiling off the hill from Towaoc. It was mid-morning. Susan sat on the edge of the bed and looked down at me.

“Father Time wondered where you were.”

My mind was foggy from sleep. “Norman’s looking for me?”

“No, silly, Regina just went in to wake him. You men! You must have caught a sleeping sickness... Time is passing and you flunked morning. It’s almost noon.”

I sat up and grabbed for her. She was half way out the door before I thought to throw a pillow.

The coffee was several hours old, the way I liked it, boiled down into a black soup that the milk could hardly lighten. Norman was having a hard time waking up. I decided not to play games. “I heard you come in this morning. I had been up too, looking out the window. I saw a procession of cars going along the foot of the Mesa.”

He looked up, gave me a look that seemed a cross between anger and worry, shrugged, and cleared his throat. “They called me. Wanted me to come to the place where the great ones are buried, Ignacio and the others.” He paused, scratched at his ear, and gave me a searching look. “Understand?”

“The grandmothers? The elders? They went to be with the old ones. They are searching for their memories of the stories they were told.” My question had turned into a statement. “Were any of the grandmothers alive when... No, of course not. That was more than a century ago.” My question answered, I waited for Regina or Norman to continue. We sat in silence. Norman was nodding agreement.

Regina went to the back of the couch, leaned over and put her cheek next to his, while looking at me. "I'm glad you understand."

"It must have been cold. Too bad this couldn't have waited until late spring." I was thinking of the old ones out on a February night.

Norman smiled, reached up and caressed Regina's cheek, as he looked at me. "There was a wind from the northwest. It was still cold enough to keep the ground frozen, but not too cold for the old ones to be out. This is the Time The Bears Dream; a good time to be with the past."

"The Chinook winds?"

"They come from what was once the Chinook People's land in the northwest. By the time we get them they are warm and dry and make February seem like spring. Sometimes, maybe every decade or so, the winds stay long enough for the trees to bud. The bears wake up and they are angry because their dreams have been interrupted. Some can not go back to sleep. It is still winter, there is no food. It is a hard time for bears. It forces them into our camps and there is conflict between bears and humans. That upsets the world."

Chapter 11

When it was finally photographed and then removed, the archaeologist identified it as a chopped-off length of human finger.

THE AMATEUR ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAD placed a string grid over the floor in the old gallery, marking off three times three meters squares. Each square was numbered relative to its position to a datum point which they had established at the north end of the building. First they removed the slabs of flagstone from a square and then the crumbling mortar that had been placed in the joints. Then they cleaned the sand and loose material away to reveal the hardpack they determined was the floor during construction. It served as the base of the wood floor which had existed until it was removed years later and the flagstone was placed.

By cleaning the hard-packed earth, they revealed differences in coloration which indicated filled depressions and areas disturbed at a later time. The hard-packed soil in the first few squares revealed nothing unusual. As the teams opened new squares they became adept at reading the coloration of the soil and determining what had happened after it was packed. At the edge of a square four meters out from the datum point and three meters from the west wall, they started tracing the edge of a large discolored area. The discolored soil was soft, indicating that someone or some thing, a gopher maybe, had dug through the hardpack. Pieces of wood and several bent, rusty nails indicated that in this area the wood floor had also been disturbed. The excited arkies

guessed that the soil had been disturbed at the time the wood floor was still there.

The archaeologist in charge speculated that the disturbed earth dated to the time when the wood floor was removed. "We must determine if the disturbed places precede the wood floor, were dug at the same time the wood floor was being used, immediately following its removal, or were dug later after the flagstone was laid."

Opening another square they were able to trace the outside edge of the disturbed area. Mapping it, they could see that the area that had been dug and stirred-up was roughly kidney-shaped. It measured one half meter wide and a little over one meter long. The teams bubbled with excitement. What was in the disturbed area? It was big enough to be a grave.

The tendency was to quickly dig it out and see what was there. The Forest Service archaeologist had other plans. She explained what had to be done, and got them started removing about five centimeters of soil at a time, over the whole grid square. All of the soil was placed in buckets and taken outside to screen. Working this way, the team found a button and six short pieces of silver wire. The screeners found three glass beads and several rodent bones.

About ten centimeters down, a trowel grated across a small bone. It was left in place as the soil was removed from around it. Close inspection suggested that the bone was human. The Archaeologist pointed-out that the internal structure of the bone was sponge-like and greasy-yellow the way human bones were. As it was revealed, it became obvious that the bone had been chopped from a larger part. The place where it was cut looked like a shovel had severed it. When it was finally

photographed and then removed, the archaeologist identified it as a chopped-off length of human finger.

Down another three centimeters and near the far edge of the disturbed area, the trowel scratched against a small chunk of pink flagstone which was carefully revealed and then removed. Near it another object caught the edge of the trowel. As it was exposed it proved to be a piece of dried skin that looked like one of the fried pork rinds that came packaged as snacks. 'Human skin,' the archaeologist wrote on the bag with the site data, provenance, date and their names. She didn't explain how she knew it was human. The team discussed the find and decided that it was "gruesome."

Several more beads appeared as they screened the dirt. Near the bottom, another nail and several splintered pieces of flooring came to light. By late afternoon the trowels were scraping against undisturbed soil. The uneven curve of the bottom of the grave-like depression was revealed. Hopes of finding more bones or parts of a body were dashed. Team III sat around their hole, speculating, when a man digging with Team I, announced that he had found the edge of another disturbed area. All three teams were gathered around the new find when a document server from Phoenix arrived and served them with a stop order.

The teams showed up the next morning, expecting to be turned away. The Forest Service Archaeologist was late, expecting to be disappointed. Dean motioned for them to gather around. His timing was perfect. The chief arrived with the head of a Coconino County forensics team. Dean introduced the Chief of Police.

“Folks, we have work to do. I warn you not to disturb any part of the structure of this building. You found human remains and I have determined that this site must be investigated.”

There were cheers from all around. The chief pulled the archaeologist aside and gave her instructions. The archaeologist told her teams to “get your equipment and resume what you were doing yesterday.” Everyone was now in a great mood---all but one of the volunteers, a seemingly shy, hang-back man named Rob, who excused himself for “feeling ill,” and went to make an urgent phone call.

Work progressed rapidly on the second depression. Within an hour, word passed via the local’s grapevines that they had found parts of another mummy right here in uptown Sedona! Soon a crowd of locals began to form outside of the building. Sedona wears its swarming tourists on its outside like a cloak. Inside, it conceals local secrets as if they were 5th column reconnaissance activities. The discovery of the mummy in the shipping crate had been the most exciting thing that had happened in months. It was perceived as a local secret that tourists shouldn’t know about---it might be bad for business. Besides, hundreds of tourists trying to see the site would interrupt ‘business as usual.’ It was best to wait and keep the transients out of it at this stage.

Chapter 12

He turned and snapped his case shut, dragging it across the perfect finish on her mahogany desk as he pulled it upright with the handle.

DENVER WAS EXPERIENCING WHAT Norma Curt's father had called "Stock Show weather," because each winter, during the National Western Stock Show, the temperature plunged to unbearable levels. Last night the thermometer had registered 18 degrees below zero. The high today was expected to be 10 degrees. She shivered, removed her fur-topped boots, and began her morning routine. The office was cold. The coffee was cold. She was freezing. Outside in the foyer of the display area the temperature was barely 45 degrees. Inside the display area it was warmer, but only a little. The cool lights seemed to create an arctic scene. The glass floor cases and the wall cases gave off cold light that seemed to meld into the gray concrete walls and ceilings. Glistening droplets of water were condensing on the sprinkler system pipes. Occasionally a droplet bombed the floor and left a glistening spot. She wondered if the droplets would freeze, decided not, and went to check the thermometer on the wall.

After making her rounds of the museum display areas and assuring herself that the temperature control system that kept the artifacts within the narrow temperature range deemed necessary for their preservation was working, she opened the door to the lower level and carefully negotiated the steps. Her knees were stiff and she felt the cold in her muscles. The storage basement was warmer. She loosened the buttons on the front of her coat to let the warmer air in. The overhead fluorescent lights buzzed and

flashed awake, illuminating row upon row of metal shelving and what she had described to others as “zillions” of cardboard boxes full of Anasazi artifacts.

She did her quick walk-around as required, noting the temperatures on the monitors throughout the room. Certain that all was as it should be---had been each morning and afternoon for the past twenty-five years---she started back up to her office. In another twenty minutes the others would start arriving. This was her time, a special time when only she was in the vast museum complex.

At the top of the stairs she re-buttoned her coat and rubbed her hands together for warmth. She started down the hall toward her office when she was shocked by what she saw. The door to her office was open! She could see her name stenciled on the glass, and she read it to herself to be certain that no one could have missed it: Doctor Norma Curts, Curator. She could see the knob and a dim light coming out from the interior of the room. She had left the door open...? No! She never left the door open! Her files had to remain secure at all times. She had left a light on inside? No! Someone was in there! No one was allowed in her office without her permission! Cold as she was, a chill ran the length of her spine. She stood frozen, her mind playing down lists of remembered instructions... She should...

“Doctor Curts. I was looking for you!”

His voice unlocked her knees and freed her mind. “Doctor Getts!”

He noted that he had alarmed her, but didn’t care. “Look Curts, there are some things happening that you need to be aware of. Come in, I want to talk to you!”

The indignity of his invasion forced her to tighten her muscles and clamp her teeth. How dare he invade her office and then invite her in, as if it were his? A sickening feeling clamped her gut. He could do that... He could do anything he pleased... She hated him more now than ever. The man had no sense of propriety, no sense of anyone but himself.

“Sit down, I only have a few minutes and there is a lot to go over!” He glared at her. His eyes dark with circles under his mangy eyebrows. His skin taut over his forehead and cheekbones, but wrinkled and sagging about his mouth. He wore a fedora like a twenties gangster and the velvet on the collar of his coat suggested an effeminate love of soft things. He held a leather case out in front of him, staring at her as he slammed it onto the top of her desk, unsnapped its brass closures, and raised the lid.

“Your job here is what? Tell me in a few words! Be concise!”

She didn’t know if she should sit or stay standing. She heard him, but anger and frustration blocked his orders. “I... I...”

“Come on! Damn it lady! What?”

She sat, she couldn’t keep to her feet. “I... I guess what I do, bottom line, is protect these collections. I just checked. In spite of the cold they are...”

“That *is* exactly what you are here for! It *is* your job to preserve and protect! Now what are you going to do about this?” He ripped a page from a pad of notes and handed it to her. She took it and had just began to read, when he grabbed it back from her and, with impatient indignation, growled at her: “You could lose most of these collections. Then what would you do? This note says that the Utes are taking charge of an investigation into... Well, into the time when these

collections were purchased or put together. What are you going to protect if they lay claim to...? Well, Doctor, what are you going to do?"

She recoiled from his abrasive and brutish manner. The threat he implied connected with a fear she had always had... What if those from whom the artifacts had been stolen claimed them? She had always imagined that it would happen and she had a plan. She puffed herself up against his power and looked straight at his face. His eyes were dull with no lights to connect to. "I anticipated this. I have a plan."

He sneered with the looser, lower part of his face, huffed an insult, and said, "Oh really? And what would that be Doctor Curts?"

She turned in the chair and looked across the room to the old, camouflage-green metal file cabinets that had been standing undisturbed since they were moved from the old museum to this building twenty-five years ago. "We have the only records."

He turned and followed her glance across the room. "In there? Those are the only records? You are certain?"

"I've never heard of any others."

"Then I'll need them!" He turned and snapped his case shut, dragging it across the perfect finish on her mahogany desk as he pulled it upright with the handle. He started for the door. "I'll have them collected today. You know nothing of this! As far as you are concerned, these files never existed... Or they were lost during the move, years ago. Got that?" He gave her another contemptuous look and left.

She sat in the visitor's chair, in front of her own station, seething and growing angrier as she recalled the indignities. He *would* destroy the records. Destroy history! She sat thinking and processing for long

minutes. A door opened into the office wing and she knew that others were arriving for work. She got up, went around and sat in her station, fingers gently tracing the long scratch in the finish of her once perfect desk top. She had often contemplated destroying the records. 'I planned it many times,' she thought. 'It's probably necessary but... I've been in this conundrum before. It's wrong.'

She didn't feel the cold now. She went into the hall and greeted her team members as they arrived. Then, perhaps too loudly, she announced that she had a ton of work to do and that she was going to hole-up for a few hours and get it done. She locked the door and got the keys to the ancient file cabinets. He could send someone for them, but he would not get the records he wanted to destroy. She went through each file drawer as fast as she could, removing originals, occasionally making copies which she put in their place. In an hour, she had a stack of documents about two inches high. She finished, stood back and let a plan form in her mind. She closed each file drawer and snapped the lock back into the case. She got a tube of Super Glue out of her desk and put a squirt into each keyhole. Then she took the keys off the ring, put them in her purse, and replaced the remaining keys in the back of her desk drawer.

Her intercom buzzed. Men were here to retrieve the file cabinets. She quickly placed the files she had removed in a box in her coat closet, opened her door a crack, and seated herself at her desk before a pile of papers. The movers, accompanied by Getts' officious little aide, arrived. She acted surprised that they were here so soon, mentioned in passing that the files were locked, always had been, and that she

had no idea if keys existed. Getts' aide gave her a twisted smile and tested each lock. "You're sure you don't have the keys? You must have them!"

She acted contrite, "Well, let me look again to be sure..." She opened her desk and pulled out all of her key rings. She went through them. "See, no keys for those file cabinets here, and I guess that there never have been any..."

Satisfied that the files were locked, and now able to report to Doctor Getts that they had been for years, the aide saw them loaded on dollies. Keeping his eye on them, he followed them out of the office.

When she was certain that they were gone, she re-locked the door and went back to her desk. The scratch was deep, probably a burr on one of the brass hinges. Touching it brought tears to her eyes. Then she looked across the room to where the old file cabinets had stood. The floor was grimy. Dirty-gray dust bunnies were stuck in the wax buildup that had flowed under the cabinets and which outlined where each file had been. She felt as if she had been violated... Her sadness kindled the hatred she had for Getts. "He may be 'Mr. Museum,' 'Mr. Preservation,' 'God and Light to the museum world,' but he..." She felt the fury of her scorn and it confirmed her decision.

The files, what to do with them? She smiled, she knew! She reached behind her and pulled a large cardboard, red, white and blue, priority mail box from the shelf. She opened her address book and searched for... "There," she exclaimed, smiling at the plan she was now committed to. She addressed the mailer: Doctor Ted Berner at his Arizona address. The act gave her release from her anger. She had corresponded with Berner after he had written a series of articles suggesting that it was time to tell

both sides of Colorado history; the stories of the conquerors and of those conquered. She knew he was right, but the curators had met with the officials from Washington and agreed that what he suggested was too dangerous. He had to be discredited! As part of that campaign the state archaeologist had written a letter published in the Denver papers accusing him of being xenophobic and of trying to destroy tourism in Southwestern Colorado. The attacks worked, but not until the Superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park joined in and worked to discredit Berner in his home community. Now, all of these years later, Berner would be surprised when the package arrived... He would know what to do with the historical records, and he would never suspect where they came from.

Chapter 13

This 'remembering' is our story. You listen and think a lot about it!

SUSAN AND REGINA WERE a number. Norman and I sat back and enjoyed their energy. "Mutt and Jeff," I commented. Norman gave me a strange look, obviously not associating anything with the comparison I had drawn. I explained. He wasn't sure he understood. Then, with a grin, he said, "Like our people and the ants? Right?" I wasn't sure what he meant, but I decided to agree and let it go at that.

Two days passed. I called Fielder and Dean, talked to friends whom I thought might have insights and went to the public library and perused books on Ute History. I now had a fat sheaf of notes with facts and references, all new information to me. Norman and I went over to Durango and spent time in the resource center of the Southwest Studies Center. Norman said he felt like an intruder in a forbidden place. I guessed that not many Weminuche Utes used the Center's resources. We didn't find the historical records we needed. There was a lot about the Capote, Mouaches and other Ute bands, but little about the Weminuche, and their leader Ignacio, after he separated from the Southern Utes. After that, we stayed at Towaoc, reading and discussing the history we were learning. Finally, on the third day, an Elder dropped by and invited us to a gathering. He said to bring Regina and Susan, as it would be a gathering of many friends.

That evening we drove to the delta-end of a side canyon along the Mancos River where the leafless

cottonwood trees made a canopy of thick branches over the flood flats. There, not far from an ancient sheep pen, cars and trucks were parked in a circle facing a campfire pit surrounded by cottonwood trunk benches. I guessed that thirty or more people were already there, and more were arriving. Not all of them were Utes. I recognized several BIA officials and a couple of other 'Anglos.' Norman saw my surprise and smiled. "Not all of the government's people are against us. This is the first gathering to remember our history in a... Well, it's the first I can remember. It is a special night!"

We sat in the circle, Susan leaning against my knees, Regina, holding Norman against hers. There was a festive happiness of chatter and laughter. People settled, passed hot coffee and bowls of steaming hot stew, wrapped blankets around them for comfort, and gradually stopped talking. The old woman who had challenged me in the meeting with the Elders began speaking. I panicked. She was speaking Ute. I leaned over and whispered in Susan's ear, "This may be a long evening!" When the energized and powerful old woman paused, she nodded at Norman. Norman got to his feet, cleared his throat and, looking into the heavens, translated:

"What I can tell you was told to me and I remember it. What this is about begins a long time ago, before we were forced to live on reservations. At that time our people communicated with each other and were able to reach out to other peoples on the edges of our lands. In those days, we learned about people from stories told by our grandmothers. There are also, I know this now, it was not told to me then, the records the Spanish kept, and the observations made by early trappers and Americans. One thing

they all say about us is that it was the custom to place a few Ute children with surrounding peoples so that they could learn those people's languages and ways and thereby cement relations between the Utes and the different groups of peoples. It was good for trade and it helped us avoid war. We were like that. We put a lot of faith into negotiating.

"This part of the past I remember, and others here remember and will help tell, is about what it was like in the time just before they took our lands. It is told as the story of one young man, but it is really a story about what happened to them all. It describes a time when the Weminuche Ute way of life was threatened by strangers who wanted our land and who wanted to capture our spirits to give to their Gods, so that they could be saved. And, it is a way we have of telling our children how we felt about those times.

"Utes of all of our seven bands were aware of the white men and were all curious about their motives. When they learned that the flow of white people could not be stopped, each band reacted in its own way. So, each group has its own story to tell.

"This 'remembering' is our story. You listen and think a lot about it!"

Norman paused as she had and let the message sink in. Then he continued translating.

"After many years of observation and careful deliberation our ancestors decided not to mix with, or accept, the ways of the conquerors. Our ancestor's reaction is not unlike what any people would do if they were taken over by a culture they could not respect and could little understand. This story is more true

than not. So here, let me start and with the others I will tell what I remember of the story.

Norman was amazing. She spoke, sometimes for a long time, and he translated. The people around the fire corrected him when they thought he had made a mistake, but generally they were enthralled by the story told in two languages. The old woman continued and we listened, occasionally hearing a word that there was no equivalent for in Ute. It was hard to be patient and wait for Norman's translation.

"It is told about Nicaashegut, a young man who, when mature, helped to formulate the cause of our people. He was called Nica by his family and friends.

"Nica liked to sleep in his breechcloth, but the Mormon family he was sent to live with in the time before we lost our lands and freedom, made him wear a nightshirt over his breechcloth. He itched, but it was the price he paid to receive his education about the white people who had recently taken our lands to the north and west of his birthplace, a valley near the Shining Mountains.

"Dressed as he was, he was deemed safe to be in the same bed with his host's children. The alternative was sleeping on the floor, which he would have preferred, but which his three adopted mothers wouldn't consider. Thus he was bundled among three wiggling and kicking Soderstrum's every night. They smelled repulsively, especially the oldest, a girl who was always working up a sweat dancing to catch her father's eye, as all young girls will do.

“Our people’s curiosity had brought Nica to this cabin home and immigrant family. He was picked to go because he had made the mistake of asking his uncles, father, and grandmothers, too many questions that demanded answers. In our tradition, children were often sent to live among others to learn about their viewpoints and to help cement ties between people. Children from the seven Ute bands had lived among the Apaches, Comanches, Pueblos, and Spanish for as long as anyone could remember. Now, this boy was living among these Latter Day Saints, as they called themselves, because he had asked too many questions.

“When he was saved from ‘a life of savagery,’ as the Soderstrums called it, he couldn’t speak their language. He learned to say their names and the names of things, in no time. It took almost a year for him to comprehend what those names meant. He had to learn their name for our own people, “The Lamanites,” and learn what that meant.

“Other things the strangers did were mystifying. He was never sure why they did them or what they meant. Poor Soderstrum had to be married to three women who liked each other, held him in contempt, and made their husband slave for them. To Nica that was a form of black misery. Our people had a balance between women and men that worked well. No Ute man would be the prisoner of three women, or be treated like the women treated those captured in raids for trade with the Spanish. Besides, if things weren’t working out a man and women could choose different partners at the next Bear Dance.

“The balding white man strutted around and talked like he was powerful, but Nica learned otherwise. Soderstrum wasn’t powerful, or very smart either. This amazed Nica because the whites acted like they were a superior form of life. They always spoke in negative terms about our people, as if they knew them and had made a valid judgment.

“The Soderstrum family and their neighbors were proud of Nica. He learned their ways of toilet, sleeping, eating, dressing, cussing, praying, and most important, sexual gratification, or in his case, the lack of it. He learned to speak their English, say their prejudices, and sing their songs. He learned how to farm, dig irrigation ditches, make cloth, and deal with sheep and goats. Soon, he was a little white man, but only on the outside. Inside his mind reeled, protesting his captivity. Still, it was good to know how they thought and did things. There were so many of them, and they were taking over the land.

“Each moon, when he met with his uncles and father, he told of his discoveries. They listened carefully to his words, but he could tell they thought he was misreading things. How could any people be so ignorant? It was hard to believe, he admitted.”

Norman paused as she had.

“One time, Soderstrum placed his arm around Nica’s shoulders and leaned over him babbling out the things that fell from his mind when he drank the fermented juice of the wild plums, the juice everyone was forbidden to drink. What fell out when he opened his mouth caused Nica to pity the ignorant creature.

Nica nurtured him, urged him to go somewhere away from the women and angels who taunted him, and to get in touch with the Gods. When the poor man finally slept, Nica knew that he could stand no more. He took his stuff and left. He had learned that these white men who thought themselves saints were afflicted with a mind sickness. They were unfit human beings.

“Back on the land with his family, Nica sought the council of wise leaders. He explained, as best he could, what it was that drove the followers of Smith, who was hanged, and Young, who was their Chief. They had a special angel named Moroni and called themselves Mormons. The leaders shook their heads. Some suggested that the People could help these confused souls. Nica tried to explain that because they were strong, they believed they were right, and the People wrong. Those at the council shook their heads some more. Tavibo, a Paiute cousin, said he would go away and be open to dreams. Perhaps the spirits would explain why the People were being replaced by these crazy ones.

“Walkara, a famous Ute man, a ghost dreamer, best known for his horse stealing and raiding, went on in life to lead a “War” against the Mormons. Later, he made peace and became an Elder in their Church. He was a wealthy and powerful man. Anyway, Walkara asked Nicaashegut to tell the stories of the whites who had taken the place where his Salt Lake Ute Band had once lived. Nica told the stories ‘the saints’ had taught him.

“‘Maybe they are right,’ Walkara commented after a long time looking into the fire, ‘we may be the

descendants of a society formed by lost tribes from this place they call Israel. But if it is so, why haven't we heard about it before this?' They all watched the fire, then went back from the light and lay looking at the stars.

"'It is possible that they are right.' grandmother Utanunta said. Doesn't it make sense? We tried living like bees and didn't like it. In time, long ago, we perfected this way of life which we enjoy now.'

"Nica wasn't satisfied. He asked an old grandfather how it had been when he lived with the Spanish. The old man beamed, glad to be asked such a question by someone so young. 'The Spanish never had such wonderful stories like those the strange tribe have taught you. They were harder on the people. They played a game I had to learn. If I could say, 'I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior' they couldn't make me a slave in the mines where I would surely have died. A young girl who liked me, taught me those words and how to make a sign of the four directions. When I said the words and made the sign to a blackcoat priest, he took me in as a house servant. Thus I lived among them and learned their language and their ways.'

"'What did you learn about their ways, Grandfather?' Nica asked.

'I learned that they were crazy for gold and silver from the rocks. I learned that they were unhappy unless they had these metals, land, and power. Most of them were unhappy all of the time. I learned that they are crazy for things that don't matter, and so miss the point of life. Oh, and another thing, grandson, I learned that their God hurts people to

show his power. He even let them kill his son and didn't try to stop them.'

"Another man came up from his blanket where he had been looking into the stars. 'How can that be? How can a people's God, who they say is their Father, do such things to them and to others?'

"'I wondered about that too,' said the old man. 'It is the reason I left them. I came back under the protection of the spirits we know. I could not live among them, they were barbarians.'

She stopped talking and reached over and placed a log on the fire. She continued and then Norman translated:

"That is what I remember of the stories about how our people learned about the others."

She sat back, pulling her blanket tight around her. The night had been still, but now, high in the leafless tops of the cottonwoods, a brisk wind rattled the branches. Someone put more wood on the fire, and people shivered even if they weren't cold. People were talking quietly to each other, remembering and commenting. A man stood, obviously weak on his legs. He leaned against a long stick as the folks around the fire focused upon him.

"I remember another part," the old man said in English. Norman nodded a thank you at the old man and sat down. He whispered to me that Sam Coats was one of the Tribe's best story tellers.

"Nica was looking for answers. He sat through the night, praying for insight. One morning he announced that he would go toward the place where the sun comes up and learn the ways of the Spanish and

others living there. Several days later, after spending time in the robes with the one he cared about, he rode his horse east.

“Nica followed the great river into the dry place where the land goes up and finds the forests. Then, he turned south, following the river that came into the great river, up into the land called Unawep. Following well-traveled trails he came, after many days, into the land at the foot of the Shining Mountains. There he visited with several bands of his people. They told him the path he must follow if he was to find the Spaniards who lived near the Mouache and Copote peoples, our Ute relatives.

“One day, Nica rounded a bend in the river canyon and came upon white men in a camp of white tents. He rode up, giving the open-hand sign. When they learned that he could speak English they welcomed him. He visited with them and learned that he was in the Colorado Territory and that they were mapping it. He told them that he had never heard about a land called Colorado. ‘This is the land of the Blue Sky People,’ he said, as humbly as possible.

“‘Never heard of that name. Heard of Utah, though.’

‘I’m from Utah,’ Nica offered.

‘We’re looking at the lands we bought from the French, and won from the Spaniards,’ the leader of the Americans told Nica.

‘I have never heard of the French. How does it happen that they sold you our land? How could you win our land from the Spaniards? This was never their land. My ancestors kept them out.’

‘Don’t matter now, nohow,’ the big white man said. ‘All of this is America.’

'I have never heard of this tribe called America. Is it like the Mormon Tribe?'

'Goddamn Mormons ... No, hell no! This here land is ... how should I put it ... well, I could say it belongs to the President of the United States, the most powerful Chief you will ever meet.'

'Where can I meet him?' Nica asked, thinking that this man could answer his questions.

'Meet him? Hell, he's more than a year away if you started riding east now!' The men laughed at some joke Nica didn't understand.

Nica was confused. He left their camp early the next morning. Climbing into the mountains, Nica's horse sensed other horses and pointed to where they were. Nica stopped and waited near the trail. Hunters stopped below, sensing him and his horse. He stepped out into the sunlight. Those below remounted and came into the small clearing, surrounding him.

'Why are you here?'

'I'm on my way to the land of our people called the Mouache to learn about the ones called Spaniards and Mexicans.'

'We know about them. You are Weminuche like us. Why do you want anything to do with them?'

'I was sent to live with the ones called Mormons. Now I want to study the ones called Spaniards. I also want to learn about the Jicarilla, Comanche, and Pueblos.'

'That is good. What will you do when you know of these others?'

Nica didn't have a ready answer. He paused and fidgeted. The leader of the hunting party waited for his answer. I will share what I learn and, perhaps we will be able to decide what to do about these people coming into our land.

'I am the one they call Cabeza Blanca. If you learn something come back here to the council fires of our people and share it. If you can not find me, find the camp of The Lion, the one some call Ignacio.'

All the rest of the day Nica hunted with his relatives. The next morning they pointed out the fastest way to the places known to them as Los Pinos, Abiquiu, Taos, and Tierra Amarilla.

"He crossed mountains that were so wild and tangled that he was forced to lead his horse through tunnels made by the bears. Finally, he entered a vast valley between the high mountains. He met hunting parties and they got his feet on the trail that led to the area called Saguache and the place called Los Pinos. He arrived tired and ready for rest. He was not so tired that he didn't notice that people were acting strangely. They didn't do much. They just hung around visiting, as if they were waiting for something.

'Why are the people just sitting around?' he asked a young hunter.

'It is a most amazing thing,' the young man answered. 'Some of our people have gotten the white men to work for us. Every so often they send us things to wear and to eat, in wagons from the south. It seems too good to be true, but you will see. Wagons are coming soon. Stay here and you will get blankets and food. It's wonderful!'

Another man, a Capote, explained to Nica that in the past they had worked hard to hunt meat and make hides into fine leather which they traded to the Spanish and Pueblos for goods. Now, however, some of their leaders had convinced the new people who called themselves Americans, and who had driven

away the buffalo and game, to provide the goods for nothing except their agreement not to attack them.

Nica was amazed. The Americans he met near the great River had said nothing about that. Perhaps there were many different tribes of Americans.

'Are these Americans cowards? Why would they fear us?' he asked his Capote relative.

'No, not cowards. A few years ago a large group of Mexicans and Pueblos tried to drive the Americans away. They killed fourteen Americans. One was our friend Charles Bent. They cut off his head. The Americans rode out in the 'Cold Snow Covers Everything Time,' and killed over one hundred fifty Pueblos and Mexicans. They are very brave. They have great power. We must fear them.'

"Nica rested and found friendship. The agency, as his friends called it, was a pleasant place to socialize. Word that the wagons were arriving came a day ahead of the event. When the wagons finally pulled into the yard in front of the agency building, people were excited and happy. A thin man with a black beard and bright eyes that shone out of his sunburned face, got down from the first freighter and began talking to the Utes surrounding him. Nica was shocked. The man spoke the Ute language. He had assumed that the white men were too selfish to learn the language. This man was an exception. It was obvious that he was well liked.

"The man's name was Otto Mears. The People were able to get their mouths around his first name. It wasn't unpronounceable like Vickers, Pitkin, or Brigham. Otto was taken over by the crowd of people and he soon disappeared into their councils. Nica asked a woman standing near him about the white man.

'He is very different from the others,' the woman said, 'He is not one of them, yet he is white like them. The blackcoats fear him because they say he killed their Christ. The agents here don't want him around us because he doesn't believe in their Christianity. He never talks about what he is, but the agent said he was a Jew, and therefore bad.'

"The name "Jew" hit Nica like an ax. Jews were those of the Tribes of Israel. The Mormons had taught him that he was a descendent of the lost Tribes of Israel. This friendly man was his relative! No wonder the man knew their language. He waited for an opportunity to visit with Otto Mears.

'On one level,' Mears said, 'I believe that all men are brothers. However, Nicaashegut, my new Weminuche friend, I don't think we are related. The Mormons believe what they want. To them I am a gentile, which to me means a non-Jew. I gave up trying to figure them out. They must have it their own way. Believe them if you want.'

'How old are you?'

'Not too old...why do you ask?'

'If the Spanish blackcoats say you killed their Christ, the one the Christians have nailed to sticks, you must be very old. The Mormons told me Christ came here and taught my ancestors after you killed him. That was a very long time ago.'

Mears was caught off guard. 'Some believe my ancestors killed their Christ, and that I should be made to pay for that. They have a lot of hate. Jews are a small tribe that is different and thus easy to hate. So are Utes, I'm sad to say.'

'If we are not related, if you are not one of us, how does it happen that you speak our language?'

'I learned your language because I respect your people and want to know them better. You speak good English...even if you have a Swedish lilt to your speech. Why did you learn it?'

Nica switched to Ute. He would ask later what a 'Swedish lilt' was. 'To know more about you people.'

'That's why I learned English,' Mears said, smiling as a mentor would at his new friend. 'I grew up speaking a language called Russian. I too learned English because I wanted to know how the world would go.'

'What do you mean, "how the world would go?"'

'This whole land we live on is filling up with people. These people are not Ute or Russian or Spanish. They call themselves Americans. Soon they will be all, and own all.'

"Mears was called away. They agreed to continue talking at a later hour. Nica needed time to think. His thoughts brought him pain. Later they met again and sipped a tea Mears made for them.

'These Americans will win?'

Mears, looked at young Nica. He had a tear in the corner of his eye. 'They will win! All of the rest of the people here will be overtaken, maybe killed, maybe absorbed. It is that way everywhere the Americans go.'

'Can't they be stopped? Isn't there something we can do to stop them?'

'No.'

"Nica thought about Otto's answer. One word meant so much. 'If they are so bad, why don't you come and live with the People and enjoy a good life while you can?'

Mears opened his eyes wide and looked at the lad. 'I choose both worlds. Here I bring goods and

build roads. I hope to help your people and my people get together. You are few, the Americans are beyond count. You have more land and resources than you can use. They want what you have and they will take it. If you stand in their way they will kill you or send you to Oklahoma.'

'Is that what you told the great Tabeguache Ute leader, Ouray?'

'That is what Kit Carson, the one you call the 'Rope Thrower' and I told Ouray. He knew it before we told him, for he had seen the power of the Americans.'

'My people have avoided the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans. We will be safe, won't we?'

'The Weminuche have great leaders. I have met Cabeza Blanca. I want you to know that I met another man who is probably a greater leader than even Ouray. He is the one your people call, 'The Lion'. He is known to us as Ignacio and he is the one you should follow. He will be the last to keep the Ute culture unchanged. But, Nica, even Ignacio will be broken, and it will be soon, in your lifetime.'

"I can't believe that. I don't see how it could be. The land is too big."

'Not big enough. The Americans come from everywhere and they breed rapidly. There are more Americans than deer or buffalo.'

"The two men sat for a long time without saying anything. In time Nica got up and walked about, thinking. After making considerable dust, he sat at Mears side again.

'I believe you. If we are dying, why are you our friend?'

'If you understood my people, my past, why I am different from the others, you would not have to ask

that question. I do for you and your people what others may have done for mine. I am here at a time when your people are being swallowed-up and lost. If I can help some of you, some part of your way stay alive, I will have done what I believe a man must do.'

'Tomorrow, I will ride south to Tierra Amarilla. Then I will go home. What can I tell my people?'

'Ride with me in my wagon. We can talk of many things,' Mears said, looking at the tea leaves in his cup and hoping for an answer that would disprove what he knew was certain. 'Tell your people to prepare for the Americans. Tell them that everything they know will be changed. Tell them to follow those who council peace. Peace or war, they have only a few years to be as they are.'

He paused, saddened by what he had related to those gathered around the fire. Another gust of wind rattled the high branches of the cottonwoods. "Our people learned of what would happen. We had a few friends. Now the story goes on:

"As they entered the Territory of New Mexico, the ancient hunting grounds of the Capote Utes, Nica and Otto shared stories inspired by the majestic country around them. They camped in groves of aspen where the trees were bigger around than two men. The oil and water of their cultures didn't mix, but as men, they became friends. Nica never saw Mears again, but he never forget that there were Americans who cared and thus were friends. When they arrived in Tierra Amarilla they had their final words.

'Here too the Utes sit waiting for the American's gifts,' Nica said.

'Not gifts! Never think the things the Americans give are gifts. The Americans have taken your land, killed your game, stolen your horses, and made you stay this side of the mountains. What they bring to you is but a token of what they have taken in profit from you. These people sit waiting because there is nowhere else to go. You are seeing the end we talked about. To your people it is a slow death.'

"Nica recognized many of our band. In his sadness he bowed his head and went among them. Listening, he was aware that they knew they were doomed; their futures lay in the hands of the white men. They had been told that the Americans would take care of them until they learned the white man's ways. Their only hope was blind faith. He knew, and they suspected, that their blind faith was faith in nothing at all.

"His people hated a lie, he thought. They assumed that Americans didn't lie either. They also assumed that all Americans were alike. They didn't know their conquerors well enough to see the diversity of cultures that formed the mass that were Americans. Nor did they guess that a diversity of morals and concepts of ethics among the foreigners would allow them to justify the foulest murder, the most base theft, and the cruelest lie. Mears had helped him gain an insight into the plague that would overtake our people. His knowledge was pain."

He paused, looking around the fire circle. "Now I can't remember the next part... Does anyone?" Sam Coats sat down. I wanted to applaud.

A wrinkled grandmother put her log on the fire and grappled around until her blanket was loose and her

arms were free to make motions. "I remember" she said in English. "But I remember in our tongue." Norman got to his feet, ready to translate when she paused to let him.

"Mears found a mule skinner who hauled supplies to the agencies. The skinner's name was Duff. He agreed to let Nica tie his horse to his wagon and ride along with him to Taos. In exchange, Mears promised Duff a job hauling men and supplies for the road he was building near Saguache.

'Go with Duff,' Mears said. 'He's a good man and he will show you Taos and explain what's going on.'

"Duff was a typical white man, he chewed and spit like a grasshopper. His pink skin was blotched with reddish-brown spots. Layers of skin peeled from the tops of his hands, arms, and from his face. He wore a black hat with a tiny brim that covered his reddish hair. He smelled like whiskey, chew, and the sickly-sweet odor of filth. It took some time for Nica to be comfortable sitting next to him on the splintery wagon seat. When something bit Duff through his layers of underwear he reached for a kerosene can with a long pointed spout and sloshed a spot of the noxious stuff onto the place where he was being chewed. He offered Nica some lice protection. Nica declined. He bathed every day, he didn't have lice like the white men had.

'They got a whorehouse in Taos that you can go in, even though you is an Injun,' Duff announced, after an hour of silence.

'What is that?' Nica asked innocently.

'Well man, that's a place where you can get a woman to do fer you.'" There were chuckles and

groans from the circle when she related that in Ute and then again when Norman related it in English.

“‘I don’t understand,’ Nica said, looking at Duff for an answer.

‘Hell man, my woman won’t want me more than once when I get back. So’s after a few days, I finds it necessary to get another woman. The whorehouse keeps women for jest that purpose.’

“Nica was stunned at such ugliness. He remembered how Soderstrum, with three wives, was never satisfied by any of them. Now this Duff was telling him that white women didn’t want their men, which I can certainly understand, and so the men had women on the side. What was wrong with white women? Ute women loved being with their man. If they didn’t, they found another man. These Americans were stranger and sicker than he had imagined.

‘Why don’t you get a couple of more wives?’

‘More wives? We’s Christian peoples. We only gets one, and that is fer life.’

‘I know Christian people who have as many wives as they can afford.’

‘They ain’t Christians, then. We only gets one at a time. Now you Injuns, I heard that you can have more than one squaw?’

‘If we take in our wife’s sister and her children when their men are dead, we can live with more than one woman, but we only have one wife at a time, just like you.’

‘You bleeding Injuns is savages! You don’t have no morals. It would be hard for you to understand us Christian peoples,’ Duff explained. He offered Nica a swig from a bottle he kept stashed between his knees.

'I don't drink.'

Duff offered him a chew.

'I don't chew or smoke.'

'You're jist like that goddamned Ouray ain't you? I drove him once. He didn't do nothing natural nither.'

Nica was still puzzled. 'The Mormons have more than one wife, and they say they are Christians. How about that?'

'There's Christians and there's *christians*. We is right, they is wrong. You got to learn that, boy!'

"They camped the night and started out early the next morning. Duff talked easily, like he was full of the wind. The whiskey loosened his tongue and it wagged. Nica learned things about the white men and women few would believe. As he listened, he was saddened by what the man driveled-out. His heart filled with sorrow; this poor man lived a life of emptiness and frustration. He was infested with devils that drove him to work his life away and deprived him of the beauty of living in harmony with the world. He found solace in his whiskey, conjured-up visions of fornication in whorehouses, and he had a white man's dream of dying and going to a place called heaven.

"Nica, in the kind ways of our people, knew that he could offer Duff a life among the Utes that was meaningful and good. A life where a man could be happy and fulfilled. He considered offering, but remembering what Mears had said, he decided not to tempt poor Duff."

Norman came to the place where she had paused and looked around at the gathering. He paused and then continued translating.

"In Taos, things were crazy. Nica stayed on the wagon and watched people run around like ants. Lucky for him, there was a line of his people, sensible

people, sitting along the street behaving themselves. After Duff disappeared into a place where men were shouting and singing, Nica made his way to the edge of the street and joined the onlookers.

'Why do they run around like that?' he asked a man sitting next to him.

'That's what they do. They never get enough of anything, so they run and try to catch some more.'

'Is that what they call work?'

'No, I don't think so. Work is something they got to do but don't like. Like those men over there," he pointed his nose at a group of men digging in the street, "Those men are working. They spend a lot of their time digging trenches so that the water will flow away.'

'Why don't they move and pick a spot that drains naturally?'

'Can't, then there wouldn't be any work. Then they wouldn't be paid. Then they wouldn't be able to take a day off and buy things and get drunk.'

'What things?'

'Oh blankets, horses, food, and that kind of stuff.'

'I feel sorry for them. We have a way of living where we don't have to do silly things to earn money so that we can buy things. We hunt and trade and make what we need. Do you think they will ever learn to live a better life?'

'No, they're crazy---but fun to watch!' He added.

'Have you ever tried this thing they call work?'

'Yes, as a matter of fact I did. I worked until I got enough money to buy a pistol I wanted. Then I quit.'

'That sounds good.'

'They got mad that I quit. I said I only wanted money to buy a pistol. They said I had to have other

things. What would I do with more stuff? I had to run away and hide for a few days.'

"Another Ute who was considerably older than Nica, had listened to his questions. Then, in a voice as dry as the fall leaves, he began to talk.

'When I was younger the Spanish caught people and made them work in the mines or on the farms. They called them slaves. We caught people from other tribes and traded them to the Spanish. The whole system was awful, there was much death and fear. Then these Americans came. They said we won't make you slaves, but you must work. What we ended up doing was the same things for them as we did as slaves for the Spanish. The only difference was they weren't as cruel as the Spanish and Mexicans.'

"Nica looked long and hard at the old man. 'Do you mean you were still slaves?'

'It was all the same, except they paid us for our work.'

'Well then, it wasn't the same...'

'It was the same. They gave us silver and then they took it away from us in exchange for food and a place to sleep. They always wanted back more silver than they paid us, so we couldn't leave because we owed them. If we tried to go home they put us in jail and then sold us out as slaves.'

'What did you get out of it?' Nica asked, certain that there was some advantage in the white man's system that he had overlooked.

'A life of hard work that had no meaning.'

"Another man about Nica's age, moved closer to them. He had been listening.

'I came here to learn about what is happening,' he said, pointing his chin at Nica. 'In fact, almost all of

the people you see sitting here came to learn what is going on.'

"Nica was surprised that others had come to find answers and to learn. 'Have you been here in Taos long?'

'It seems like a long time. I am waiting for the big celebration that comes tomorrow. Then I will rejoin my people.'

'A big celebration? Here?'

Nica asked. 'Here, very big! Come with me, the Mexican will explain it to you.'

"The two young men walked across the muddy street and into a large trading post. His Ute friend said something in the language called Spanish. A large Mexican with a smooth, rounded face, motioned for them to pull up a chair and sit with him.

'Tell us about tomorrow,' Nica's friend said in Ute.

"In broken Ute the Mexican explained that tomorrow the Americans celebrated their Independence Day. It was a day, he said, that they celebrated because years ago the Americans had gotten away from a great power and become free.

'On that day they claimed that all men are given, by God, rights that can't be taken away by any other men. Rights like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'

"Nica was amazed, 'This is the most important thing I have learned,' he said, barely able to contain his excitement.

"The Mexican looked at him, smiled, and shook his head from side-to-side. 'It could be, but they get around it where we are concerned by claiming that we aren't men; that we aren't human beings; that we aren't Americans. So you see, my cousin, we don't share those rights they got from their God.'

“Nica didn’t want to hear ... he looked into the Mexican man’s eyes and saw that he was telling the truth. Then he decided to leave Taos and find the trail back to where the Americans hadn’t come yet. He sensed a new emotion coming over him that he had never known before. It was awful, like a weight pushing him into himself. A weight pushing the life in him down to where there was no light, hope, or positive thought. He sensed that this terrible feeling of powerlessness was the emotion that would destroy his people. He was very wise..”

She stopped talking and looked around. People encouraged her to continue. Norman was sweating. He looked tired. She was an accomplished story teller and he had difficulty translating her descriptive words and ideas. He waited. She began again, in Ute. He was focused upon her words, still staring into the heavens.

“Riding toward the west, Nica slowly recovered control of his emotions. Everything Mears had told him was true. The end of everything beautiful and meaningful was near. The end was coming with an unrelenting push of the Americans into the mountains and valleys of this land. He found the ancient trails of the Weminuche. Sitting, at sundown under aspen trees that didn’t seem to know or care that the world was ending, he began to recover his center. After three haunting nights he regained a sense of what he must do. The fourth morning he looked for signs of his people. Finding small groups, he asked where he could find Cabeza Blanca or Ignacio.

He came into the Lion’s camp with the hunters. They told him that Cabeza Blanca was dead. A tall,

thin man rose from his blankets to greet him. Nica had heard that Ignacio was tall, but his height and the way he radiated power impressed him beyond words.

'Come and join me! You are Nicaashegut, of my sister's family. I heard that you went out to learn of the world. You seek me out?'

'Uncle, I went to learn. I did not learn what I thought I would.'

'You thought that the world was good, and that our understanding of order prevailed.'

'Yes Uncle.'

'You thought that you would find a way for our people to live in peace with the white men.'

'I had hoped to find a way....'

'There is no way! We must live as long as we can and take what is left of our lives. Then, when it ends, we must figure a way to survive, but only if we want to.'

'You know, then, Uncle!'

'I have watched Ouray and others try to save our land and ways. He has only delayed the end of us. I have decided to keep out of the American's way as long as I can. I will go to the west end of this reservation, to where the white man doesn't want the land. Some Weminuche follow me. We will fall-back until we have no place to go. Then it will be over...perhaps we will have the good luck to die.'

'Then what I have learned confirms what you learned before me. I traveled for no reason?'

'Nephew, what you have learned confirms my thoughts. It gives me the strength to know that the direction I lead is the only one left for us. Will you go out to our people and tell them?'

'Yes Uncle. Wherever I ride I will tell the Weminuche to trust the Lion. And Uncle, I will return

to be at your side. I will do whatever I must to support you.”

After, the fires had been built-up and the firelight showed people’s faces once again. Norman stood, back to the fire, and began to talk, looking at Regina, Susan and me as he spoke. As a spiritual leader, his leadership and opinions were valued.

“In 1880 the Weminuche Utes were placed with the Capote and Mouache on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation here in southwestern Colorado. In 1885, Ignacio, The Lion, led Weminuche families---anyone who would follow, about 250 people---to this dry and agriculturally barren western end of the reservation onto land that white men didn’t want at that time. Here they were able to maintain many of their ways. The Americans finally succeeded in destroying what was left of our culture. They succeeded in removing what was left of us from this land when we were kids, in the 1940’s.

“Ignacio’s understanding of Ute options and the option he selected which allowed our people to live with dignity, even though starving, gave our ancestors another generation to be free, but it did not help us make the transition to the conquering societies ways. During that time, those who did not want to adapt to the white man’s ways were able to live out their lives and die. The tragedy is that they were made to suffer horribly for practicing self-determination. The Americans took their children away and killed many of them. The American’s government only related to leaders who agreed with them. That is the way the Americans practiced cultural genocide and robbed us of our history.”

Norman paused and those around the fire stared at him. The wind moved from high above in the treetops, down to the fire circle and sent tendrils of freezing air around the People.

“To this day we Ute Mountain Ute People are made to feel the anger of the conquerors who were threatened by Weminuche rejection of the white man’s ways. As a result, some members of other Ute Bands ?---especially the Southern Utes who were most threatened by Ignacio’s leaving---some other Indian tribes, a few governmental administrators, educators, and too many members of our own people have been led to assume that we Ute Mountain Utes came from nothing and are going nowhere. They assume this because they believe a legacy of lies created by those who covered their misdeeds by trying to destroy the record of our people.

“Today, we are a young people and a vital people. The future is ours to make! We have great thinkers and statesmen to thank for these options, and to model our lives after. We have *these* Elders who are telling our story once again.”

Someone started drumming and people sat around the fire, which was now well-fed. The night air became almost balmy. I felt a chill, but perhaps it was more from being here than the night. One of the other non-Ute guests came over to our side of the circle and sat in the space between Norman and me. He introduced himself as Bill Jefferson. Close-up I could see features that suggested that he was part Native American. He turned to Norman, adjusted his buttocks on the log, and commented on the beauty of the night. After small talk, he got to the point.

“Beardancer, do you believe all that?”

“It’s based upon what happened.” Norman gave me a look, nodding and jerking his head toward Jefferson, that suggested that I should listen.

“I mean” Jefferson continued, “They have no way of knowing that story. None of them! It’s all made-up.”

Norman smiled, looked down at his boots and waited a full minute before answering. “You’re right. They have been meeting and praying and searching for a way to explain the past to their children. They have taken what they know and woven these stories. It’s not all made up. If you check history you will find that many of the people, places and events are real. The stories connect what they know. I’d say they are more true than not.”

Jefferson raised his eyebrows and nodded. “I see. It’s good stuff, I know that for sure. It is history and it’s what their kids need to hear to gain pride. I didn’t understand what they were doing...but you know, I think my people did the same thing, now that I think about it.”

Jefferson wandered off visiting and making connections. When he was out of earshot, Norman asked me what I thought. I told him that I agreed that it was a good way of creating a history out of the void left by cultural genocide. “Norm, one thing I am wondering about. Could Nica be the mummified man we found? Are they talking about him?”

“No, Nica is a composite character, an ideal hero, a vehicle for relating what was. You can’t understand, but it is clear to them. There is no name, Nicaashegut in our language. By using that name, they communicate that he is a figment of their imaginations.”

“Wow! I would never have guessed that. Then is it possible that they don’t really know who the man we found was?”

“Maybe...maybe not. The pieces of memories they are stitching together may reveal much more than even they think they know. We’ll have to wait for other nights and more stories to find out. One thing though, you have a whole new insight into those times from their perspective, right?”

I nodded. The Ute side of history was a new way of thinking for me.

Chapter 14

I have more information in my little finger about how to deal with these remnants than you will ever have.

SUSAN AND I WERE making our way toward the truck when Jefferson called to us from the edge of the circle. He said that he had someone who wanted to meet us. Leading a tall man, face hidden in the shadow by the wide brim of a black cowboy hat, he came up to the truck.

“Avery here has some questions!” He stood looking at his guest and I expected an introduction. The tall man he called “Avery” was nodding his head. I could see a chin, thin lips and the point of his nose.

“I do! I’m concerned about this evening and I have some things that I...”

Jefferson interrupted him. “He’s Department of Interior. Been here for less than a week on some kind of fact finding.”

Avery gave Jefferson a scowl and a nod. “I want to know...how did you get them to do this?” He was looking at me. Now I could see his eyes. They were gray and lacked luster. I turned to look for Norman, but he was nowhere in sight.

“What do you mean?”

Avery stared at me, kinda tucking his chin and raising his eyebrows, the shadow of his hat’s brim obscuring and then revealing his features. “I mean, this whole thing! These people don’t get together like this unless someone else plans it. Your friend Norman would pretend otherwise, but it’s obvious from what I heard tonight that someone else is putting words in his mouth as well.”

I was confused. Susan was leaning against the side of the truck, a puzzled look on her face. “You’ve lost me. What is your question?”

“Look Cain, Utes don’t have *that* kind of vocabulary or knowledge of history. Your friend Beardancer pretended that he translated, but everyone knows that what he said had to come from some kind of script or something that you probably wrote. He used words that... Well, you can’t fool me! I want to know why you set this whole thing up?”

Jefferson stepped forward, placing an arm in front of me as if to separate me from Avery. “Maybe not Mr. Avery, Sir! Norman Beardancer has a better English vocabulary than almost anyone I know. I’m sure those were his words and their ideas.”

Avery gave him an insulting look and then turned back toward me. “Don’t yank me around, Cain! None of this was going on until you arrived. These people aren’t gifted enough to do this on their own. You brought trouble with you and you’re stirring this tribe up. I’m here to warn you straight-out that the government will not tolerate non-Indians coming onto the reservation and causing trouble. You may be able to manipulate Beardancer and some other simple folks,” he made a point of staring at Jefferson, “but you don’t fool me! Cain, the word’s out on you! I think it’s time you left here... Leave before you get these poor dependent people into something they don’t belong in and don’t have the capacity to understand. I’m going to write your actions up for the FBI, they know how to deal with guys like you!”

I was taken aback. I heard his slurs. I was angered by his attempts to use prejudicial stereotypes to describe Utes... I needed time to think. “Look Avery, it’s obvious that you haven’t a clue about the

Ute's or me... Why don't you spend some time getting to know these people and then..."

"I warned you Cain. I'm an expert on Native American tribes and issues. Don't try to imply that I'm not. I have more information in my little finger about how to deal with these remnants than you will ever have." With that, he turned and walked away.

Chapter 15

If you squeeze your own hand, she had learned, you create a circle of energy that goes nowhere.

“DR. FERNER GETTS PLEASE!” The secretary instantly reacted to the command form in the caller’s voice by sitting straighter and dropping her pen. Ordinarily she would have asked a lot of questions, sorted the call and directed it away from Doctor Getts if she could, but the voice got to her.

“May I ask who’s calling?” She said meekly.

“No! Get him on the line!”

Her hand shook as if she were caught in an electrical short circuit. She reached for the intercom button, held back, and then, shaking, pushed it. “Professor, an important call on line two.” She released the button, decided that she may have transferred a call that would irritate her boss and give him another excuse to shame her. She gently pushed the speaker button so that he wouldn’t hear the click. The woman’s voice boiled out of the speaker, full of malice. She left the speaker on, thinking that she could prepare herself for the verbal punishment he would mete out to her for letting the call through.

“Look Ferner, Darling, kill the sons-of-bitches if you have to! I don’t care how you stop them, just stop them...or... Well, kiss your sweet future goodbye! You’re responsible for this mess! You clean it up! I’ve had enough to worry about without this! What are you doing? Or do I have to take over like I usually do and do it all?”

Nancy sat back in her chair, eyes wide, hands still shaking. She heard her boss clear his throat, make a sniffling noise and try to calm the woman.

“Edith, my God, you’re overreacting again. I’m on top of this. Why only this morning I got all of the historical records, went through them and had the incriminating documents destroyed. There’s no way they can come after the museums or anybody for that matter.”

“Ferner, you prick! You know that the historical record can’t be that easily purged. We’ve tried for years. Damn you, you better get down to Arizona and take charge of this yourself. And don’t give me any bullshit about what it costs. Money is no object, they’ll pay whatever it costs. Do whatever is necessary to stop this nonsense!” She paused, changing the tone of her voice as if by a switch, “Oh, and Ferner Darling,” she said sweetly, “you’re going to the opening at the Museum this evening! I have a woman you will take. She’s my mark. All she needs is a little hand-holding and to feel socially important. She’ll donate big.”

“My God, Edith. I’m not some...”

“Oh yes you are dear. You are that and much worse. Don’t pretend that you don’t enjoy it. My secretary will call and leave the name and number. You call and... Well, darling, I’ll see you both tonight!”

The click came through the speaker like a jolt. Nancy reacted in panic, reaching for the button and imagining being caught by Doctor Getts. Nothing happened. His door remained closed. She calmed herself, almost weeping from the strain. She couldn’t concentrate. She got up and walked around the office, got a cup of water and started hunting for a tea bag. The telephone rang. It was line two again. She

was afraid to answer, decided that she must, and pushed the button. The voice announced that it was that of Edith Brownfield's personal secretary. "I have a name and number that must be given immediately to Doctor Getts. And it is personal!" the voice added.

She wrote the name and number down and sat wondering. So Edith was Doctor Getts' cousin Edith Brownfield. She knew about her and the way she dominated Washington society and the national arts movements. The name of her 'mark' was that of the daughter of one of the most successful land developers in the West. 'Amazing,' she thought. Then the reality of the conversation she had overheard hit her. Her boss was evil, she had long known that, but this was the first proof she had that he did evil things. Now, after all of this time, she could get even with him for the years of abuse. She had information that confirmed how bad he was... But what could she do with what she had? 'I need more information' she thought. "I have access! I can get it! That bastard!" She announced to the room.

Ferner Getts thought he had colon cancer. He worried constantly about his prostate gland which the doctor told him was shaped like a large walnut. He still shivered from the horror of it. He had decided that the cancer spread from there. His anus ached as he thought about his impending death. His gut churned with the anger he felt. He had recently read that people with stomach cancer often became angry and difficult to get along with. It was another symptom of his problem. "Rectum? Hell it killed him!" That wasn't funny anymore! What a way to have to die.

He had so much to do. Forty-nine and he was not making it physically! He felt his chest tighten---lung

cancer! He knew that living in the city and breathing the fumes of so many cars was killing him. He scratched without thinking, then reacted, shocked. The mole! He had scratched the mole again! It was probably bleeding. He felt the pain in his head...He had read neurological reports...and the enlightening book, *Matters Gray and White* by Russell Martin. Melanoma! He knew how it spread to the brain. How much time did he have? His testicle hurt when he sat down. Testicular cancer! His body was riddled with it. The horror of it all flashed through him. He'd show them! Damn doctors tried to hide the truth from him! He shuddered and let a little whimper pass his lips. That made him feel better.

He had a lot to do in the short time he had left. He had a place in history to preserve; the pride of his family to protect. He was the pre-eminent Southwestern Scholar, the world's foremost authority on Anasazi artifacts and collections. His research formed the database for the accepted history of collecting. His *History of Southwestern Collections*, was the baseline work for all museums and private collections. Among other things, his work was used to document their legitimate ownership of Southwestern grave goods and artifacts. Now his documentation, actually the records kept by his grandfather that he had falsified, was being threatened by the discovery of that damned Ute Indian. It was possible that all of Willis's records would come to light. In addition, some damned academics at the America West Center in Utah had found documents that... He had to stop them all! Like Edith said, "Kill the bastards if you have to!" What could they do to him? He was dying already. Whatever he did, he had to insure that all of

the contradictory records were destroyed. He had to preserve his place in history.

He peeled his shirt back and looked at the mole. Red around the edges, maybe irregular? Discolored? No, the red was from scratching. But... The itching, that was the clue. That told it all. He daubed spit on the growth, closed his shirt and looked into the mirror.

His face had lines of power etched into it. He reached up and ran an index finger down the line which ran from his left cheekbone to the side of his chin. How he had worked for those lines! How many years had it taken to hold his face in the power-scowl that told others that he was their master? Thirty years? More. The lay people and the weak academic twits cringed and kowtowed to him. He was at the top of his game with all but... Damn her! Damn them! Once again he had to show them who was on top. Now he could save their reputations and their fortunes. He could do it! He was just as powerful and clever as his mother's father, Ferner Brownfield, who had carved a fortune out of the antiquities trade... Back then in the good days when collecting and trading wasn't questioned if you had the power of a university or museum behind you... If you had power!

Edith used him like a gigolo for her marks. If anyone needed killing it was her. This woman she had foisted upon him tonight... Another stupid cow who thought her father's ability to sell retirement mecca's to dull-witted wage-slaves gave her the right to rub shoulders with the elite... Who thought that she could buy her way into the power structure by donating money...whom he had to suck-up to and maybe even bed for bucks... At the least, he had to

publicly gush over the cow and... He tied his black bow tie and cursed Edith... He'd do it and then maybe... Reality hit him. He relaxed and gave a huff of a laugh. The cancer was eating him. He felt the ache in his rectum. He'd be dead soon and they'd be sorry! Then they could all go to hell!

He met her at the museum's main entrance. She was a cripple with aluminum canes that clipped on her arms! Worse, she resembled a fireplug dressed in a gown. The gingham tent showed her dowager's hump more prominently than her elongated tugs. Her face was round, peasant-like and... He had to lean over to steady her while she removed a crutch and put her arm through his. He looked straight ahead, grimacing every time a camera flashed. Edith was there to meet them. Even she reacted with disdain, and she didn't hide it well. He excused himself and went to stand in front of the urinal. Unable to even dribble, he pretended, grunted, flushed and took his time washing his hands. The sooner he could get away from all of this and go to Arizona, the better. He'd claim that there was an emergency in the Willis affair and tell Edith that he had to leave tonight... Great plan! Let her take the mark home!

Kathy Dells felt their contempt burn into her. Without exception, the 'beautiful people' caught sight of her and turned, nosing away. Doctor Ferner Getts, the head of the academic arm of the university and museum, whom Edith Brownfield had promised was interested in meeting her and discussing her work, was open in his disdain.

Edith greeted them, avoiding Getts eye; cringing at being seen with her; constantly looking around for photographers and moving to keep her back to them.

If this was hell, this was Kathy's time to burn in it. Her guard was always up, their reaction to her was no surprise, and still her defenses were undercut by their rejection. Her father had urged her to accept their invitation. He was proud of her and wanted her to receive the recognition and strokes she deserved.

For many years they had had frank discussions about her 'physical limitations,' as he called them. She was different. Something had gone wrong in the first trimester, or so the doctors said. They had also said that she would be retarded. That would have been a blessing. Instead, she was gifted in ways that those able to put aside their reactions to her physical form, marveled at. The same screwy connections that had sent misinformation to her body parts, created brain connections that could only be measured at the genius level. Kathy Dells had one of the more powerful minds on Earth...and a sweet disposition. Her father loved her and believed that her academic contributions would gain her acceptance.

Edith came on strong, not in support of her work, but to milk her for her father's money. "Honey, we need your help so badly. You know, Kathy dearest, that it's up to you! Only you can make this wonderful new ceramics wing of the State Museum happen."

Kathy played along, dejected and hiding her reaction to the real reason she had been invited to the grand opening.

"Oh dear, Ms. Brownfield, what can I do?"

"Honey, you can name this addition after your mother." When Edith didn't see a reaction on Kathy's face she added, "Or, better still, your father. He has

done so much! This would honor him through all time!”

“Is it about money? Is this only about money?” Kathy gave her one more opportunity to recognize her achievements... Nothing! She mentally went to her Plan B, and waited.

Edith was an experienced fund raiser. Rule one, you never came right out and asked for money---at least not until you were certain that you had convinced the mark that only they could make a difference, and that you really wanted to honor them or theirs. “Oh no dear, it’s about a way to honor your father---and you too! At some time in this difficult society we must honor those most talented, those who have made a major contribution to our country.”

“Oh thank you Edith! You know, everyone is chasing after me for money. I’m glad you’re not that way. I’ll tell you what, since you have been so supporting of my father’s work. I’d like to make a little financial contribution anyway. Is that all right?” She reached into her small clutch purse and took out her checkbook. “My dad and I want to cover some of your expenses; a week of your time at least. Will this check,” she ripped a previously written check from the stub, “help?”

Edith glowed. She reached for the check, her mid-arm length gloved hand like a Moray Eel snaking out. Politely, in the way of experienced fund raisers, she folded the check pretending not to look, but seeing a lot of big 0000’s as she tucked it into the top of her glove. She was so good at what she did! Fleecing grubbing-little boors was so easy!

Having achieved her mission, and growing increasingly excited, she made some small talk, mentioned having to “Go bad!” and spun away

heading for the rest room where, secreted in a booth, she could assay the results of her work. 'It's a million,' she thought, her whole lower body pulsing with excitement.

Kathy couldn't suppress a gleeful smile. She excused herself, not that her escort noticed or cared, and made her way out of the museum. A parking valet, assuming that she was there by mistake, reluctantly hailed a cab for her. The check was for \$100.00.

"Kathy calling. Please interrupt him, he's expecting my call!" She heard her father's secretary put the phone on a hard surface and walk away. She kicked-off her shoes, wiggled her toes and waited.

"Kath? That was quick!"

"I told you Dad, they were rude and only interested in getting money from you."

"Are you sure? Kathy, your work is receiving rave reviews. Everyone is talking about your research. They must..."

"I'm sure Dad. They never mentioned my work or... Dad, that woman, Edith, was grasping and cold. I did meet Getts. He was awful. He never acknowledged that I was anything but a...a..."

"Honey, honest. I thought it would be different. I thought that as academics and scholars they would respect you for your work and honor you. I thought that was why they invited you... What did you do?"

"I gave them the little check as we agreed. I'll write *VOID* across the big one and send it to the chairman of her board with a note explaining that rudeness and contempt are not fund raising tools."

"That won't change anything, not even for three million."

“Dad, I think it will! At some level they are going to respect me for what I am, not what I look like or how much money you have.”

“Kath, from what your professors tell me, your work is exceptional. These people are synthetic academics. They are not true scientists or... Honey, you’re expecting respect for your work from people who are playing political power games that have nothing to do with research and learning. You say they control the whole academic community... Well, I think you should check that out. Stop! Think! There are people out there who are true academics and who respect pure, original research. Find them and let’s stop this head butting...”

She held the receiver in her hand long after he had hung up. He was right, he usually was. The university staff where she had completed her dissertation was aware of her. The research labs she had used to confirm her gene growth findings and the new uses of DNA... Why not ask some of them to help her? They respected her work. All she wanted was to teach and do research... They knew how to connect her, they had to know...didn’t they?

She placed the receiver on the set and rolled over onto her right side. She let herself slip into that wonderstate of almost-sleep where she could play back the memories of the time when she first existed beyond her body. Back to when her father was developing a tract of desert land and came upon the irrigation canals and home sites of the Hohokam. The time when she knew for certain that she would find the answers for her future in the past. The place where the answers lie.

If you squeeze your own hand, she had learned, you create a circle of energy that goes nowhere. If you hold a human bone tightly, or even a pot or a basket once loved by its creator, you create a link with others. Small, crippled with an affliction she could not shed, she held the clay of humanity tightly and squeezed from it a realization that things once charged with the energy of being never lost that energy. She learned how to squeeze-tight the remnants of those past and read the essence of their thoughts and times. With that ability, she let the ancient ones lead her through their world. As she matured, she knew that to be a great scientist, one must link to the past and read the energy still emanating from it, and then develop the tools necessary to decode it. That had led her to research DNA and genes. That quest had led her on her present course.

In time, she learned how to interpret the road maps to the past contained in genetic material. She had risen to the top of her field and become one of the few who could illuminate the course of human development. It was the scientist in her that had done that! She felt she was unimportant otherwise. The pain of her evening's humiliation still burned, a little hot fire on top of smoldering layers of pain.

Her arm ached, she shifted to her back. Her mind cleared and she cathected: The process of selection! 'Natural Selection,' Darwin had called it, made each individual seek-out mates more perfect than they. If possible, they would mate with someone more adept at survival; someone who could protect them and provide for them. There was a natural rejection process that destroyed the weak. When nature failed, mankind would thrust the sword. Because of her

physical deformity, she would automatically be rejected by everyone. 'So I had better accept it and stop trying to change the ways of nature,' she surmised. 'I am not my physical body... I am my mind!' She sat up, an awkward struggle on the bed. 'If I am to be welcomed out there, it will be through my work, and that must not be associated with my body.' She had it! She must create a persona ethereal, a persona existing in their minds that none would ever touch. "Not that hard to do in this electronic age," she said as loud as she could to the walls.

Her mind was forming associations with myriads of bits of information. Within minutes, she was booting the computer and designing her electronic apparition. Later, she morphed a picture of herself and created the male-female entity nature had probably intended. By dawn, a new entity walked the ivory halls of academia. Kathy Owens Dells became K.O. Dells, Ph.D., with all the academic credentials she had earned. She relaxed and let her thoughts run into the future. Most university education was switching to the web. Place-specific education would soon be a curiosity of the past. She, or rather "He," whomever K.O. would turn out to be, was destined to be the web university's greatest teacher and scientist. That was in the future. First, she needed a job that would provide a lab and cover her research expenses. She liked Silicone Valley where she had done some of her graduate research. She liked and trusted Tom Lanard who was building a company now, a company she could make a success. 'Daddy,' she thought, 'you'll love this business venture, and the new 'Me' will ease your guilt.'

Chapter 16

Buried under the fire pit, Quentin found an olive-drab ammo can that had been made to hold thirty-caliber ammo.

C.J. WILLIS STUMBLED along the dirt track jerking his head up and down and from side to side. "These are horrible times, desperate times. Horrible! I see you! See you! See you... You think I don't, but I do, I do, and I know what you are! Here," he bent awkwardly to the ground and picked-up a small clod, "eat this! This is for you! This is you! Eat this! You should be full of it! You should be dirt! You should be dead, dead, dead...and stay dead, and under the dirt where you belong! I see you, you damned heathen savages! You can't get to me, can you? I've had my fill, my fill! I'm sick up to here of you! These are desperate times, desperate times. I didn't know! It won't change anything, so leave me alone!"

He pushed and tripped his way through the Asian tamarisk; ripped his jacket on a Russian olive thorn. "Foreign plants own the place now. We brought them to hold you down... Keep you underground, underground. It's our world now. We changed the plants and the animals so that you wouldn't know it. Get back, get back where you belong! Quit following me!"

The muck of the calc-alkaloid soils dissolved into the Mancos River water and made it vile. He got down to it slowly, painfully, pushed through the thin lace of ice, and using his dirty handkerchief as a strainer, drank. The alkali burned the back of his throat. It made him gag. He got his knees under him and started to rise, when out of the corner of his eye he

saw them watching him. “Damn you all back to hell!” he screeched through his alkali-burned larynx. He stood. They didn’t go away like they should have. He heard the drums. He heard their chants. They came toward him as he fled up the crooked trail that led to his hideaway, arms flailing, stiff with age, but charged with voluntary jerks and jumps that carried him forward more as a stick figure than a suffering pile of stringy muscle and brittle bone. Winded, he stopped and, with an insight of sanity, decided that as they were his creation he could will them gone. But they were kicking up dust as they followed him up the trail. Dust! “My God, they are real!” screeched out of his mouth as he gave up and rumped himself into an obstacle on the trail. He lay wheezing and pleading. “Forgive me! Forgive me! I didn’t think it mattered, mattered, mattered not at all.”

Quentin held back until he saw the old crazy curl-up on the trail. Then slowly, he made his way up and stood looking down at the man.

“It matters old man, you’re trespassing on our land. You gather your stuff, I’m taking you in. You need medical attention and help.”

The old man didn’t move. He kept squalling.

“Silas, Benjamin. Come take him to the truck. It’s getting colder, lets get out of here.”

The two Utes moved up the trail, holding their heads away so as not to breathe his essence. Each grabbed a frail arm and pulled the pathetic skeleton up onto his feet. The old man wouldn’t stand on his own, so they held him between them and, feet bumping along, carried him back to the Suburban with the black and gold tribal insignia.

“Quentin, suppose we should go up there and get his stuff?”

“We’re supposed to look for papers. I’m going up. You two stay here and... Hey, he’s coming around!”

Willis reacted to the warmth of the Suburban and the soft seat. He took charge of his body and sat straighter, looking around.

Quentin watched him orient himself and when he felt the man was aware, he told him that they were taking him to Towaoc where he would get some good food and medical treatment. Willis stared at him, fear and hatred emanating from his eyes.

“Look Mr. Willis, you’ve been trespassing here. I’ll take your stuff if you want. Tell me what to get.”

Willis stared at him, his eyes only communicating fear. He said nothing.

“Look, I’m going up there and I’m going to get your stuff. Tell me where your personal papers are. If we leave them here, they’ll be stolen and you’ll never get them back.”

Willis got a wild look that sent shivers down Quentin’s spine. “Papers? How did...” He stopped and thought. A crafty look settled on his face for a few seconds. “Okay, ya mean my license and Social Security stuff?”

“I mean all of your stuff. Leave it here and it will be gone, I can guarantee that.”

Willis slumped against the far door, his head striking the window glass with a hair-pie thud. He wheezed out, “They’ll never find them! Mine, mine, mine! Money in the bank. I have power over them all... You’ll never get them. My God, Utes again! How could they know?”

A search of the ruin in the twisted little side canyon, turned up blankets, cooking gear, extra clothing, food, and a shovel. Willis had made some crude furniture and a juniper bough bed. There were remnants of a long table. Quentin searched the space methodically, imagining that he was Willis trying to hide something important where no one would think of looking. Buried under the fire pit, Quentin found an olive-drab ammo can that had been made to hold thirty-caliber ammo. Willis had wrapped the ammo can in black plastic, buried it more than a foot below the fire pit, and thought it safe.

Quentin smiled as he unwrapped the metal box. He hoped that it contained the papers Beardancer was so anxious to retrieve. He re-filled the hole, replaced the rocks and ashes and then laid and lit a small fire. Years of good police work had taught him how to cover a trail. As he left the ruin, he turned for one more look around. A sealed-up doorway, one expected to find several in these larger ruins, seemed wrong somehow. In fact, all the rock work seemed wrong. He made a mental note to investigate further at some other time, turned and went back into the cold sunlight.

Back at the Suburban, Willis was sleeping. He placed the metal ammo can in front of his seat, where he could keep it from sliding under the brake pedal with his left heel, and started the engine. Silas rode shotgun. Ben got in with the old man to make sure he didn't fall off the seat, and they headed back toward Mancos. This time of year it was faster to go around than to chance the mud and cross the reservation. In Mancos, they got on Highway 160 and headed west, through Cortez, and then south, toward Towaoc. Had they crossed the reservation, they would have been

apprehended by two FBI agents, out doing their job, which they had been told was to apprehend the tribal police officers and take their prisoner and anything that belonged to him into federal custody.

Just to the south of the Casino, Quentin turned into the large parking area and spotted the blue Ford Explorer. He pulled up alongside and let the electric window fall away. Inside the Explorer, he recognized Benjamin's father, a tribal council member. He looked back at Ben, Ben nodded with a smile. "You could have told me Quent."

"He said not to."

The Ford's window was down. "Find anything?"

Quentin reached between his feet and lugged the heavy ammo can up into his lap. "Haven't opened it. Found it buried under the fire pit. Here!"

There was disagreement on the tribal council. Several members believed that their first responsibility was to their keepers. They felt strongly that the Ute's were not ready to make it on their own and that they still needed the direction of government agency personnel. They were always well rewarded for playing ball with the agencies, and that had given them economic and political power over their tribe.

Now, there was conflict. At the urging of their advisors, they had argued against the tribal council taking charge of the investigation of the body found in Sedona. When they lost, they also lost the trust of their fellow council members and found themselves outside of the information loop. The rest of the council were actively working together to recall as much of the history of those times as possible, and to take

charge of the investigation. Despite the vehement objections of the BIA sympathizers, the leaders of the council had also worked out some kind of deal with the tribal police. The agency people were putting pressure on their 'sympathizers' to share council discussions and secrets... The agency pawns were out of the loop and so had little to share. They blamed outsiders for the problem, pointing at Cain, and were laying awake at night thinking of ways to get around Beardancer and regain their power on the council.

Word came from Dean in Sedona that the volunteer archaeologists had found more grave depressions in the floor of the old trading post. The depressions held no bodies, but they were full of evidence that bodies had been interred there---or at least hidden there. In each depression the archaeologists found human remains which they carefully collected. Dean faxed me that the entire floor had been examined and that there were no papers or other records. He commented that when that was known, the Historical Site Preservation people and the goons who had been hanging around, disappeared. He was able to go on with the remodel project, "...although," he wrote, "Doc Connely is acting very strange. He really believed that we would find Willis's records under the floor. When we didn't, he began to accuse some of the old guard traders around here of a cover up. He's on the warpath, and everybody in town is talking about it."

Dean noted that the skin and bone fragments were being forwarded to a Doctor K.O. Dells, reported to be the reigning expert on human genetic material and DNA tracking. He warned that it could take

months for the tests to provide any information, “useful or otherwise.”

A day later, during a phone conversation, Dean stated that he was sure he was being followed. He had also heard from a friend in Phoenix that someone from the Architectural Review Board on the state level was undermining him professionally by saying that there might be an investigation into his competence.

Later that same day, Dean called me again to report that our house had been broken into. He had been called over by the Chief of Police. As far as Dean could tell, the burglars had gone through Susan’s and my files and papers, nothing else. He asked if we had taken our computer to Colorado with us.

“No, we left it there. I don’t know what good it will do them. The only files I can think of were business files, like contracts and stuff. Mostly boiler plate. Nothing about this case except, well, maybe the contract with Doc Connely...” Hey, who would want an old Pentium III machine anyway?”

“Okay, keep thinking. I guess they were just looking for leads. Chief didn’t think it was a burglary, but now I’ll tell them your computer was stolen.”

Chapter 17

He imagined that this was a night from forever's place, an always was and would be lie that things were right with their world.

SUSAN AND I WERE spending a lazy March 1st morning lounging in bed. The March lion was out there running around and the lamb was hidden, probably under our bed. The wind tore around the Beardancer house, deflected off of the Mesa Verde escarpment and raced a zigzag course for the far La Plata Mountains. The temperature had peaked by 9:00 AM at fifteen above. We snuggled into the covers and each other, pretending that we were snowbound and trapped. "If this is hibernation," Susan said with glee, "Then how come we're so wide awake? No wonder boy and girl bears don't hibernate together."

We heard Norman come in, stamping his feet and making noises like a bear. We heard him, pulled deeper into the covers, and waited. The dreaded knock on the door came too soon.

"You frozen in there?"

I answered, as Susan tried her best to distract me. "Norm, you're back?"

"No thanks to your truck. Ever hear about putting weight in the back? Ever hear about snow tires? You from Arizona or something? And one more thing, your chain's too short!"

We heard him stomp off. Susan did some quick moves with her hands and announced, "He's wrong! It's not!"

Reluctantly we showered and dressed. By the time we joined Norman and Regina, the smell of venison chili filled the house. Regina handed us each

a bowl and pointed to the saltines. "If it's too hot, tell me. Stove hot I can deal with. *Chili hot*, you can get used to!" She joined Norman on the couch and we sat across from them. "So?" I asked.

They want to meet near the bronze bust of Jack House. You know, the area outside of the council chambers... It's the only place, what with this storm."

Regina looked up from her chili and gave Susan a wink. "Hot? We like it hot on a day like today..."

"Susan reacted. On any day, right? It's not too hot. I like it!"

Regina turned to Norman. "Hey, this must be about Jack House then?"

"I think so. There are a lot of folks who knew him. He died in 1972. His life... Well, more important for us, memories of his family's life are a road map to the past. What is left out of the American history books is the fact that the Ute man the Wetherill's refer to as Acowitz, was Jack's father, Asa House. The way the Anglos tell the history, Acowitz gave them permission to run cattle on Ute lands and he let them dig the ruins. That's a lie, but it's accepted as fact." Beardancer shifted his weight, put his empty chili bowl down and continued.

"What we know is that after Ignacio led his band to the western side, the dry side of the reservation, they almost starved to death. After a time, they were able to get a few sheep herds together. Survival without becoming dependent upon the Americans, required the water from the springs at the head of the canyons. The House Family held the lands in what the conquerors named Cliff, Soda and Navajo Canyons. Unfortunately, those verdant little areas were where the cowboys wanted to water and graze their cattle and where the great cliff dwellings like Cliff

Palace, Spruce Tree House, Balcony House, Square Tower House, and... Well, that's where the ancients built them because of the springs.

"Acowitz's family suffered when the cowboys ran their cattle on their land and used up their grass. They suffered from an invasion of their lands by grave robbers. Finally, they suffered a major loss when Congress forcibly removed 53,054 acres of their land for what was to become Mesa Verde National Park. They lost land that contained canyon-head springs they depended upon as well as important pastures and food gathering areas. They were 'guaranteed' water and grazing rights, but the government lied. Congress had never intended to live up to that contract."

I sat there, spooning more chili into my burning mouth. Susan put hers aside. "Norman, do you think the man they found in Sedona... I mean, will we know who he was... Is, after tonight?"

Beardancer took a moment to answer. "Susan, I hope so. Maybe we will sit by many fires before anybody knows who he was. Anyway, I'm anxious for tonight to get here."

The bronze bust of Jack House dominated the crescent-shaped space around the great council room. They chose to meet here for several reasons, the most important of which was that a meeting of friends held outside of the council chamber was unofficial and did not require notice. The other was that the Bronze, so beautifully crafted by Greg Neeley, a treasured local artist, conveyed a spirit that ignited the Ute People.

The lights were low and conversations petered-out until the room was quiet. Only the harsh cutting sound

of the wind objecting to the building could be heard. A member of a prominent family got up and stood facing the arc of the room. He spoke in English, because he had been forbidden to speak Ute as a child and had never learned to express himself well in his native language. He occasionally added a Ute word for clarification. He prefaced by saying that the story he could tell started when Acowitz decided to go from a Mancos River camp up to the top of the mesa. He cleared his throat and began:

“The night before Acowitz left on his journey to the Place of Springs on the high mesa, he had many visitors. He was a leader, wise. He paused and looked around. His son sat quietly, listening, paying attention to everything. It was a time to observe carefully and remember. Leaders from other families were there, those who had survived. Dead leaders were there also. They lived on through their teachings; they were a part of what the People knew.

“The boy observed that his father’s face was deeply wrinkled, and yet Acowitz still seemed young. Lines cut by pain no human should ever have to endure gave character to all of the faces, at this fire circle.

“The boy noted that the firelight softened the overall effect of the weariness of those gathered to wish Acowitz well. The wind soothed them, he thought with his boy’s partial insight, as it blew through the sage, pinons, and junipers. He imagined that this was a night from forever’s place, an always was and would be lie, that things were right with their world.

“In the morning he would go with his father as far as the place where the deer always were in the early

summer. They would hunt and he would bring meat back for the family. His father would travel on, alone.

“Acowitz was powerful; so sure of himself, his son observed. His father was a leader! People followed him even though in their emotions they feared he was wrong. They followed him because in their intellects they knew the way he pointed was the only way that remained if someday their children, or their children’s children, were to live with dignity again.

“The boy knew that Acowitz dreamed of the time beyond. He also knew that tomorrow his father would leave for the place, high on the mesa, where ‘those who were never satisfied’ were digging in the cave houses of the Ancient Ones. He knew that the strangers might kill his father, so the boy tried hard to fill himself with his father’s spirit. He sought to become a man who could take his father’s place.”

“They left the camp leading their horses. It was powerful to walk and touch the earth. Out of sight, they mounted and let the animals find the trails that led upward.

‘We should kill them, Father. We could, you know. They will be in the caves.’

‘We could kill them,’ the proud man agreed.

‘Why shouldn’t we? They’re on our land. They steal from us. They kill our people!’

‘That’s true. That is the way they are.’

“The trail narrowed; the horses went singly. The boy wondered at the meaning of his father’s agreement and yet he knew his father was unwilling to drive the invaders out.

“They came to the place where the deer fed in the early summer. The open meadows were crisscrossed with trails. Fresh droppings were signs. A large

jackrabbit with black-tipped ears jumped high above the sage and grass, then bounded away, still jumping high to see if they gave chase. Acowitz smiled. The big rabbits always made people laugh; they laughed together.

“While the horses nosed the bunches of grass, looking for tender shoots, they found a vantage point in the shade of fallen rocks. Rifles across their knees, they waited for the deer to move.

“His father broke the silence. ‘A part of me, the man inside me, wants to drive the Americans from this land...or die trying. It is easy to find them and kill them, and yet it can not be done. I need to tell you why because they might kill me today. You should know how I came to believe that to kill them is to destroy our people. Perhaps you will be surprised at what I tell you. I will tell a little of what you must know.’

“Deer were trailing out in front of their vantage point. A large doe brought a spotted fawn into the hot afternoon sun. The two Utes were no threat to the deer, they didn’t kill does or fawns this time of year. Later they would kill a buck for the meat they needed, but now was not the time to kill.

“Acowitz spoke again. ‘Some time in the past we came into this place. It was a time so far back that even my father’s father did not know it. Our people passed through here every spring, and then went on. Our people came back here every fall and stayed for awhile before going to warmer places for the Cold Weather Here Time.

‘We have always had to share this land. There were always other people who came into these places. We have found the fallen homes of others who lived here long ago and are gone. The Navajos

pass through here to get to their sacred mountain just beyond. So it is that this land has been used, probably forever. If we were wise and let strangers pass, they were soon gone and all was the same as before. Now think of that! We let them alone and in a short time they left.'

"A deer peered at them, envying their place in the shade. She browsed her way to another shady place and grunted to the ground.

'Some people, white-skinned people, came one time with a horse, many horses someone told my grandfather, for it was in his time. Then, more than one very long lifetime ago, the Spaniards, as the white skins were called, came through here. They didn't hurt anything. Some of our people went away with them and came back with horses and strange stories about these people from across great seas. It was the same as it had been before, strangers came and went. The big change was that now we had horses.

'Nothing like that happened again for the rest of my grandfather's life and all of my father's life. The only people who came into these places were Navajos and a few Mexicans. They hunted and left. We ignored them when we could. The world was in balance. But then, when my father was old and I was younger than you are now, word passed along that another strange race of people, like the Spaniards, but different in many ways, was coming into the high mountains. Then, when I was your age we heard that these people were coming into the land in numbers greater than the deer. We heard that everywhere they landed they killed everything and drove all other people away. They stayed and didn't move on... We

began to run into them. I had never seen one of those people and I was curious.

'I went across the mountains and, on the plain where the sun rises for us, I saw them and I knew why our people were so afraid of them. They were sick people. They were pink as the inside of a hand and some were greenish-white. Their hair was thin and grew in pale colors. Many had pustules on their faces and skin. I saw one who had a brown eye and a blue eye. Whatever disease made them sick, and their skin so ugly, might come into our camps, we thought, and it did. Our people got their sicknesses and died.'

"Way up along the canyon rim, a raven soared. He followed his father's gaze and together they watched it until a magpie rose to chase it away.

"His father continued talking in his soft, strong voice. 'We came back to hide and wait for them to leave, but their numbers continued to grow. They came into the land and forced our people out. They wanted every place and they didn't want to share it. When I was born, there weren't any of them here. Now I am not that old, and they are everywhere. They drew lines and said 'stay over there.' Then they came across the line they drew and pushed us behind a new one. They drew another line just north of us here, and said 'this is your land forever. If you leave it we will kill you. If you stay you will be safe.' Others of our people were put on lands they didn't know. We were lucky. They said stay on this land we are giving you, and it was already ours.'

'Father, are there so many that we can't kill them?'

'Our leaders who got to know them said so. They were right.'

'But they keep killing us. They shoot us for no reason. They kill women. Children. They intend to wipe us out!'

'If we fight them, or get even with them, they will wipe us out. That is what we have learned. My son, do you know that they don't think we are human beings? They use their laws and religions to make us animals. They believe they can do anything to us they want to do and not even their God will care. Do you know that? Can you grasp what that means?'

'Father, then we are doomed!'

'No! We are not. The way will be hard and our people will be hurt so badly that they will be driven into the depths of futility, but the spirit in us will survive. In time our people will be strong again.'

'But what of my life? What can I dream? How can I live? Can I ever bring children into this time?'

'I am a father who must tell his son that his life will be a horror of pain.' Tears ran down his face as he looked at his beautiful child, so lithe, so handsome, so capable and good; above all else, a decent human being. 'You and perhaps your children will suffer through this darkness the conquerors are bringing about for us. You will adapt to their ways and survive. Around you all of those you love will suffer and die and there will be nothing you can do to help them. As a leader, you will have their pain as well as your own. You, my loved son, will die without knowing if the spark you have carried inside you will live. I want you to believe that someday our blood will flow in human beings who walk with dignity and the power to be everything they can be.'

'Is this what you dreamed, Father?'

'No, son, they say I dreamed it, but it is not so. This is what I was taught by Ignacio, The Lion. They

called him Chief, but he was just one of many men who had grown wise following our ways. Like Ouray, he gave-up land for peace, gambling that under the protection of their laws some of our lives would be saved. This new line and this land they call the Southern Ute Reservation, is our last place on earth. If the line doesn't hold them out and us in, then none of us will ever walk the face of the Earth again.'

'Father, I don't want to be like them. They are a sick plague on the land. They bring things to ruin.'

'I have seen inside them; what drives them. You are right. They have even created a God that urges them to control everything and everyone around them. They use up the land and leave it barren. They are against nature. Nothing fouls its own nest and lives, but they do, and they thrive. Maybe they will die-out and be gone. Maybe that is why we must keep our spark alive.'

'When you go there they might shoot you for fun...'

'If they do, then you must let me fall and not avenge my death. To do so would give them an excuse to kill all of our people.'

'It isn't right. What did we do to deserve this?'

'We did nothing. We are simply in their path. Would the ant you just swatted off your arm receive a different answer from you?'

"The boy saw that they could take two deer at any time. Yet they sat and watched the shadows lengthen. The ravens circled above. The circle that was the world seemed not to know that the circle had been broken.

'When you die, Father, I will bury you in the mightiest juniper tree. The eagles will circle above you until the world is won or lost. And you will know that I will carry-on with peace, regardless of my hate.'

'Your hate is fear. Fear is an easy enemy to master. You must be useful for those who live. What more can anyone do?'

"They checked their rifles and eyed the animals before them. Then, quietly, they let the rifles back down across their knees. This was a hard time to think of taking life.

'Father, we believe that there are spirits living in the ancient houses of the people long gone. We respect the right of their dead to lie at peace. Won't the spirits drive the grave robbers out of the ancient ruins?'

'No, and I don't understand why not. All of the things we came to believe are now being questioned. I try to hold on to things that must be true. I believe that any people who desecrate the graves of those who have gone before suffer from a great weakness within the fabric of their souls. I believe that the spirits will not let them alone. I am afraid to believe that it doesn't matter, or that the newcomers are right.'"

The elder paused for the first time, and immediately people urged him not to stop. He looked around, caught Norman's eye, and smiled. He took a sip of water and continued.

"Where the old trail turned like a snake, to coil its way to the top of the mesa, the father and son parted. They held their horses and stood near a lichen-covered cairn.

'This is the sign my grandfather's father built to mark the corner of the place where our family grazes its horses. Before the strangers came we were here during the 'Spring Moon, Bears Go Out Time,' and again in the 'Trees Turn Yellow Time.' There are

many more of these rock piles. They are honored by our people. In time you will be the leader, you will know the lands between these markers. To me, this is where my spirit will always roam free. I wish I were older. Then I could come here and live-out my last days.' Acowitz smiled and looked into his son's eyes. 'I will not die today son, I still have time to do things that must be done. Come back for me here in one day. We will chase a jackrabbit together.'

"Resigned to his task, and feeling every one of his thirty-five summers, the powerfully built man made his way north, up the winding trails to a place with deep canyons where caves held the ancient stone houses of those who had gone before. The places which were being desecrated by cowboys from the valley below and people who paid them to come onto our Ute land to steal from graves.

"Wherever the white government drew the line it soon stood as a challenge to those who felt they needed what was beyond it. The Ranchers, as they called themselves, were a scrappy lot, desperate for anything that could be gained easily. They had taken the Ute lands in the fertile Mancos Valley at the foot of the Mesa Verde. Land that was rich and whose grasses once nurtured Ute horses. A land a hundred times more fruitful than the meager grasslands on the Mesa itself. Yet, the ranchers had pushed their cows up the steep slopes and finally on to lands beyond the line that the government had promised was the place where they must stop."

The storyteller paused again. People waited for him to continue. He stood, thinking, while the sound

of the wind outside seemed to moan and then whisper.

“Now, the way I learned this is that on an earlier visit, Acowitz had ridden up to the cowboys and showed them the cairns that marked his family’s homelands. They had scoffed at him, given him tobacco, patted him on the back, and sent him away. They didn’t know or care that he understood enough of their language to hear their contemptuous comments about him and our people. They didn’t know that he understood them as he rode away. They shouted to each other to witness that he had given them permission to graze their stock on Ute land for a plug of tobacco. He knew that if he turned to argue they would shoot him, throw his body down a canyon, and forget he ever lived. They, or others like them, had done that to Utes many times before.”

The storyteller stopped to comment. “I think Acowitz and others knew that cattle grazing wasn’t a real problem. The cowboys didn’t have much success running cattle in that area because their steers were always wandering off. A cowboy could see cattle across a deep, narrow canyon, but it might take him a day to ride around the canyon-head and get to them. The grass had seemed abundant on our lands, but it really wasn’t. Our people believed that soon the cowboys would find other pastures. They were wrong.”

He reached over and took the glass of water from the table, drank, and smiled at the assembly as he replaced the glass. “Forgive me now if I mix-up part of

the old story with what I have learned. I will try to fill-in some of the facts as I go.”

“It was in 1887 when the ranchers found something else of interest to them on our land. Something that translated into dollars; more dollars than a few scraggly cattle could bring. The ranchers found treasures they called ‘relics.’ This wealth they found on our land, when mined and shipped to buyers, came from the graves and deserted houses of the people who had lived before.

“Now we know that on earlier visits, Acowitz learned that it wasn’t just pots and bone tools, baskets, and old clothing that they were after. They also wanted to steal the bones from the ground and the mummified bodies from the caves. In their camp, they lined up the skulls and the dried bodies of the ‘Ancient Ones.’ They placed the remains of the old ones around their camp and made the dead witness the desecration of what had been their homes.

“Acowitz was sickened to the core by what they were doing. At first he thought they would take a few crates of pots and tools and then grow tired of the pillage. He and his people waited for them to grow bored and stop. He didn’t understand that the possessions of the ancient people were worth more than cattle, coal, or timber.

“I now know that it was the summer of the year 1891, the year Acowitz learned that a man from Sweden had come with the ranchers to excavate the homes of the Ancient Ones. The man brought hired laborers who plundered whole cliff houses and filled crates with relics which they sent down to the railhead at Durango. That’s when Acowitz left the mesa and went for help. Perhaps, he thought some of the words

spoken by the representatives of the United States Congress were not lies? Perhaps he imagined that those appointed to represent the Utes would force the cowboys to stop mining the ancient ruins? I don't know, but I can imagine.

"The Southern Ute Indian Agent whom Acowitz and two other leaders turned to for help, was named Bartholomew. If judged as a man, not as a member of the conquering multitude, they thought he was a good person, as were many who tried to help the Utes. He was limited in the actions he could take by the knowledge that if the settlers wanted resources that had been included in the Southern Ute Indian Reservation, then the line would probably be moved further south---regardless of treaties or issues such as right and wrong---so he advised them to proceed carefully.

"Bartholomew cared, but his concern was filtered through his cultural biases. He knew that horrible wrongs were being done, yet he couldn't quite figure out what to do about them. Our people had never declared war or fought against the United States of America. They had never gone on the war path and sent parties out to kill. There had been altercations, like the one with the liar Meeker, but Weminuche Utes were not involved.

"The Indian Agent knew that none of his people would hear the Ute side. Bartholomew knew that the brutal treatment of those he was supposed to represent was a sick cover-up of the fact that they were being robbed and mistreated. His culture generated hatred toward those it abused, as a way of justifying its wrongs.

"So, the man Bartholomew was appointed to represent the Utes. A group of leaders, the

government called them 'Chiefs,' had come to see him. How simple it would have been for him to look to one leader who wouldn't make trouble and appoint him 'Chief' of all of the Utes. But he didn't have that luxury because he had learned that each Ute family band or group had more than one leader. Power was balanced between wise men and wise women. The American government wouldn't recognize a woman as a leader, so women were not heard. They appointed chiefs if the appointee did only what the government wanted.

"Bartholomew recognized that our Ute culture was an evolved and highly effective form of democracy; a system of decision making and leadership that worked for the small bands when they were isolated on the land, and when they came together for common meets and ceremonies. He respected our ways. Now, be patient with me, for there is more information I will give you that explains the story."

He looked around the gathering expecting opposition. There was none. He continued:

"Acowitz asked Bartholomew about the strength of the boundary of the box they had been put into. He wanted to know if the U.S. Congress would punish the Utes if they tried to keep the whites from crossing the line.

'It is a dangerous situation for you people,' the Indian Agent cautioned. 'If the white people want something that you have they can get Congress to break their agreement with you and take it.'

"Acowitz stepped forward and pointed his chin at the agent. 'What is it Asa?' The agent chose to call all of the Utes by their assigned names. Acowitz's assigned name was Asa House.

'On the land where we have always grazed our horses and hunted, there are many of the old stone houses of those who have gone before us. The ranchers have come onto our land and now they desecrate the houses and rob the graves of the old ones. They do this because they are probably crazy. While we talk, they have brought a man and many workers to our land and they are packing the old people's possessions and even their bodies and bones into boxes. They are taking the boxes to Durango so that they can ship them over the great seas to Europe. That is wrong. We want them to stop defiling the graves and to return the old ones and their possessions.'

"This wasn't the first time the agent had heard about the robberies. He knew that the ranchers were after a fast buck. He knew that they were mining the Ute lands. He also knew that if stealing from the Ute lands became an issue, the Utes would find themselves behind a new line and lose the springs and the high pastures they so badly needed to stay alive in their desert prison.

'I think I can stop this foreigner. I fear that if we try to stop the ranchers, you Utes will pay a great price. The locals will go on the killing path and no one will stop them or prosecute them. I will go to Durango and have the Swede arrested. Perhaps we can get the artifacts away from him before he takes them to Europe.'

"The wise leaders bit their tongues and waited until their reason prevailed again. 'Do that, Bartholomew. It is the best we can expect.'

"Okay, now that I have made these things clearer, I can go on with the story I learned." He looked

around the room, and saw that he had not lost his audience.

“Now Acowitz was nearing the top of the long mesa. He came through the pinon trees at a place where the ranchers had built a rough shack. He looked around and knew the place. It was the camp where his family gathered pinon sap when it bled from the trees into crystalline balls. When chewed, it became a sealant for their fine baskets, making them water tight and sound. Sap was a strong glue which found use on courting flutes and headdresses. This clearing was a place where he could see his memories.

‘There’s a goddamn Injun out here ... get a gun! He’s a big friggin’ bucknigger Injun.’ A man’s voice with a Missouri twang, sang-out. He heard a banging noise in the cabin as if crates were being moved about. He put his hand up at his side, palm-out. He had hidden his rifle on the trail below.

‘Mikeqwash ... Hello?... Wetherill?’

A man came from the rear of the shed and peered at him over the barrel of a Winchester. ‘It’s alright, boys, this is the Injun who showed us them big cliff ruins. He’s a good Injun.’

“Three skinny, gaunt men came into view. ‘You bastards kill some more of my cattle?’

“Acowitz understood, but acted like he didn’t.

‘What you doing here Acowitz?’ the man asked.

‘I come to you who say they are my friends, with a message from our agent. He has gone to Durango to arrest the man who took crates of the old one’s possessions away. He says ranchers better leave Ute land and stay on the other side of the line.’ Acowitz

spoke in a mixture of Ute and English called 'Utelish' by some.

'Damn!' One of the men still in the shadow of the shack said in anger. 'The goddamn government is always trying to cheat us out of making a living. What'd he go and do that fer, Injun? ... You put him up to it?'

'Not good to bother the dead. Not good for you to be here. The spirits will make us all sick. I came to tell you.'

'You goddamn people never have no use for this stuff. Wha'd'you care about it? Why don't you get the goddamn hell out of here before we take it to mind to skin ya!'

'Easy John,' the elder rancher said through his teeth, with enough force to communicate that he was in charge. 'You got braves with you?'

Acowitz sat on his horse, expressionless. Then he reined his mount and rode away. In the still air he could hear their voices.

'Goddamn savages. We should'a killed 'em all. We oughta ride down and kill 'em now. Get rid of the women and children, 'Nits make lice,' Chivington said. Clean 'em out of our land and put people here who can use it.'

"An eerie feeling that they were being watched and could be trapped in the caves by the Indians, made the hair stand up on the back of the necks of the robbers. The fear worked to the Utes advantage. Soon the Wetherills heard the call of their other duties and closed-up most of their digging activities on Ute land.

"The ranchers had sacked most of the significant cliff houses. The collections they stole were

impressive. They were significant and valuable finds that they sold to collectors and museums. The thing is, there are laws about selling and buying stolen property. The objects they took belong to the land and to their descendants. For those of you who wonder why there is so much opposition to our tribe taking over the investigation, and to Cain being here, it is because they are afraid that the collections legally belong to us. They will do anything in their power to stop that from being known.”

He paused and walked back-and-forth looking at his people.

“What happened to the Swede?” someone asked.

“Our people learned that the case against the foreigner was dropped. The excuse used was that there were no laws preventing the collecting and shipment of antiquities out of the country. The fact that the artifacts in question were stolen from Ute land, and that their rightful owners wanted them returned, was not allowed to be heard in the courts.” He paused again, getting his wind. Then waving his hands about to keep their attention, he continued:

“What we found out was that Bartholomew kept doing his job as best he could. But nobody would dare prosecute a case against the ones mining ‘relics’ on the reservation, or for that matter allow such a case to go to trial.

“Our people kept protesting the invasions and thefts.” He took out a wrinkled sheet of yellow paper and read: “Four ‘diggers’ were arrested by the U.S. Marshal in Cortez, Colorado in January 1892. Bartholomew tried to prosecute them, but he was intimidated by his superiors. The case disappeared in

the courts. After that it didn't take much savvy on the part of non-Indians to know that times were changing, not for the Utes, but for those who coveted their lands. Soon, better organized forces began work to deprive our people of our lands and resources.

"Acowitz and the other leaders tried their best to make the white men relent. Few listened. Death and depression, suffering and hardship, lay along the Mancos drainages and on the backs of our proud Weminuche Utes. The people were pinned down, unable to follow game, unable to move with the seasons. In effect, our people were deprived of their ability to feed themselves, to make a living.

"A constant stream of Special Indian Commissioners, con men and women, and oppressive government employees, pressured our people. They told us that if we turned over the lands with ruins to them, they would excavate and develop them, and share the booty.

"When our people would not go along with these scams, they were forced to suffer while religious zealots were unleashed upon them. 'Poor heathen savages needed saving,' the hate mongers professed. The government agreed. The soul-savers brought many ugly forms of Christianity to the reservation. They worked ceaselessly to steal the Ute resources, undermine Ute leaders, destroy what little remained of our Ute culture and traditions, and to assassinate Ute identity. Some of the worst, like the Mormons, stole our children so that they could raise them to believe in their made-up story.

"As dark and unceasingly cruel as the times were made for our people, a spark was still passed one-to-another. That spark of hope was nurtured and not allowed to die. It was an embryonic flame they

believed would flourish, someday, in a future that none then living could share or understand.”

He sat down, and no one in the room moved or spoke. The winter storm howled around the building and nature let her will be known. In time, when it was right to do so, a grandmother rose and clasping her hands out in front of her, began to speak in Ute. Norman rose, ready to translate for those of us who could not comprehend the language.

“Now I know this part of the story,” he translated her words. “For the aging leader of his family band, and for many others, their greatest hope lay in his boy, who was mentioned in the first part of the story. Acowitz’s son’s leadership could, if he chose, inspire every man, woman, and child to pick up a pistol, rifle, or stick, and crying the hot tears of the oppressed ride headlong into the mass of whites who caused their suffering, and kill until all were dead. But, the wonder of Acowitz’s son, the rising leader, was that he would not allow himself to be tempted by such a satisfying solution. He lead in other ways. This is the story about that time that my mother’s grandmother told:

“From the Weminuche lands, where the Mancos River finally breaks free of the Mesa Verde, to the Southern Ute Indian Reservation ‘Capitol’ of Ignacio, southeast of Durango, is a long day’s ride. Acowitz asked his son to travel that long trail so that he could sit at the seat of the government for the people, the seat vacated by Ignacio. It was now held by the part-Ute traitor, Buckskin Charlie, the white man’s puppet, and Severo, a chief appointed by the government,

who was coerced into going along with private ownership of reservation lands.

“His son, now a strong and handsome man of twenty summers, with a family of his own, spent his last evening listening to his people at the councils of his grandmothers and his fathers. They knew that he was beginning to have wisdom, and they loved him. His father observed the smiles on the faces of his people; smiles that betrayed the hope that his son’s words at the councils could re-unite the Ute bands to stop the white men from coming onto their lands and stealing land, water, grass, timber and coal, and the possessions of the ancients.”

Norman finished translating and took a deep breath. She continued:

“United, the Muache, Capote and the Weminuche could use their power to stop the proposed ‘checkerboarding’ of our lands which would allow whites to take the good pastures and wet areas. The Coloradoans knew that he had the power as a leader to make this happen. They were working in Congress to apply the Dawes Act, that would force the Southern Utes to allot land in 160 acre parcels, knowing that they could then wrest the best lands from our people, which they did.

“The son of Acowitz rode out before early light with all the blessings and hopes of his people on his shoulders,” she paused for several seconds, “...*and he disappeared forever.*”

There was a collective gasp, then everyone was talking, those who did not understand the language, asking Norman to translate. He raised his hands,

people quieted, and he gave the translation. Then, the whole room was filled with every voice.

Susan and Regina turned to me. Regina said, "I think he's the one!" The grandmother wasn't finished. She clasped her hands again and the room quieted. She looked around and began again:

"Acowitz recovered enough from the loss of his first-born son to focus his remaining energies upon his second son. A son he and the grandmothers would teach as they had his brother. This son would walk in two worlds and be effective in both. He would learn to control his hate and fear and be strong enough to lead the Weminuche through their darkest years. The old man, and Ignacio, lived long enough to plant the seeds of wisdom in the mind of the boy, a youngster whom they soon learned was an artist, athlete, and natural leader. He was called Jack House. In time, many would call him "Chief," but in keeping with the old ways of leadership, if he were forced to be Chief, then he would be the last the white men could use that way. In the future the families would be represented by the men and women they chose, in a tribal council." She looked around and quickly sat down.

Norman finished translating and remained standing. People were aware that he had something of his own to say. He spoke first in Ute, changing to English often to translate for us.

"Although our people bowed and were humble before the conquerors, they were still torn apart by them. Those in the U.S. Congress heard the will of some they represented and decided that the

'Agreement' with the Utes---the government had stopped making treaties by that time---which had established a line that whites could not cross and a box wherein Utes would live, was in part null-and-void because it gave the Utes resources of value. Resources the Utes should not be allowed to benefit from.

"Those in power in Colorado wanted all of our people removed to the wastelands of Utah. Many Americans believed that Congress would take the Colorado lands away from the Utes and open them for white exploitation. They used that as an excuse to mine graves and steal resources from Ute lands.

"Too late, some whites realized that the ruins needed protection. Not from the Ute people, but from greedy whites. In 1903, Congress authorized the Secretary of Interior to 'negotiate' with the Weminuche Utes for the parts of the Mesa Verde that had the richest cultural resources. The Utes said they did not want to sell or trade their land. Of course that had no bearing upon the 'sale' and 'land trades'. Congress had reserved for itself the power to do whatever they wished *to* or *for* our people, with or without their consent. To make matters 'look good' the Ute consent was falsified.

"By threats and tricks, over 52,000 acres of land and economically important resources were removed from Ute possession. The treaty line was breached, and for the next sixty years the United States Government, through its Department of Interior, National Park Service, would denigrate our people in an attempt to gain possession and/or control of the cultural resources on our lands adjoining the National Park.

“Out of prejudice, or perhaps to belie any public outcry at its covert and overt acts, the government and the so-called ‘unbiased historians’ left the story of our Weminuche people out of their histories. Even the names of places in the park have been changed to the names of those who exploited us. What letters and communications still exist, and there are many, show an intentional misrepresentation of our culture and motives. The position of the government has been that Ute interests and rights are expendable if the National Park’s Interests are even perceived to be at risk.

“For those of you who didn’t know him, Jack House walked in both worlds until 1972. His greatness shines, as does that of Ignacio, Ouray, Cabeza Blanka, Wing, Colorow, White, Jacket, Mariano, Red Rock, John Miller, E. House, Knight, Hammond, Cuthair, Lopez, and dozens of other Ute leaders. These amazing leaders have preserved sparks from the time when we lived on the land and had a rewarding way of life. Most of all, they preserved the wisdom that kept our people alive.

“Generations of our people have suffered terribly in the time that has just passed. The futility disease is still spread among us by the conquerors. It still kills minds and then hearts. Most of our Ute Mountain Ute men die before their fortieth birthday. Children are often bounced around between the empty walls of destroyed families.

“Our people are one of the youngest cultural groups in America. The average Ute Mountain Ute is under eighteen years old. In these children, a spark, kept burning through the generations, is beginning to catch fire. Human spirits, stifled for over a century, are beginning to flower. We will behold, in the

generations to come, the beauty and contributions of a great people, because you are here on nights like this, and because you know how to remember.”

Chapter 18

They saw our tears and, as they were focused upon their own, they denied our suffering.

WE UNBUNDLED IN FRONT of the radiating Earthstove in Beardancer's livingroom. The ride home, although less than a mile, took forty-five minutes. Drifts blocked the road in several places. Others, caught earlier when the storm was at its peak, had become snowbound and left their vehicles. Twice, we had to get out and push as we made our way around the roadblocks. Now safe and warm, we were still caught in the web of the stories we had heard.

Susan was the first to speak. "I couldn't help but think that that story about the son was a parallel of the..." She paused, almost afraid to express her thought, "You know, the Messiah. The boy from the house of David who would save the people."

I had wondered at the same connection. "You know, that story is archetypical. I mean, every culture has a story like that. Norman, is there any proof that Acowitz had a son older than Jack?"

Beardancer waited to answer until he was sure that the anger he felt about the Christ parallel passed. "I don't know. In my mind I see a connection between the man you found in the crate and the man in their story. For now, let's assume that he went on an important mission that would have resulted in reuniting the Ute bands and stopping the white theft of reservation lands and resources. That would have made him an enemy of all those who were trying to get the good farm lands and water on the reservation.

If we are willing to go that far, then let's decide that the man in the story and the man from Sedona are the same, and let's solve his murder. Are you with me?"

We stood, rotating back-to-front in the heat from the stove. Regina went to check on the kids. Susan leaned against me, tears streaming down her face. I hadn't noticed her tears until Beardancer reached over and took one on the edge of his thumbnail and held it up to the light.

"You know, the Christian men and women who came amongst us in those days refused to believe that we felt pain as human beings. They saw our tears and, as they were focused upon their own, they denied our suffering. In fact, the fact that we could feel anguish and shed tears is one of the factors your courts considered when they ruled that we were human---but that wasn't until the 1920's." He looked down and I saw him brush away his own tears.

I didn't feel comfortable. My own eyes were filled with tears. I forced my thoughts to move on. "Okay! This promising young leader poses problems for the government...all of the whites stealing from the Utes. Somehow they catch him, torture and mutilate him and finally put a bullet in his heart. They must have put him in a dry cave somewhere where he dried out and didn't rot away. Then later, Willis finds him, boxes him up and sends him to his place in Sedona. It doesn't compute. That last part doesn't make sense."

Susan was nodding. "It does if you think that Willis did this in the 1950s and that the killers might have still been alive. What if Willis was holding the body for blackmail? What if there's a whole other part to this story that we don't know yet? What if the people who killed him did so because he stumbled upon

something else they were doing?” She stopped, her eyes wide and her mind obviously racing.

Beardancer grimaced. The ‘Feds’ took Willis. We never got answers from him, probably never will.”

“Yeah, but they didn’t get the ammo box! When will the council be done with it?” I knew that the council member who had the box wanted his cohorts to study the contents before making any decisions about it.

Chapter 19

I hadn't learned then, that the Americans brought a terrible disease to our people, the futility disease which pulled one down below the level of recovery.

THE KIDS WERE SNUGGLED deep into their covers, Norman had fallen asleep on the couch and then awakened only long enough to shuffle into the bedroom, undress and fall into bed. Arnie had turned-in. Susan was reading a magazine. The house was quiet; the wood stove radiated its special warmth. 'Regina,' she thought, as she lay back against the couch, 'remember this time! It is everything you have ever dreamed of.' In her thoughts, she counted her blessings, so that she would never forget:

'I am Regina Beardancer, wife of an important man, a spiritual leader, a man who loves me! I am the mother of two wonderful kids who belong to the future. I am hostess to friends who genuinely like me for who I am.'

Susan put her magazine down and gave Regina a warm smile. "Regina, do you know how lucky you are? Your life is really good!"

Regina smiled. "Susan, you don't know much about me---how I got to this..." she paused, thinking, "to this life. It is good! But I still have a lot of work to do... I mean, to stay here and not go back to what I came from. I still have questions about who I was and why things happened to me? Understand?"

Susan sat up straighter, listening; concerned. "No. I guess I assumed that you were always a together person."

“It took so long to get here!” Regina let her mind drift back. “I had so far to come. I had to love myself before I could love my people---love anybody, even my daughter and then Norman, and then my son...and all the others. It could have been different, I think, if someone had told me what had happened to my people and how other peoples had dealt with conquest... How history has repeated what happened to my people, thousands of times. Other people have been conquered; wiped-out, and everything they believed in destroyed. Their children were probably as confused as I was. Susan, now I know that the Romans did it to hundreds of different tribes and peoples. It’s an old story! The Japanese and the Ainu, the Spaniards and native tribes. History is the story told by those who have wiped the others out. What was different, was that the Americans didn’t wipe us out completely. They blasted us down to remnants and then put us aside and preserved us, or what was left of us.” She got up and made them cups of herbal tea, walking around the kitchen in her stocking feet, thinking; remembering.

“When I was growing up I heard all the empty words the teachers said about pride. And yet, when I looked around I saw people I could not be proud of... Not all, most! Do you know how confusing that was? I saw parents and kids doing crazy, destructive things that seemed to confirm all the prejudice and hate others had for us. I saw families---my own family---engaged in hurtful and destructive behavior. What I saw, what I experienced, was about as bad as it could get. I was terribly confused! I hadn’t learned then that battered people, survivors of cultural genocide, act like battered people who have no hope or vision. I hadn’t learned then, that the Americans brought a

terrible disease to our people, the futility disease which pulled one down below the level of recovery.

“Susan, as a girl, I was so confused! That whole part of my life seemed not to have existed. Even when I was older, I could remember only fragments about elementary school. I remembered how excited mother had been when she gave me a new dress and a lesson about not showing underwear. I remembered the desk the teacher assigned me. Beyond that, things were fuzzy. I couldn’t remember what had happened in those years. I blanked it all out because of pain.”

“Sounds like things were really bad for you when you were growing up. Whatever you did worked! You got through it.” Susan was trying to understand, but her words didn’t convey how deeply she sympathized. “Regina, how did you overcome it all?”

“I searched the memories of the little girl within me. I discovered that images and feelings could be found like tumbleweeds blowing across the deserts in my mind.” She tried to think of other ways that would help her explain the process to Susan. Her thoughts went back to the dress, and... Tears came to her eyes.

“What I first got in touch with was when I was on the school playground near the fence where all the trash was caught in the weeds along the wire. I was caught there too, pinioned-in by three bigger girls, sixth graders, who were yelling at me, taunting me, hurting me with their ugly words. They said things like: ‘You stupid nigger, you think you belong here? Don’t you know the teachers hate you? They’re trying to find out what’s wrong with you, you wiggle in your seat so much.’ ‘Yeah,’ a girl with the blond hair said in the most threatening voice she could muster. ‘All you

Injuns have to be watched so they can see what's wrong with you.'

"Then, other memories became clear. I let them flow out. The largest of my tormentors, the girl who stole food from my lunch tray every day in the cafeteria, a girl with black hair and blue eyes, pushed me back against the wire. 'You keep out of my way. My folks sez I ain't to talk to you, 'cause you're a dirty Indian,' she said, then her hand shot out, grabbed the sleeve of my new dress, and with a tug, ripped it from the bodice.' Now, years later, I still get tears in my eyes when I remember the ruin of my beautiful new dress; my humiliation! It was through that memory that I touched the darkness of my downward spiral into the pits! Then, I had a major breakthrough! I was older. I had Trina then, she was six I think. I was sitting in a car... Susan, do you really want to hear this shit?"

"I do if you want me to know it. Regina, telling me... I mean sharing this with me... Well, thank you for your trust."

"Susan, here is what I remembered. I was there in the car. What I saw as I sat behind the wheel and gazed out, was a dirty, mud-splattered windshield, and the ramparts of a green mountain. The radio had, long ago, died. The seats were stained, worn, and coming apart along the seams between the ribs in the fabric. Cardboard food trays, dirty napkins, wax cups with garish colors, and small capsules of unused mustard and ketchup, littered the dash and floor. Muddy footprints on the glove box door reminded me of the last man who had ridden beside me. It was raining; too muddy to drive." Can you believe that I remember it so clearly?"

“My baby was somewhere where she was safe from me, at least that’s what the man at Social Services had said. I missed her in the deep womb of my heart, but not in my mind, then. The baby was okay, that’s what counted, I guessed, but I wasn’t sure. I sat there in that stinking car. I needed time to think, to search for answers to events in my past. I was probing another part of me for answers. I decided that there was something I could have done, should have done, years ago when they had me backed against the fence. I was in touch with it for the first time.

“Susan, that was when I learned to turn feelings in my mind like they had handles. For the first time, ever, because I wanted to, I had learned to turn memories and examine them like objects or pictures, or like capsules containing moments I had lived through.” Regina sipped her tea, her forehead was hot and she felt sweaty. She was amazed that her feelings were still so clear and strong.

“Susan, I got in touch with a particularly powerful and emotion-charged image of a little girl, face tear-streaked, head bowed in shame, coming to her mother and trying to explain the large rip in her new dress. At first, I interpreted the memory as my own recall of the way I had dealt with my Trina when she arrived home with her dress torn. But the vision I saw was of my own mother whipping-up rage and anger. Then I remembered the slap that had knocked me to my knees. My mother had done that to me and I had never forgotten. She had believed that was the right thing for a parent to do. In fact, Susan, I admitted that I had done the same thing to Trina. In my mind’s eye, I saw my daughter hide her head and crouch on the

floor. I heard myself yelling the same insults my mother had yelled at me.

“Susan, that was my breakthrough! I understood what had happened when they came and took my baby away, after I had knocked her down and while I was still raging and swearing. Later I cried to those around me that I couldn’t understand myself. That was when, trying to escape, I drove out alone into the rainy afternoon. I had hit bottom, and I was fighting my way back. I knew what had happened! I knew that the cycle was unbroken. As mother had done to me, I had done to Trina. In my mind, the little girl inside me and my little Trina, wept side-by-side. I can remember how it was, as if it were yesterday.

“The rain from the squall flushed mud into a ridge along the wiper blade. The car was dank, smelled of rotten junk food, but it was secure, a bubble of steel and glass, not unlike the bubble-capsules now floating in my mind. Except, like the car, the capsules of my memories were waiting to be opened and dispersed. Susan, in that car, I opened another one.

“The teachers, lots of people, always made comments like: ‘There’s something wrong with Indian kids,’ or, ‘Everyone knows that those kids are thick-headed and stubborn,’ or, ‘None of those kids can learn arithmetic, they don’t have the aptitude,’ or, “I told you that you would hit a brick wall! How could you really think that you could teach them something? They’re all retarded, you know, before we get them.’ I got in touch with those messages and the pain they caused.

“Susan, don’t laugh, but I learned to turn those people into rats and beat them away with a broom. I felt good inside then, and lights of energy twinkled-on. I learned to visualize capsules popping open;

monsters that had once been oppressive adults, running around and bumping into each other, then popping off into nothing. Yucky things, that had locked my thoughts into tarpools of shame and harnessed my reasoning powers, began to disappear or become manageable. I had learned how to fight my way up to a surface where the light was the clarity of my own worth. Probably sounds dumb, but that happened to me. There's more. Want to hear it?"

"I do! I really do Regina. It's amazing, what you did!"

"I remember how it was when I awoke in the car as the sunlight broke through the gray clouds, stabbing the ground in a dozen places on the mountain flanks. I got out of the car and stood on the wet earth under the heavy sky, taking deep breaths of the moist air. Then, I opened the door, rolled down the window, and slowly slid back behind the wheel. It was too muddy to travel. The sun made steam rise near the car. Watching it rise and dissipate, was when I sensed that I was understanding my own problems, and that when confronted, they disappeared like the steam.

"All of the counseling, all of the hours I had spent listening to people advise me and tell me what to, how to, where to, ...or cursing me, damning me, praying for me, were shed like a mantle of lead. I was taking charge! I was beginning to do for myself what others had tried to do for me. I was taking control of my life by filtering out the images placed in my head by those who had no understanding of my needs or my people. I knew that dealing with what I needed would prepare me to deal with the needs of others. I knew then, that I would get Trina back! I would make myself ready to nurture her and guide her through the

misdirected slander of those who never tried to understand. I knew it would happen in a short time, once I was in charge of myself and had energy to pour into my life.

“Susan, I separated my reality from my confused emotions. I had begun to see myself as whole. I had cast aside thoughts that tormented me and burned energy to no end. I was working my way free of those purposeless and hurtful pursuits. That reality scared me, then it empowered me to thrust-out my chest, take a deep breath, and wear my identity proudly. I could ask for help; whatever I needed. Now, I could become solid and strong as the grandmothers of my people had been in days past. I realized that I could give to Trina, and to others, what I believed women had given in the past before the dark age of the conquest: the power to cherish one’s self.”

Regina sipped the remains of her tea, got up and put the kettle back on the burner, but forgot to turn it on. Susan sat, looking at her with admiration. “Regina, you grew-up as battered and as lost as most of those around you...and yet, you always had a spark within.”

Regina closed her eyes and thought back. There was still something there that was blocking her introspection. Something she had not gotten in touch with. “Susan, there’s more, but this is hard stuff. It would help to share it now, I don’t think you will like it... Or me after you hear it.”

“You’re kidding! Who you are *now* is who I like. What matters is that you are not held back by the past.”

“Okay! Here goes. At fourteen,” she recalled herself then, almost seeing her face in that mirror of

time. "I was blooming and full of a special energy. Those around me felt it and although some were threatened by it, others treasured me. I believe that my warmth cut through even the toughest barriers placed around their feelings. I really did have a special inner glow!" The thought still gave her happiness after all of these years. "My eyes sparkled from this broad face of mine that carries the beauty of our people. I was battered, but I was the joyous representation of all the things that made our people special. My hair was cut medium length. I dazzled young men with its highlights. I kept myself well-groomed, a sign of self-worth that hadn't been totally killed even though it was badly damaged.

"I was not conceited. Even at fourteen, confused and lost...yes! I remember that I was a person who cared about others... But that was before *it* happened...'

Regina saw in herself, the young girl of fourteen. She tossed her hair, smiled, wrinkled her nose, and laughed, the way she had done all of her life. "Susan, did you know that I was a window into the past and the future of our people?" She didn't wait for Susan to answer.

"That was the year I broke," her grief escaped as a moan as she remembered. "I was only fourteen!" She shivered and sank down into the couch, placing the tea cup on the table, out of the way. "That drunken bunch; boys I had grown up with. They..." It was so hard to deal with even after all these years. "They were brutal, more so I guess because I represented something they could not have. They raped me and beat me... Then..." For the first time, she remembered something else folded away all these years under the layers of pain and humiliation.

“Susan, I remember something else now that I had hidden from myself. After the rape, I sought treatment and comfort at the clinic. There was nowhere else to turn! I guess that the nurse in charge had grown hardened to abuses among our people. She took one look at me and attacked me! Do you know what she said? ‘You stop your crying! You deserved to be raped, dressed the way you are, with your hair fixed that way---the way you act so friendly like you are just asking for it! I’m sure this isn’t the first time you’ve had men, so what’s the problem? What do you want me to do?’ It was like being raped again! Do you understand?” Susan nodded and slid over close to her.

“It was a horrible time. Grandmother had just died. Mother was off drunk somewhere. I never knew a father. The word of my abuse spread. I thought people were looking at me to see if I had changed; to see if the spark was still there. You know, Susan, there is something cruel in human beings. They seemed to hope that I had been destroyed. The only people I could turn to were wild girl friends; girls who had given up. They taunted me and urged me to party with them and forget. One girl, a friend when we were younger, said, ‘You don’t have to worry about your precious virginity anymore, let’s go party and forget this shit!’ I had no reason that I knew, not to join them. In a month, I knew I was pregnant from the rapes. That’s when I descended into six years of futility and hell. It is a wonder that I ever got back! She lay back against the couch, relaxing now, thinking of what she had achieved.

“Susan, now you know! And you know why I love Norman so much! And why I love you... Thank you for being here and caring!”

Chapter 20

We need to go through all of these pages and see if anything stands out...like a mummified Ute body or...?

SUSAN AND I HAD just returned from a snowy-cold hike following ploughed roads when a Ute Tribal Council member drove up to Beardancers. Norman met him outside and I saw him receive the metal ammo box. He reported that the council members couldn't make anything out of the contents. "Let's give it a try. I'll bet it's in code or something."

We opened the box and Norman carefully lifted out the contents, which seemed to be about the thickness of a ream of paper. "Got to keep them in order," he said as he carefully placed the stack on the floor next to the coffee table.

Regina and Susan joined us. We began by taking the first page and studying it.

"It is code!" Regina said, shaking her head.

"Not really." I said, picking up a second sheet. "Look! Each entry is in order. The first is a description. See, *B&W Bowl*. The second is... Probably where he got it. Look here!" I pointed to an entry down the page. "*Cliff P.*" Then I found another, "*16 Window.*" The others agreed, finding other place references on pages they picked-up. "Hey, there's no dollar sign, but this must be what he paid. *12*. This next one is *14*. Here, this one is *21.50*." They scanned their sheets, identified numbers, and agreed. "Next is a date, month and year only. See, *7-00*. July 1900. And finally, look at this!" I waited until all eyes were focused upon the entry I was pointing to. "*100 Brownfield*. In fact, there must be thirty Brownfield

entries on this page. And here, 300 C-St M. Is that 'Colorado State Museum?' There are a lot of entries with those letters. Here, 'S' may mean Smithsonian. 'PU?' Maybe the University of Pennsylvania?"

We had begun to decipher the format of the records. Willis had identified the object, told where he got it, when, to whom it was sold and for what amount.

Susan was nodding, agreeing, but I could tell that something was bothering her. She thought a few moments longer and then out it came.

"Guys, these records are interesting---I mean we can identify some of the buyers and amounts, but what good are they? There must be umpteen-million black on white bowls. With these descriptions, the Utes couldn't recover anything."

We all thought about that and agreed. Beardancer wasn't willing to leave it there. "Yes, but it shows that the artifact came from Sixteen Window House in 1900. That ruin is on our land. I'll bet the museum, or whoever, wrote a code number on each artifact. They always do that---at lease nowadays. If there is a code, then we can identify the bowls and stuff from 1900."

It hit me suddenly. We had a problem. "1900? Willis wasn't born in 1900! These may not be his records." I heard the defeat in my voice as I spoke. "Hey," I said, fumbling through the stack of papers. "Let's see if the handwriting or something changes later... You know, when Willis took over."

I leafed through the stack of records trying to find a place where the... "Look!" About a quarter of the way down I found a note scrawled on the letterhead of the Willis Trading Company. I read it out loud. "*Son, i'm passin these on to you. Dont disapoint me*"

and Ma by failin to keep them as i done all these years. Dad.”

We had it! C. J. Willis’s father, Charles P. Willis, was an artifacts trader. He ran a trading company that Willis Jr. had taken over long before he opened the Rocks and Ruins Gallery in Sedona. The Willis family records did go back to the turn of the century, maybe earlier.

I lifted the pile of pages off the floor, turned it over, and took the top sheet. “This should be the last entry... By date, I mean.” It was. Most sales on the sheet were dated 1958. At the very bottom of the page, the last date was 8-59. “We need to go through all of these pages and see if anything stands out... like a mummified Ute body or...?”

Regina smiled and sat back, her long hair silken against the rough fabric of the couch. “That will take a long time. If we look for mummified bodies, how would he have listed them?”

“If he listed them,” I replied, “he probably used ‘body,’ ‘mummy,’ or something like ‘DI.’”

Beardancer grimaced. Susan couldn’t leave it. “DI? Dead Indian? That’s awful!” She picked a sheet at random from about a quarter way down the inverted pile, scanned it and stopped, scowling. “Like these entries? Look at the money he made! 1500, 1200, 1000, 1500, 2000, just to note a few. Wow, these items brought in lots of money. And look! Most of these big dollar items are M’s and look at this! One, two, three, four, five...*WM’s*.” She held the page so that we all could see it. “WM? Woman’s Mummy? And look at these! *CM. CM. CM.* What does that stand for?”

We had a lot of research to do. I volunteered to research the history of the times by going through

documents and historical accounts. I would spend the rest of the day at the library. The others began the slow and arduous task of going through Willis's records.

Chapter 21

“Look, Doctor, I know that you and Brownfield edited the records some.” ‘Edited’ was a word that was acceptable in the academic community.

“FERNER GETTS! DOCTOR GETTS!” he growled at the girl behind the counter, incensed that she had questioned him.

“Sir! Doctor. I must see your driver’s license or some other form of identification.”

“But I’m...” he gave in. These officious clerks always had to have their way. He flipped his leather personal organizer open and took out his passport. He shoved it toward her. “I don’t need a drivers license, I don’t drive myself, of course.”

“I’m sorry Sir, please take it out of the jacket for me!”

She had to be harassing him and he didn’t know why. She had to know by looking at him, the way he dressed, his bearing, that he was an important person, much her better. “If I miss my flight because of this... Well, you will not be happy with the results!” He caught the edge of the passport with his thumbnail and fingernail, slid it out of the plastic pocket. He glared at her as she wrote the number down on her ticket form. She handed him the passport without putting it back into its jacket. He fumed.

“In the future you can save time by booking your flight in advance, Sir. But you will still need your identification to get a boarding pass.” She looked away from him and smiled at the next person in line.

“Damn poor way to run an airline! Damn poor way to treat important people,” he mumbled. The worst of

it was that there was only one class on the airplane. He had to sit with the unwashed. He hoped that this beginning didn't portend problems to come.

It took most of the day to get to Sedona. Phoenix had been balmy, and the orange blossoms filled the air with perfume that made him sneeze and his sinus cavities itch. He waited in the executive lounge for the connector flight. They obviously recognized his importance and status. No one questioned his being there.

Jammed, jostled, insulted, hungry and angry, he de-planed on the mesa top above the famous strip city surrounded by amazing red rock formations. All he wanted was a way down off the mesa and a fine room where he could order up a massage before dinner. He should have had Nancy make reservations for him... Too bad. He had to get out of Denver and away from Edith as fast as possible...damn her, it was her fault that he was at the mercy of these desert barbarians.

"Reservation?"

"No," he said puffing himself up and giving the man his special look.

"Sorry Sir, but we've been booked-up for weeks. Can I call around and try to find you a place to stay?"

He felt dirty; soiled actually. The town was full of sunbirds and other useless drones. The gray haired man picked up the phone and began dialing. Getts interrupted.

"See here, I don't want just any place. Understand? I need a place like this one or better. Call them first!"

"No chance Sir. All of the triple-A resorts are booked months ahead. If I can find you a room, you'll

have to take it or drive on to Flag or maybe Cottonwood.”

He settled for a small place along the strip. It had no services and the pervasive smells of human dander-mold and rotting shower stall seams.

He ate at a restaurant across the street. It cost a lot and that made him feel good. The food was tourist fare, clarified butter and corn starch seemed to be the main ingredients. He felt ill, even before he returned to the motel. Locked in the room, he partially undressed and stretched out on the bed, having carefully removed the bedspread without actually touching it. His mind raced as he tried to figure out how to get out of town as soon as possible. He looked in his personal organizer and found Connely’s name. That old man would know everything. He reached for the phone to call... There was no phone in the room. Completely humiliated and debased, he pulled his heavy coat over his shirt and slacks and went out into the freezing night to find a pay phone. When the door lock clicked, he realized that the key was inside on the night stand, next to his personal organizer. He couldn’t help it, his eyes teared and a sob escaped his thin pursed lips.

“Roy Connely here.” The voice was heavy with sleep.

“Connely. Doctor Getts. My secretary is back in Denver, forgive my calling without notice. I’m here in Sedona.”

“Getts,” he recognized the man’s voice even though it had been more than a decade since he had last talked with him. “I was expecting your call. Knew you would be coming here, too. Bad for you isn’t it? You want me to help you get the records?”

Getts was alarmed that Connely knew his purpose and spoke so openly about it. Was the line secure? He felt the heat of anger rising to his head in spite of the cold February night and the wind-chill which had to be near zero. "Stop It? What do you mean?" He paused for effect and continued before the old centenarian could inject an answer. "Oh, you mean they found Willis's records?" He jumped ahead to Willis, realizing that he could have exposed himself, but gambling that his move would draw Connely out.

"Something like that. They found a mummy as you know."

"Yeah, but not one of the... It was the Ute, right?"

Connely remembered Getts as a pompous ass who imagined that he was a chosen American upper class WASP prince. He disliked him, didn't want to talk with him, so he decided to twist his tail and see what he could learn. "Oh yes, you're right. They did find other bodies or at least parts of them. The Ute will tell the tale though, won't he? And the records will change things, right?" He had no idea how the Ute figured into the whole thing, but decided to pretend that he did.

"My God, it's gone that far already?"

"Further, I'm out of the loop of course, so I only know scuttlebutt. You want Willis's records of sales, right?"

"Well now I..." He thought about what he should say to hide his purpose, decided that the records did exist because Connely knew about them, and let out a breath that the wind swept away like white smoke. "That's right. And any other records that could prove embarrassing to...to us all." So there were records, he thought. That traitor trader had been planning to

blackmail them all. Connely had seen them...maybe not. But he knew where they were; who had them.

Connely laughed his great, hearty, chortling laugh. "Not all, not me! I could give a rat's ass. I want Willis and that's all. The records mean nothing to me. You want to burn them, right? I have a score to settle with Willis, that's all I want. What you want is interesting and hard to get. Kinda puts your joint in a wringer, doesn't it? In fact, maybe we can do some business together. Maybe I can help. Can you spend what it will take? What about others who have seen them? What about copies?" He twisted Getts' tail harder.

Getts heard Connely overstate that he was not involved. Damn fool! Did the old bastard think that he didn't know that he had run the trading post until Willis bought it from him? That damned old fart! He decided to let the ace lie for now. "Look Connely, this is not the time or way to talk about such things. We need to meet and I need a favor..." He didn't give the old man a chance to reply. "I need a place to stay that is civilized. I need... Well, can you get me into a resort hotel or someplace that has services?"

"Don't know. Town's always booked-up these days. You want a place for how long?"

"Good God man, not more than a week. It shouldn't take that long."

"Where are you staying now, Ferner isn't it?"

Getts cringed. The man had no right to call him by his first name. "I'm at the only place I could get. Motel on the West Sedona strip... Doesn't even have phones in the rooms. It's called the Red Rock something or other. I need out!"

Connely was grinning ear-to-jowl. He heard the wind whistling around Getts and imagined him outside at a pay phone. 'Fitting,' he thought. "Okay Getts, I'll

work on it. Listen, call me tomorrow mid-afternoon. I'll do some legwork."

It was cold in the motel room. His stomach hurt. The parts of his body that were infected by cancers hurt. He lay in his clothes, afraid to get undressed and expose his skin to the germs crawling around the bed. The night lasted longer than his fear of germs, but not of mites and fleas and... Finally sunlight crept through the bathroom window and began to illuminate the room. Relieved that the ordeal was over, he fell asleep. At 11:00 a maid pounded on the door, bringing him back to the world. His body ached. He was hungry and cold. His problems had only just begun.

The restaurant where he had eaten dinner was closed. As far as he could see in either direction there was no place to have brunch. He stood outside the motel where the manager had told him to stand, waiting for a taxi. After two trips, his three suitcases and his briefcase were at his feet. The sun was shining, traffic was streaming by, and the taxi arrived. Things were looking up!

"Driver, can I retain your services for a day or two?"

The Driver turned in the seat of his worn Lincoln Town Car and looked at his passenger, who was well dressed, unshaven and rumpled, haughty and abusive in tone and body language. "What is it you're after?"

"I need transportation. I will hire you and pay you well for your services, my man."

“Can’t do that. Lots of people hereandabouts depend on me. I can’t hire-out for long periods of time. Why don’t you rent a car?”

“Sir, I have never had the need to drive myself. I don’t have a driver’s license.”

“So, let me get this straight. You want a car and chauffeur?”

“Of course!”

“Well Sir, It can’t be me. Let me think. No one here this time of year does that sort of thing. Well, maybe you could...” He paused and waited for the query.

“Yes? What?”

“Rent a Pink Jeep. This time of year they have extras and I’m sure one of their drivers would love to work for you. What about that?”

“Are you serious? Ride around in a Jeep? A Jeep? Did you say a Pink Jeep?”

“Take it or leave it hombre. I’ll drive you over there if you want. Otherwise, where should I drop you?”

The taxi driver dropped him and his gear in front of the Pink Jeep office. Inside, he stated his need and got a blank stare in return. After restating his need for a vehicle and driver, the counter attendant called his boss. The boss shook his head, told Getts that what he asked for would be very expensive, and stood watching the pompous man in the expensive greatcoat. Getts pulled out his credit card and presented it with a cold stare.

“Only problem is,” the man said, “I ain’t got a driver on call...unless,” he turned to the counter attendant. “Hey, Bill’s around back cleaning vehicles.” He turned back to Getts and asked him in if he minded if the driver was an older man.

“How old?”

“Hell, I don’t really remember. Maybe late sixties. He’s fit! Doesn’t drink or mess around. He’s always been responsible for us, knows the country around here like a Cougar. Has his Class C. Want me to call him? He goes by the moniker Anasazi Bill.”

Even with the canvas sides snapped on, the Jeep didn’t keep the cold air out. Ferner was perched on the middle seat, luggage stashed around him. He held the passenger’s safety strap in one hand and the bottom edge of the seat with the other. His kidneys cramped with each bump in the road. The cancer was spreading!

“You’ll like the Enchantment Resort,” the whiskered cowboy driver commented as they made their way down Dry Creek Road. “I know a guy there who works the desk. Maybe he can get you in.”

Ferner sat in the Pink Jeep while his driver went inside. He felt weak. ‘Cultural Shock’ he thought. ‘I’m lost in this vile hinterland.’ The area was remote, a prison surrounded with impassable red rock walls and impenetrable desert. His head sunk until his chin was touching the velvet collar of his imported Scottish greatcoat. His rectum ached.

“Doctor Getts? Hey Doc!”

Someone calling him? His mind was foggy. Maybe his driver...

“Ferner you old son-of-a-gun! Hey, we’re not here on vacation. What the hell are you doing touring around in a Jeep?”

Ferner gasped. Phil Long! He recognized the Director of the Pre-Historic Society as he approached. He got his energy up and acted pleased to see Long. “Phil, I should have known that you would be staying here. I’ve been out touring---you know, getting the lay

of the land around here. My man is inside now checking on my reservations. When did you get here?"

Long summed up Getts' state in a glance. The man was unshaven, rumped and dusty. "You're a fish out of water here, Ferner. I never expected that you would come down here. Things are that bad? Are they worse than we thought? You here for a reason?"

"Bad, yes. I'm here for the same reason you are. What do you..."

He was interrupted by the cowboy who came out of the registration office and yelled across the parking area at him. "Come on in fella! I got you a room by sheer luck and good connections. Leave your bags, I'll fetch 'em in when you're ready."

He cringed at the crudeness of his driver. The man was uncouth and wild, as he guessed all Arizonans were. Oh well, this was the frontier and he had to adjust to it. The thought of a fine room, hot bath and decent food helped him focus. "Listen Long, I've been roughing it and I need to get settled-in and cleaned up. You meet me...is there a quiet bar?" Long nodded. "Well how about two hours...no, better make that three." He looked at his platinum Rolex. "Make that 3:00 PM!"

Long had worked with Getts before and feared the man. He was tempted to say "No," but Getts was powerful, the chairman of his board of directors, and vindictive. He hated submitting, yet he knew his place. "Yes Doctor. I'll change my plans and be there."

Getts and Long met in the bar exactly at 3:00. Both prided themselves upon being prompt. After

some small talk, Getts asked Long to fill him in about Connely's involvement and the progress made so far.

Long chose his words carefully. "Doc Connely only knows me as the man who took over from his friend, your grandfather, to coordinate the efforts to protect the collectors. I've never met Connely. What I know about him came from Ferner Brownfield." He stopped talking. Ferner Getts' face showed no sign that he was listening. The bastard held a smirk in place like a mask.

"As I recall, when old man Connely was the owner and operator of that Sedona trading post, long before Willis bought it, he had a major collection of Anasazi grave goods. Your grandfather, as you know, was *the* major player in the antiquities trade and the man who first recognized the danger of existing records. It was Brownfield who warned his friend Connely to get out of the trading business and sell his collections. And, as I'm sure you know, it was your grandfather who targeted Willis, the major supplier of grave goods from the Mesa Verde area, and tried to force him to destroy all of his records. Willis had seen an opportunity for blackmail. He hid the records and claimed that they had never existed. About that time, the fifties, Willis approached Doc Connely, offered a fair price for his collection, and offered to buy Connely's trading post. Doc sold out, but Willis was unable to make his payments. Connely was temporarily appeased when Willis told him about some of the major sales he had pending. Sales that would more than pay off his debt to Connely. Does that agree with what you know Doctor?"

Ferner Getts nodded. It was mostly news to him, but he didn't want Long to know that. His mother's father had died almost fifteen years ago at 97. He had

never had a decent conversation with the hateful old man.

“So, the story goes that Willis was a man who loved to brag about his deals. One evening, when Doc Connely had come down to the Red Rocks and Ruins Trading Post to collect overdue payments, Willis bragged about five mummies that he had just shipped to himself from Colorado. Connely knew from his time as a trader that there was always a market for the remains of Indians. Mummies brought people into museums, side-shows and trading posts. A good mummy, preferably female, was worth thousands of dollars in those days. Egyptian mummies brought even more, I guess. I know Connely wasn't concerned about trading Injun remains at the time--- who was? He agreed with Willis that the bodies would bring top dollar. Then Willis, still bragging, so your grandfather told me, opened his storage room and showed him the mummies. The bodies were those of children, all young girls.

“Brownfield told me that the sight of those bodies unnerved Doc Connely. He got his money soon after and pretended that he knew nothing about Willis's business. Some time later, so the story goes, Willis approached him for a “loan” secured by records that Willis said showed that Connely was an accomplice in the child mummies scheme. Connely called his bluff by threatening to have him killed, which I'm sure he would have, and the matter was dropped... Later, Willis closed the trading post and moved away. Doc Connely hates him with a passion.

“Doctor Getts,” Long continued, “Connely knew that the falsified records still existed. He had to destroy them. I imagine that the matter lay inside him like a festering sore for years before he decided to do

something about it. He had re-purchased the old building several years before, probably to make certain that no one else got in there. Since Willis left, it had been used as a fruit sorting and storage shed. He always intended to do a systematic search for the records, but he never did. Then his real estate scheme got ahead of that. He hadn't searched for the records when he had the chance, and now, when he intended to search, the shipping crate with the remains of the Ute was discovered. The project became public. He hired some thugs to go in and dig up the floor. That didn't work. The police brought the archaeologists in. Lucky for all of us, the records didn't turn up." He paused and noted that Getts face hadn't changed a wrinkle. The man scared the hell out of him.

"I think Doc Connely thinks that that investigator Cain fellow who works for him will get the records and he will have an opportunity to destroy those pertaining to him. I fear that if he gets them before we do that he will use the records as Willis intended, to blackmail a lot of good people, yourself included. In fact, I guess your name would be at the top of his list."

Long had more information than Getts could easily process. He never dreamed... Connely? The records? Who was this guy Cain? Cain had the records? He cleared his throat, he knew that he had caught a bad cold or something terrible from this awful desert. He stared at Long. "Phil, where are the records? Has the guy you mentioned, Cain, found them? I talked to Connely last night and he as much as said that he had them...or at least that he had seen them."

"Impossible! I have men watching Cain's every move. He's sent nothing to Connely. He hasn't even

talked to Connely! He's not even in Arizona, he's in Colorado. No, Connely is bluffing..." He felt a shock of realization flow from his spine into his brain. "Well, I think he is. You say he implied that he had, or had seen, Willis's records? Well if so, maybe he's using Cain as decoy..." he paused and thought about it, his face losing color. "It's possible! Cain was hired by Connely to find out about the Ute. We got in and took Cain's computer and I read the contract with Connely. Connely put him on the track of the Ute, not the records. I know that for certain." He paused again, letting his mind sort. Getts' face hadn't changed.

"Hey, that's right Doctor Getts. He is a decoy! Our friends at the FBI picked-up Willis and he didn't have the records and he said he destroyed them years ago. That means that the records are here in Sedona, always have been. Connely must know where. Damn!"

"But the Ute?"

"You're right Doctor. The Ute could lead to... Well, to the other problem. I've thought a lot about that. More than a century has passed. According to your grandfather there was no record of his death. Cain can investigate forever and never get anyplace. Everyone is dead that ever knew. That's one spirit from the ruins that we don't have to fear."

Getts sat back. His mind was reeling. He hadn't had a clue as to what he would do when he came to Sedona. Now, Long had laid all of this on him... He looked around the bar as he thought. His eyes met those of the cowboy sitting not more than ten feet away on a bar stool. The seedy man's imitation Stetson was on the bar next to him. His boot heels were hooked over the rungs of the stool. His driver!

What the hell was he doing here? What had he heard?

“Hey there Mr. Getts. How’s it going? You want me to take you someplace? You want me to stick around?”

Long turned to view the lanky cowboy. How long had he been sitting there? This time of the afternoon no one should be in the bar. He recognized the stringy old man as the Pink Jeep driver who had delivered Getts. So, Getts had a shadow! He saw through that game. Getts was dangerous. He played ignorant and didn’t offer information. The cowboy had heard their conversation. Getts had a witness, whatever that was worth to him. Maybe Getts had a bodyguard?

“That’s your driver, why’s he staying around?”

Getts took a minute to register Long’s question. What was the cowboy doing? Was he listening to their conversation? Had he been set-up? Did the guy work for...? He couldn’t process it all. Long was looking at him, waiting for an answer. “Oh, calls himself Anasazi Bill. Works for the Jeep people. I’ve retained him to be my driver.”

Anasazi! The word signified Long’s greatest nightmare. His life revolved around protecting everybody who had gained from robbing their graves. Now this guy... Anasazi Bill? What was Getts up to?

Phil Long had questions that only Ferner Getts could answer. The problem was that he didn’t know how to ask them. Getts was impossible! Finally, after deciding to jump in and ask, Long turned back to Getts, his voice a whisper that Anasazi bill could not hear.

“Doctor, your research was based upon your grandfather’s records, right?”

Getts reacted physically, with a start, although his face never lost its set. He sat looking at Long, turning his glass in his hands. "Some."

"Look, Doctor, I know that you and Brownfield edited the records some." 'Edited' was a word that was acceptable in the academic community.

"Grandfather did, of course."

"So your work is based upon the edited records and..." He paused to see if Getts was reacting, "the records kept by various collectors."

Getts's face muscles seemed to twitch and the edges of his mouth dove deeper into his chin. He was good at hiding his reaction. "I wouldn't say *that*, necessarily."

Long thought about the answer. What in the hell did that mean? "Well, Sir, what would you say? I mean, you and I have got to make certain that there are no unedited records out there, right?"

"Exactly! I'd say that all of your concerns have been addressed. I knew where all the records were. Those that survived are as they should be." He paused, wiped the moisture from the glass off both hands with a napkin, and continued. "My work reflects what should be known. *Is that enough for you?*" His last question was stated with the most intimidating force he could muster.

"Of course, Doctor. If the records turn up it will be your work against what, then?"

Getts reacted with fear which he couldn't control. He watched Long's face and saw his reaction register. His mind raced. What could he do to redirect Long? 'Go with it,' he thought.

"Damn, you scare the hell out of me Long!" Long's reaction showed that he had taken the right tack. "If

the records become public, we need a plan. But the best plan is not to let them become public! Got that!"

"We're on the same page, Doctor," Long said without conviction. It was as if the wind had gone out of him. The reality was that Getts, maybe with his grandfathers help, had manipulated the records he used as the basis for his dissertation and his book. Records that were used to get his university's highest degree and could now discredit that fine institution. Records that had been made to show that all of the collections had been obtained legally from public lands or with the private landowner's permission.

Chapter 22

We represent all of the people, we don't have to listen to any of *you* people.

QUENTIN COATS DIDN'T LIKE thoughts nagging at the back of his mind. This one had lain here for two days, making itself known when he was asleep or during conversations when someone mentioned key words that were associated with it. Something was rolling around in the back of his thoughts; bugging him. But what? A policeman's day was full of the unknown. His job was to make it known; to find out. This thing? When did it start? He lay awake long after the ten o'clock news. Nothing. He rolled over and found sleep. Sometime in the middle of the night he awoke. His subconscious mind had solved the mystery. It was the way the room had been built and especially the rocked-up doorway in the Anasazi ruin Willis had commandeered for his hideout. The stone was laid-up in too neat a fashion. Sealed doorways were common in Pueblo dwellings, because the Ancients had remodeled often. But this doorway, the whole room in fact... Someone had laid it up differently. He had seen it as he left with the metal box and his mind had recorded the discrepancy. That was what was eating at him. 'Next opportunity,' he thought, 'After this damn snow melts, I'm up there and figure out what's different. I'm opening that doorway to see where it goes.'

I spent the rest of the day in Cortez, at the library. Susan, Regina and Norman kept at the arduous task of going through Willis's records. I wanted to check-

out the dates and events the storytellers had included in their accounts of Ute history. It was difficult. Weminuche Ute History was not readily available. Southern Ute histories painted those who broke away in a bad light. Mostly, the written histories avoided the Ute Mountain Ute's story. The references I found were often derogatory and insulting. A lot of liars had abused the Utes for their own purposes. Some "historians" had written the tribe off as unworthy of a place in history.

The government's attempts at destroying the culture and the people had been successful as far as the written records were concerned. I was sickened as I read what "so-called" scholars had written. I returned the books, frustrated. The librarian noted my angst and made a suggestion. She told me that at Towaoc, I should find a report done by the America West Center in Utah. "Get that, and you may find what you're looking for. We had two copies, but someone stole them about a week ago. I think it was called *A History Of The Relationship Between The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Mesa Verde National Park.*"

This was the first time I had heard about the report. Finding a copy turned out to be a problem.

I asked the girl manning the counter at the tribal library if they had a copy. The card said they had three, but there were none on the shelves.

"We have a card for it," she said, pulling the same record up for me to see. "We had copies... The agency guy came and took them all. I remember because I was on duty and he came in and took all three copies."

“You remember?” I thought that strange as they had thousands of books. “How long ago?”

“Oh, last week. That’s why I remember. It was only last week.”

“Who checked them out?”

“Nobody did. That guy Avery from Washington said that they were not tribal property and that he was returning them. He’s been in since. He’s gone through our collections and... I can’t prove it, but I think he’s stolen some of our books and records. I don’t like him!”

Avery! The BIA guy who had threatened me after the campfire down Mancos Canyon. The guy Jefferson kowtowed to. I felt let-down and defeated.

“I really need a copy. Do you know who else might have one?”

She didn’t. I left after writing down the pertinent information from the library card. I knew she could call the America West Center at the University of Utah and ask for a copy through interlibrary loan. That would take a week or more. I was hoping that Beardancer had one that I could read now.

“I don’t. And I’ll tell you that report was very unpopular with the Feds. The NPS went into orbit when it was released. Congress funded the report, but not many copies were made. I’d bet my Chevy that you can’t even get one from the America West Center. I’d guess that someone in Senator Ben Campbell’s office might have one... Hey, did you ask Doc Berner? He was on the task force. He’d have one.”

I called Berner in Prescott. “I have one Arnie. I was on the Joint Task Force that requested the study. Parts of it are very enlightening. Other parts are repeats of the falsified histories you’ve already read.

Put your crap detector on before you read it! Overall, Professor O'Neil had his graduate students do a good job. I'll overnight it to you. Don't lose it, it's my only copy. Oh and Arnie, look at the Calendar of Documents section. Very helpful as I remember. When you sort out what really happened you'll develop a strong contempt for the so-called historians who have written the histories currently available. We all did."

"Ted, forgive my ignorance. Why is the work so controversial? It's my understanding that it's just a collection of documents from the Washington archives; public records. Am I right?"

"Good question Arnie. You're right! It's all from public records. It documents the fact that the Utes protested the theft of grave goods from their lands. The records deny the Wetherill's claim that the Ute Acowitz gave them permission to dig on the reservation. If the Utes should ever claim ownership of the stolen collections... Well, the law says that you don't own stolen things even if you bought them." It also shows that people like Virginia McClurg lied about the Utes and her agreements with them. When they wouldn't accept her offer to commercialize the ruins, she invented ugly stories to discredit them. Her stuff appears unchallenged in the histories we're supposed to believe were scholarly works." He paused and took a breath. "Want more?" I did!

"In actual fact, those who took the Mesa Verde ruins from the Utes under the guise of protecting them, actually mined and destroyed most of the major sites. Many of the ruins that the Utes were able to protect on their remaining lands still have scientific value because they weren't 'protected.' Do you think the NPS wants that in the history books? Also, there

is an ugly story that can be easily gleaned from the records. The NPS harassed the Utes to get control of more of their land. In 1989, when I was on the task force, the highest NPS official was rude and contemptuous of the Ute People. The Regional Director at that time was openly hostile to them. She was undignified and coarse with them in our meetings. She made it clear from the beginning that even though Congress had set-up the Joint Task Force, the NPS was not about to cooperate with the Utes. Her actions and the results of the task force prove that very little has changed with NPS policies. The NPS preserves and honors an ancient Native American Culture while attempting to denigrate and damage a contemporary one.”

“Jeeze Man, I’m glad you don’t feel strongly about this stuff!” You have given me reason to worry. We may be about to run head-long into the NPS---all the Feds. They are already trying to block our investigation.”

“Sorry Arnie. It was a terrible experience for me and I can only pretend to understand the Ute’s reaction. Those pompous bureaucrats sat there ignoring all the Ute issues and saying, ‘We represent all of the people, we don’t have to listen to any of *you* people.’ Be afraid my friend! The information you are bringing to light cannot be allowed to surface. They won’t kill you, but you may disappear into a hell of false charges and legal battles.”

“Ted, what can I do to protect myself---all of us?”

“Make certain that the Ute Tribe is in charge of the investigation. The Feds can’t easily override tribal decisions on the res. Don’t leave the res! Off the res, they’ll get you! That’s about all I know. Make certain that Norman keeps those on the council he can trust

informed so that they can protect you. Even the FBI will hesitate before they arrest you for doing work the tribe wants done. Good luck!”

Beardancer grinned when I told him. “So, you’re now an Indian! You have the force of the whole U.S. Government against you. They make the laws, interpret them and selectively enforce them. I’ve learned to live with it. Maybe we will have to adopt you.”

Chapter 23

So you will know if the samples they sent you match *us* or *them*. You can identify the gene pool--race, and... What else?

"KATHY DELLS CALLING FOR Doctor Tom Lanard. Okay, I'll hold." Kathy had slept later than usual, knowing that Sunnyvale, California time was one hour earlier than Denver time. Everything was going to be okay now. K.O. Dells would emerge as a mind and a scientific force they would have to honor and deal with. She had always respected Steven Hawking, and so had they. He was a mind trapped in a body that was in worse shape than hers. To true science, that didn't matter. Her resolve strengthened.

"Kathy? Your calling to take our offer?"

"I really never considered not taking it." She lied, but that was what he wanted to believe. "Did you get the new Velcro stuff?"

He laughed. There were maybe five people on the planet that would know what she was referring to. "It came in over a week ago. I personally unpacked the silicone chips, readers and the fluorescent molecule-tagger."

"Say I was to start right away? Is the lab I used last time still set-up?"

"Kathy, we figured you had it wired to destroy invaders. Of course it's ready. It's just the way you left it."

"Tom, I have a personal request. I don't want anybody to know where I am or who I am... I mean, I don't want to be disturbed while I'm working. I want you personally to front for me. You know, take my calls, release my findings... And I'm not going to be

Kathy from now on. Please don't call me Kathy anymore. I'm Doctor K.O. Dells. I'm under your cover...your protection, okay?"

Denver in early March was Siberia. Groundhogs be damned, spring never came early or late to the Rockies... Well, that wasn't exactly true. Denver had spring for a week in May last year. K.O. could have called for her dad's Gulfstream, but thought better of it. She managed okay without putting him out. The stewardess had wheeled her aboard the 737 ahead of the other passengers. The airline wanted to avoid the spectacle of a short woman on four legs spazzing along the boarding ramp. She held her aluminum clip-on crutches in one hand, her briefcase in her lap with the other. The flight was uneventful. They wheeled her off the plane in Oakland, left her near the moving sidewalk, and breathed an audible sigh of relief. She knew the routine. If she knew Tom, he would be there to meet her and drive her to Sunnyvale. He would probably let her stay in his large house again. It was handicap friendly and he was never there except to sleep... She hoped so. Digs were almost impossible to find in and around Silicone Valley.

Tom was a friend... Well why wouldn't he be. She was worth hundreds of millions to the new company. Tom had his dream of an IPO in the near future. With her on board, their work in gene technology and specifically, gene chips, would leap ahead. The money interested her because it was a way of measuring success. Other than that, the money was like a second Lamborgini in the garage. Interesting, but never as exciting as the first one.

Tom was a competent scientist who had earned his Ph.D at Berkley. They had invited him back to do

his graduate work even though, like Gates and a dozen other greats, he had dropped out and never finished his undergraduate degree. Now, Tom the scientist was Tom the empire builder. His challenge was keeping the venture capitalists away from operations. They invested money and thought that gave them the intelligence to make operational and research decisions. Tom kept them at bay, and she respected him for it. His company needed her and would try hard to give her anything she asked for.

He was there, walking beside her and looking directly into her eyes. She doubted that he would be able to describe her physically, if asked, as his whole focus was on her mind's energy.

"Hi Kathy! You're coming with me! Don't argue, don't let on that you're being kidnapped. Just do what I say and come along peaceably."

He steered her to a waiting taxi, gave the driver instructions to his car parked in the close-in lot, and gave the driver a twenty. Then he turned, took her luggage check-stubs, handed her a door key to his white Lexus, and said he'd get her luggage and meet her there in five. He was off.

"Kathy I'm a happy man! Thank you for choosing Lanard. You will never regret it! Your contract will be drawn up soon, but not without first hearing your conditions. Did I tell you that we just did a private offering and raised sixteen million? Well..."

"Tom, slow down! I need to tell you that I brought some unfinished work with me... Stuff I promised. Part of it is velcro applicable, so I know you won't mind. But I need to get right on it."

"Mind if I ask what it is?"

"You can ask, and I'll tell. That's the way we work together best, right?"

“My dream of a perfect R&D company. I think it works best that way.”

“Tom, I was contacted by a friend at the Tree Ring Lab in Tucson. They want to know if bone pattern growth studies I have could be applicable to the dendrochronology studies they have ongoing. It’s interesting and it won’t take much time.”

“No problema, Chiquita!”

“And one other thing that I think you’ll find interesting. The tree ring folks turned an Arizona archaeologist onto me. Seems that the local medical examiner couldn’t do the DNA studies on some skin and bone, and... Well, they got to talking and the tree ring folks told them of my work. So, I’m going to try to identify the DNA for them using my new technique. Okay?”

“A real case! Boy will that make the venture guys drool. They always want examples of real applications of our science... Will this work for that?”

“I’ll let you know.”

They were making good time. Tom was a careful driver, and she appreciated that more than he could ever know. It was one of the reasons she trusted him and wanted to work for his company. She was more sensitive to safety than most. The last thing she needed was another impairment. She watched him negotiate the freeway clogs and avoid the wolf packs that formed, exploded apart, and then reformed again to stifle swift movement.

“Kathy, how does our project apply to what the medical examiner wants? I mean, I know generally, but what will you do?”

“If I can get the DNA from the samples of bone and skin, which I think I can, given the new developments in DNA extraction, I can split the

strands. Then, as strands are made up of *A, T, C and G* chemical building blocks, I can use them as sticky, like Velcro, to attract similar single stranded DNA from my base collection. The A's on one strand always stick to the T's on the other, and likewise, C's always bind to G's. Almost all will match, as the human species has only minute differences. I mark the unmatched and odd pairs and tag them with fluorescent molecules. Then, I map the markers and, using my baseline data, I can find the matches for the single stranded DNA I am testing. That will tell me its relationship to my baseline DNA database."

"So you will know if the samples they sent you match *us* or *them*. You can identify the gene pool--- race, and... What else?"

"Tom, gene pool and that kind of ID is the easy part, you know that. What you want, what Lanard is working on that interests me, is to know if it is possible to identify bad combinations that result in disease and good combinations that result in strengths like intelligence. We'll be able to analyze DNA from Einstein's brain and tell which combinations caused his unusual enlargement of spatial intelligence centers. Neat, huh?"

"I've been telling our investors that as a result of Lanard Bio-Technologies work, a person can go to the doctor and get a reading of her proclivity for future ills. We'll be able to identify markers that show bad combinations and potential problems, and maybe even fix them."

"That's what hooked me into this. In my case, my parents could have known that I was missing some key links, or had mismatched or unhealthy links, and repaired them before I was born. I'm a believer!" She paused and watched the Californicated landscape

slide by. “Thanks for agreeing to let me do this other stuff. It won’t take too long. If I can extract DNA from the samples they sent me, I’ll know by the end of the week the genetic background of each sample.”

“The important question is,” Tom said, “Are you as hungry as I am?”

Chapter 24

Hey, this could be the last Indian war, The War Against Remembering.

REGINA AND SUSAN HAD spent hours searching for information on the wrinkled and often smudged accounting sheets Willis's father and his son had used to record sales. They were amazed at how much money changed hands. Susan pointed to a 5000 entry. "Five thousand in 1936 was worth what today?"

I suspected that it was worth almost ten times more. "You could buy a great house for \$4,500 back then. That house would sell for three or four hundred thou today. Who paid that amount?"

"B-Mus," Susan read. "Maybe that's the Baltimore Museum."

"More likely the Berlin Museum," Regina commented. "A lot of stuff went to Europe."

We were all tired. Beardancer was off meeting with some of the council members who supported us.

Regina got up and stretched her tired muscles. "Want some Indian food?"

We looked at her, wondering.

"Stay here, I'll make it and bring it in. Just relax, I'll surprise you...and the kids will be home from school in about twenty minutes. They'll want some too."

She closed the kitchen door and we could hear strange sounds coming from the kitchen. The house filled with an oily smell that... "Susan, do you smell what I smell?"

"Popcorn!"

Norman came home at dark, shortly after the kids had come stomping in, trying to get their blood circulating to warm their feet. The house suddenly became small and cramped like a den. Winter! I remembered why I lived in Arizona.

Later that evening, after the Beardancers had cleaned up the dinner mess and helped the kids with their homework, the house got quiet. It was Voyager time, and by agreement, if everybody's work was done, the TV could light the living room. We all snuggled together and went to the Delta Quadrant. Re-runs were as good as the originals, and nobody cared that Captain Janeway had long ago gone to join Kirk and Picard someplace in the far recesses of the picture tube.

"Want an Indian nightcap?" Regina asked after the kids crashed, still enjoying the success of her popcorn joke.

"What's that?" we all responded, including Norman.

"A hat!"

Amid the groans and hisses, we had time to laugh. That was the Indian way. Anglos called it junior high humor. To understand Native Americans, you had to enjoy laughing.

Beardancer was the first to regain composure. We were all tired and dingy. "The BIA and the FBI and maybe even the guys running the housing projects, have all teamed against us. That guy Avery is more than just BIA, he's some kind of advisor on Indian affairs to the President. Every file they have access to has been rifled for documents we might use to understand our history. Several council members

have been so intimidated that they have turned away from their agency bosses. The council has been approached three times now with threats to cut off funding if they allow you, Arnie Cain, public enemy number one, to remain in their employ."

Regina was shocked. "And so? What did the council do?"

"They made a motion to conduct all further meeting in Ute, and to allow the agency guys in by invitation only. They have sealed some of the agency's offices and taken control of the records of tribal government actions, which luckily were stored where the government's goons didn't know to look for them. Avery stormed out, threatening to enact some obscure rule that he says gives the U.S. Congress the right to dissolve the lowly Ute Tribal Council."

Susan couldn't believe it. "How could they do that just because the Ute people want to know their history?"

"Oh that's not why they are doing it. Just ask them. They are acting to prevent a takeover of tribal government by a radical element led by your husband, an outsider."

"They can't do that, can they?" Susan asked in a defeated voice as if she already knew the answer.

"We don't know. Maybe this time the Utes will rise up against the white man. We may have a small war to fight, but I imagine that is the last thing the agency folks want. Not because they wouldn't like to defeat us again and make us totally dependent, but because someone might find out what we are fighting for and tell the American people."

I wasn't as concerned as maybe I should have been. We had right on our side and the people who control the press know that Indian articles sell papers.

We would get great coverage. “Hey, this could be the last Indian war, The War Against Remembering.”

The late winter snow storm had done its best to change the surface of the world we knew. Then, within days, the snow was gone, but the moisture wasn't. It lay trapped in the top inch of soil, freezing at night and melting into the clays and loess to form slippery mud when the sun shone. “Mud season,” Norman grunted. “I can take rain and drought and lots of snow, but I hate mud! It'll be like this for weeks.”

I was frustrated. The tribal policeman, Quentin Coats I believe his name was, had told Beardancer that he wanted to go back to the ruin that Willis had used as a hideaway. He wanted to investigate the way the rocks were laid and open a doorway that was sealed-up in an unusual way. We had the records, and the FBI had taken Willis somewhere where we couldn't get to him. As far as we knew, we had learned all we would be allowed to know about the man. So, if there was something hidden in back of that sealed doorway we should be the first to explore it. There might be clues there that would give us the Ute's murderers. The mud made it impossible to drive in. Hiking in would take several days. Horses could make it, but even they would slip and slide and have a difficult time. We had to wait and pray for wind.

Beardancer pounded on our door two days later. I looked at my watch. 6:30. We usually stayed in bed and out of the way until the kids went off to school. That gave the Beardancers time to be alone as a family. We were camped on top of them and although they never even implied that we were disrupting normal family interactions, we knew that we were.

“Hey, what is it? We’re getting up!”

“Get up! Come outside and look at the sky!”

The sunrise spectacle was over. The sky was a deep cobalt blue with tinges of blue-green at the horizons. High up, maybe thirty thousand feet, were long stringers of wispy clouds, like lacy fingers reaching for the North Star. The jet stream was roaring high overhead and the weather was about to change.

“Forecast says high wind warning this afternoon. We should be able to drive out there by the end of the week.” Norman hunched his thick shoulders into his plaid blanket coat and surveyed the sky. “We are glad for the winds now, but just wait. In a week we’ll be watching the sky and praying for the wind to stop.”

Susan and I had reluctantly agreed to stay on the reservation and out of sight as much as possible. A tribal police officer warned us, via a friend of Beardancers, that I was under surveillance. She told him that although there wasn’t a legal arrest warrant, someone had given orders that I be picked-up for questioning. We assumed that they would get Susan if they couldn’t get me. We felt trapped. It did give us endless hours to analyze Willis’s records and to systematically examine our notes and what we recalled of the elder’s stories. When we had a question, Beardancer or Regina either knew the answer or went out and found someone who did. In a few days we had a pretty good idea of what life was like for the Weminuche Utes in the 1890s.

I got a call from Fielder. The FBI lab where he had sent the newspaper article found in the Ute’s back pocket, notified him that it was being held as “evidence” and would not be returned to him until the

case was closed. I knew the system, and I knew that a lot of good FBI people were simply doing their job, and doing it well. They never questioned the decisions of those directing them. I couldn't get mad at them, it wasn't their fault that the system could be perverted by their own bureaucrats and 'politically responsive' directors who worked for those in power, not the American people. Any member of any American minority could explain how that worked. Getting something from them would be like trying to get a grant from a large foundation to "empower" Hispanics and Native Americans. You were dead before you started. Those in power would have to die before they would allow a feared minority to be empowered. That's how political power was used. That's the way it worked, and I wasn't surprised.

The list Susan and Regina had made of buyers of the Willis's stolen grave goods was long and impressive. Susan had laughingly made the comment that it would be easier to list the museums and universities that had not purchased collections. The list of private individuals was much shorter. Brownfield had been the single largest purchaser. Other names that appeared read like a page from Who's Who Among Art Dealers In America. Most bought single items, or items that seemed to be rare because of the prices they paid.

In the early 1950s the name Connely appeared more than two dozen times. It didn't take us long to realize that in the early 1950s, Doc Connely was buying from Willis for his trading post in Sedona. Red flags began waving in my mind. Connely had said that he wanted revenge on Willis. Well, it was becoming obvious that he and Willis had a longer history together than he had implied.

Why had Connely retained me? He said it was to find out about the Ute. Now it looked like he wanted the records as bad as the “good” guys whose reputations and collections could be taken if the list came to light. Well, hopefully, by tomorrow afternoon it would come to light in a way they never dreamed of. Once it was out there on the internet, I imagined that they would leave us alone. Boy was I wrong! I was beginning to suspect that something else was threatening some of them even more than the Willis records, but I never imagined how horrific it was.

Two days later we were ready. Beardancer sat me down and questioned me. “Now you’re sure? You’ve been over them all and they are ready to be made public? Is there any reason we should wait before we put them on the internet? I have a feeling we’re moving too fast.”

I was shaking my head and motioning with my hands that I could find no reason not to proceed, when the phone rang.

Regina answered it, listened and handed it to me. “It’s Doctor Berner calling from Arizona.”

“Cain? I thought I could find you through Norman. Listen! You won’t believe this! I just got a packet in the mail, I don’t have a clue as to who sent it. It came from Denver. Guess what it contains!” He didn’t give me time to breathe, let alone guess. “The original records of several big purchasers of antiquities... Major museums and some universities. Maybe even a private collector or two. The file is thick! Are these the records you’ve been searching for?”

I turned to Beardancer and grinned. “You’re right Norman. There is a reason why we should wait to put the stuff out on the internet.”

Chapter 25

She had a small Exacto knife in her desk. She took it out and began jabbing it into the appointment pad.

EACH BAG K.O. DELLS examined contained human material. Bag #1, had part of a human finger and a patch of dried skin. Bag #2, held a tiny patch of skin with hair still attached. As she perused it, she decided that it must have been exposed to the sun and elements. The hair was weathered from black to a blotchy brown. Bag #3, had a piece of cloth and a stain that looked as if it might be blood. Bag #4, held a crinkled piece of skin-like material that looked almost like the skin off of a nose. Bag #5, had fragments of skin and hair. She felt a twinge of uneasiness as she put the materials back in the bags. It would take time, but she knew that each bag contained adequate material to obtain DNA. A year ago, she would have doubted that DNA could be retrieved from all of the samples. Now, with the new techniques and tools, she could find it, split it, let it velcro to her baseline DNA, tag the combinations she identified as mismatched, with fluorescent molecules, and identify the specific origin and race of each person represented by the bagged samples. "Easy!" K.O. exclaimed to the room. "I can have it for them in a week."

The phone didn't ring unless Tom had personally cleared the call. It jangled and she jumped.

"Yes?"

"K.O., there is a call from a guy that says he's the Head Curator or something like that...in Washington. Says he is calling about the work you are doing for

the archaeologist, Carla, from Sedona. He said it is important that he talk with you. Will you take the call?"

Kathy was surprised. Who would call her from Washington? "Tom, did he give you a name?"

"Sorry honey, I didn't get it. He gave me his title like I should already know him. Should I tell him to write?"

She shrugged. "Oh no, I'll take it. Thanks Tom."

"This is Doctor K.O. Dells. Can I help you?"

"Doctor... I didn't know you were a woman. Well, hello! I'm Doctor Ferner Getts, I oversee *all* Museum collections, federal and state. I'm the author of *Southwest Collections, the definitive study of the origins of all of America's great Southwest collections*. You must know of me!"

She did, but not because she admired his work or position. Getts, the rude bastard that had been so obviously repulsed by her at the Colorado museum dedication. "Oh Doctor Getts, of course I know you. Why have you called?" She had a small Exacto knife in her desk. She took it out and began jabbing it into the appointment pad.

"Well, you see, some material was sent to you by mistake... Oh, no one's at fault. It was a simple error made by an archaeologist who didn't know better. Did you get the samples for some kind of DNA testing?"

That bastard. She didn't know what was going on, but he was the last person she would give straight information to. She grinned, seeing her reflection in the partition window and giving herself an evil smile. "Doctor, you mean the stuff we received from some place in Arizona?"

"Why yes, that's it!"

"Sir, do you know what it was supposed to be?"

"I... Well, 'er... Wasn't it human remains?"

"I don't know, Doctor Getts. What I got wasn't enough for me to identify the parts or where it came from." That wasn't totally true, but it wasn't a lie either. She forced the knife blade down.

"You mean the samples were..."

"Nothing you would be interested in, Doctor. I don't think they have any value to your collections."

"Really? He was so relieved that he felt a rush of energy. "So you do what, return them?"

"No, I don't have any obligation to do that."

"And you are sure that they won't be of help to me?"

"Doctor, I can assure you that this stuff won't do you any good!" That was true, she would never help him and he would never touch them.

He thanked her and cut off. K.O. had no idea how right she was.

Chapter 26

He was so integrated into the past, that when he was around, it was the present.

“I’M REALLY SORRY NORMAN,” Quentin said, holding his police officer’s cap in both hands and twisting it around by the brim. “It was something I knew, but didn’t think about when I told you about that sealed-up doorway and going back there to open it. We can’t! I mean, it’s a protected site and we would have a ton of paperwork to do to even apply for a permit to dig. That is if we could get an archaeologist to come up with a research design and... I only know it’s impossible!”

I stood to one side, listening. He was right. The ruin was protected. Norman knew he was hearing the truth. He grimaced, gave the police officer a knowing smile, and thanked him. “Quentin, you’re a damn good officer. You’re right. Any ideas?”

Quentin shuffled one shiny black boot toe in the dirt and took his time to answer. “Yeah, one. We could go back in there and see what we could see without digging or damaging the ruin. You know, kinda case the lay?”

Beardancer’s face lit up. “We could, couldn’t we! And Quentin, we can take an arkie with us. How about that guy who helps out at the tribal park? I’ve heard that he’s on our side.

“Your talking about Sturdy? Doesn’t he work for some contracting outfit?”

“Yeah, that’s him. Can you find him and feel him out about this? If he’s connected with the powers-

that-be, we need to know before we tell him anything.”

I agreed. “Oh and Quentin, don’t you guys have detailed maps of the res... Not just topos, but maps that were produced to identify geological strata and things like drainage’s, rights-of-way, historic and pre-historic sites... The BIA has them, I used some for the work I did last year. If we ask the BIA...”

Quentin interrupted. “I can get ‘em. Might not be a good idea for you to come over to the office... I’ll get the ones we need and bring them by, okay?” He said he had some other things pressing, but would get the maps and be back later. Norman and I nodded and thanked him. Berner’s stuff would arrive today or tomorrow. That would mean a lot of hard work, mostly for Susan and Regina, seeing how Willis’s records jived with those of the purchasers.

If the wind continued, the ground would be dry enough to make our trip to the outback any day now. We wanted to come in from the Mancos side, the way Quentin had brought Willis out, not the harder, riskier way by crossing the reservation. Reports said that the main reservation roads were open, but almost impassable in places due to mud slides and waterlogged soils that were more like quicksand than road base. We knew that if we left the res, we risked being picked-up by the cops. We had no choice, but to cross the reservation. With 4-wheel drive, chains, and knobby mud tires we would probably make it. If we got stuck, we would have extra food and water and lots of warm clothing. I wanted to take two vehicles if possible.

Alex Sturdy was the type of archaeologist that Indiana Jones only dreamed of becoming. His whole

bent was to go native, living, thinking and even dreaming like an Anasazi. He was so integrated into the past, that when he was around, it was the present. If a thousand years had passed, that was only the blink of his eye. He could walk a site and tell you what lay beneath the sagebrush and drift. I had met him on my first tour of the Ute's Tribal Park. His way of sharing his insights and love of the ancients got through to me, and the others on the tour. He was an unforgettable character; a scholar and a fine scientist. I was really excited about spending time with him. I had told Susan about him at the time, and she was now primed and ready to learn from him.

Alex Sturdy stood alongside of the big table in the Beardancer family room, turning through a sheaf of large maps. "These maps were developed by the mineral guys. They had to have accurate maps, mostly to stake their finds. If they impacted a prehistoric or historic Ute site, they had to spend thousands mitigating it, so they followed the model that Shell and Mobil had worked out with Colorado University to predict the locations of historic and pre-historic sites so they could avoid them. So, the more detailed the maps the better. They used a new photographic technique and GPS. They had arkies like me spend hours locating and documenting sites. Best money our company ever made. You know, you're not supposed to have these!" he bent over, searching the topography of the area where Quentin said he had found Willis.

"Officer, can you point to the exact location?" he asked Quentin.

Quentin moved along side of him, leaning over the maps. He traced the line of the Mancos River with his

index finger and studied the wavy lines that represented elevation. “Here!” he pointed to a place along what had to be, from the way the topo lines were drawn close together, a steep cliff side. “See where they wrote ‘*Ruin*’ and see this dotted line that is probably the trail up to it?”

We all looked until we saw where he was pointing. Alex let out air in what sounded like “Phew!” He moved his finger as he spoke. “See this line? I know the area. Quentin, if you are right, I know exactly where that is. I was on the survey team that recorded it. You may have problems. I’m sorry to have to tell you this, but that line puts the place you pointed-out on private land. And also, it says ‘*Ruin,*’ not ‘*Indian Ruin.*’ That’s because the rocks stacked there may have once been Anasazi, but early homesteaders or pot hunters or cattlemen or someone used them to build a shelter. We couldn’t determine if it was ever a prehistoric site. I don’t think it was Ute, but we didn’t have the opportunity to check that out.”

Beardancer was the first to react. “What? That line is...” he looked carefully at the map, “Of course! That is our northern border. The area was contested until the Cadastral surveys forty or so years ago. Willis’s place is not on the res.”

I followed their fingers and the lines and came to the same conclusion. “Willis owns it then?”

Alex stood up and moved away from the table. “I had to resolve a problem we found when we did our site-survey. Part of the old homestead or whatever it was, was across the Mancos River,” he moved back to the table, bent over the map, and pointed. “We found a rock cairn there with a piece of tin and a name. The name was Johnston. We got the County records and found a living descendant. I contacted

the guy, lives in Arizona, goes by the name of Anasazi Bill. Real name's Tom Johnston. He knew all about the property; claimed to have grown up there. Said his Dad was a trader. He said that they were forced to give-up the land below the road and across the Mancos River. Happened sometime in the forties or fifties. Said he camps there when he's in Colorado and that he pays the taxes."

I guess my reaction was too obvious. Regina Beardancer asked me what was the matter? "Anasazi Bill? Lives in Sedona? I've heard of him and I think I can get in touch with him. Damn, what a small world! That's the guy, right Alex?"

"Sedona. Yeah. What? You need his permission to go in, right?"

"Let me make a few calls. I don't think this has to delay us, but I'd better get started."

Susan had listened and watched as we perused the maps and discussed the location and ownership. "Guys, does the FBI know that Willis was taken from private land onto the reservation and then off again where they arrested him? Quentin, you probably made an arrest off the res."

Quentin's eyes got big and his face showed real concern. Then he relaxed. "We never arrested Willis. We found him freezing, disoriented and in trouble and were transporting him in for medical care when the FBI took him. Interesting! Very interesting." he thought a few seconds. "Hey, what is a problem, is the ammo box. I took it from private land. That may mean that whatever you found in it is not admissible! We've got some thinking to do." He paused again, "Unless that guy in Sedona is on our side..." he paused again, so deep in thought that none of us interrupted him, "No, that's not necessary. I told Willis

that I was going in for his stuff and he agreed. Even talked about his drivers license and social security papers. I can honestly say that he gave me permission to search.” He paused again, turning to look around the room. “You know, he was at the river drinking. Then he collapsed on the trail. If I read the map right, he was on Ute land when we found him.”

I called Sedona. Ter Martel, a guy I had worked with when I was a Yavapai County Marshal, and who was the husband of Misty, Susan’s closest friend, answered the phone on the third ring. We exchanged ‘what’s ups’ and visited a few minutes before I asked him about Tom Johnston, aka Anasazi Bill.

“In the winter he guides for a Jeep tour company here in Sedona. I’ve seen him go past, driving tourists, playing the part of an Arizona cowboy. He’s a character! When I met with him last year, he was dressed more like an add for government surplus clothing. He told me stuff about the vermin around here that still makes my skin crawl. I can’t imagine what you would want with him, but yes, I can go talk with him if you want.”

“He’s from up here. We think he grew up on the Ute Reservation and he still owns land here that we need to get on.”

“Same guy. He told me that he grew-up on the res. That’s where he got his name. I remember joking with him about being Anasazi Tom, and agreed that Bill sounded better.”

I filled Ter in with an overview of our situation. He was a troubleshooter for developers and did investigative work himself. Misty had told him about the discovery of the mummified Ute and why we were in Colorado. He knew exactly what was needed.

“Cain, you’re sitting there waiting for this guy’s answer, right?”

“On our thumbs.”

“I’ll go now. Get back to you ASAP.”

Chapter 27

Beardancer grinned. "White men have a good system. What's yours is mine because everything is ours."

"LOOK, DRIVER, I HAVE arranged other transportation." Ferner Getts stood in front of the cowboy who was perched on a barstool, back to the bar. "What if I just pay you," he reached into his coat jacket's inside pocket and withdrew his billfold, opened it, and filched-out three, one hundred dollar bills that belonged to his employers, "this! And you can go."

"Well, Sir, thanks, that's a fine tip! But you got an open credit card with the company and a contract with them for the week."

Getts sneered. Damn them! These desert rats took advantage when they could. So what? It didn't matter. "Have them charge a fair amount and bill it to my credit card." He thought a moment. "Tell them I'll contest any exorbitant charges!" He wouldn't, he didn't care, it wasn't his money. And besides, he had the feeling that the old bastard had been listening to their conversation. He wanted him gone.

The Jeep started with a puff of black smoke. He was pissed and had pumped the gas pedal even though the engine was warm and primed. He had evidently blown his cover. They knew he was listening.

He hadn't known when he got the job that his fare was Doctor Getts. When Getts got in, he feared that the pompous ass would recognize him. The guy never even gave him a second look. People like him

never noticed the servants, especially since he was now a cowboy with a mustache half as big as his face.

When Getts ran into Phil Long in the parking lot, Bill decided that his guardian angel was looking out for him. He overheard them arrange a meeting in the bar, and became a fly-on-the-wall, a drunk on a barstool, near enough to overhear every word of their conversation. So, they were here to destroy historical records. They new about Willis and Connely. Long was right about Connely, but he never suspected that the old man was after something more damning than the records. Well, he thought, Willis killed Pop; CP Willis and his son, C.J. They were responsible for his death, them and that Brownfield fellow. Killed him because he was about to reveal their secret, a secret that died with Pop. A secret he had been searching for all these years.

As he refueled the Jeep and got ready to park it, a guy he recognized, but couldn't place, came up to him. He should know the guy...

"Remember me? Ter Martel. We met under the bridge and you told me about going into Prophet Canyon and what to look out for."

"Yeah, the real estate guy, Landsman sent you. You went in there and broke that case, didn't you!"

"Me and some others. Your information was valuable. I need something else, or at least a friend of mine does. It's about your place in Colorado."

Martel hadn't expected a reaction. The old cowboy physically tightened and his mouth fell open behind the salt-and-pepper bristles of his overgrown mustache. He twitched and the constriction caused him to cough a shallow, dry, cough.

Bill stared at Martel until he realized that he was staring. He fidgeted, thinking as fast as he could. "Wha'd you say?"

"Your name is Tom Johnston. You have a place up in Colorado near the Ute Reservation. I have a friend who wants to talk to you." Martel almost said wants permission to go on your place, but thought better of it. The old cowboys reaction was too extreme. There was something that Anasazi Bill was reacting to, and Martel didn't want to give more information until he understood what it was.

"Yeah, so what? I pay the taxes."

"Sorry Bill, I didn't know I was invading your privacy. You heard about the Ute they found in the shipping box?" Bill nodded. "You know my friend Arnie Cain is up there in Colorado meeting with the Utes and helping them find out... Well, who, what, when, why and how?"

"Mister, I just might know a lot about that. The name sounds familiar, exactly who is your friend?"

"Remember the guy that was marshal here when I talked to you last? Well, now he's doing freelance work. Works for the Ute Tribe and, whoever pays him, I guess. The architect, Dean Arbor's his name, called him in when the body appeared. The trail led to a guy name of Willis and to Colorado. That's about all I know."

"Yeah, and what do they want from me?"

"They found Willis. He's been staying on your land. They want go onto your land and look around. They need your approval."

Anasazi Bill was visibly shaken. "C.J. Willis is alive? What about his son? Is Bobby with him?"

I shook my head. "All I know is what I told you. Sorry."

“Tell me, who is this guy Cain connected with?” he paused and thought a moment keeping Martel from answering by shaking a loose fist at him. “Are they connected with the museums and universities? Big collectors?”

“Absolutely not! In fact, as far as I know those guys are doing everything in their power to stop them.”

“That’s for sure! Well...” he stopped, looked around nervously, obviously trying to think something through. “Well, can you tell me where I can find them?”

“Sure. Towaoc. Norman Beardancer’s house. I’ve got the number...”

“You call ‘em then! Tell them I’ll leave soon as I can get my gear. Tell ‘em I’ll be there late tonight.”

The Fed Ex truck almost got stuck turning around in the Beardancer’s driveway. I stopped, holding the thick envelope he had delivered, and watched his tires dig for something solid beneath the mud. One, then the other grabbed frozen soil, and spewing mud and chunks of sandstone road base, they pushed the panel truck back to Cortez.

The return address was Prescott. The weight of the package excited my imagination. Regina and Norman held the door and let me back in. Susan was standing by the table motioning for me to put Berner’s present down and open it.

Susan was primed. She had been crouched over the keyboard of Norman’s computer all morning setting up a web page. She applied for and received the domain name, artifactowners.org/anasazi. The Tribe’s computer experts had set up a program that

would allow us to scan-in all the records we wanted public.

“Okay, what did he send?” Susan asked, struggling to see over our backs.

“Look, this starts with entries from the 1890s. *Rc'd from R. Wetherill. From Cliff Canyon ruin. 6 large krates contain 17 painted bowls, 23 painted mugs, eleven painted jars, 41 corregated jars, 81 peces of sandel and yuca fibr, 2 poor shape mummies in rabit fur berial wraps, 44 small corn kobs, 7 metate with Manos, 2 atlatl, varous bird pts., 1 dog hair belt, 5 humen hair...* The list goes on.”

“Who received it?” Beardancer was looking for a name at the top of the page. We thumbed through several pages, looking. “No... Wait, look here at the bottom of this list. *Shipt to museum in Denver.*”

“That’s the first time we’ve seen a record of a sale by Wetherills. We know that they collected and sold a lot of artifacts stolen off the Ute Reservation.”

“Yea!” I said, “From the research I did, no one ever questioned that he was on his neighbor’s land mining their resources. All they wanted were the treasures.”

Beardancer grinned. “White men have a good system. What’s yours is mine because everything is ours.”

Regina looked up, rubbing her eyes from the strain of reading the faint brown ink on the yellowed paper. “Everything they did was wrong, but there were people standing in line to excuse it, saying that ‘for men of their times they were doing okay.’”

“Yeah, Susan said. “You can’t help but like that guy Gustaf Nordenskiold from Sweden. I loved his book about the Cliff Dwellers of the Mesa Verde, and I learned a lot. In the summer of 1891, he paid

Wetherills to take him into the ruins on Ute land and to provide him with diggers. The history books laud him because he was the first to approach the ruins as a 'scientist.' They leave out the---what is it that right-wing guy Harvey on the radio always says---'Now, let's hear the rest of the story...?'

"I agree," Regina added. "Nordinskiold said in his book that it had been discussed---'mooted' I think he said---that the Utes should be removed to Utah where white neighbors wouldn't dispute the possession of the soil. He knew they were on Ute land! Everybody knew it was Ute land, even though the Governor of Colorado---most Coloradoans, wanted to throw them into the deserts of Utah like they did the other Ute bands."

Norman nodded. "Thank the gods for that book. It makes our case! His book is important. If not for it, all of the information of the mining of the great ruins would be lost. We know that there were many folks who knew that the artifacts were stolen off our land. There was a large group of locals and people from all over who opposed his shipping the artifacts back to Sweden. They wanted the stuff and thought they could get it that way.

"There is a period of years, 1893 to 1906, when groups out of Denver, like the Colorado Cliff Dwellings Association, tried to get my people to let them commercialize the ruins. When that failed, McClurg and her group made false and ugly accusations slandering our ancestors because they would not let them dig the ruins. They ignored the fact that the Utes were against disturbing the graves...and that the idea of doing it for money was against all that they believed. For that reason, Utes were avid preservationists. She accused them of being drunk,

carousing wildly and said she was afraid of being raped, a claim that she knew would unite every white person against the Utes. Those are absolutely false accusations, so easy to prove wrong, but the so-called historians only want to tell her side of history, not the truth. The way we look at it, the fact that she knew she had to get Ute permission is proof that even they acknowledged it was Ute land. Their story is revisionist history.

“What makes me even angrier, is that “our” government keepers violated our wishes and allowed digging on our lands. Our people have always been opposed to robbing graves and exploiting the dead. When McClurg and Peabody couldn’t get our ancestors to cooperate with their commercial ventures to exploit the ruins, they urged Congress to take the lands from the Utes. By 1906, the government had taken the lands from us and created Mesa Verde National Park. Finally, in 1911, in exchange, they traded us some land we already owned, falsified surveys, and faked records of votes and agreements. It was totally criminal and dishonest. After 1916, when the National Park Service was created, the lies were set in stone and they are what governed the service’s behavior.”

“So, damn it Norman!” I said, somewhat angered, “That was then! That’s the way things were in those days! Not just with the Ute people, but all over. So what? It’s time to get past all of that!” I had heard the, “They were doing the best they could,” argument so many times that I had come to believe it. As I made that argument, light began to dawn; I saw through it. I was embarrassed.

Beardancer gave me a hurt look. “Arnie, if we lie about our history then we can not teach our children

about right or wrong. Of course they were able to do that then, and they may not have known any better, although I am sure the records show otherwise. But for historians and people of our time to cover up the way they made decisions and the damage they did when they made the wrong decisions, denies the lessons that history can teach. Historians must be allowed to examine issues and show how the right decisions and how the wrong decisions affected our country. As long as we lie about our past, we communicate to our children that it is possible to get away with lying and evil acts. The truth always comes out, as these records attest, and nations have moral standing relative to that truth.” He paused, hot with passion. “Jeeze, Cain, didn’t we learn anything from Nam?”

Seven hours later, fighting eye-strain and aching muscles, we had lain each page on the optical scanner. The new state-of-the-art OCR-trace program that we had taught to “read” the handwriting and recognize each letter or number that it questioned, put the exact files into a *.PDF* format that went easily onto our new web page. It was midnight and the deed was done, if the truth be known!

Chapter 28

“You realized that it was wrong to rob graves?” Susan asked. “No, silly girl! Everyone wants to find goodies. We stopped because we can’t afford to curate the stuff forever as the law requires.”

OUR ADVENTURE STARTED AT dawn on a cold March morning. To say we were primed for it would be an understatement. We were charged with the energy of the hunt and the ambition generated by curiosity. We had a mission. We discounted the danger and saw only the quest.

As I drove the big Suburban, studying my passengers in the rear-view mirror, I was taken by their beauty. ‘Beauty,’ I thought, ‘is Susan, radiating excitement; sitting in the back with the winter light from the dust-smearred window streaming over her; her features highlighted as by a great artist. Beauty is Regina, black hair shining in the white light, features round and perfect; balanced as planets in a system. These two women ‘epitomized the human will to live freely with all senses tuned to the world.’

The other Suburban was ahead far enough to let its dust blow away before we got to it. Dust and then splashes of water and mud thrown up by the vehicle’s fat tires marked its path into the wilds of the reservation. So far, so good. We passed the place where Jack House had once built his hogan, burned many years ago, but still a site where Utes and their visitors stopped to think about what was. Back in the rocks, he had drawn pictures of things he loved. We didn’t stop, although Susan had never seen the place. We were going fast, too fast probably. If it had been

summer, or if livestock were present, we would have gone half the speed.

Alex sat next to me, riding shotgun. Somehow the men always took the front seat. More leg room maybe? Maybe it was just the gentlemanly thing to do. Twenty minutes passed, seemingly faster than the landscape. We were climbing now. The road had to leave the Mancos River drainage and go over the top. The country changed and in the distance I could see what looked like piles of dirt, very old... Dug a long time ago.

“Alex, what’s that over there?”

“Earl Morris’s Revenge.”

A voice from the back. “Earl Morris? *The Earl Morris?*”

Alex grinned. “The one and only! The great southwestern archaeologist. That’s where he dug... Well, at least one of the places.”

I was surprised. “You mean they let him dig here on the reservation?”

“Well,” Alex said nodding. “If by ‘they’ you mean the BIA. Remember that the Ute People have only been allowed to manage some of their own affairs for a little while. In fact, they still do not have self-determination as a people. The BIA did what they thought was best for... Well, let’s just say, ‘for special interests.’”

Susan leaned forward. “So what you’re saying is that the BIA let archaeologists dig on the reservation?”

“Right!”

“And Earl Morris was one of them. What did you mean by ‘his revenge?’”

“Well, the Utes protested. That created friction. When Earl was through, he left these ugly pits and

back dirt piles. In those days everybody wanted to dig for artifacts. Nobody wanted to backfill or repair the damage they had done. Over in Johnson Canyon they even removed the perfectly preserved roof of a Kiva so that they could get photographs. Don't look at me that way! I'm ashamed of what they did."

"And now? Do you backfill?" Regina asked.

"We have to. But the best news is that we rarely dig. Because of sophisticated remote-sensing equipment we don't have to. If we do, we know what we are digging to learn and we get in, get the information, and get out. We have lots of techniques for 'seeing' into the ground. Besides, we don't dig to collect artifacts anymore."

"You realized that it was wrong to rob graves?" Susan asked.

"No, silly girl! Everyone wants to find goodies. We stopped because we can't afford to curate the stuff forever as the law requires. When I dig, I hope I don't have to remove an artifact or disturb a burial. What I'm after is information, not a collection. Things have changed..." he paused, "Well for the professional, that is. The pot hunters still dig for artifacts to sell. Big business!"

Susan sat back, the light playing across her face. "Alex, do they...the pot hunters I mean, still dig for mummies?"

"I don't think so. The market, in this country anyway, has dried up," he paused and grinned, "pun intended. I heard that a pot hunter in Utah, recently sold a mummy to some collector in Asia. I don't know how he did it, but I believe that a market still exists."

I wanted to confirm something I had concluded about mummies. "Alex, they don't dig for mummies, do they?"

He turned back toward me. “Well, that depends. If we were in a dry cave, excavating the floor, we might find a desiccated body. Mostly, the burials in the crevices behind the ruins were mummified. I’ve found several burials in cracks and fissures. Seems that the extreme dryness and the movement of air preserved the bodies.”

Regina said something to Susan I couldn’t hear. Then she raised her voice and asked Alex why he thought the Ute found in Sedona was dried-out.

“Only way I know is that he was placed in a cave or cleft where there was little moisture. When he was removed and shipped to Sedona, he obviously wasn’t exposed to humidity or... If he had been, he would have rotted away. Cain, you saw the body?”

“I saw it in the shipping crate and during the preliminary autopsy.”

“Did it smell?”

“Not really. It was dust-dry and smelled kinda flat-acrid; just a whiff of death, if that’s a description.”

“Sedona is dry; kept the body preserved. We know that he came from around here. We’ll have to look for a dry cave, cleft, fissure, crack. That won’t be hard, there are lots of them around. What will be hard is finding the one he was placed in.”

We could see for miles. The dirt road wound along the mesa top heading roughly E-NE. Alex pointed to the north. “From up here you would never believe that the Montezuma Valley around Cortez, or the Mancos Valley exist. This is how the land probably looked millions of years ago before those valleys were cut.”

“You mean that the lands we see way over there to the north and this mesa we’re on were once connected?” I was amazed at the thought.

“Well first, Cain, we’re not really on a mesa. We’re on a cuesta. Think of a card table with two legs folded under. We’re on a ridge with a steep escarpment on one side and a gentle slope going all the way out into New Mexico.”

Susan pulled herself forward in her seat. “I was looking at one of those aero-relief maps in the Towaoc Library. I couldn’t understand how Cliff, Soda and Navajo Canyons---all the deep canyons were cut. They run from near the edge of the escarpment, cutting to the south. If water cut them, then where did the water come from? Certainly the ridge between them and the cliff face didn’t drain enough water to cut canyons this deep.”

“Great observation!” Alex said with gusto. “These canyons,” he pointed to the north and west, “You see from up here, were cut before the great Montezuma Valley was cut. The water that cut them came from the lands now washed away. Understand?”

We all nodded. It was amazing and it made sense.

“A river that once flowed about where the McElmo Creek now flows, but almost 1800 feet higher, began to cut off the rivers that formed these deep canyons. Then it kept cutting down to where it is today. That river was powerful, draining the areas where the La Plata Mountains are---a much greater mountain range then.” That ancient river is called by geologists the Navajo. It finally cut-out the whole Montezuma Valley and washed the soils into what is now Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. In time, the ancient river lost much of its power. There was an uplift caused by vulcanism. The river was blocked and couldn’t get into the valley anymore. It, or its predecessor, turned north and instead of draining into the San Juan, it

finally made its way to the Colorado River, west of Grand Junction, in Utah. We know it as the Dolores.”

“Wow!” We three responded as one. Geology made sense when you had a guide like Alex and could look out over the terrain and see its dynamics.

“So,” Susan said, “The Mesa Verde canyons like Cliff, Soda and Navajo were once drainage’s for lands now washed away. But why don’t the canyons go all the way through the cuesta and form notches in the escarpment? And why are there overhangs and caves---the places where the Anasazi built Cliff Palace, Balcony House and Spruce Tree House?”

Alex smiled. “The ancient rivers that drained the land cut into the sandstone at points where the softer sandstones began. As they cut down, it happened that the heads of the canyons we see today were where the strata changed. Those nick-points---if you were walking down a stream bed and came to a waterfall, that’s the same thing---are now the heads of the canyons. Comprehend?” We all grunted or nodded. A picture was playing in our heads.

“Now to the second question. This is important! It’s something you should know before we start hunting for ruins and places where the Ute’s body was placed. You see, the lands we are driving over were once at the bottom of a sea. They are layered deposits from a geological past much more ancient than this topography. As the sands and gravel, shale and other materials were deposited on the floors of those ancient seas, they formed layers. Under pressure of the weight from above, these materials were fused into sandstones and compacted shale. Then, millions of years later when they were cut through by these drainages, the softer shale and sandstone eroded-out from beneath the harder

sandstone layers. That made overhangs and caves. As the harder sandstone was undercut, it often cracked and slid down. That made the separations we're looking for--you know, the fissures and cracks that the Anasazi used as passageways to their fields up on top, and sometimes as places to inter their dead."

The road forked and I watched as the Suburban driven by Quentin and carrying Beardancer and the strange Sedona cowboy, Anasazi Bill, took an unimproved dirt track to the left. I was about a quarter of a mile behind so I sped up, afraid I'd lose site of them. I made the turn, realizing as I did that I had taken it too fast. Our big vehicle bucked over the ruts and was airborne for a few seconds. In the back, our camping gear and coolers flew up and then landed with a sound that scared us all. I controlled the vehicle's attempt to spin-out, slowed as fast as I could without freezing the brakes, and came up on the rear of Beardancer's Suburban. He sped up, thinking, I guess, that I was impatient.

"Thank you Barney Oldfield!" Alex said sarcastically.

"What does that mean?" Regina said as she angrily tossed a sleeping bag into the back compartment.

"Crazy man! Race car driver back in the old days." Alex answered.

"Crazy is right!" Susan agreed, feeling the lump on her head where it had struck the headliner.

I felt sweat dripping from my armpits. I had almost wrecked the vehicle and I was trying to deal with my stupidity. Out here you didn't make mistakes, especially this time of year. Well, I had made one and

it had to be my last. I placed both hands on the wheel and stayed focused.

An hour passed. The women talked quietly in the back seat. Alex pointed out a coyote and then a big buck that was bounding away at the edge of a clearing. Since coming up on the cuesta top, we had been driving through miles of trees that had been knocked down as if by a tremendous storm. I turned my attention away from the road for a second and asked Alex what had knocked all the trees down?

"It's growing back. The government creeps chained this whole forest back in the '50s and '60s. Said it was to make the grass grow."

I looked around. "So, where's the grass?"

"Oh, sorry! We destroyed this whole native forest by mistake. The grasses that thrive here need the trees to protect them." Alex let his voice get bureaucratic.

I played along. "By mistake?"

"Hey, we thought it would work! So, it's only a Pinon-Juniper forest, not good for lumbering. Why make a big deal out of it? The Indians wouldn't have turned it for economic benefit anyway. They didn't know what was best for them, we had to take action on their behalf."

"But you cabled a whole forest. You wiped out a..."

"Look man, we did what we thought was right for you people. What's wrong with that?"

Regina was laughing. "I've heard that argument before. Do you work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs?"

Regina was quiet for a few minutes and then broke into our thoughts. "Alex, were my people here when the Anasazi were?"

Susan turned and looked at Regina. “Great question. I’ve been wondering about that too.”

“Well, Regina, I wish I knew the answer to that question. In fact, we don’t know. That’s one of the reasons we’re doing research. To the north and west were a people called Fremont. We know a little about them, perhaps they were related to the Utes. To the south were other Pueblo groups like the Hopi---the Pi, or Pai peoples. Perhaps they were related. With modern DNA testing we hope to find out who the Utes are related to. Maybe we will find that they were here first and all along. Maybe we will find that like the Navajo, they came in here after the Anasazi were gone. The problem is that we have almost no pre-historic Ute genetic material to analyze. Part of that is because Ute sites are ‘uninteresting.’ No great pottery. No rock buildings. No interment practices that provide burials to study, at least that we know of. Archaeologists didn’t feel excited about digging them. Part is because the Ute’s were discounted and not thought important enough to study. Sounds dumb, but when the government takes a cultural genocide position, other groups just seem to follow along.”

The road wound up and down drainages and along steep hillsides. We passed colonnades of rock, mostly gray-white, but some with pink hues. On the north-facing slopes we found deep mud and sometimes the remains of snowdrifts. The going was tough, but the Suburbans growled through without losing a stroke. In the distance we could see a tree line in a wide valley.

“Mancos River again, straight ahead,” Alex announced.

We crossed the river three times before the jeep track led us along the north side. Another twenty minutes of grinding along, and I noticed that Quentin had stopped his vehicle and the doors were opening.

“Found him drinking right there. He started up this trail, collapsed about here.” Quentin informed us. “See that ruin up there? Follow the trail with your eye and then look to the left.”

“I see it!” Susan announced. Regina was nodding.

“That’s my place up there,” Bill said proudly. “I got to tell you I feel like it’s home.”

Quentin was giving Bill his full attention. “You know all around here, don’t you? You played here as a kid!”

Bill pulled at the bristles of his outrageous mustache and grinned from behind it. “I did just that. Only then, my pop wouldn’t let me play back of the place. ‘Too dangerous’ he said. Besides, that area was where he stored stuff. He was a trader, not like Willis. He had a little trading post in those days, traded food for hides and horses.”

“The place up there. I’ve been in it,” Quentin said, “Seems that there might be something in back of it, like through a sealed-up door?”

“I rocked-in the old inside door. Cold air came down through there all the time. Great in the summer. Kill you this time of year. Nothing in the space back there. Onc’t was Pop’s storage. Empty now, because I made sure.”

I listened as Quentin got information from Anasazi Bill. What I didn’t understand was how, if it had been a Johnston operation, C.J. Willis and his father had been involved here.

“Bill, Willis was living here? Tell us about his history here, okay?”

“Well, you say he was here? Here on my place? That’s strange, ‘cause his dad’s place was on around the rocks there.” He was pointing to a ridge that jutted out to the east of where we stood. “Willis’s pa had his place, Pop had our’n, well, that’s, long before C.J. was born you understand, or me either of course. I came along much later. They first came in here back in ‘90 or ‘91. Story I was told is that at first Pop and he was friends and depended on each other. Then, something happened. Pop was always bringing food and clothing and stuff in, and taking hides and horses out. CP, that’s what Pop called him, was always taking grave goods and stuff out, and not bringing nothin’ in. He wasn’t having much luck selling his artifacts, I suppose. Them was hard times for Willis. Pop thought he was stealing food from him. Caught him onc’t and tried to make him pay, so I recall what I was told. Then that guy Ferner Brownfield came on the scene and paid Pop off in gold eagles. Brownfield told Pop that he would always make Willis’s debts good if’n he would help him out by storing stuff and keepin’ people away. That’s when my pop opened up the dry area and worked with Brownfield. Things were really tough in the trade, and Brownfield and CP had to cooperate on scams they had. Willis was pissed that Pop knew what they was doing, so Pop said, and Pop said Willis told him to keep his mouth shut about what he saw.” He paused, and started walking up the trail. “Follow along, you’re all welcome on my place.”

We inspected the long room of the old Post and determined that it had once been an Anasazi house, added on to and made over by Johnston. Susan and Regina were unpacking lunch and we sat around the place waiting to be served, kinda a male thing

complementing a female thing, or at least it used to be.

“I can tell you somethin’ else too,” Bill said as Susan handed him a piece of frybread loaded with meat, lettuce and hothouse tomato slices. “Them other people around here in those days was into every form of conniving and stealing they could get away with. Not the Utes, they was always up front. I’m remembering what I learnt about the riffraff that worked for the cattle operations and mines. Most was lost boys who were hiding out ‘cause they was wanted somewhere. Most was considered dangerous to cross and they was always looking for another man’s kit, if you know what I mean. Pop told me that they was washed up against the reservation line and had nowheres else to go. I think some of them took places along the Mancos uptowards where the town is. Most, I guess, was dead or gone by the time I was born. Pop was always still looking out for them, though, as he figured that if he wasn’t prepared they would get him for his goods and purse. Made life somewhat intolerable. Even when I was a kid, some was still around. We got robbed onc’t, but Pop shot the guy when he was riding out on our own horse. He buried him over there,” he pointed to a grassy flat about the size of a septic tank.

“Mostly the Utes was fair and easy to deal with. It was later, after per-capita, that traders got greedy and took their money without giving them fair exchange. But everybody did it back then, and hell, that’s how Mancos and Cortez was supported and built-up. But that’s long after Pop was killed.” He paused long enough to take a mouthful of frybread.

“Bill, when did your...ah...Pop die?”

1952! It was October of '52 in fact. I was gone off to school in Durango. You see, my Ma had passed when I was born. Pop wanted me educated. I was seven or maybe six. All's I know is that Willis's son was successful by then and that guy Brownfield and he had a big falling out. That's C.J. Willis, remember, 'cause by then his daddy was too old or maybe dead...yeah, I know he was dead.

Pop and me was alone a lot in my early days. Pop was old then, I think maybe older than I am now, but I ain't sure. Anyway, there was no radio or nothin' so he talked all the time. I remember, 'cause all I knew about the world was what he talked about. Anyway, Brownfield comes to Pop and says that he's after C.J. to turn over all the records of who they sold stuff to. He also asked Pop to destroy any records he might have about the stuff stored on our place over the years. Pop convinced him, he said, that he never was fool enough to keep any records. Well, it seems that Willis refused to do as Brownfield asked, saying that the records were his insurance policy or somethin'. Brownfield was furious. He told young Willis that he'd get him."

Well, time passed, a couple of years at least, and Pop was always in the middle of their fight. Willis got increasingly antsy and when I was home fer the summer one year, I heard him tell Pop that he had proof that Brownfield's diggers stole some bodies and that he would ruin Brownfield if he didn't leave him alone. I figgered that Brownfield and Willis's dad had found themselves a bunch of mummies. I recall Pop mentioned that there were mummies stored at our place---that would have been natural, back then. A little later, maybe a year or more, Willis moved to Arizona. The day he left is the day they found Pop

dead on the rocks over there, like he had fallen, except that there was no place to fall from that he could have climbed to. I knew it was Willis or Brownfield, but I was a kid. I couldn't prove it. And by the time we buried Pop, it was more than a week later and both culprits was gone."

"Did they ever come back?" Alex asked. Good question, I thought.

"Well, I don't know for sure about Brownfield. I heard so, but I never knew. I was at school in Durango and then they moved me to Mancos 'cause I was in their district or somethin'. I saw Willis in town and about a year later, I saw him again coming out on our road with a truck full of crates... I'd say that was about '55 or '56. No later. '56, 'cause my huggie had a '55 Chevy about a year old and we was out driving when I saw him."

We finished eating and probing Anasazi Bill for information. What he said, gave us lots to think about. Alex went out into the clear day and walked across the wash and stood looking back at us. It looked like he was studying the rocks. Beardancers were visiting and Susan and I found a warm place outside the ruin where we could let the sun penetrate our winter clothes. Quentin excused himself and went back down the trail. We watched as he stopped about half-way and cut up and over the talus slope headed for the back side of the great ridge the ruin was hidden in.

"Hey you guys, come over here for a minute, would you?" Alex called from across the wash. We got up, brushed off, got Regina and Beardancer and made our way across to him.

“Now look up there!” Alex ordered as he pointed to the great sandstone formation hulking over the eroded-out cavern that held Johnston’s ruin. About a hundred feet up, I guessed, the sandstone ridge formed a floor where sagebrush and several juniper trees grew. The ridge went back toward the canyon’s wall, getting thicker until it looked like part of the wall itself. I could see that the whole last five hundred or so feet had been slipping down as the underlying shale and soft sandstone eroded away. To the left of Johnston’s ruin, a great crack was evidence that the end sixty or seventy feet of ridge was breaking away from the rest and falling in a slow motion, hundreds-of-thousands-of-years, slide toward the river.

“See, it’s like I told you. These pieces are breaking away like calves from an iceberg, creating cracks. Look how this crack comes down like a cursive *f* and adjoins the cutback where Bill’s pop built. That light coming through way up there about thirty feet...see it? That light tells us that the crack goes through to the other side.”

The four of us looked where Alex pointed and agreed. Just then, we heard Quentin yelling up at us. He was coming back over the hump of talus at the foot of the vertical sandstone. We heard him yelling for our attention, but couldn’t make out what he was saying. He stopped trying to speak and came up to us, breathing hard.

“Fresh tire tracks on the other side. In from Mancos, I guess. They’re really fresh! Looks like someone left when we arrived. Looked like a truck, from the tread marks, pulling a trailer---a horse trailer from the sign. They unloaded one horse and either let it go or someone rode it away up canyon. There were signs in the damp soil of at least three people. One

wore hiking boots, new tread on them too. One pair of worn-soled work boots, and one had slick-soled boots, cowboy boots I think. I followed two sets of tracks up to a pile of rocks---wood sticking out was sawn. A man could still get some shelter under there. Bill..." We all looked around for Anasazi Bill. He wasn't with us and I realized that he hadn't been since Alex crossed the wash. "Where's Bill?" Quentin asked. "I need to know if that pile is Willis's old place."

We moved as fast as we could back to the ruin, calling out for Bill. Inside we saw that he had been busy while we were outside. He had opened the sealed-up doorway and evidently crawled through. "Get a flashlight!" I ordered, knowing that Susan would get ours from her pack. Freezing cold air was flowing like ice water from the hole. Susan handed me the flashlight and I started forward, Norman and Alex letting me take the lead. I shined the light into the black---Regina's scream exploded in my ear before I could react. Anasazi Bill came forward, holding a 30-30 saddle rifle out in front of him. We gave him room as he climbed over the rubble and back into the ruin.

"Still there! I left some stuff here...hid it...left it for a time when maybe I would need it to hunt. Look, it ain't even rusted much."

"Can we go in there?" Regina asked, recovered from the shock of seeing Anasazi Bill appear out of the dark.

"You got a flashlight, and I got the time. You know, we should probably look around up above here. Pop wouldn't let me play in there as a boy, cause somewhere up in there, was where he stored stuff for 'em."

“You mean you haven’t explored the whole room?” Susan asked.

“Well ‘taint exactly a room. What he done was wall-up the cracks so’s he could keep the critters out. Pack rats ever got in, you had problems. Now I hid my stuff, this rifle and other necessities, right back in there in a side crack. I ain’t much at climbing, so I never went in further than I could get easily, but if you are, you can follow the crack up and see what’s there.”

“We could use another flashlight. I’ll get ours.” Regina was already rummaging through Norman’s pack.

“Wait, you guys,” Quentin ordered. “I want to know. Bill, was the place Willis lived right on the other side of this?”

“Yep, almost exactly.”

“And did he have access to this crack from that side?”

“Well sure, and Brownfield did, I remember that. I watched them hauling some crates and stuff up there. It was a place up above Willis’s shack that might be the other side of this crack.”

“I was just over there. Three men---well, people---and a horse were there this morning. Two walked up to a pile of rocks that a man could still find shelter in. Then one came back down, shuffled around the truck, got in, and left. The other got on the horse and rode off up-canyon. Any ideas?”

“Nope. Utes maybe. Maybe park rangers. Hell, for all we know it could have been someone here for the same reason we are.”

Chapter 29

He liked to call Indians, "Indigents," a little play-on-words that he thought fitting. So did most of his cronies.

"LOOK AVERY, YOUR JOB is to follow orders, not give me shit! Hell, man, I'm just following orders myself. Someone up top, some politico in charge, wants these guys stopped before they lead the Tribe into---Well, how the hell do I know, you're the Indian expert. You tell me why they're such a problem." The agency bureaucrat spoke into the speaker phone as he leaned over his desk. Maryland was frozen-over and he was antsy to get on a case he could supervise in Florida where it was warm. Now this stupid request from upstairs that he bust Avery's ass for going too slow! What the hell did it matter that some assholes were stirring up the damned Injuns; Utes! Hell, Avery had said that there were less than two thousand of them, men, women and children. They sure as hell weren't a threat to the good old US of A.

"Sorry boss. I know that most of the pressure is coming from back there in D.C., and it originates very high up in Interior, that's why you're getting pressure. From what I've been able to put together, the Utes are looking for more freebies from us working people. They're looking for more ways to make us pay them to sit on their asses, gamble and breed. The threat they pose is that if they can make a lot of people look bad, the government will have to pay them off to stop them, like it did when that bunch of self-serving lawyers sued to recover monies that were siphoned off from Ute mineral leases and stuff. The outsiders got them Injuns big bucks back then, so they are

trying it again. If we let it happen it will cost the taxpayers a bundle. My job, as you've so clearly pointed out, is to stop the game and squash the bastards who are using these indigents to make themselves a fat thirty per cent of the take." He liked to call Indians, "Indigents," a little play-on-words that he thought fitting. So did most of his cronies.

"So this white guy you want arrested? He's an attorney?"

"Naw, he's an ex-cop. Fancies himself an investigator. Must be working for the attorneys, else why would he be out here on the res freezing his ass in no-man's-land?"

"You want the FBI to take him out, I understand that. You talk to them already?"

"Sure. They're doing everything we ask, except they don't know where their line of authority is relative to the tribal government. They can move if we make a case that this guy Cain and some of the NA's too, are breaking the law. So far, I haven't been able to make that case. That's why I need you to get this thing declared a special---I don't know, maybe it's a matter of national security or... You got any ideas?"

"Subversives? Terrorists? I can't make that case. But, what about undermining a legitimate government? Hey, that would work! It's Congress's responsibility to protect the government of the Tribe, right?" He paused and turned through his dialer, "*In my opinion,*" He cleared his throat, "*The duly elected representative government of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is being undermined by a group which wishes to use tribal resources for its own purposes.* How does that sound?" He found the name and number of the person he was thinking of.

“Great! Then the FBI can bring in Cain and Beardancer and... Hell, everyone we identify as involved. Thank’s boss, can you make it happen?”

“Of course, that’s what I do! Listen, it will never stand up in court. We can jerk these guys out of the way, but doing it this way you’ll never get a conviction.”

“Conviction? Who the hell wants a conviction? Hey, the way it works is that we get what we want. That’s our system. This will never get to court anyway, so we can do whatever we need to do.”

“Okay Avery, I’ll get back to you.” He let his finger hit the button on the speaker phone and cut Avery off. He buzzed his secretary. “Hey Donna, get me a Doctor Ferner Getts, he’s the advisor to the President for curatorships, or some damned foolish thing like that.” He smiled. Easy pickings. Getts would tell him which senator to talk to. He’d be in Florida by tomorrow afternoon, and Avery would be able to make some important people happy.

Chapter 30

Them pompous bastards will pay, won't they? I like that! They'll pay for years, kinda like a cash cow we can milk.

GETTS WAS ON THE warpath. He had ordered everyone in the Sedona area involved in the matter to attend his meeting. "Every one of you sit down! Okay, that's better. Now listen! I called this meeting to assure you all that there are no records that will cause you or me or anybody any problems. I assure you that I would not be here if that were not the truth."

Doc Connely sat in back, his great body jammed into, around and overflowing a student desk. The borrowed Brewer School classroom was the safest place to meet, he agreed, but the chairs were for kids. Phil Long was standing to the left of Getts, nervous as hell, pacing around like a waltz partner. Darrell Kingsley, owner of the oldest antiquities trading post in Sedona, and four of his people were sitting in five desks to Getts' right. Two other men, he suspected that one was Bobby Willis, the son of that bastard C.J., and a creepy degenerate with the unwashed look of a dump scavenger, sat as far back to the right as they could.

"I called you here to assure you that what is past is past! Due to my *high* and *powerful* position and to my years of *excellence* in academic matters, the truth as we know it *is* our history! You have all been worried that the misinformed ways people of today have used today's standards to try to discredit the legitimate business activities of our relatives and business partners, could cause the memories of our loved ones to be tarnished. Well, you no longer may

concern yourselves with that fear! I, with the help of Mr. Long here and a covey of good people in Washington, have worked to protect the memories of those we care about. My work stands as the accepted, uncontested *Bible* of the sources of collections. You should give thanks, as that chapter of the past is now closed and closed forever!

He stood waiting for their accolades, but his audience merely looked back at him as if what he had pronounced made little difference. He snuffed a little air and turned up his chin. Damn them! Now to the part that would make them beg him to help them.

“Okay, so you accept this as nothing new! Okay, but of course you all know that the big problem has not been effectively dealt with.” He stared at them, looking from group to group until his eyes touched those of Connely. The old bastard was sneering at him! No way!

“Connely,” he refused to call him Doc because men of his academic standing didn’t acknowledge that a degree in sociology was worth anything, “You have a lot to lose! Bobby’s dad set you up, didn’t he? You’re here because if the truth about what they did gets out you will be a big loser. If it gets out, your name will be forever associated with... Well, let’s just say disgust!”

Bobby Willis got to his feet and then sat back down again under the force of Getts’s glare. “Look Doc, my Dad... Well, you jist be careful about how youse talk about him. Him and your fat-ass grandfather created this mess, that’s for sure, but there ain’t no proof! There was six and they’s all gone now. All of ‘em, ‘cause I sold the last to the Japs.”

Getts caught a grimace on Connely’s face. He had the same thought. “Six? Did you say there were six?”

“Sure was. Kingsley’s pa bought four, if’n you recall, right Darrell? Bought ‘em from my Pa and sold ‘em to... well, how the hell should I know. Where did your pa sell ‘em, Darrell?”

“I never was involved! Never! My Dad bought them just as he bought everything else. He never suspected that... Well, not until Doc Connely here told him. They was all sold to Bruce here and to the Germans, before ‘60. Bruce, didn’t you say that you sold the one you got to a private?”

“Yeah, but I didn’t know who. I sold it for cash, no records. I can’t even recall who bought it. Never met her, she worked through an agent.”

Everyone turned to look at Willis. Getts gave him a power-squint and demanded, “Well?”

Willis wiped his hand off against his jeans, turned and said something to the creature next to him. Then, shaking his head ever so slightly from side-to-side, said, “I sold mine. Must have been when Darrell sold his. I kinda liked to have her around. Got a fair price, which is my business. So what!”

Ferner Getts was pissed. “So what? *So what?* You said there were six. Where did number six go?”

“Hell, I don’t know! Pa probably sold it.” Bobby turned to his companion and they discussed something in voices too low to be heard around the room. “Yep, Pa sold it. He and Brownfield had their guys get six, I know that for sure. Took almost a year, and they was shipped here... No, I ‘member. When he got five he sent them here to Sedona. Then they got one more and... Shit, man, I don’t know what ever happened to that last un! Oh yeah, it got wet and rotted and they had to throw it away. Yeah, seems I heard some talk about that...” It was obvious that he was lying.

Getts motioned for Phil Long to come close. He whispered something in the Director of the Pre-Historic Society's ear that obviously scared the man. Long straightened up and with a look of fear flashing across his face, turned to Bob Willis.

"Bobby, two things! First, you find where that last one went. And, after that you scour every place your grandpa and pa ever was or did business and you make certain that they didn't write down anything. Got that!"

"Screw you! It don't make any never mind to me. You want it done, fine. But it'll cost ya plenty. Skullcroft here and me, when we work we get paid." He got up, pushing the desk to the side and started toward the door.

Getts seemed to come unglued. "Now you listen here Willis! You mess with me and... Mister, I know what you do and who you sell to. I can unleash an investigation into you and your buddy there that will put you behind bars for the rest of your miserable lives." He noted that Willis, rather than being scared, was grinning at him as he made an obscene gesture with his middle finger. "Oh, so you think that you can implicate me and mine? Well it won't happen. It would be your word against mine---ours, and guess who they will believe? Remember, there are no records!" He cooled off a little and continued, "What I command is money and networks of powerful people! I'll pay you well, damn you, if you get what I need. But you do it my way or I'll have you... Well, horsewhipping would be a mild form of death!" He knew how to talk to these degenerates.

Willis seemed to deflate. He had always imagined that he would find the records and be able to collect big from Getts and Long and all the others. Getts had

destroyed the records, he had to accept that. He felt a weight on his shoulders and slumped down as he stood. He stared at Getts as he motioned for Skullcroft to follow him and started toward the door again. Connely grunted and groaned as he extracted his bulk from the tight desk, got to his feet, and followed the two diggers. Outside, under the eaves where there was shadow, he stopped and called to Willis. Willis had known that Connely was following and came over, grinning at the old man.

“Got your tail in a crack don’tcha old man. Ya gonna pay me too?”

“If that’s what it takes, of course, a business deal between us gentlemen.” He pushed his oversized black-rimmed glasses up on his nose and tweaked the end of the protrusion, hunting for moisture. “Getts is wrong! Records still exist, I know it, I feel it, don’t you?”

“Ya think he lied?”

“I think he thinks he’s right. What he thinks, I could give a hoot about. What I know, is that he may have destroyed your dad’s records and maybe some others. But he never destroyed Johnston’s records because he never ever knew about Johnston’s relationship to Brownfield and your grandfather. I’ve come to believe that all the traders kept records, else how could they remember what they sold and what to reorder? Else how could they know how to price things? Right?”

Bobby Willis nodded, still grinning. He was hearing what he needed badly to believe.

“So,” Doc Connely continued, a smug set to his face, “for you and me, a business opportunity, right? You find the other mummy if it’s still around, and destroy it so there is no evidence. Then you search

around the Johnston place and find his records. Chase down any family he might have left. Get them! Then, we will be in business! Right?”

“Them pompous bastards ‘ull pay, won’t they? I like that! They’ll pay for years, kinda like a cash cow we can milk. Okay Doc, you got a deal. We’ll head out in the morning. Skullcroft here’s brother has horses and trailer. We’ll get in there and find that stuff.” He turned to Skullcroft and smiled. The grave robber gave a smile back that Connely thought looked like a Halloween pumpkin, carved-out teeth and all. “Hey Doc, get Getts to fund us! How’s about hitting him up for a couple of thou for us?”

Connely had extracted a wad of cash from his pocket and was counting out large bills. “My money! That way we don’t have any responsibility to tell Getts or his crew anything.” Bobby Willis took the money, divided it into two folds, and jammed it into his pockets without counting it. ‘No need to tell ‘im we’ll pick up Pa afore we go in.’ he thought. ‘He’d go apeshit! He still hates Pa.’

Chapter 31

The history they tried to suppress all these years is finally out there for everyone to see.

EDITH BROWNFIELD WAS SHAKING and sick to her stomach. Her hatred was fueled by confusion. Had that dimwitted bastard cousin of hers betrayed them all? She had to find him.. “Look, you’re his secretary, you’re supposed to know where he is!”

“Yes Ma’am, but he hasn’t called. I only know that he went to Arizona.” His cousin again, rude and crude like Ferner.

“Nancy, you tell him that its all over! We’re all ruined! No, you just tell him that I called! Tell him to call Edith, and... Well, he’ll probably never call, he’s screwed us all!” The phone line went dead, clicked and the dial tone filled the office.

The last time Edith Brownfield had called she had told Getts to “kill the bastards if necessary.” So, he had failed? What wonderful news. Now, if she could figure out what he had screwed-up, she could figure a way to get him.

“Hi Doctor Curts...Norma honey, this is Nancy. Doctor Getts is somewhere in Arizona. Something strange is going on and I thought you might know what’s happening.”

“Our revered leader is lost in the desert I hope?”

“He may be. He hasn’t called-in to let me know where to forward his calls. His cousin, that awful Edith Brownfield, and some guys from the Department of Interior need to talk to him real bad...” she paused for effect. “Now isn’t that just a shame?” Her mirth giggled down the phone line and tickled Norma.

"It really is, isn't it! And have you heard what appeared on the internet?"

"No."

"History... I mean the real records of sales and sources of artifacts. Not Ferner's records, I mean the *real* history. Now isn't that just shocking?"

"Norma, no! You mean all the records that Doctor Getts has been searching for all these years?"

"Amazing, isn't it. He thought he had found and destroyed them all. Suddenly all of the really big and powerful collectors are holding stolen goods...and...Nancy! The scary thing is that collections like the ones we house here, have a new history, a real history, not one made up of lies. I always knew that most of the collections were stolen off of public lands or Indian lands. Now, it's all there for everyone to read."

"Jeeze, he's through, isn't he? The history they tried to suppress all these years is finally out there for everyone to see. That's wonderful Norma, I can't tell you how good that makes me feel. But, you and me Norma, what about our jobs?"

"You'll get a new boss, I'm sure of that. The great Ferner Brownfield Getts is finished! A fate he worked hard to earn and certainly deserves." She giggled into the instrument and wiped tears from her eyes, "Me? Well, whoever owns them, these collections need a curator. I think it's safe to say that we're both all right. But Nancy, I think you sound ill. Why don't you take a few sick days, honey, and get some rest, if you know what I mean."

"You mean get out of the middle! Thanks Norma, I hear you."

Chapter 32

"Awful bad horseleg you got there Quentin." Anasazi Bill commented, eyes focused upon the gun.

"LOOK JEFFERSON, I'M ONLY going to tell you one more time. I want that officer and I want him to bring Cain in... And Beardancer and... Got that? Now make it happen!"

Jefferson grimaced under Avery's wrath. "Sir, I called the police station and got information. They're out in the field somewhere, took two Suburbans and lots of supplies."

"And a radio? A cell phone? I'm serious Jefferson, you get in touch with them now! You order that tribal officer to arrest them both and drag their asses back here... No, better, turn them over to the FBI in Cortez. Have them take them to the Justice Building."

Jefferson had delayed as long as he could. He drove over to the police station and got a Motorola radio phone. "Beep! Beep! Beep! Bill Jefferson calling Officer Quentin Coats. Coats, get back to me!" The static was broken after almost thirty seconds. "Quentin here. That you Jefferson?"

"Listen Quent, can you talk? Are you alone?"

"Hold on."

Jefferson held the instrument out in front of his chest, waiting. A minute later he handed the instrument to the Chief of Tribal Police.

"Okay."

"Officer, you are ordered by the FBI and me, as the head of police, to bring in Cain and Beardancer. Apprehend them and take them to Cortez...Justice

building. Do you copy? Apprehend them, do not arrest them. Copy?"

"I copy Chief, on what grounds?"

"Attempting to undermine tribal government. Quent, this is no joke, this is for real! You are ordered to do this now! You have no choice, do it Officer, it must be done."

Quentin felt his gut tighten and bile come into his mouth. His features tightened and set. "Okay, but Chief, we all know that these charges are untrue."

"Avery doesn't. Neither does the FBI! They've overruled the council and taken jurisdiction. Bring them in! We know they aren't undermining the tribe, and that this is not right...but trust in their system. Give Norman and Cain their day in court and they will be okay."

"Okay, but I'm on record as saying that this is nonsense and that I object. I can not disobey a direct order. We're coming in."

Quentin hadn't removed himself far enough away. We had heard. When he turned back to us he couldn't look us in the eyes. "Quent, we heard. Don't take it so hard. I guess we should pack-up and go."

Beardancer wasn't so sure. "Quentin, if you take us to Cortez, off the res, I have no rights... You know I'll simply disappear."

"Okay, Norman I'm going to stay with you. I'll do everything I can... Let's get the subs loaded and go!"

We explained what was happening to Susan and Regina when they came in from a hike. Strangely, they were silent, whipped, it seemed. I had expected tears and arguments... Nothing?

Beardancer took charge. "Get the packs! Arnie, go find out how far up the fissure Alex and Bill have

gone. Let's get the sub loaded while we still have good daylight. We'll go out through Mancos."

I stood just inside the doorway in the pitch-black fissure and called for Alex. I heard him answer from what seemed miles away. Then I heard Bill, closer, yet still far above me. "Hey guys, we have a problem. Can you come down?" I heard stones roll and boots slipping against sandstone. I waited until I was certain that they were headed down and then grabbed a pack and started for the Suburbans.

Quentin was standing beside his sub, radio in hand. I thought that odd, so I stopped and listened.

"I don't care what you think Chief, I would not disobey a direct order. I am not playing games! Sir, someone has removed the computer units from both Suburbans." He paused and listened. "Yes Sir, I found sign of a truck and horse trailer in here earlier. Two people were left off in this area. One on a horse, one walking." Another long pause. "Yes sir, they are under arrest and under control. We are stranded here. I'll hold them until you send a unit, Yes Sir. No Sir. No Sir. I realize that Sir, but we have been stranded here by the actions of others." He listened again, nodding. Then he put the radio phone into its carrier and leaned back against the metal. His eyes met mine, and he shrugged.

"We're camping I take it," Susan said. She gave Regina a smile that made me nervous and grabbed her pack again.

Regina put her pack on the floor and lay with her head and shoulders against it. The rest of us sat around the ruin. Alex and Bill emerged from the dark and joined us. We filled them in on our transportation problems and Quentin's orders. They asked questions until they were certain that there was

nothing they could do. The idea of camping was pleasant to both.

“Well, what did you find up there?” Regina asked.

“Not a damn thing!” Alex spoke for the two of them.

“I told you it was empty.” Bill said, pulling the ends of his longhorn mustache.

“Yeah, but we got blocked about half way up. Been sealed at a narrow part. Couldn’t get through, but there’s some space up past there, I’m sure of that. There looks to be another crack that leads up, wind comes through there strong, but I didn’t have time to find it. I felt the wind and saw a little light. I’m going to rest and then come in from the other side. I’ll bet that’s the way in they used.”

“Think you’re right partner. I remember they came in from that side. But its hard, especially since that roof collapsed on Willis’s old place. Used to be they could climb up using the roof and go right in.”

Quentin was up and pacing around the narrow ruin, carefully avoiding our bodies and gear. Susan was growing irritated. “Quentin, you’re making dust! Why don’t you go outside or... Well, have a seat!”

He became aware of his actions and stopped. “I... I’m sorry, I was somewhere else.” He sat near the door, moving his hand back and forth to cut through the dust. “Sorry. I’m worried. There are at least two people out there and they disabled the subs.” He reached into his pack and brought out his 357, holster and belt. He unsnapped the keeper strap and carefully removed the hand cannon.

“Awful bad horseleg you got there Quentin.” Anasazi Bill commented, eyes focused upon the gun.

“What did you do with your 30-30?” Quentin asked in reply.

“Oh, its back in the crack. It’s safe and ready for some other time.”

“You got rounds for it?”

“Box. Well, that’s less 3. 9, keep 4 or 5 in the tube. Shot three times, got two bucks. That was years ago, maybe ten...fifteen.”

“You keep it loaded?”

“Chamber’s empty. Safe enough with no kids around.”

“Any other weapons?” He looked around the ruin, taking time to get a head shake from each of us.

“Hunting knife.” Beardancer started to move toward his pack to get it.

“Leave it for now! We’ve got to have a plan. From the way I read the sign, one guy is up near Willis’s old place. One took off on horseback. The other drove the truck out... Maybe he just took it around the point and hid it... I wonder... Alex, Bill, we’ve got some scouting to do before dark. Cain, Norman. You’re under... You’re not under arrest, but you are both apprehended, you know that? Do I have your word that you’ll cooperate?”

I looked him in the eye and smiled. “Absolutely!” Beardancer put his hands above his head, and grinning, announced, “I surrender!”

“Okay, then I don’t have to cover my back. All of you, listen! I think we are in danger... At least we have to assume that we are. Whoever’s out there, we must assume that they crippled the subs to keep us here. Why they would want us here is a question I can’t seem to answer now. Why wouldn’t they have let us leave and then they would have had the place to themselves? Unless they were afraid that we found something... Like records or something?”

Susan was nodding agreement. "That has to be it! They can't let us leave until they are sure we haven't found what they're after. That means that they know something's here. My guess is that it's Willis's creepy son Bobby. Arnie, I never told you, but Bobby and a grave robber from Utah that he worked with thought nothing of killing people. It's not the FBI, rangers or law enforcement. They'd hold us and tie us up and out of the way with legal mumbo-jumbo. It's got to be someone like Bobby who wants those records."

Quentin agreed. "Okay, we've got to get out and look for sign. We've got to know where they are and protect ourselves. You'll go in two's. I'll go alone and pick-up their tracks around the subs. Bill and Alex, be careful and scout around the other side and get to where you have a view of Willis's old ruin. Watch it and observe. Norman, you and Cain...you see if you can climb up where you can see the whole valley. See if you can spot the truck and trailer. All of you, get to where you can keep me in sight. I'll make myself known and hopefully that will bring them out to see what I'm doing."

"And what about us?" Regina was getting pissed.

"You're safe here. Set up camp. Get all of our things organized for the night. Keep a sharp lookout in case they get past us. Knowing you're both safe will make it easier for us. Hey, we have about two hours until dark. Be back here while you can still see. Don't get caught out there in the rocks after dark!"

"What about your boss? Are they sending someone to get us?"

Quentin stopped and smiled. "Yeah, that guy Avery has taken charge. He and Jefferson are on their way. The FBI is supposed to send someone to meet them at the reservation line."

“Regina was watching him closely. “So why are you smiling?”

Quentin grinned. “We have the maps. Even if they have a set, they don’t know where we are. I imagine they can find us... but not before dark. They’ll be radioing for directions. You know, I’m very good at giving directions, it’s the landmarks that I have a hard time with.” He grinned even deeper and turned away.

“I wish Bill hadn’t knocked out that doorway. The air blowing out of there is freezing cold!”

“Here,” Susan said, “We have this extra blanket. We can use rocks to hold it in place. It should block most of the cold.”

“What about a fire? They know we’re here, the smoke won’t give anything away.”

Half an hour later the rock walls were warming and the space was pleasantly warm. They sat with the fire to their backs, leaning against packs, listening to the crackling fire and watching the valley through the doorway.

“The wind makes a funny sound even with the blanket in place,” Susan observed as she watched a raven ride the last thermals rising out of the side-canyon.

“I don’t like it! I’ve heard that the wind wails---well this is the first time I’ve heard it. If you let your imagination go... Gad! It sounds like chanting.”

“It’s the ancient spirits drumming and singing...”

“Don’t do that Susan! I’m scared enough without you saying that!”

“Sorry Regina. It’s hard to sit here and not feel like we are in touch with the ancient ones. They must

have sat here like this a thousand years ago. Only then, the chanting sounds were probably real.”

Chapter 33

According to my sources, he was a strong leader who could have united the bands and kept the reservation intact. They put a contract out on him. It came from the top of state government...

GETTS SLAMMED THE RECEIVER down hard on its carriage. It was his third try to get through to his office, in as many hours. Nancy! Damn her! She had probably gone shopping or something... Would have, knowing that he was in this God-awful hinterland, unable to catch her. He got up and paced around the room. He had convinced them that the records were gone... Well, they were. He had personally destroyed the last ones from the old file cabinets. Willis was dead...they were all dead! Now to clean up the last mess his grandfather had left. Brownfield! He owed his whole career to the man and also his nightmares. Why? What made a man like that do such an abominable thing? It must have been Willis! Willis had probably hooked his grandfather into the scam. Maybe Willis had hired the miners to dig up the graves... Sure, Ferner Brownfield was a civilized man. He had believed that Injuns weren't humans, as most good Christians were taught at that time. He must have been duped. Things were tough. They needed money badly. There was always a market for human mummies...they brought in big bucks...and they had run out of mummies from the cliffs. It made sense! One mummy was as good as another.

What he didn't understand was why Willis had mummified the body of the Ute. What good was that? No one would buy it! The market was for women and girls, not Bucks. He had to find out who the Ute was,

and why he had been killed. Then he could get that guy Cain and the Utes off the case and out of the way. With them satisfied, no one would be poking around anymore. If records survived, which he doubted, they would remain hidden. The Ute was a priority! Now who would know what had happened to him?

“Aunt Millie? Ferner here. Can you hear me okay? You can? Listen Auntie, how are you? You are? Well yes, I’m calling for information. I’m way down in Arizona. Yes Ma’am, long distance. It is business, I’m sorry. I know I should come by to see you, but I really need your help right now. You were Grandad’s only secretary and confidant right? You are probably the only person that has the information I need, if you can remember? You’ll try? Thanks Auntie. Well, some folks found a Ute in a shipping case down in Sedona. Yeah, he was all dried-out. Dead? Of course he was! Had been since way back in the early 1890s. You do know about him! Yeah, when Grandad was first in Colorado working with that guy CP Willis. Yes! Sure, a young Ute man. Killed...by whom? Who did they work for? Ranchers? Do you know which ones? No? They didn’t work for Willis or Grandpa did they? They did! Dug for them when there was no other work, then. Why did they kill him? Really, the Governor? Who in Durango? I understand Auntie, you didn’t know their names. Your memory is great! You never knew them, that’s all. Okay, but powerful men, right? Why kill this one? He was that powerful? So, he could have united the Utes and stopped the checkerboarding of their lands. Sure that would have been bad. No, I understand, the Utes had no use for the water and arable

bottoms. Of course it was the right thing to do. Grandfather knew, then? The guys from Durango paid him to help them? And Willis? He wasn't? But who hid the body? Johnston? I never heard of him. Who's he? Really! Auntie, did Grandpa know Johnston had it? So he paid him to keep quiet? Blackmailed Grandpa until Johnston died... Who killed him? But he paid him, right? Wow! Auntie, you have helped me a lot. You're wonderful! Sure, next time I'm in Denver. No, I didn't know she was trying to get in touch with me. Okay Auntie, I'll give her a call. Of course, she's my cousin, but you know, we never got along that well. You're right, it is time. I'll do my best." He couldn't say, "I love you." He didn't. Call Edith? What, did she think he was, crazy?

He tried his Denver office again, cursed the answering machine, and then called Darrell Kingsley. "Kingsley, Doctor Ferner Getts here. Listen, I have some information. What? Well I'm sure you do and I'm sure you think it's important. Wait! Listen to what I have to say first!" Kingsley was trying to inject some of his fears into the conversation. Well, it was his call and he would do the talking.

"I know who the Ute was they found in the trading post." He paused and listened. "No, not his name, that's not important. He was a Ute who was going to make trouble for the guys that wanted to buy up Southern Ute lands. According to my sources, he was a strong leader who could have united the bands and kept the reservation intact. They put a contract out on him. It came from the top of state government; Brownfield arranged the hit. Hired some of his diggers---you know, cowboys and miners---to do the deed. Seems that another guy name of Johnston hid

the body and blackmailed my grandfather for years. My stupid grandfather finally had Johnston killed. What I don't know is who this guy Johnston is?"

"Oh damn you Getts, who cares? Do you know what's on the internet?"

"Look Kingsley, we'll get to your agenda. Who is Johnston?"

"Well, I know his son... Old man. Lives here in Sedona. I've talked to him over the years. He's always nosing around trying to figure who killed his dad. If what you say is true, your grandfather had it done. Bad ju-ju. Johnston was a trader up there on the res. Hey, maybe that's where they got the records!"

"Records? What records are you talking about?"

"Hey Ferner baby, you're really famous now! Check it out! It's all on the internet." He slammed the phone down. Getts would never insult him again.

"Phil? Doctor Getts here. Listen! I just learned that a guy by the name of Johnston had the Ute and was blackmailing my grandfather. Has a son lives here in Sedona. The guy was a trader. Probably kept records."

"Records? Shit man, maybe that's where they got them." Phil wanted out, but he was curious about how the records had appeared on the internet.

"Who got what?"

"The records. The ones on the internet. You seen them? I haven't, but I understand that they are really bad!"

"No. I know about them though. I'll deal with that in my own time!" He made a mental note to check out the internet. Nancy would be able to find the address. Then he got back to important matters.

“That guy Johnston was blackmailing my grandfather with the Ute, because he helped arrange the Ute’s death. That’s why... Damn, that doesn’t explain why Willis had him and brought him to Sedona.”

Phil saw some light of his own. “We know Willis and your grandfather were working together. If Willis was also working with Johnston, and Johnston was killed...then maybe Willis decided to keep blackmailing Brownfield. Make sense?”

It did. For the first time Ferner was getting a handle on things. “Then we’ve got a trail to follow, right? If there are any other records out there, this guy Johnston probably has...well, *had* them. His son lives in Sedona. What say you pay him a visit! Can you find him?”

“Look, I’ll try...But? Okay, I’ll call back later.” Long let the phone fall from his hand. Getts wasn’t the least concerned that the records were out. That could mean only one thing... He decided to wait an hour and then finish things with Getts.

“Long here. Bad news Getts. I traced Tom Johnston down, didn’t take too long in this burg. Works for a Jeep tour company. Calls himself Anasazi Bill! He left sudden-like for Colorado two nights ago.”

The cowboy! Oh no! That SOB! He’d played dumb and listened to every word of their conversation in the bar. His gut hurt as the cancer spread. He felt new pains in his rectum. His prostate swelled with rabid cells. He found it hard to breathe. Lung cancer! He had so little time left, and so much to do. Colorado? Long would have to go and search for the records. ‘Besides,’ he thought between clutches of pain, ‘Long

was the perfect person to go onto the reservation, no one would suspect he had anything to do with... Well, anything.'

"Phil, can you arrange to get to Colorado? Sadly, there is no one else who can do this for us. We two, just us two old soldiers, we've got to finish this thing! That cowboy posing as my Jeep driver? He is Tom Johnson!"

"Doctor Getts, I got word a few moments ago that I am to return to Denver. My job here is through. It seems that what you did changes everything. My funding has been cut! I've been ordered back. It's the internet thing!"

"Phil, you can charter a plane and be there..."

"What I know is that *you* can charter a plane here at the airport and be in Cortez in two hours. I can't go with you, but as my ex-board chairman, you understand of course." He held the instrument away, stuck his tongue out at it, smiled, and hung-up. He never had to do anything ever again for Getts! On his way to Denver, he'd have to stop over in Phoenix. Flowers in March! Warm air! The golf greens would be perfect. Wonderful! Best of all, no Ferner Getts ordering him around, ever again.

Getts jammed his big bags into the storage locker and pinned the key inside his coat pocket. He held the small carry-on as if it were a precious kiva jar. The charter outfit wanted payment in advance, his business credit card was fouled-up and was rejected, so he was forced to pay in cash. Insulted and abused by every system and every person he contacted, he let his chin lay on the velvet collar of his great coat and took comfort in little whimpers as he waited. Soon the plane was airborne and he slept, awaking only

long enough to feel the pain in his dying body and the awful urge to pee. “Damned God had to make his prostate into a walnut thing!” he cursed under his breath.

The pilot seemed amused. “This is it, man, the big city after dark! I sure hope you have someone waiting for you. Don’t look like anybody is here to me, never are after 11:00.”

The plane was gone before Getts decided that the doors to the little terminal building were locked. The wind was up and the freezing air blasted him. He thought he heard a noise over by the gas pump. He began walking that way, slowly. He had to pee bad. No one there. He faced the runway, away from the faint perimeter lights, fished around until he got through to *it*, aimed *it* and... Couldn’t go. Nothing! He had to go bad, but... Nothing! He was standing there, whimpering, crouching over his member, aiming *it* and shaking *it* as best he could, waiting for something to let go.

“Been out here long?”

He exploded! It must have been the surprise; the woman’s voice.

“Look Mister, there *is* a toilet in the shop area... If... Well, do you want a ride into Cortez?”

He wasn’t finished, but he jammed *it* back into his pants and yanked the zipper... Pain! And *it* wasn’t through; couldn’t stop. He felt the dribble down his leg even as he backed the zipper down and got *it* free. Then carefully, grimacing with pain, he zipped it closed.

“Thank you Ma’am. It was a long plane ride and I couldn’t get into the terminal and...” He sobbed.

Couldn't he just die here? Why not here, now, instead of this degradation?

"I'm going in. Must be scary being out here alone like you was. Sorry if I scar't you. A little pee won't hurt nothin', and hell, we need the moisture."

"I need a place to stay...and do you know a guide? Someone who knows the Ute Reservation and how to... Well, how to find people there?"

"Just might! My sis is married to a Ute. He'd take you in, I guess, but you would have to pay... I mean, me to set it up, and him to take you. How you going?"

"Going?" She knew *it* wouldn't stop dribbling?

"You planning to walk in?"

"Oh no," he was relieved, more now. "I'll need to rent a---what is it you call them, four wheels?"

"Hey, you're in luck. Silas Cutclaw has one! He'd probably rent it to you if he drove it."

"That's wonderful! Thank you. Now, can we go?... I mean drive into Cortez?" Good God, he thought, I still have to go!

At least the motel was up to his standards. This town had some class. He even got a newspaper and... He was lying on the bed, stripped down to his silk underwear. He couldn't relax, so much had happened. He opened the paper and saw his picture, the one from the promo they had done for his speech before the Anthropological Society. He glared back at it, it wasn't even close to his true likeness. How dare they use that picture! The headline screamed:

Academic Discredited: Historical Records Send Shock Waves!

Washington, D.C. According to sources high up in the Department of Interior, the records which appeared on an obscure web page yesterday have

not been verified. A department official, who asked not to be identified, suggested that the records were some kind of cruel hoax, probably placed there by internet terrorists in a continuing attempt to discredit the Department... He urged people to wait before drawing any conclusions.

He scanned down the page, not yet paralyzed by the shock of what he had read. ...and Doctor Norma Curts, the well-known president of the Curator's Society, has confirmed that the records are valid and that she had personally seen some of them in the files at the Denver Museum within the week. She told this reporter that Doctor Getts had removed the file cabinets and contents several days before. Attempts to reach Doctor Getts have failed. It is rumored that he is hiding-out in Arizona, and that he may have placed the records on the internet. According to his university advisor, Doctor Paul Brownfield, the man who wrote the Foreword to Getts' book, Southwest Collections: The Definitive Study of the Origins of America's Great Southwest Collections, "If Doctor Getts did release the records he negates all of his previous work. His contribution to those who seek to document the ownership of collections is now suspect."

A spokesperson for the Ute Tribe in southwestern Colorado pondered the question many museums and collectors are asking. "Who owns the collections stolen from our lands?"

Getts couldn't move. He held the newspaper in front of him, staring at nothing. His mind, wound like a rubber band as he read, suddenly let go and unwound leaving him blank and confused. His body relaxed and seemed to doze off. When he came back

to his body he smiled and got up. The newspaper fell to the floor. 'Nothing important in that hick paper,' he thought as he slipped out of his silk underwear and went in to shower. He had work to do...it took him a few moments to focus on just what work that was. Then he knew. Connely and Willis had a plan and Willis had gone to the reservation to get the records so that they could blackmail him. He had to go out there where his grandfather had mined his fortune so many years before. He had to go there and...find that last mummy and make sure that Johnston fellow didn't keep records. He had to get Bobby Willis and shut his damned mouth for good. He could do that, would in fact! He dried off and crawled into bed, feeling good for the first time in months. 'I'll probably need a gun,' he thought as he planned his day. 'Well, Indians are allowed to have guns, I'll use theirs.'

Chapter 34

I turned slightly and saw an old man pointing a pistol at us. He was standing on the edge of the gully, glaring down.

NORMAN AND I LOOKED at the fissures along the face of the ridge. We needed a natural fault that we could climb up to get to the flat top of the jutting sandstone. We found a large fissure that started up about thirty feet above us and looked as if it curved up all the way. Getting up to it was scary. We helped each other crab up and along the slick sandstone bulb at the bottom of the vertical rock wall. Finally, Norman gave me a hand and we stood in the fissure. From there, climbing was easier. We made it up almost to the top when we came to an overhang. It looked like we had climbed to a dead end. Then Norman inched his way under the overhanging sandstone and let out a “whoopie!” He had found indentations pecked into the rock by the ancients. The small steps gave us handholds and footholds. Soon, we pulled our weary bodies up onto the capstone. We lay there, catching oxygen like fish.

“Now this is a view!” Norman announced as he stood. “And look, over there behind that hill. Truck and trailer. That means there’s three of them around here. Let’s go toward the edge and see if we can spot Alex and Bill.”

We looked down upon what had to be the old Willis ruin. To the left, nearer the cliff face, we saw Alex and Bill secreted in their lookout. I moved closer to the edge, hoping to see the base of the cliff.

“Oh no! Look at this Norman!”

Curving gently down to the left was a trail that followed a wide fracture. There were animal signs in the soft earth. Looking down, I could see that the trail followed the gently curving fissure down to a point in back of our friends' lookout. "Dumb! We about killed ourselves getting up here, and here is a trail that you could ride a motorcycle up."

"No way to know," Norman said, consoling both of us, "let's move out toward the end of the ridge and see if we can spot Quent or someone."

We kept low, trying to hide our profiles against the sky. At the end of the ridge, we looked down on the Suburbans.

"I see Quent." Norman announced after studying the area for a few minutes.

"Where? I can't see him."

"Look behind the subs. See where that gully goes... Well, look down it---follow it down! See?"

I saw Quentin's head and then his shoulders and then his whole body as he emerged out of the gully. He came forward, around the subs and stood in the middle of the road. I thought he was moving too slowly, but from this distance it was hard to tell.

"What's he doing now? Is he waving at us?"

He was waving his arms around, trying to catch somebody's attention. Then, echoing around the hard sandstone walls we heard his voice. We couldn't make out what he was saying.

"He's yelling something," Norman acknowledged. But what?"

I turned to look at the place where Alex and Bill were on lookout. They were standing, waving, and starting down to Quentin. "Alex and Bill are going down to him. Look, now he's looking this way and waving at us."

“He can’t see us, but he knows we’re here.”

“He’s motioning for us to come down.” I stood and he evidently saw me against the sky. He made gathering motions with his arm, no doubt that he wanted us to join him.

We eased our way down the path through the fissure until we reached the lookout point Alex and Bill had held. The going was steep and slippery, but easy compared to our way up. Quentin motioned for us once more and turned. He disappeared behind the Suburbans. Bill and Alex were nowhere in sight.

“He must have found something down that gully.” Norman observed. “Come on, we can catch-up.”

It took us about ten minutes to get down, across the talus and to the road. Their tracks led down the soft earth bottom of the deep eroded cut. We followed them, until the walls on each side were above our heads. I smelled a horse, but couldn’t see it. I turned as Norman grunted surprise.”

“Git yer hands up away from yer bodies. Do it now!” The shock of being ambushed nearly immobilized us. I turned slightly and saw an old man pointing a pistol at us. He was standing on the edge of the gully, glaring down.

“Reach easy and drop yer weapons!”

Norman shrugged and turned slightly so that he could see our captor. “We haven’t got any.”

The old man spit and pointed his pistol at first Norman and then me. “Skullcroft, you gits down there and sees to that!”

A dirty, disheveled man came over the edge above, and slide-jumping his way down, came to rest about ten feet in front of us. He kept a 30-30 pointed at me.”

“Now whilst I got ‘em covered, you search ‘em. Do it good!”

He felt us up and down and decided that we weren’t armed. “Hell, C.J., these two ain’t nothing but tourists.”

C.J.? I turned slightly toward Norman and whispered, “That old man must be Willis.” Norman nodded agreement. He looked down toward his hand, my eyes followed. He held two fingers out, shook his head and then held out three, meaning where’s the other one?

“Now you tourists march!” Skullcroft ordered. “Injun, you go first.”

We rounded a curve in the gully, now at least eight feet lower than the surrounding sagebrush flat. I saw the Buckskin reign-tied to a sagebrush root sticking out of the bank. Beyond the horse I saw Quentin, on his stomach in the mud; hog-tied, tight. He turned his head toward us and I could see that he was in pain. He was laying in the cold gray mud, wet in front. His legs were folded up, boots tight against his buttocks and his hands were locked with rope under his boots. There was no way he could move out of the mud or even roll to his side. Alex and Bill were tied the same way, but on their sides. Neither could move and it was obvious that the position the ropes pulled them into was painful. Wills and Skullcroft were cruel and ruthless.

“Git them cuffs!” Willis seemed to be in charge, Skullcroft did as he was told. “Now cuff that one’s wrists to that one’s ankle!”

Skullcroft had us down in the cold mud, lying on our sides, back to back, heads to feet. He took my left hand and clamped the handcuff on my wrist, tight. Then he forced me to bend back and around until he

could get the cuff on Norman's ankle. That done, he stood up, looking at Willis. "I ain't got me no more rope." It was more a question than a statement.

"Git somethin'! Cain't leave them there free like that."

"Got me a leather!" He went over to the horse and pulled something off the saddle. "This here strap's long enough."

"Well hurry up goll-darn you boy! Tie 'em tight, they got to be here all the time."

He forced my free arm back and tied the leather strap to it. Then he took the other end, reached under Norman and pulled his arm back and into a hammerlock position. Then, running the strap over Norman's shoulder and around his neck, he tied it to Norman's wrist. We were more than hog-tied, when I tried to move, it hurt Norman. When he shifted, it about killed me. We lay there in the mud. The sun was gone over the lip of the gully and the cold was filling the gully with numbing intent.

They led the down the gully the way they had evidently come. Quentin's face was gray, he smiled at me, an apology that I knew wasn't owed. I could see that his body was beginning to shake.

Alex humped a few times, turning toward us. He studied the way we were tied while we perused his fix. "Men," he said in a voice he'd bolstered with some inner strength, "what we got here is a knotty problem. Now I've got an idea, but it'll take a lot of humping and bumping for us to get close enough for my teeth to do some good."

Chapter 35

They were speeding toward a confrontation with people who had done nothing wrong. Their job was to net them and cause them so much legal and bureaucratic grief that they would be immobilized.

“WE SHOULD START DINNER. They said they would be back just before dark.” Susan was too comfortable with the warmth of the fire at her back and the view out the ragged-edged doorway. “It’s like a big television screen. Only I like this channel better than the ones we get on cable.”

Regina laughed. “Norman would go ballistic if he heard that analogy. He fears that TV is the brain-neutralizer weapon of the Christian Right.”

“He’s right, at least about it being a brain-neutralizer. Soon everyone will stay in their houses and be entertained. The world will go wild again, and man will waste away in cities, carefully fed and clothed and entertained by a few puppet masters.”

“You really think that?” Regina turned so that she could study Susan’s face.

“I don’t know, but it is happening. It really is, you know.”

“You’re right! I see it with our families... You know, some people only come out of their houses when they have to. At night, the neighborhoods are empty. All you see that indicates life is a flickering blue light behind closed windows. It’s scary.”

“Your kids are really doing well. I think your daughter is a lot like you. She likes school and...”

“Susan, it wasn’t like that until this year. Norman finally got through to her and... Well, she lost her anger and she’s accepted her little brother, Norman’s

kids and grandkids, and become one of the family. We actually talk now.”

The Sun was glimpsing the rock wall and the tucked-in ruin of Johnston’s Trading Post for the last time. Brittle-white winter sunlight seemed to shatter as it came through the rocks and trees on the far rim. Then, with a wink, it was gone. Shadows lengthened and a wind kicked its way up the valley. It blew against the sandstone ridge and made whistling sounds through the boughs of the stunted pinons and junipers that clung to the rock face. The blanket they had placed over the doorway opened by Anasazi Bill, suddenly bellowed out like a sail. They heard a whining sigh as pressures equalized and the cold air rushed out for a last chance to get warm in the dying day. Something way back in there made small rocks roll, and as the blanket became limp and then filled again, they thought they heard a giant breathing.

“It’s like living in a giant church organ, or a bellows.” Susan observed. Let’s bring in more wood from the pile before it’s dark... And we should start cooking, they’ll be hungry as bears when they get back.”

Avery let his gaze swing across the land as he drove. All this land and for what? There were not even two thousand Indians! They had over half a million acres of land, mineral resources, a gambling casino, a tribal park, cattle operations, and potential wealth beyond measure. Desert wastelands, sure, but it was unfair. Why should any group of people, regardless of their history, be allowed to own such resources collectively? It was a form of that damnable communism he had fought against all his life. Lots of

good guys had died in Nam fighting for what? For these few remnants to own a vast empire right in the heart of America? He corrected his speed and looked to see if Jefferson was awake.

Jefferson was a half-breed. He sided with him--- any boss---only because it was his job, but he wasn't fooled. Given the opportunity, he would turn Injun and go for the freebies. It had to be stopped! Congress had made a major error when they allowed reservations. No matter how he studied the situation, it had never been clear if the legislators back then had intended to create countries within America. Most were realists like Sherman---good old William Tecumseh. Named in part after a Shawnee leader who tried to unite the tribes and who had sided with the British in the War of 1812. William Tecumseh knew Indians. He saw the future and, if he had been left alone to do the job, there would be no reservations or indigent populations of remnants. Sherman had the final solution, but they had stopped him before his job was done. Why? What had the Indians ever done for America? He chuckled. He had asked the President that very question, and the Texan had stopped for a moment and given him a strange look. Within weeks, he was the President's Special Advisor on Indian Affairs. Good question, Avery! You always have been right-on!

He was driving too fast for the conditions, maybe, but he wanted to get there before dark. In a way he should let Cain stir up the Tribe. If they got out of line enough, too visible, too demanding, Congress could act---would act! Hell, there were many who believed that tribal governments had gone too far. What they called self-determination was really an attempt to split the nation and create independent countries within its

borders. That could never be allowed to happen. The rights of the majority couldn't override the rights of the minority, hell, everyone knew that, but the rights of these few minorities could override the rights of all Americans. That could never be allowed to happen!

"Take that turn-off, Sir." Jefferson was holding the map in his lap and pointing to an almost obscure dirt track heading off into God knows where.

"What? That's not a road, I'm not going to get stuck back in there, it's almost dark!"

"We should check for tracks, Sir, I think that's the road that gets us over to the other side of the Mancos and..."

"Jefferson... You have an interest in seeing me get lost out here, right?"

"I have my job to do. I'm doing it!"

He slowed the vehicle, trying to decide if Jefferson was tricking him. "Okay, I'm going to test your intentions. We'll go back... But damn you man, there had better be tracks!"

Avery wasn't the kind of man to admit to any indiscretion, let alone a slight to an inferior. He got back into the vehicle, waited for Jefferson to close his door, and steered down the dirt track. The tracks of the other vehicles were easy to follow, because the angle of the winter sun made shallow depressions stand out like lines. As he drove he thought about Jefferson's comment about doing his job. Well, that's what it was all about wasn't it? The man had made it up the ladder in the agency and he held a fairly responsible position. His file showed that he had caught the attention of some higher-ups who were watching him and grooming him for some kind of a promotion. Evidently the guy inherited a lot from his

non-Indian parent. That would explain why he spoke and wrote well, and had potential for management. Maybe he was being too tough on him... “Jefferson, what would you do in a case like this?” The question startled the man, good! It would bring out whatever the guy was hiding.

“I’ve thought about that. What’s unclear is that the facts in this case that I’ve seen don’t jive with the charges. One of the first lessons I had when I joined the bureau and went through the indoctrination was never to move unless the facts pointed the direction.”

“Simplistic! Out here in real life, in the real world, you soon learn that those with the facts make the decisions and we carry out their decisions. We’re foot soldiers who can’t see over the hills, not generals. I agree that what we have learned about this guy Cain, and what they say, are not the same things. But, they have other motivation.” He paused, looked over at the man, and decided to share more with him. “Frankly, Jefferson, they want Cain out of the way for reasons of their own. Understand that? We are not to act as judges. We are to accept the laws as interpreted by our bosses. Our job is to get the guy and put him aside for awhile. *Innocent* isn’t an issue! You and I know there will never be formal charges, and the guy was a cop, after all. He’s probably innocent, but from what I’ve seen, he’s creating quite a script for the Utes to follow... He *is* putting words in their mouths and ideas in their heads that are dangerous. We have to take him out. Trust the bureau, we do this all the time.”

Jefferson heard Avery’s explanation and winced. It wasn’t news to him, he had seen the bureau’s “best,” skirt the law and intimidate innocent people many times before. The directors and their henchmen were

given almost unlimited power and the resources they needed to work within the gray area between---what was it that civil rights leader had called it---suspicion and the courts. If you knew the outcome you wanted, any means justified the end. If the accused ever got his day in court, the agency would admit the slip-up and promise that it would look into it's procedures. No one was ever held accountable for abusing the rights of those perceived to be in the way. That fact alone was the reason, he thought, that the bureau and the department had never changed the way Native American affairs were administered.

Avery was still waiting for an answer. What would he do? "And, well Sir, I would carry-out my orders and do my job." He knew he should stop talking and leave it there, but... "But I would not allow myself to become oblivious to the bigger picture." He saw Avery stiffen. "I have spent some time on this case, and although I'm not a law enforcement officer or even trained in law enforcement, I have learned what Cain and Beardancer---now the whole tribal council---are after."

"Oh sure you have! You and what, a network of spies?"

"No Sir, just me, by myself, observing and asking questions. What they want is to know who the man was that they found in Arizona, why he died, and... Well, the other part of this is, that they want to know their history and to be able to tell their children about who they were...are!"

"Sure, sure! So what then? Hey, they lived in brush wickiups, traveled all the time, and... Hell, they were primitive and uncivilized peoples who didn't even make metal tools. They were a Stone Age people who should have been assimilated and made to disappear."

Jefferson deflated a little and gave up. It was an old argument that he wasn't skilled enough to win. The dominant assumption was that people who didn't have European standards, values and religion were inferior. Nothing they had or did was given value unless it fit into the European framework. Human cultures were measured against... It was a no-win situation, and Jefferson could see no equitable end. Men like Avery---most Americans---believed that Native American's were inferior. Even when they saw examples of competence and brilliance---men like Beardancer and many others---they denied the facts. Someday, maybe something would happen to change that. He had given-up, there was no light that he could see at the end of this tunnel.

Avery wasn't finished. "So, you learn all this stuff and you file your report. Someone up-top reads it and... So? Maybe you do make a difference in a perfect world. I agree that you should do that---believe that! But Jefferson, this ain't a perfect world, man! They have other *facts*! They don't want to know your facts even if they are right on. That's what you have to learn Jefferson. Facts don't drive this system, personal interests do---always have." He paused and looked quickly away from the track at Jefferson. "But you know that, don't you! That's why you're here, uneasy or not!"

Jefferson felt powerless and defeated. No matter how he tried, he didn't have arguments that convinced any of them. Avery represented every bad experience he had had in the system. But there was something he had inherited from his mother, a childlike belief, an ethic, a sense of right and wrong. Their system couldn't be allowed to ignore the

contributions of minorities. Whatever it cost, little people had to fight.

They were speeding toward a confrontation with people who had done nothing wrong. Their job was to net them and cause them so much legal and bureaucratic grief that they would be immobilized. Like hell!

“Sir, we should come to another turn. It’s getting dark, so we won’t be able to follow the tracks, but this will keep us out of the muddy bottoms and get us, he held the map up, as if he were identifying a place, to the ruin a little after dark.”

“You’re sure?”

“Well Sir, maps don’t lie do they?”

Chapter 36

Dean, those times were different. I mean, I knew how horrible all that was, but you've got to understand that in those days those bodies weren't considered human.

DEAN WALKED TO THE far wall of the old Sedona trading post and ran his hand along the ax-hewn beam over the doorway. The construction crews had finished their work and the painters were due sometime this afternoon. The beams had cleaned-up nicely. In a few deep cracks he could see signs of the dark brown paint that had been slopped onto the wood by what must have been a long-bristled Dutch brush. The painters could seal the stripped wood and let the yellowing beam's natural colors come through. He was satisfied! The remodel had taken longer than he had first bid, but Doc Connely seemed happy.

The building had given up its secret which started a chain of events that was still rattling Sedona. In the 21st Century, people were shocked by the acts of their grandparents of past generations. The idea of trading in human remains---of grave robbing---seemed more like a theme from a Steven King novel than reality. It was hard to believe.

Once the volunteer archaeologists had determined that there were no other bodies, the pressures to stop him dissipated. The thugs, who were never identified, were gone. The Architectural Review Committee sent a letter of apology, and the Sedona Police no longer had to watch the building. He would have been okay if he had accepted all of that and quit picking the scab.

Doc Connely was late. He had called Dean's office and left a message to 'meet early, before the workers

arrive.' It was after 7:00 a.m., but the old man hadn't arrived. Dean walked around inside the old trading post. History! Restoration work was the finest way to learn history. Across these floors myriads of people had come, some as lookie-lous, some as sellers with packs and blankets full of precious things. A few were buyers, people who collected or bought for collectors. They were looking for fine woven rugs, paintings and pottery. Some were looking for antiquities---grave goods. He wondered how human bodies were displayed and sold. The thought made him shiver.

"You act like the place is full of ghosts." Connely had come in behind Dean, moving quietly for his bulk and age.

"Ho! Doc you startled me! I was! I was thinking what it was like when this place was a trading post... I mean people coming in to look. Others buying and selling."

"It was exciting, always exciting! I never knew who would come in that door. Sometimes the people who came in scared me... I mean deep down, something wild and dangerous about them scared me. Other times, people came in and we swapped lies. In those days, the late '40s, early '50s, not many tourists came in---maybe five in a whole week. Most were from over at Jerome, not copper miners, but those that lived off them. Good folks, worked for Phelps-Dodge. Most of my sales were to professional buyers. They came from museums and from private collectors. Even back then, they were secretive and reluctant to divulge who they represented.

"Most of the stuff I bought came in the back door." He saw Dean's puzzled look and pushing his thick-framed, black-rimmed glasses up on his nose, he gave a short chortle. "'Back door' means that what

they had to sell was stolen or... Well, you know, they had it and wanted to sell it, but they didn't want to be seen. When I first opened they wouldn't even sell to me. Then, old C.J. Willis? You heard of C.J. Willis? Well he told 'em they could trust me. He was my biggest back door supplier. Later, I sold this place to him."

"Doc, how did they sell bodies?"

"Had a little storage room over there." He pointed to the far corner. "Not really a room, it was an area set aside by stacked crates and dividers, that's why you didn't know about it. We had the bodies in there, leaning against the wall when we could. Some, could only be shown flat. They took up a lot of room. Them little bodies... Well, you don't know about them. When Willis had the place he bought little bodies," he couldn't bear to say *children's* or *girl's*, "and stood them up along the wall. They'd been buried different. Flat-out, not fetal or flexed you know, knees to chest like most?"

"You mean he stood them on their feet?"

"Yeah, against the wall for all to see. Grotesque! I raised hell and told him I was going to turn him in. He said they were all sold, and that he would bury them under the floor to keep them dry until the buyers came and got them. That's how come you found those grave depressions with skin and stuff in them. They weren't there long, but that's where he hid them. He owed me money. Paid me off when they paid him. Awful business, but by that time I had been tipped-off that the government was going to stop the trade. That's why I sold out. Liked the business, though. Fair profit."

Dean had enough to chew on and changed the subject, directing it to Connely's approval of the work

done so far. Connely was pleased and went from pillar to post, remembering how it had looked more than 60 years before. Finished with his tour, Connely kept bringing the conversation back to the days when he and Willis had locked horns.

“I know that skunk kept records of everything he bought and sold. I saw him recording stuff, he made no attempt to hide it. I thought the records were here, buried or... Every hiding place has been looked into. He took the records with him when he moved on. Worst thing was that he tried to blackmail me! He wrote something, or so he said, that implicated me in the little mummies trade. I never was involved other than as I told you, but he wrote that I was and said that if I didn't loan him money, he would swear that the mummies were mine---that he had found them when I sold the place to him. Awful! Folks would think I was a grave robber!” He was sweating, the droplets forming under his eyes like tears; his potato-shaped head glistened.

“So you've been afraid those records would turn up? Maybe he was lying?”

“Damn, but I hope so. I went through all of that stuff that appeared on the internet... Not there, thank God. But you know, I found proof that he had sold those little girls...” He paused, hearing his own words.

Dean turned and reacted. “What did you say?”

“I try not to say it, actually. Freudian slip I suppose. I'm getting old. The children were all girls, little girls. You know Dean, I think they came from Fort Lewis Cemetery---died at the Indian School and was buried back of there. Then, Willis and Brownfield had them dug up, dried them out, and sold them.” He was sweating profusely now, droplets running the length of his nose and bailing out over his rotund

belly. He ran his hand and handkerchief around his massive head like a maid polishing a pot. Then changed hands, hand and forearm moving like a windshield wiper on a bus.

Dean felt sick. There was no way he could deal with this. Was the trade in mummies so lucrative that people dug-up the recently dead, mummified them, and sold them? Dead girls? He moved across the room and found a place to sit on the reconstructed counter. Doc Connely, morose, followed him and got his bulk up one pillow-bun at a time so that he too could sit.

“Dean, those times were different. I mean, I knew how horrible all that was, but you’ve got to understand that in those days those bodies weren’t considered human. There was no law against having them or selling them. Even if I had turned Willis in, the law wouldn’t have been able to do anything. Indian remains were displayed almost everywhere. Really! I know it’s hard to believe but...”

“Doc, how long did that go on?”

“Early ‘70s as I recall. Then the Indians got the woman they named Esther removed from display at the Mesa Verde Museum. Others, I’m not sure.”

“So those records you think Willis had, they don’t make much difference now that you have Willis’s real records on the internet?”

“Well, I didn’t know that then---I mean before I got Willis’s son Bobby and his partner to go up to Colorado and look for them.” Connely stopped, gave Dean a strange, dark look, and then lowered his big head. “There’s more! Up in Colorado on the Ute Reservation, Brownfield, who was Willis’s father’s partner, and old CP Willis, had a place. It was their base for digging ruins on the reservation and, for that

matter, on state and federal lands. Hell they didn't care, they dug where the ruins were. Well, as I understand it, when times were tough they went looking for the Anasazi burials---mummified cadavers. When they ran out of them, they hired degenerates to go dig up more recent graves. They had a place where they would hide the bodies and let them mummify. Sometimes it took a few years, I think. Well, I got Bobby to go up there and look for the records---and, damn, Dean, this is not the way I wanted it to be, to destroy any evidence they found in the drying area."

"Doc, you mean there are more mummies---dead bodies?"

"Probably one, as far as any of us can tell. We know there were six. We can account for five."

"Doc, you hired Cain to go up to Colorado and find out about the Ute we found here. Have you heard from him?"

"Last I heard was day before yesterday. They were leaving the next morning to go out to Willis's old place. I tried to discourage them, what with Bobby and that creep he runs with going there, but they were gone before I thought of that."

"So you're telling me that Cain and his Ute friend are going to run into Bobby Willis. Is that a problem?"

Connely slid down off the counter, turned and faced Dean. "If he's like his dad, he'd kill anything that got in his way. He's a bad one, I know that...his partner is worse. My God, what have I done?"

"We've got to get word to them... Doc, help me! We can't let those two meet without Cain being prepared. He wouldn't suspect..."

"I'm telling you Dean, they're out there---I mean way out in the wilds. At home I've got one of the maps

Willis left here, I can show you where his old place was.”

“Why can’t we just call the tribe and get a message to Arnie?”

“Got to try that! But there is no way short of being out there to help them.” He paused and Dean knew exactly what he was thinking---in fact, he was thinking the same thing. “Dean, I’ll cover your expenses and time. Can you get up there? You could fly into Cortez, rent a four-wheel drive and hire a Ute to guide you. Tell them the problem, Beardancer is one of theirs. “

“And then what, Doc? If I found the place. What could I do?”

“You’re clever about things, Dean. You’d figure it out. First though, let’s not jump ahead of things. Let’s go to your office and start calling. Maybe someone at the tribe can warn them.”

The police officer Dean talked to was suspicious, but helpful. Dean explained that Bobby Willis and his partner were on their way to the reservation to try to find records and destroy evidence. He expressed his concerns for Cain and the Ute he was working with.

“You’re the guy who found the body and called Norman Beardancer?”

“I found the body and called Cain. He called.”

“And what? You with the Feds, checking up to make sure I’m not interfering?”

“Absolutely not! I’m a friend of Cain’s... A very concerned friend.”

There was a long pause, long enough for the man to think the situation through.

“They got out of here early this morning. One of my officers is with them, and some others, one is an archaeologist. Beardancer’s wife and Cain’s wife went with them. The Feds are looking for them now, but

something is wrong. Someone messed their vehicles up... Officer Coats---Quentin Coats---radioed that their vehicles had been put out of commission. Two bureau guys are on their way out there to... Well, it's a long story. You say these two guys are dangerous?"

"Yes sir, very! I believe that our friends are in danger. Can you get word to them; someone else out there?"

"No." He paused and let that sink in. "Not because I don't think it's necessary, but because I have been ordered to stay completely out of this. The bureau has taken over, and... You probably don't understand, but we really don't have much power to act on our own. They gave me a direct order, in writing. My hands are tied."

"Can you radio them?"

"I've been trying. Quentin's radio is out... You may be right, they may be in trouble."

"What if I came up? Could I find a guide and vehicle? Could I go in there?"

"You a tourist?"

"Well..." Clever! The Ute officer was trying to help. "Yeah, I just need a guide and a vehicle to see the res."

"Happens that one of my young officers has the day off. Used to work for the tribal park, giving tours. Name is Silas. He was out there with Officer Coats about a week or so ago. Knows the... Well, just say he knows the reservation. Hey, and there's another guy been calling from town. Flew in from down there last night. Another tourist! I've put him off all day, thought he was a nut case, but what he says kinda confirms what you told me. Mind sharing the guide? I'll have Silas ready when you get here."

“No Sir, I don’t mind!” Dean tried to imagine who the other “tourist” was, had no clue, and continued. “I can be at the Cortez airport a little after three. I’ll rent a car and come to... Where?”

“Silas can pick you up at the airport. I think you’ll have better luck going in from the Mancos side. It’s pretty muddy out there. Silas drives a big F-250, gray, oversized tires, chrome headache rack. Can’t miss him. And Mr. Tourist, keep me informed, will you? There are some really good people out there. Silas has a good radio.” Dean hung up and turned to Connely.

“Doc, any idea who flew up there last night and wants to get out to the Willis place?” Dean had used his speaker phone and Connely had heard the conversation.

Doc Connely shrugged his massive shoulders and, arms akimbo, let his hands open, palms out. “Maybe!” He saw Dean’s lips begin to tighten with anger. “Well, what I mean is that... Well, there are guys from Denver who have been poking around here. One is Phil Long, director of the Pre-Historic Society. The other is Doctor Ferner Getts, a pompous pseudo-academic related to Ferner Brownfield, old CP Willis’s partner. He’s powerful... Well, he was. The stuff on the internet? Well, it showed that he falsified the records of where collections came from... My bet? It’s Getts. Either one, they’d be going there to destroy records.”

The airport was almost deserted when Dean parked in front of the hanger. He looked around for JB Mann, saw him next to a plane and waved.

“Hey Dean, old bud! ‘Bout time you threw some money my way. This will be my second charter to

Cortez. Got back from there about 2:00 this morning. Had a guy last night. Odd sort of bureaucrat or something. Emotionally on the edge I'd say. Left him off a little after 11:00. Paid cash. We'll be there in two hours. You won't have much daylight left, but at least you'll be there."

"Last night? What was the guy's name?"

"Doctor Something...let me see. Here, Getts, Ferner Getts."

Chapter 37

He tapped her hard on the shoulder. "Sit yer pert ass down, Suzie. I got plans fer you, only first I gets that Injun you's with."

REGINA STOOD, STRETCHING, AND went toward the doorway. "Susan, I'll get the wood, you lay those rocks better so we can put the pots on them. First though, I've got to pee. I'll be right back."

Susan focused upon on the fire-blackened rocks that lined the fire pit. She pried one closer to the others and adjusted its height. She felt the cold wind and turned to see if Regina needed help.

"Well, if'n it ain't my old girl! Suzie Que, I still remember you!"

Bob Willis stood over her holding a rifle in one hand and the blanket they had used to seal the doorway in the other. He was grinning; eyeing her like a prize. She tried to stand, but was paralyzed with fear. He had come from the sealed-off room! He looked disheveled, dirty and... In the firelight she could see that his youth was gone, leaving in its place, a stringy, worn-out body. Failure was written in every line of his face. He had lost whatever spark he once had that distinguished him. Now, no matter what happened, he had no future worth living. She sensed his bitterness; knew she was in danger. She fought for control. He would hurt her if she showed her contempt."

"Bobby! Gad, I haven't seen you in years and now we meet again out here." She saw his look of surprise. "I thought your dad's place was on the other side of the rock. Are these two places connected?"

"Guess yur still too damn smart! Get up! Take that light over there and go ahead. Me, I'll show ya what's

connected!" He let a dirty laugh out with stinking breath near her ear and pushed her toward the doorway into the black. "Use yer flashlight Suzie, and move! We's got lots a rocks to get over afore yer friend comes back."

He forced her forward with the barrel of the rifle. When she aimed the light in the wrong direction, he cursed her and tapped her right or left arm. She climbed ahead of him, barely able to keep the light focused ahead, keeping her balance with one hand. Rocks rolled, and he cursed her more vehemently. The passage got narrow and the light shone on a walled-up place ahead. He tapped the rifle barrel against her right arm. "Get left! Go around under that there!"

The flashlight's beam showed a jutting sandstone wall. She went left, and knelt to crawl under its overhanging mass. He prodded her in the butt with the rifle and laughed. "Tender ass, huh?" He pushed her out into an open space, walls visible in the light, but not close enough to touch. The temperature changed and she realized that they were out of the main gale of wind flowing down the fissure. He tapped her hard on the shoulder. "Sit yer pert ass down, Suzie. I got plans fer you, only first I gets that Injun you's with." He reached over to a pile of gear and flipped a rope out of its coil. "Hands back Suzie!" He tied her hands tight, and then forced her to her side and pulled her feet up behind her with one hand while reaching under her waist to wrap the rope around her middle, then back through her hands and around her boots. He stood then, reached down and squeezed her breast through her clothes. "Still a scrawny hen, ain'tya. Seems as though you thought ya was too good fer me, didn't ya? Well, maybe tonight you ain't

gonna be, jest fer ol times sake, right?" He picked up the flashlight and looked around the pile of gear. "You a duck Suzi? Well quack through this!" He peeled a six inch strip of duct tape off the roll and forced it over her mouth. "Silence is golden Suzie my gal." Then he was gone, back down the way they had come.

Regina stacked another piece of wood onto the ones that filled her arm, rose, and was making her way slowly to the door when she heard an airplane. She turned, facing the sound, and strained her eyes to see the plane. Nothing! It sounded like a small plane, but the sandstone walls around her made it impossible to tell where it was. She waited, watching the sky. She heard the plane again, and thought she saw it flying low over the Mancos River. It was making an odd popping noise like gunshots. Then it was gone. She waited, wondering if it would return. The Feds must be scouting the place, she thought, to see if the vehicles are really disabled. Their plane must be having engine trouble.

The firelight flickered and welcomed her back in. She saw the blanket in the middle of the room and... "Susan? Susan!" She dropped the armload of firewood and stood, confused. 'She couldn't have come out, I would have seen her,' she thought, fighting back real terror. She heard rocks roll then, as they tumbled down inside the fissure and came to rest in the blackness against hidden walls. "Susan! What in the..." She saw the boot tracks on the floor, men's boots and the shuffling marks of... She stepped carefully over to the fire and placed a dry branch on the glowing coals. The fire jumped to the brushy end of the branch and lit the room. She saw Susan's boot marks and over them the man's boots. They led to

the doorway; into the dark. She knew then that someone had come out of that darkness and taken Susan. She looked around for a flashlight. The one they had been using was gone. Then she crouched down and put her head back to think. Anasazi Bill? He had appeared suddenly out of that room. Was it him? No, these were not the tracks of cowboy boots. She moved quietly toward the doorway and into the blackness, listening. She heard an evil laugh and feet against sandstone. The sounds came from far above. Anasazi Bill had put the rifle back, but where? Somewhere in there was a crevice where he hid things. She thought she heard Susan cry out. That forced her action. She entered the blackness and began to feel her way along the sandstone wall. Slowly, she made her way along, slipping and tripping on loose rocks and bumping into outcrops and overhangs. Long minutes passed and she found nothing. Above she heard boots sliding on sandstone. Small pebbles rolled down and caught somewhere above her. She felt the cold wind that was blowing the sounds down to her and again stopped to listen. Breathing! And then she saw the glint of a flashlight's beam, way up, reflected from some ceiling or wall. One person, a man, coming down fast!

She focused her mind and pushed fear aside. She had to get to the rifle! She started again, creeping with arms out, hands feeling her way, feet finding places to push from, eyes wide open yet unable to see. He was getting closer! She came to a rough and broken part of the wall, feeling with all her tactile senses for the crevice Anasazi Bill had used. Nothing!

The light he carried flashed into the room like lightning. She had to find a place to hide! She inched along, faster now that she could hear his

breathing and mumbling. The light lit her space and she saw the bright flash of the reflector. She crouched and then lay as flat as she could on the broken sandstone floor. He was invisible behind the light, but the noise he made filled the cavern and her ears. Her heart was beating so fast...she couldn't control her breathing. Her breath came in gasps, too loud she thought, he's got me!

In less than a minute he was past her and standing near the ragged doorway. She got up and crept forward to where she could see his silhouette. He held a rifle pointed out to where he thought she was. He was tall, but that was all she could see. He was gone then, crouching like a cat as he entered the outer room. One thing she knew, he'd be back!

Along the wall, past the rough and broken sandstone, she felt the edge of a crack or split in the rock. She moved around and felt inside, certain that some hairy spider would bite her hand. Instead she felt the cold metal of Bill's rifle. She remembered what he had said about keeping it loaded. Checking it in the dark, she moved the lever down so that the breech opened, felt resistance as a shell raised up, and then slowly brought the lever up until the shell was seated in the barrel and the breech closed. She pulled the hammer back with her thumb, felt it cock, and then, holding it back, let her finger pull the trigger. The hammer came off its cock and she let it down gently with her thumb. She hefted the rifle to get its weight and balance, and crouched down. He had left Susan up there and come back for her. Susan would have called-out if she could...maybe he had... No! She couldn't think that way.

Norman should be back... Where was he? It was dark now and they had promised... She heard footfalls again, someone was coming back into the room... Norman? Then she heard the man cussing and mumbling. "Well goddamnit to hell, she can run around out there, but she'll never find where we gots 'em tied. Let her go goddamnit! Ol' Dad or Skullcroft u'll git her. If'n not, we'll git her first light. Damn Injun. Got one fer the night, anyway, so why care? Damn them!"

She heard him kicking the fire out, then saw his light again coming toward her. It was now or... She stood in the middle of the space, holding the 30-30 at her side, waist high, pointed at the opening. He came through, still talking to himself and cursing. His light beam struck her feet and then came up fast. He stopped, seemingly paralyzed with the realization. Then the light went out and she heard him moving off to the left. She got a shot off that ricocheted once and than hit the side wall with a splat! She moved quickly to the left, and sank down to her knee, still aiming the rifle at the place he had been.

The flash and the ear-shattering clap of his rifle came from her right. The bullet hit behind her and zinged off into the darkness. She aimed her rifle and fired, and then moved quickly to her right. Her bullet hit the wall. Her ears were ringing, yet, as if she were under water, she heard sandstone fall. Then she saw a shape pass back into the outer room. She stayed down and listened, aware that beyond the ringing of her blasted ear drums she could hear footsteps running away. Maybe she had hit him?

She stayed still and assessed her situation. She had fired two times. Two, maybe three more bullets in the rifle, if she could remember what Bill had said. He

was out there, waiting for her to make a stupid move. He had taken Susan up there somewhere... She had to find her. Then another thought came to her as she rubbed her ears wondering if they were bleeding. The sandstone had fallen...and something else. Something metallic. She remembered the sound. He might have... She crouched down so that she could feel the floor. In moments she felt the metal canister of the flashlight. He had dropped it! She wondered if it still worked, but was wise enough not to turn it on.

Chapter 38

"My God! There are five bodies down there!"

AFTER PASSING TO THE east of the snow covered Spanish Peaks and Flagstaff, the pilot leveled the plane and coaxed it northeast. He fixed their course with the radio beacon, first on a Farmington, New Mexico station, and then, after twenty minutes on KVFC in Cortez. The cold afternoon light of the March sky painted a shadow-pattern across the broken topography below. High desert ridges and mountain ranges hemmed-in basins and range lands which in turn, looked like snowy blankets at the foot of red rock ridges and greenery-laced tablelands. Almost two hours out of Sedona, the pilot broke into Dean's thoughts.

"Mount Hermano! Breast of the Sleeping Ute, straight ahead."

The plane slipped through the stable winter air, directly toward the Mountain. "See there!" The pilot pointed to a great raised mass to the east of the Sleeping Ute. That's the Mesa Verde. You want to come in from the south?" I can dogleg over the Mesa Verde and then come in over Cortez... Or, if you like, I can swing around the west side of the Ute and come in over Goodman Point and then swing around and come in west of town."

"JB?" Dean had the map Connely had given him, in his pocket. "I have a map here..." He unfolded it, holding it open so that JB Mann could see it. "Could we fly over the Mesa Verde and go over this place?" He pointed to the pencil circle Willis had drawn to mark his homestead.

“Not a problem, buddy! I can turn here at Jackson Butte and follow the Mancos. Story is that Escalante named it for a crippled member of his party, back in ‘76.”

“‘76? You mean 1776!”

“Yeah, seems like it was only yesterday.” He smiled and gave Dean a silly look. “We’re barely going to have enough light. You say you’re meeting someone who’s going to take you back out here tonight?”

“Yeah, sounds dumb, but I have a terrible feeling that Arnie Cain, his wife and his friends are in trouble.”

“Oh, so you’re the cavalry?”

“Best I can do! I tried to get the cops, but the BIA guys have forbidden them to get involved. I’ll make a lot of noise and scare the bad guys away.”

“I’d stay and help you Dean, but this plane and I have a work day tomorrow. Keep safe buddy. Hey, look! Two vehicles...Suburbans directly ahead!”

He put the plane into a steep descent, leveling out over the bottom of the river valley at about 500 feet. The plane passed to the left of the parked vehicles, as they stared down searching the ground for people. Dean glanced out his side window and saw shapes down in what seemed to be a deep gully. Before what he saw could register, they were past the Suburbans and JB was raising the nose.

“Truck and horse trailer beyond that hill. Looks like some folks up on the east side of that rock reef formation sticking out there. I see two men and a horse.”

“JB, I think I saw... Well, it looked like bodies lying in that gully back there. Can you come back around?”

Mann did a tight 180 and we were looking into the red ball of the setting sun. "Don't look at it! Keep your eyes on the ground!"

He slowed the plane and we seemed to drift down into the valley. This time he put the plane to the south of the vehicles, almost over the river. Dean targeted the line of the gully and waited. As they came over it, he saw five shapes lying in the bottom of the narrow cut. "My God! There are five bodies down there!" JB Mann hadn't seen them, as they were visible from the starboard side. He gave the plane fuel and began to climb. Something he saw out his side window made him gasp. "They're shooting at us! Look over there Dean! See those puffs of smoke coming from their rifles? Instead of raising the plane back to altitude as he had planned, he kept it low and flew the river. "We're out of range, but we were under fire! I don't think they hit us."

"We can't go back, can we?" Dean was filled with grief and rage. Maybe that was Cain and...there was no question in his mind, there were bodies laid out down there. None had moved as the plane passed over. Were they dead?"

JB pulled the plane back to altitude and turned to fly over the scene again, this time too high for whoever was shooting at them to easily hit the plane. "Even a 22 Long Rifle bullet will travel a mile. Those rifles were bigger bore. 22's don't smoke. At this altitude it would be sheer luck if they hit us...they still could, though. I'll come in to the southeast, over the river. Get my binocks out of the back there, and take a look as we go over."

Dean pulled the binoculars out of their leather case and tossed the case on the floor between his feet. Then, leaning against the door, he stabilized his

arms and held the binoculars to his eyes, focused, and quickly looked away as his stomach reacted to the change in the messages from his eyes. "Jeeze, that makes me dizzy!"

"Sorry about that good buddy, try again! This time keep your arms away from the plexiglas---don't touch the door or you'll pick-up vibrations. Your system will adjust to the change in distance and motion."

Dean searched the ground as it raced by, looking for some landmark so that he could orient himself. He looked away, focused his eyes on the ground and got a bearing on the Suburbans. He put the glasses to his eyes, found the gully and... "JB, It's got to be them... One guy... Damn, I lost them."

"What did you see?"

"One guy was moving. Seemed like he was tied-up---yeah, they all were. One was kinda humping over to two others. A fifth was... I couldn't really tell, but he was off to the side, laying still. Can we go back over?"

"On our way! They shot at us again, one shot for sure! I saw the white puff of smoke from the rifle... Sounds like Marty Robbins. Well, this ain't El Paso fellas, you missed! I'll stay high."

They came over again, and Dean confirmed that the bodies were flat-out in the gully. "They're tied or... Well, no one got up. JB, we've got to notify the police." He slipped the tiny cellular phone from its leather holder, pulled his memo pad from his shirt pocket, and punched-in the numbers.

The phone in Towaoc rang, then rang again.

"Tribal Police."

"Listen! This is an emergency. Connect me to the Chief!"

"He's gone home. For emergencies, call 9-1-1."

Dean knew that 911 would be monitored by people in Cortez. His instincts told him that he needed to talk with the chief first. "Listen please! I must talk to the Chief. Can you get him?"

"Okay, I'll try." Dean heard the squawk of a radio, the girl's voice and then loud static as the systems were merged. Before the chief could speak, Dean started talking.

"Listen! We just flew over the site of the old Willis place. Two Suburbans down there. Five people tied-up in a deep ravine to the south of the vehicles. One moved. There were at least two men near the rocks. They fired rifles at us."

"Where are you now?"

"It's getting too dark to see so we're heading to the airport. Here, I'll let the pilot tell you." He handed the cellular to JB.

"Over Park Point, just breaking out over the valley. I'll come in over Cortez and land from the north. We should be on the ground in ten." He handed the tiny instrument back to Dean.

"Okay, I tried to make radio contact all afternoon. Nothing! Silas is at the airport. He's got gear--- everything you'll need. He's armed. Get in there! I'll notify all authorities. Wish there was a copter we could use... First, I'm going to try to raise those two BIA guys that took over. They should be there now... Oh no! Did you see who fired at you?" He paused, shaking his head. "No, no way it would be them! Feds wouldn't shoot at an airplane."

Chapter 39

She heard the sound of a boot hitting rock, heard him grunt loudly and then she heard his body thud against something.

REGINA WAITED JUST LONG enough to make sure that the guy wasn't coming back into the outer room. Then she felt her way along the wall and found the crack that Bill had used to hide his rifle. She held the flashlight close to the rock and slipped the switch up. The 30-30 shells were in a yellow plastic container. She slipped three into the magazine and put the plastic box into her coat pocket. Then, using the light only when she absolutely needed it, she began to work her way up the fissure toward... Her eyes teared as she prayed that she would find Susan alive.

It was difficult to hold the rifle and the flashlight and climb at the same time. At times she needed both hands to stabilize herself and keep from slipping back. She flashed the light, letting the image of the way in front of her burn into her retinas, put the flashlight into her pants top, then moved the rifle between hands as necessary. She came to the dead-end, flashed the light, and saw the footprints and scrapes leading under the overhanging rock and up again. As she came into the big cave-like space, she crouched low, suspecting that the man was there waiting for her. She listened, heard a muffled sound, a humming-whine. Carefully, she stood, held the rifle at ready, pointed out, jammed against her hip, her finger on the trigger. With her left hand she slid the switch on the flashlight.

She first saw that she was in a long L-shaped room with a fairly level floor. Susan was lying face-

down on the far side of the room, tied with her feet and arms behind her back. She saw the duct tape and understood the sounds she had heard. Glancing quickly around the room, she saw a doorway in a crudely laid stone wall that led...? The guy who had attacked them wasn't there, but he could burst through that doorway at any time. She moved toward Susan, their eyes met, and she sensed both terror and relief.

Pulling the duct tape off Susan's mouth must have hurt, but she heard her friend gasp for breath as she tried to get her tongue working again. "Hurry! Where is he?"

"I don't know. He ran outside---I shot at him, he got one off at me, then he ran out."

"He'll come up the fissure---or he'll come around and in that way." She tried to turn toward the doorway.

"Hold still! Regina was able to untie the knot that held Susan's hands to her feet. Then she untied each wrap of the rope and slip-knot until she had Susan freed. She helped Susan roll onto her side, gave her arm a loving squeeze, grabbed the 30-30 and went over to the doorway. She moved carefully, having trouble listening because her ears still rang from the gunshots. She stopped, heard Susan groan and say something under her breath, and then crouching low, eased her way through the doorway. She heard Susan get to her feet and walk toward her.

"Susan, turn off the light!" She was afraid that backlit, she would be a good target. The doorway led to a narrow cleft between the rocks. Overhead, she could see a slit of starry night.

Susan came up in back of her and they inched forward together. The passageway turned to the right

and their feet told them that it began to descend. They stopped, listening; afraid to breathe. A dim light ahead and below told them that the passageway went down and opened out into the Willis side of the canyon.

“Susan, are you all right?” She whispered.

“Every joint in my body aches---he didn't hurt me. He was going for you and then he had plans for both of us.”

“Who? Who is that guy?”

“It's Bobby Willis. Remember I told you that years ago I dated him? He's become something cold and dead! He's full of hate! He's here to find Johnston's records, he mumbles his intent, always talking to himself; planning out loud. Look, go back to the doorway and stand where you can hear if he comes back up the other way.”

Regina waited for Susan to get back to the doorway and then continued her descent. The path wasn't too slippery and it was narrow enough so that she could use the walls for support. She eased out into the night, holding the rifle in front of her, the last vestiges of twilight and the stars seeming almost bright after her time in the total blackness.

She heard Susan move, waited, listening. Then she heard voices coming up from the canyon below. Jumbled male voices with no discernible words. She heard a horse blow dust from its nose, and a metallic “clink.” The sounds came from far below and toward the road. She determined that the men weren't moving. So she moved down the trail about ten feet and saw the glow of a tiny fire.

“I'm coming back up,” she whispered, “there are some guys camped down there... And a horse. They

must be the guys with the trailer that Quentin told us about.”

Susan was recovering, but she was unable to get warm. “Brr, I wish I had a blanket...or a fire.”

“Here, I’m sweating. Take this jacket!”

Regina, there were three of them, isn’t that what Quentin said?”

“Yeah. And the guy I shot at---Bobby Willis---he was mumbling about the others getting me. He thought I had run out into the canyon. That was before he came into the back room and I shot at him.”

“And it’s dark now! No sign of our guys... Where are they?”

“If they aren’t back soon, we... Well, we have to assume that they are in trouble! Should we make our way back down to our camp?”

Regina eased past Susan and entered the long room. “Turn the light on a minute, keep it low---keep your hand over it so that not much light gets out.”

“Wow, this is a big storage space. This is where the wind comes from, no wonder you were cold. Feel that? It’s open to the sky over there, and the air rushes through. Look over there!” Susan move the light to the left. Someone’s gear. Let’s see what’s there.”

Willis had piled a sleeping bag and a knapsack on the floor in a corner. “He left it here and went down to get us. Is that a jug of water?”

Susan handed Regina the flashlight and reached down for the plastic juice bottle. She unscrewed the cap and put it to her nose. “Yuck! Some cheap kind of ill-smelling gasoline or something.”

“Let me... Oh yuck is right! This is some kind of moonshine...It may be kerosene though. No, I think it’s booze.”

“You could start a fire with it, it smells that strong! Look around, any water?”

They went through the pile and then continued to look around the room. Regina held the light now, her hand pink and translucent over the bulb reflector. “There’s something over there... Glass bottles or something and some rags.” She led the way, stooping to pick up a funny-shaped little bottle. “India Ink! What’s India Ink?”

Susan picked up another of the odd-shaped bottles. These are old. They used to write with ink like this. They could fill a fountain pen or dip a quill... There must be records, otherwise why would they need all of this black ink, there must be five bottles of it?”

“Beats me! Look at these old rags. Cotton. Phew, full of dust! They look like parts of old dresses.”

“Don’t breath-in that dust, it’s ancient!”

Susan took the flashlight and moved it slowly around the room. Then, she let more light out and shined it up above their heads. There was a shelf or rack built out of long poles which spanned the narrow part of the room. Across the poles she saw warped, rough-sawn boards. “Someone built a storage place up there.”

As Susan played the light overhead, they could see that something was still stored above them. In the dim light it was only discernible as a mass of something piled in the far corner. “No way to get up there, is there? Maybe somebody hid water up there.”

“We could knock it down with this loose pole.” Regina started to pick-up a long pole that had fallen from the rack.

“Sure, and then we’d have to breathe the dust! We need water and it would be nice to have some food,

but I think we should make our way back down to our camp. The problem is what to do when Willis comes back. We don't want him up here where he can sneak up on us again...and we may not be safe down there. Let's think! Where can we hold-out until the men come back?"

Regina looked around the room, looking for anything that they could use to protect themselves. There was no door they could use to block the entry, no... "Susan, if we go back down the fissure, we should block this room so that they can't get in."

"What with? We only have that pole and some boards from that rack up there, maybe."

"We could block the trail, you know, where you have to crawl under that overhang." Regina was forming a plan.

"At least we can make it so hard to get through that we'd hear him coming. Let's do it! You go outside, I'll see if I can knock some boards off that rack and then I'll run out and we'll wait for the dust to clear."

"Susan, no way! You go out, you're still shaken from being captured and... I can cover my nose, hit that long pole up there and try to knock it out of the notch. The whole thing might fall. You stand by the doorway and shine the light for me! Keep the rifle where you can get to it. The noise may bring them running... First, throw that gear we found down the fissure. We may need it."

Susan aimed the light first at the pole so that Regina could pick it up, and then up at the place where someone had chipped a notch in the sandstone for the butt. "Regina, see where I'm aiming? If you can knock that pole out...wait! If it

starts to go, get out of there fast! This is really dangerous, are you sure that we should do this?"

Regina shrugged and hefted the pole. It was amazingly light. She put the thin end under the butt and pushed hard. The whole platform groaned and dust came down in rivulets. She pushed harder, and the butt moved up, out of the socket and back. She was holding the whole weight of that corner of the rack. She took a deep breath, turned, planning her escape, gave it one last nudge, and let it fall. The whole platform groaned and slid forward, away from the wall. The back poles held it long enough so that instead of crashing to the floor, it came down in front, the back poles scraping down the wall until they jammed. Regina was out the door, laying next to Susan when the dust billowed over them. The cloud was caught by the strong draft and swept back into the room, down the fissure and away. There was little noise.

When the room finally cleared, Susan shined the light in. It would be easy to get to the boards and poles now. Only... "What in the hell is that!?"

The mass they had seen piled in the far corner of the rack had come down with the boards and slid across the floor to the middle of the room. In the flashlight's weakening beam they saw the desiccated body of a child, partially wrapped in old white canvas. The white of its skull behind patches of withered skin made its empty eye sockets stare.

The shock weakened them. Susan started crying, her whole body shaking. Regina stood staring. The light was getting dim, but they were afraid to turn it off. Regina turned to Susan and took her in her arms, squeezing hard. They stood there for what seemed a long time before Susan stopped shaking and

regained control. "The light's not going to last much longer. Let's get the boards and get out of here!"

They skirted the mummy and began to stack the boards. When they yanked a long one loose, something else came tumbling from out of the dark and plopped onto the sandstone floor. The 'plop' reminded Susan of the sound their newspaper had made when it hit the driveway. A leather covered ledger lay at their feet, as if delivered by some spirit.

Working in the dark, using the flashlight only for quick bursts of light, they slid the boards down the fissure. Regina went first, pushing Willis's sleeping bag and rucksack in front of her and inching the boards along behind her. When she got past the overhang and back onto the main part of the fissure, she gave Willis's stuff a final shove and heard it thumping down to the room below. If anybody was down there, they would have reacted, she thought.

"Susan, can you get by the boards?"

She heard her friend breathing hard and saw the light flash twice. "Here Regina? Can you take this damned rifle. I left the ledger, I have to go back up for it."

Soon she was back, letting her breath escape in soft grunts as she navigated along the edges of the rough boards. Then Regina saw the light flash quickly on, around, and then blackness again. Susan came under the overhang and sat beside her.

"Let's see the light, I think the boards can be jammed across this space. She directed the light around their tiny space, studying the rock walls. See here! And then back to here? You'll have to move, I can get them in place. Here, take the rifle again and

pass me. Watch out, he may be down there waiting. Leave the ledger, I'll bring it down with me."

She wrestled each board around and under the overhang. Then she flashed the light, picked her spots, and began placing the boards across the narrow fissure. She worked in total blackness, "seeing" an image of the space in her mind. In a few minutes she had four boards stacked edge-to-edge across the opening. She pulled one more through from above and used it to cross-brace the others. 'A child could probably get through', she thought, 'but not quietly.'

She picked up the ledger and worked her way down to Susan, sliding on her rear. She hadn't realized until now how tired she was. Poor Susan. If she felt tired, how must Susan feel? "Any sounds or lights down there?"

Susan was leaning against the sandstone wall peering across at the ragged doorway that led into the outer room and their camp. She could see a slight grayness which told her where the doorway was. The wind at her back was freezing cold. She shivered and moved the rifle to her other hand.

"Susan, give me the rifle and let me go first." There was no protest.

"I can't shoot one of these things anyway," she whispered. It was funny, but she was too stressed to laugh.

Some instinct or some genetic code that switched Regina into higher gears at times like this, made the skin on the back of her neck and head tighten. She approached the doorway, lowered her body until she was in a crouch, and slowly began to look around the opening. She smelled it then, cigarette smoke. It was strong, wafting along from the back of the room;

caught in an eddy near her face by the flow of air moving through the doorway. Her mind analyzed what she observed with her sense of smell. For the smoke to be there, it had to be coming from the back of the room. Had to be! Susan started to say something... She reached back and hit her with the back of her hand. She heard Susan gasp, but that was all. She understood.

If she put the rifle barrel out too far, he might grab it. She checked to make certain that the hammer was back, crouched even lower, picking up a chunk of sandstone as she balanced and got ready. She tested the weight of the rifle again for good measure, and threw the sandstone as hard as she could around the opening. It hit the wall and the place exploded!

Explosions that felt like they blew-out her eardrums, and flashes of light that almost blinded her, followed by cussing and the sound of something hitting the floor, shocked her. She was prepared, but not for all of that. She reached out with the rifle, pointing it into the room and fired. Another flash of light and clap from his gun followed immediately. She was ejecting the shell and levering another into the chamber when the smoker ran past and out into the starlit night. She heard the sound of a boot hitting rock, heard him grunt loudly and then she heard his body thud against something. Then all was quiet except for the ringing in her ears.

Susan's hands were touching her back, contacting her to see if she was okay. "Regina?"

"I'm okay. Except for my ears."

"Mine too. He shot at you three times! Did you get him?"

“I must have. He ran out and I heard him hit the ground. I think he’s out there... Be careful, he may be playing a trick.”

After their time in the total blackness of the fissure, their pupils were wide open. The room and their gear were visible in gray-black shadows. The doorway to the canyon seemed lit by a streetlight. Regina crept up to the doorway until she could see the ground in front. To one side, crumpled in front of a large block of sandstone, was the body of a man... From its position she could tell that he wasn’t playing possum. She eased out and marveled at her night vision.

Susan joined her. They crept forward five feet more and she recognized, “Skullcroft! Bobby’s partner.” She said loud enough for Regina to hear. There was a bloody spot on the sandstone where he had hit his head.

Regina stood up straight and stretched her body out of its cramps. Looking back and then toward the body again she put it all together. He had run out, probably ducking low in fear that she would shoot again. He had run smack into the boulder. The way his head was turned back, it was obvious that he had broken his neck. She shuddered. His hand was still curled around a big pistol. It had sounded like a canon! She imagined what a 30-30 sounded like to someone in a rock enclosure close to the end of the barrel.

“Did you kill him?” Susan kept her distance. The man was as repulsive in death as he was in life.

“I don’t think so. I think he ran into the rock and killed himself. I may have hit him, but... Well, I’m not touching him! Susan, he was here at this end waiting. Where are the other two?”

“And where are Arnie and Norman? Regina, we’ve got to find them...help them!”

“I know. First we’ve got to get inside. We’re targets out here. Look for another flashlight. Find our stuff. We both need water.”

“What about his gun?”

“Leave it... Can you fire it?”

“No! I was just thinking that...well, I’d feel better if I had one, but not his.”

Chapter 40

Avery jumped. "What's that?" Not far away they could hear shots.

IT WAS ALMOST DARK when Jefferson suggested they stop. He was holding the map, acting confused. Avery slowed the vehicle and turned on the overhead light.

"You get us lost? We should have been there by now."

Jefferson suppressed a smile. He had taken them the long way around, stalling for time. Now, he could delay no longer. They had to find the road that cut back down to the Mancos River and came out about a half mile from the place where the vehicles were supposed to be.

"We need this road, and I haven't seen it yet." He was pointing to the dotted line on the map and holding it so that Avery could see. "This road comes out near where they are. I thought we'd find it by now."

"This one?" Jefferson nodded. "Well then, it goes...how the hell are we supposed to get across the river?"

"Probably a ford."

"It is a Ford, Jefferson! How do we cross?"

"I mean a *ford*, a shallow place where we can drive across."

Avery grimaced. Of course! "Okay, lets find that road. We couldn't have passed it. It must be ahead somewhere. Wait, I've got to take a leak!"

They both stepped out of the truck and took a few steps away, facing different directions.

"Whump! Whump!"

Avery jumped. "What's that?" Not far away they could hear shots. Then they heard a plane and saw it rise out of the west end of the valley and, gaining altitude, turn back on its path. It passed to the east of their position and they heard two more shots. "Rifle!" Avery was sure of that. They watched as the plane, now catching the red rays of the setting sun, came back. Again they heard a shot as it went over.

"Jefferson, we've got to get over there fast! Let's find the road."

Avery drove slowly, window open, head out a little so that he could see the ground. He was about to give-up, turn around and look back the way they had come, when he saw the ruts. "Here! Get out and walk ahead a little ways, make sure this is a road."

Jefferson walked in front of the headlights, scouting the trail. This was it, not traveled, but at least a road going down toward the river. He got back in, and Avery crept along, barely seeing the old track. After about fifteen minutes they came to a thick stand of tamarisk. The track led into the brush and Avery followed. Another fifty yards and the road ended at the river's edge. The water looked deep and threatening. They got out and stood, perusing the bank as far as they could see to the right and left. Nothing but a steep embankment and deep water beyond that.

"Dammit! Now we're trapped here. How are we going to cross?"

Jefferson kicked at a stump and looked down. "Guess we back out and try further down." They got back into the truck and Avery took one last look at the river. Beyond, he saw the rays of the sun glinting off something. "A reflection! Something's over there," he

said pointing. Give me the glasses, they're in the glove box."

After a few seconds he gave a sigh of relief. "The Suburbans are parked about a half mile up from here...and across this damned river! Let's find a place to cross." He slammed the truck into gear and looked back at the same time to see where he was going. The truck responded, wheels spinning in the clay. He stopped, cut the wheel to the right as far as it would go, and trying to make the turn, gunned it forward again. The wheels bit in and dug down. "Damn! Get out and turn the hubs, will you Jefferson!" Jefferson unloaded and stood looking at the truck.

"Sir?"

"What is it you don't understand? Turn the hubs!"

"There are no locking hubs. This is a two-wheel drive!"

It was very dark by the time they got the truck back to the track and drove along the tamarisk grove looking for a route to a ford. After checking three out, and hiking the bank for hundreds of yards up-stream, they decided that the truck was a liability. "It's deep, but what the hell, we can swim it!" Avery observed.

"What do you mean *We*, white man?"

"Jefferson, what the hell! Okay, we walk along the banks until we find a place we can get across without getting wet. You red or white now?"

"Yes sir!"

Chapter 41

His eyes were the most revealing part. Dean had noticed that they didn't focus and hold on anything. Rather, they darted around like a deer's might--if it thought a mountain lion was about to jump it.

SILAS HAS ALREADY AGREED to take his sister-in-law's contact onto the reservation. He needed money, and often acted as a guide in his spare time. She had called him early in the morning, urging him to let them both make a few bucks off the guy. He agreed, subject to approval from his chief. He had the day off, but he was on call. He waited until 9:00 and called the Chief. He explained that Trinka had met a man at the airport last night that wanted to hire a guide and a vehicle to take him out to the place where Benjamin, he and Quentin had found the old man. Before he could finish explaining, the chief refused his request on the grounds that the guy might interfere in the BIA's ongoing investigation. Silas was upset. He got the chief to agree to talk to the man and gave him Getts' number at the motel.

An hour later the Chief called Silas back.

"Silas, I talked to the guy. He has some crazy story about needing to go out there because his grandfather once lived there. I couldn't get a straight answer from him. He made up some story about other people going in there to steal records or something. I think he's dangerous."

Silas was bummed. "Okay Chief, but I could have used the money."

"Look, I'll do some more checking. You know that Quentin, Beardancer and that guy Cain went out

there this morning. Now this guy... I'll get back to you."

Mid-afternoon the phone rang and Silas, who was watching the tube and sipping a beer, hit the button.

"Silas, get your stuff together! Pack enough gear for three; two beside yourself. It's cold out there and you'll probably stay the night! Take a shotgun plus your handgun. You pick that guy Getts up at the motel at 3:00 and then be at the airport to meet a plane with a guy name of Dean Arbor on it. Go in from Mancos," he paused, "and Silas, go prepared! I think Quentin is in trouble---Hell, it sounds like they are all in trouble! Dean's okay, but watch your back. I still haven't got a read on Getts, except that he's some fancy-assed academic."

Silas was ten years older than Quentin, and except when they were on patrol, they had nothing in common. The bond that had developed between them was due to professional respect. At first Silas had resented the younger officer, especially when Quentin was promoted ahead of him. In time, after working together on several difficult cases, they found that they worked together well as a team. About a year before, when they were investigating a domestic dispute, Quentin had put his body between an assailant with a bat and him, taking a blow to the forearm that broke both bones. No officer, hell, no one had ever protected him before... He owed Quentin.

Even though Silas was driving, Dean couldn't take his eyes off the road. Mancos on a dark March evening was already shut-down for the night. Their headlights showed streets with snow piled along the

curbs and patches of ice. They passed through town and Silas wound around, taking back roads until they were on a poorly improved road past Weber Canyon, that roughly followed the Montezuma-La Plata County line. The ground was frozen and the snow which had been fairly deep in Mancos, petered-out. There was no moon and their only light was from the F-250.

Although the truck was riding on oversized tires, the ride was not smooth. The vehicle seemed to lope along, swaying from side-to-side as if it were a boat. The three big men sitting shoulder-to-shoulder in the single seat, rubbed together as if they were familiar. Dean observed Getts, and Silas glanced sideways at both of them, sizing them up.

Dean was checking out his first impressions of Getts... The man had introduced himself as Doctor Ferner Getts, with emphasis upon the 'Doctor' and the 'Ferner,' but here in this country he would be judged by what he was, not his titles or connections. Evidently he didn't know that. He seemed glum and confused more than scared. His face told of an aloofness and haughtiness that he probably used to intimidate others. His hands were white and weak. His handshake had been limp; like holding a bunch of withered carrots.

His clothing was fit for an office, not a trek to the wild reservation. His shoes were expensive maroon wingtips. He wore a black greatcoat with a velvet collar which he sank his chin into like a shamed child hiding beneath the covers. His eyes were the most revealing part. Dean had noticed that they didn't focus and hold on anything. Rather, they darted around like a deer's might---if it thought a mountain lion was about to jump it.

Silas had written Getts off before they got to the airport. The man was weak, and harmless. He had asked for cash up-front and Getts had peeled three hundred dollar bills off his wad. There was nothing else to know about the man. Dean however, was a different challenge.

The plane had landed from the northeast and slowed to make the second exit onto the taxiway into the private aviation area. He had expected another citified wimp and was surprised to note that the man approaching his vehicle was tall and lithe, moved like an athlete, and had a force about him that caused the people around him to smile and then get out of his way. He was about his age, obviously in control of himself. He was dressed for the back country and his boots were well worn-in and had seen a lot of rough miles. Dean's eyes were focused and caught his easily as they engaged. 'He wears his hair long, like me.' Silas observed.

Each time the road passed a turn-off, it became less traveled and rougher. In twenty minutes it changed from a road to a track. Silas noted that someone had driven in ahead of them... At least since the last storm.

"They came in mid-day, and they were pulling a trailer."

"You can tell that from...?" Dean left his question open.

"Sun was out. Road was a little muddy. Our tracks won't show much, the ground is froze."

Another ten minutes and Silas slowed. "Look ahead! I saw a vehicle up there."

He approached slowly, following the track, but trying to keep his headlights on the vehicles ahead as

much as possible. "Truck and horse trailer. Been there for hours."

"How can you tell?"

"Frost."

Dean understood. The hood of the truck was covered by frosty ice. If the motor had been warm, it wouldn't have formed on that part of the hood. Getts seemed to be staring ahead, unable or unwilling to engage.

Silas stopped the truck about fifty feet beyond the end of the trailer.

"We better leave this here. They went in on foot, so we better."

Getts seemed to jerk awake. "Walk! We have to walk? How far?"

"Whatever it takes." Silas answered, unconcerned. "Or you can stay here and we will have all the fun."

Getts opened the door and felt the cold wind. He cursed under his breath, pulled up his collar and got out. Dean followed, went to the bed and started unloading his gear.

"Take some basic stuff like for a hike. We come back here when we know if we are staying... This is the right place, I been here before." Silas had a day pack on his back. He was holding his radio. "Got to check-in first!"

Chapter 42

Regina felt bile rise in her throat as she leaned over and took the pistol from his frozen hand.

SUSAN SAID SHE WAS all right, but Regina didn't believe her. For one thing, she was still shivering. The back of the ruin was protected from the cold air blowing out of the fissure, yet it too was cold now. The fire was dead-out and Regina knew that she couldn't re-light it. Bobby or Skullcroft had gone through their gear, scattering it around the floor. Skullcroft had evidently been eating their food when she surprised him. He had dropped the tin can and the soup had spilled over their gear.

"I can put more clothing on and warm up, don't worry about me!" Susan said as she rummaged through her stuff. "We can eat some dried fruit and drink our water." The way she said "our water," indicated just how violated she felt. Regina couldn't see her in the darkness. When they did use the yellowing light of the flashlight, it was only for seconds to find their things. She knew her lanky friend had little body fat for protection against the cold. After what she had been through, Regina feared for her.

"Susan, I heard Willis mumbling something about our guys being tied up... He said, *"...goddamnit to hell, she can run around out there, but she'll never find where we gots 'em tied."* I need to go out and look for them. You stay here and rest...get warm!"

"No! Regina you know I wouldn't have any protection if Bobby came in here... Regina! I go where you go, okay?"

Regina knew she was right, but that didn't address the fact that they were both exhausted and that

Susan was running on some reserve that couldn't last long. "Okay, we'll warm-up and then go slowly. We'll stick together girl, like..."

"Like cold and winter?"

"Susan! How about like sunshine and July? Think warm!"

"What about the journal?"

"Right, we can't lug it along. I'll hide it outside under a rock or somewhere. We can come back for it."

Skullcroft's body was grotesque. Regina felt bile rise in her throat as she leaned over and took the pistol from his frozen hand. It came free easily, as if he were about to drop it. She had heard stories about death-grips and was relieved. She checked the pistol. It had a big bore. She released the cylinder and prodded a cartridge out with the rod. In the starlight, holding it at just the right angle, she saw '357.' He had fired three times. She ejected the three spent casings and then checked the fourth, It had a head of lead. She adjusted the cylinder so that upon cocking, the first remaining bullet would be under the firing pin, closed the cylinder, and put the gun into her parka pocket. Its weight dragged her parka down uncomfortably...which gave her some comfort. The weight of the 30-30 was too much for her arm, so she traded it between left and right hand, often.

"You just go ahead as fast as you want. I'll follow, don't worry about me Regina, I feel okay and we have to find them."

Keeping to the shadows, Regina led their way down to the road, keeping to the rocks about fifty feet to the side of the trail. Their breaths formed white

clouds in the starlight. It was dark, but Regina could see well enough to lead.

“Regina, I was just thinking that Willis could be using the Suburbans as a place to hide.”

“Right! We’ll take our time and sneak up on them.”

As they neared the road she thought she heard a vehicle up the canyon. “Do you hear that?”

“A truck?”

“The sound is coming from up there where the road goes out to Mancos.”

They stood listening, but all was quiet. Regina turned and looked back up at the ruin. She gasped! Someone had lit a fire inside.

“He’s in there! My God, he’s lit a fire!”

Now they felt trapped. They were out here in the cold, and whoever was up there knew it.

“Susan, you all right?”

“Cold, but it’s better when we keep moving. How are you doing gal?”

“My hands are frozen. This rifle is cold! Can you carry it for awhile while I warm my hands?” She gave Susan the rifle and stuck her hands into the parkas pockets. “Brr. The pistol is freezing cold. Wait a minute.” She pulled the pistol from her pocket and slipped it barrel-down into her pants top. “Brr... Boy is that a shock! Let’s go!”

It took a long time to get to the Suburbans. They had to stop and rest often. Regina worked their way along the edge of the road, using rabbit brush and tamarisk to hide their progress. Neither could resist looking back at the twinkling firelight coming from the ruin of Johnston’s old trading post.

Regina crawled along the edge of the dirt track, only feet away from the Suburban Cain had driven.

Susan knelt, holding the rifle as Regina had showed her, her thumb on the hammer ready to cock it, and her index finger resting on the trigger guard. "Point, aim, squeeze the trigger, and... I hope you don't have to use it, but..."

Someone was moving in front of the other Suburban. Regina saw a shadow move. It moved again and she knew it was a person. She stayed down, waiting, pistol ready. She heard whispering. Then the shadow stood, and she saw the reflection of starlight off of something silver. 'A gun,' she thought, as she pointed her own at the figure. The man was looking into the vehicle...she saw him move, now looking into the back. Something was... His hair was long, tied in back. How could that be? He came toward her hiding place, studying the Suburban. His profile was...familiar. She inched forward, holding the pistol tight, pointed right at the man. "Silas?" She was prepared to shoot.

"Regina?"

"Yes, it's me...and Susan Cain."

"Don't move!"

She saw him squat down and move back the way he had come. Then she heard voices, whispers that seemed loud and piercing in the freezing cold air.

He came back around the Suburban, talking quietly to her. "Regina, what's going on? Are you okay? Are Quentin and the others with you? Are they safe?"

Another shadow stood and came toward Silas. Silas turned and said something...the other man had long hair, but he didn't look Ute, it was too dark to tell.

"Are they?"

"Silas, they were supposed to meet us back at the ruin before dark. They never came."

Susan came forward, looking first at Silas and then at the other man. "Dean Arbor? Dean is that really you? What are you doing here? My God, Regina, this is our friend from Sedona." She went past them and gave Dean a big hug.

"Were you hiding here in the Suburban? Silas asked, more concerned about Quentin than ever.

"No, we---well, we just came down from up there. There's a lot to explain. We came down looking for Norman and Arnie. They left to scout around with Alex, Bill and Officer Coats---Quentin. That was before dark!"

"Listen, this may not be... Well, I flew over this area about that time."

Regina interrupted, whispering too loud. "That was you? You had engine trouble, I heard it popping. I was afraid you'd crashed."

"Not engine trouble, the noise your heard was coming from around the point. Two men were firing rifles at us. Listen, Regina, Susan, from the air I saw five people down in that gully." He pointed into the darkness. It looked like they were tied up. We need to get down there, but I don't think its wise for you to go in," he saw their reactions beginning to form into protests, "I mean, someone must stay up here and protect our rear."

"There may be a guard. There are enough of us now to protect our rear and our sides. First, I'm going to go ahead. I can move without being seen. If they posted a guard, I'll take him out. Then, when you hear me whistle like a canyon wren, you come in." Silas began checking his weapon and tightening his jacket.

"Silas, what about Getts?"

"No problem from that guy. He'll stay in the truck."

“Okay Silas, you go. I’ll move up canyon about fifty feet and then start in. I’ll try to keep even with you---I’ll just have to guess how fast you’re going.”

“No, you can’t go in without a gun! Here, know how to use this?” He tossed Dean his rifle. Dean caught it, amazed that he even saw it coming in the dark.

“Wait, you may need that rifle Silas,” Regina said as she pulled the silver 357 from her belt. “Dean, use this!”

Silas moved forward quickly. He had seen the pistol when he found Regina. Now, he wanted to take a closer look. “Let me see that!”

She turned and instead of handing the pistol to Dean, she turned it butt-first and let Silas take it.

“Quentin gave you this?”

“No, I... Well, I didn’t tell you that there’s a dead man up there. Hit his head on a rock and broke his neck. He’s Willis’s partner. I took it out of his hand. It still has three bullets in it---he fired three at us.”

Silas heard her and stood stunned. “Dead---shot at you three times?” He shook his head and refocused. They would tell their tale later, for now, “See this mark? This is Quintin’s. If that guy had it...” he paused, thinking the worst, then refocused again. “Dean, take the pistol. Use it if you have to! I’m gone!” He moved silently toward the head of the gully and started down. The darkness was his greatest ally.

Dean turned to Susan. “They’re close! We’ll know in a few minutes...how they are. He squeezed her arm and turned to go.

“Dean...” she started to sob, and Regina turned and put her arms around her. There was nothing he could do except get the answers they needed. “I’m

out of here. Keep our backs covered!” He nodded at the 30-30 leaning against the side of the Suburban.

Dean moved down the road until he was sure that he could parallel the gully and not be heard. It was dark, and he knew that no one above the road could see him. The sagebrush and rabbit brush were easy to avoid. Crusts of snow made a crunching noise so he avoided them and carefully placed each foot into the dark areas of clear soil. He made good time, unsure of where the edge of the gully was, but using every sense to keep his distance from it. Suddenly, he felt lost. Something became dysfunctional in his mind, maybe due to the lack of objects from which to orient himself in the darkness, maybe due to an instinct that he was going the wrong direction. He didn't know why, but he became confused. He felt disoriented, like a pilot must feel when flying blind in clouds.

He walked slowly, staring into the dark in search of something. He turned around facing back the way he... Which way? He panicked, caught himself with a powerful will, and knew what he must do. He crouched down until he could see the depressions of his boot prints. Then, he followed them around until they became a straight line again. He straightened and smiled inwardly. As an athlete, he had learned how to overcome fear disorientation. He knew which way was back, and aligning his senses, he started forward again.

'Too far. I've gone too far.' He cut to his right, aligned his senses, and started moving again slowly. He should come to the edge of the gully soon. It would be hard to see, maybe a line of brush? There it was! He came to the edge and knelt. Silas should be somewhere down there---unless he had gone too far.

He heard a strange sound to his left. Something was moving along the edge of the gully---coming his way. He waited, changing the pistol between his hands to keep his right hand warm and limber. A guard would be up here where he could look down on the prisoners... If... He pushed the thoughts aside. Whatever it was, it was moving and then stopped. Had it seen him? His ears ached as he strained to hear. Voices. He heard whispers, closer than he had imagined. There were at least two men. He crouched, and then decided that they were walking along following the edge. He backed away, and crouched again, one knee in the cold, damp earth, waiting.

They came as noise and maybe heat. He couldn't see them but he could sense their positions. There were two of them. He waited for them to pass, then quickly came up behind them, 357 pointed directly at the nearest back.

"Stop! His voice was controlled, modulated, but still more than a whisper. "I have a gun pointed at this man's back. Stop and... Identify yourselves!" He touched the freezing metal to the man's bare neck.

"Avery? He's got a gun pointed at my neck!" then the man sagged, tried to catch himself, and sank to his knees."

The other man had turned. Dean could see his hands. He was unarmed.

"I'm... We are... We're BIA. Don't shoot, we won't do anything foolish. Relief surged through Dean. Something went silly inside of him. Federal employees that wouldn't do anything foolish? He knew that they were for real. "Be very quiet! There are others out here that might."

“We’re lost... Well, we know where we are going, but in the dark we got lost. We crossed the river and we’ve been walking. My God, don’t shoot us!”

“Keep very quiet. You lucked out! I’m one of the good guys. Why are you here?” He whispered, pistol pointed at the standing man. “And you, you can get up. Move slowly!”

They were wet up to their waists and freezing. Ice crystals had formed in the muck on the legs of their pants. He told them about his flight over and that he had seen five people in the gully. He explained that Silas, a tribal police officer, was coming down the gully and that he was hoping to give him cover from the side by taking-out a guard if there was one. They shivered and listened.

“You think we’re below them? I can tell you that they’re not down there, that’s the way we came.” Avery was fighting to keep his composure. Jefferson just stood and shivered, his arms hugging his chest.

“Okay, we know Willis and someone else have the high ground, up there in the rocks. They’re armed. They shot at our plane, they won’t hesitate to shoot us. What we need to do is move quietly up this gully. I’ll go first, give me twenty feet... Follow my tracks if you have to, you won’t see me at that distance. Keep quite! The sooner we get to them, the sooner you can get warm.”

Dean moved quickly along the edge of the deep gully. He skirted brush and carefully placed each step. His eyes were seeing shades of gray and black now, the starlight seemed brighter than he had ever seen it before. He had crept less than one hundred feet when he smelled smoke; sagebrush burning. He followed the edge as it cut around to his right in what

he imagined was a gooseneck. Then he saw red-orange firelight reflected off the far wall. He took several steps until he was certain that the fire was directly beneath him, and stopped, listening.

"My God Quent, you could have lost your hands." It was Silas's voice.

"*Silas?*" Dean's whisper was course and strained.

"*It's okay. Come down!*"

Dean made his way along the edge until he found a cut that he could get down. He waited until the two men were up to him, motioned for them to follow, and slid-hopped to the bottom of the gully.

"You get lost?"

"Yes. And I found two BIA guys."

The man whom Silas was talking to bent close to the fire. Dean assumed that he was Quentin. "Where are the others?"

"Got loose. Climbed out over there and went up toward the Suburbans. Silas must have passed below them; missed them! I was too bad off to go, they built this fire and left me. Hurt my back, the way I was tied. I was in some water, almost froze. That's my piece! How'd you get it?"

Regina took it off of one of them... Said he hit a rock and broke his neck."

"Skullcroft took it. He's dead then?"

"Susan said it was the partner. His name Skullcroft?"

Dean was trying to figure their opposition. "So, there were three. Two Willis's and a partner. Now we're only facing two men, one of them old. They're out there somewhere!"

Silas helped Quentin move so that the fire warmed his back. Quentin grunted in pain, and then seemed to relax as the heat warmed him. His clothes were

drying, steam was rising from his red flannel shirt and blue jeans. "Two crazies! We never saw the third. The old one kept his gun on us. The creepy one tied us up. They planned for us to die down here. They're all crazy. Skullcroft talked to himself constantly, mumbling about a dead girl, the records and making someone pay big. He kept repeating, "Gonna get rich, gonna get rich. Bobby and me is gonna get rich!"

"The old man... He kept warning Skullcroft that the 'Injuns' were surrounding them. He'd look around and then call out, "You're dead! He kept asking why they didn't die? He's really dangerous---they both are, but the old man thought we were ghosts. He thought I was a ghost. Said I was dead. Said he was sorry he had kept me. Said he was sorry he took me to Arizona. Said I had come back to get him. Then he cried out, "Stop the drumming. Stop it! I can't stand any more!" I don't think he realized who we were. Once we were down," he said they had to join Bobby and, "go kill 'em all again so's the drumming would stop."

Silas couldn't find anything to warm water in for Quentin. He took his canteen, peeled the felt off the side, and placed it near the fire so that the water inside could warm. "Quent, we got to go. Dean, give him back his pistol!"

Avery and Jefferson asked if they could stay by the fire... Silas looked them over and nodded. Any trouble, you two hit the ground. Stay out of Quent's line of fire!"

"Best way is to split-up again. Dean, you follow their tracks. Me, I'm going to ease my way back along the other side. Careful, Regina's good with a rifle!"

Susan wanted into the Suburban, but they were afraid to open the door because the light would come on. "What about the back?"

"Try it! If the light comes on, drop down quick."

The chrome handle was so cold her aching hand almost cramped as she held it tightly so that she could push the button with her thumb. The mechanism 'clicked' and the doors split apart. No light came on. She reached in, and using the hitch as a step, pulled herself into the vehicle. It seemed warmer somehow. "I can still see the glow from the fire. What I would give to trade places with them!"

"Let's hope they're up there and not prowling around down here. I'm okay, so you rest and I'll keep watch."

Regina moved to the rear of the Suburban and quietly closed the door. As she did, she noted that there was a little spring-loaded switch that should have turned on the overhead light. "Susan, there are two overhead lights. Can you pry off the plastic covers and take out the bulbs? Then you can open the door... I can get in if need be."

She heard Susan moving around inside. Then, she decided to get far enough away from the vehicle so that she could listen in silence. She moved off into the brush about twenty feet and crouched in the blackness. She couldn't even see the outline of the Sub, but she could hear. She shielded her wrist by placing her hand under her parka and with the other hand pushed the watch's illuminator button. 8:30. She shook her head to clear her senses. She had imagined that it was past midnight.

She heard it then, a swishing sound of cloth against brush. She felt the security of the rifle against her, standing on its butt between her boots and

leaning against her shoulder. She held her breath and listened again. She heard a twig or branch snap, and someone trip; the thump of a footfall, and a whispered curse. The noises came closer. She focused upon hearing.

“They have to be around here someplace.”

“*Norman!* Over here!”

“*Regina?*”

Chapter 43

Getts felt the smooth rock beneath his hand and something inside of him made him tighten his hand around it.

GETTS SAT IN THE TRUCK, trying to peer into the black night. He had felt safe with the doors locked until he noticed that the Ute policeman had taken the keys. Then he felt abandoned and helpless. His feet were freezing, and even his greatcoat wasn't warm. He tried to see the face of his watch, but the Rollex didn't have a light like the cheap watches had. If you could afford a Rollex, you were never in a situation like this one where you needed a light. He decided that he had been sitting in the truck for an hour... No, maybe half an hour. He couldn't expect them back for a long time yet... He should be there when they went into the place. No, not at night, not in this blackness. He smirked. Let them get Willis under control and then, when it was light, he could go in and do what needed to be done. He imagined the place, he had heard enough talk of it over the years.

The pain in his bowel wasn't new, but it was worse. The cancer was spreading, he knew that, and was resigned to it. He should have peed before they left. Now he sat on his prostate and suffered. All he had to do was open the door, step out and... No! There were *things* out there! He moved from cheek-to-cheek and suffered. Time passed.

He opened his eyes, he hadn't been sleeping...or had he? One thing had changed, he could see shades of gray outside. No light on the horizons, no moon, just stars, bright stars that gave off enough light to see the ground around the truck. Pain! He had

to get out and pee. He looked around first, seeing the ethereal landscape near the truck through dirty windows. Nothing out there! He had no choice. His hand felt for and found the door handle. He pulled it out and up and... A blinding light filled the cab and forced his pupils to close down. "Damn them!" he growled, "They knew the light would blind me!" 'Dirty tricks,' he thought, 'no one could trust the Utes.'

He was shaking with cold and pain as he stood facing a bush and waiting for something to let go and give him relief. He was getting angry. He moved his weight from foot-to-foot, trying to think of anything but...

"Well I'll be damned! Ferner Getts, right out here in God's country!"

The shock hit Getts like a plunger, but nothing except urgency happened. His mind jumped back and forth between his pain and his captor.

"How didyagit from Sedona to here? Brung me all this nice equipment, didn't ya! Well, yer granddaddy would be proud! Here you is in his ol' stompin' ground. Now load up! I cain't carry this here rifle and lug much. Grab that stuff and let's git back!"

He waited until Ferner had loaded himself with as much gear from the back of the truck as possible. The man was shaking and whining, but that was about what he expected. His pa had said that Brownfield was a tough old buzzard. Well, his grandson was a...

"Ferner? Howdit turn out that ya didn't turn into a man like yer granpappy? Here you and me is in his old place and you... Hey, I get it! Ya know, don'tya? He tol ya where the stuff is hid. That's why yous here. Ya said ya had destroyed all them records and then...we talked about Johnston. Hey professor, I donwan ya to destroy 'em, just find 'em fer me."

Getts stumbled along in front of Willis, who prodded and cursed at him as if he were a mule. The bulky gear was hard to keep balanced. A pack tumbled to the ground, and then a sleeping bag. The bag puffed-out of its stuff-sack as it hit the ground. He stopped and started to turn back to pick the gear up, only to have Willis jab him in the back with his rifle barrel and order him to, "Leave it!"

He was being forced to walk along some kind of road, a track really. His eyes had readjusted to the starlight and he could see about ten feet around him. Willis prodded him when he hesitated or tripped. Then Willis whispered in his ear that if he made any sound, he would knock his head off. Then he came around in front and led him off the track and on to a foot trail. They started climbing up, the loose gravel and scattered rocks making it difficult to keep their footing. Getts couldn't hold on to the heaviest of the remaining gear. He let a pack drop, stumbled over it, and dropped everything else so that he could catch himself with both hands.

"Stupid ass!" Willis hissed. "Pick 'em up! Make more noise and die!"

Getts was shaking. He was bent over, knees on the pack and both hands on the ground in front of him. Willis prodded him with the rifle. He whimpered, trying to catch his breath. His right hand hurt, it had come down on a rock.

"I tol ya to pick that shit up!"

Getts felt the smooth rock beneath his hand and something inside of him made him tighten his hand around it. He pulled back, knees on the pack, and stood. Then he bent and picked up the pack.

"Leave the other stuff! I cain git it later. Keep shut and foller me!"

Willis's voice...? He was afraid! He was afraid someone would hear them. He was...that meant that someone was out there. Probably Silas and Dean. He had a chance... His hand tightened on the rock and he moved the pack so that it was balanced on his left arm. He walked faster, coming up closer to Willis. Willis slowed to listen and look around. Getts raised the rock until his shoulder tightened and wouldn't go back any further. With a gasp, he lunged forward and slammed the rock into Willis's head. The man grunted, dropped his rifle and fell to his knees. Getts stood behind him and hit him again. Willis wouldn't go down, but his hands fell to his sides as he knelt there, balancing but dazed. Getts dropped the pack, turned back down the trail, and tried to run. His body was thick and felt frozen. He could barely make it go. He forced himself down the trail, stumbling and gasping. His feet wouldn't coordinate with his observations. He stumbled, caught himself, and continued as fast as he could. Imagining that Willis was aiming the rifle at him, he crouched as he moved over the broken terrain and stumbled along until he became weak; unable to go further. Then he realized that he had lost the trail. He was in a field of large sandstone boulders, at least that's what they looked like in the dark. He sank down to his knees, his breath whistling and wheezing, his hand cramped around the bloody stone. He held it up in the starlight. 'Like a small loaf of bread, smooth and... A Mano! An Anasazi Mano.'

Getts pulled himself around and under one of the chunks of sandstone until he felt hidden and safe. The rock, the ground, the air---everything was freezing cold. He hugged himself for safety, even though he had to pee so badly that his back ached.

Silas had moved out of the gully and started a wide swing around the Suburbans when he heard Regina call Norman. He smiled to himself. At least they were together now and safe. Or were they? He crouched, sitting back on his heels listening to the night sounds. If Willis was waiting to ambush them, he would be able to stop him.

Five minutes passed. Silas eased his body up and stretched. The cold was getting to his bones. He picked a thick twig off a nearby plant, broke off about six inches, stripped it, and placed it in his mouth. Clamping down on it kept his teeth from chattering involuntarily, an internal noise that interfered with his hearing.

The starlight was bright enough to see tracks, but the only place tracks were visible were the open areas and the road. He moved in the same wide arc toward the road and came out about mid-point between his truck and the Suburbans. He crouched again in the rabbitbrush at the edge of the track. The starlight seemed too bright; he felt exposed.

To his right, a dark mound at the edge of the track caught his attention. In the starlight, it seemed to shine or reflect... He studied the object, deciding to examine it closer, but first, he moved onto the road searching for... Tracks! Two people. Recent. Boots with Kletter soles. Street shoes. The shoes had been in the lead. But... He was dragging his feet, as if he were heavily loaded or tired... Silas moved quickly back toward the object he had seen in the road. 'My sleeping bag!'

Getts had worn street shoes---wingtips! He was carrying their gear and... The guy in back! Someone had Getts and was making him carry their gear. He shivered, let the rifle slide to its butt on the ground,

and rubbed his hands together to warm them. He knew not to blow on his hands as even a little moisture now would help freeze them. Then, rifle at ready, he hunkered-down under the too-bright starlight and began following the tracks.

Moving up the side trail, he stopped to listen and get his bearing. Something was off to his left...maybe a hundred feet. He strained to listen, biting through the twig. He heard a sound that seemed too familiar, like water striking the ground with force. Then he heard someone let out a sigh of pleasure and whisper, "Oh thank God!"

Silas was sure that the two men he had been following had stopped to take a leak. He moved as silently and quickly as he could until he was close to where he had heard the sounds. Large sandstone blocks made it difficult for him to see... But he heard and then saw a man standing with his back to him. He moved closer. It was hard to tell, but the man was alone. From the look of the coat... It was Getts. He waited to make certain that Getts was alone. Still not sure, he moved forward at the edge of a ragged block and whispered.

"Mr. Getts. Don't move or do anything unless you are alone." Getts collapsed and Silas barely got to him in time to protect his head.

He wasn't out, he was exhausted. Every ounce of fortitude had been drained from him, and he had lost control of his muscles. When he realized that Silas was caring for him he began to sob. Silas put his hand over his mouth and held it firmly.

"Don't make sounds! Who had you? Where is he now?"

"Willis! I... I hit him with a Mano...on the head. Twice. He wouldn't fall over."

“Shhh! Whisper! Keep your voice down! Look, Mr. Getts. I need to check on him. You stay here and be quiet. You’ll be safe that way...If you’re quiet, I mean.”

Silas worked his way through the fallen blocks of sandstone, estimating the distance and direction to the trail. He cut the trail and knelt to examine the soil. Lots of tracks. He observed how the starlight lit the earth, and leaned down so that he could see across the trail. There was almost a shadow. Of all the tracks, one set seemed undisturbed. No other tracks cut or were on top of these prints. They were headed down. He rose quickly and moved off the trail. Then, keeping the silvery line of disturbed earth in sight, he began to move. In minutes he heard a shuffling sound, like boots in gravel. He moved forward and saw a man trying to get up, but obviously hurt and disoriented. *“Willis!”* he said quietly.

“Mikewash! Norman? Dean? Anybody there? It’s Silas, I’m commin’ in.” He spoke as quietly as possible, but his voice sounded like a shout. The night was so quiet; so cold!

He heard the vehicle’s door squeak and murmuring sounds. *“Silas?”*

He prodded Willis in the rear with his rifle barrel and reached out and pulled on the lapel of Getts’ greatcoat, urging Getts to keep up. Willis was holding his head and cursing as the others surrounded them.

“Cain, how’s Quent?”

“I was just down there. He’s okay I think. Says the muscle spasms in his back have almost stopped. That Avery fellow and Bill Jefferson are keeping him company. Sure wish we had some food. It’s all up there.” I looked at the tiny glow from the ruin. *“Who did the number on Willis’s head?”*

“Getts! Who would have believed? That leaves one more, old man Willis. Bobby says he’s up there and that it ain’t over ‘cause he’ll kill us all.” Silas leaned against the lead Suburban, looking out at the tiny glow in the dark.

Norman was standing as close to Regina as it was possible to get. Susan was sharing a blanket with me that she had found under the seat. I had white gauze wrapped around my wrists. Blood from the rope cuts was still oozing.

“They really hurt, you can’t kid me!” Susan whispered.

“Not as much as Norman’s ankle, I’ll bet, and certainly not as bad as Alex’s wrists and Bill’s... Quentin took the brunt of their vileness. They got the jump on him and hit him hard. He’s blaming himself, but none of us knew that there was a gully there. It was almost dark and they knew where to hide to get the jump on him. He’s not at fault.” I was talking now in a normal voice, we all were. We heard the bullet rip into the side of the back Suburban before we heard the report of the rifle.

“Get down! Get around to this side!” Another bullet ripped overhead and the report that followed made us all cringe. He was shooting in the dark, at sounds. He had our range and direction.

Anasazi Bill stood up cursing under his breath so that the women wouldn’t hear. “I ain’t gonna get shot at by no trespasser! He’s in my place, reckon I get’s the job of rootin’ him out.” Another bullet tore into the ground about ten feet away.

Silas and I reacted at the same time, with the same intent. We both started to talk and then I nodded to Silas. “You tell him!”

“Bill, I’m in charge here...this is the res! That crazy old man has the advantage. We have one too, time! We wait him out. No one has to go after him.”

Susan kept her head down and stared into the darkness. He’s probably firing from the rocks in front of the ruin. Our food’s up there! And our water. I’ll bet the parts for the subs are up there too.”

Alex was talking quietly to Anasazi Bill, quieting the tough old man. “Look, that old coot was mumbling about Quentin being someone else... Kept saying for them to stop drumming. He’s totally whacko!”

I agreed. “He thought Quentin was the Ute we found in the shipping crate. Quentin is wearing a red flannel shirt and jeans. C.J. Willis brought that body to Sedona, he knew how he was dressed. In his mind, Quentin must be the Ute.”

Dean was kneeling next to Willis, shaking his shoulder. “Where are the parts you took out of these vehicles? Stay alert man! Don’t sleep or you may never wake up. Fight it! Now talk to me! Where are the parts?”

“Willis couldn’t hold his head. Silas had tied his hands behind his back and wrapped the rope around the trailer hitch on the back of the first sub. Willis complained, but there was no sympathy for equal treatment. He slowly turned his head from side-to-side, obviously trying to get to one side of a headache. “Screw you!”

Dean saw that the man was shaking with cold. “If this was settled, you could sit next to a hot fire and have some coffee.”

Willis opened his eyes, his face skewed from the pain. “When he gits ya! Pa’ll make me coffee!”

“Your dad’s nuts! He’s... What’s that about hearing drumming?”

“He ain’t! What he hears is real! Knows them spirits. Nothin’ wrong wit that.”

“You took the parts from these vehicles. Where are they?”

Willis tried to smile, but the pain and lack of use wouldn’t let him. “Pa has ‘em. Wha’dya think?”

We were all whispering again. Norman turned and motioned for Getts to come closer. “We can’t let him sleep. Probably has a concussion. We should take turns keeping him awake and talking if possible. Okay? You start Getts! Keep him awake!” We all nodded in agreement.

Dean gently took my arm. “I have a plan, Arnie. Can you help me?”

Chapter 44

He slumped down beside the frozen body of Skullcroft and sat making self-comforting mewling sounds, the kind his mother had once made as she held him. In his nightmare the graves were open.

IN THE BACK OF the Suburban I had driven, we had left an empty metal cooler. Dean pulled it out, set it top-open, top down on the ground and put his weight on it. The hinges gave with a loud “snap!” We all ducked, expecting a shot from the rocks.

“What in the blazes are you doing to my cooler?”

“Cooler? What cooler... Oh, you mean this drum?”

The old metal cooler had lost much of its white foam insulation and plastic liner. It served now as a metal box that protected crushables like loaves of bread and potato chips. I hadn’t thought of it as a drum, but then, I didn’t drum. “What do you mean a drum?”

“Listen!” He held the cooler between his knees and began softly slapping his hands on its rusty metal bottom. “I’m looking for sweet spots, hey, nice!”

I had to admit that he got some interesting sounds out of the box. “So, now you can entertain us while we freeze to death out here.”

“Hey, you can listen, but the music I have is for our friend up there.”

I was slow on the uptake, but I got it. “He hears drums. You’re going to... What? Drum him to sleep?”

“No, but I think I can get his attention and maybe he’ll leave. First, I need to get up to that room that Susan and Regina were in. Want to help me find it?”

Anasazi Bill was still chomping-off mumbles behind his bushy mustache; ready to throw Willis off

his property. Alex and I watched him pace back and forth, ducking when he thought Willis might fire at us.

“Bill, can you get us up to that room?”

“Nope! I’m going to hide up there where I can see him come out of my place. Won’t gun him down, but I may hog-tie him like he done us and put him in the freezing mud! Mr. Cain, you got to tell Silas to let me cover that end!”

Silas looked at me and shrugged. “Go ahead!”

Norman parted from Regina and stood looking down toward where we had left Quentin warming by the fire. “It’s too cold for the rest of us to stand around. If we stay here, we may catch a bullet. I think we should post guards so he can’t sneak up on us. I’ll guard. Go on now, join Quentin at the fire. Warm-up and be ready for...whatever!”

“Well Sir, and what about me, after all I’ve done?” Getts was trying for respect. “I suppose that you expect me to freeze up here with this degenerate just because it was I who apprehended him?”

I went over and untied Willis from the hitch. “Help him to his feet! I think you’re right, I hadn’t thought of it until you spoke up just now. He is your responsibility, you bring him down.”

“He’s dirty... He stinks! He’s covered with...blood. I have certainly pulled my weight, you take him!”

I ignored him. “Take him down! If he gets away, you’ll go after him!” From the look of Willis, Getts would not have a problem.

Dean wouldn’t let Alex or me help him carry the old cooler, even when the going got tough and we had to climb up on the rubble where Willis’s old building had stood. Silas and Norman were back in the dark somewhere guarding the others. I thought I

saw a glow of firelight, and imagined what it would be like to warm by a fire. My wrists burned. My knees felt as if they had little pieces of gravel in them from the strain of being tied back. I had feared hypothermia, more for the others than myself. My internal body temperature was still above that, and it seemed that the others had avoided it as well. Thank God!

“Is that the trail you and Beardancer came down?” Dean was pointing to a darker line in the sandstone.

“I think so. It should be, if we’re on the right trail now.”

Alex grunted and pulled himself up to what seemed to be a shallow ledge. “When the house was here, you could step from the roof to this... Hey, okay,” he whispered, “This is the trail.”

We inched our way up the steep crack, paused to listen, and then entered what seemed to be a tunnel. A few more steps and we were standing in the doorway Susan had described. “Cover me, I’ll turn on the flashlight!”

“It’s empty... Except for that... My God, it’s a child’s skeleton wrapped in canvas... It’s the mummy Regina and Susan knocked down!” I knew to expect it but... These were the remains of a child, sun-bleached, old, brown, dry and peeling.

I held the light on it long enough so that we all understood what it was. Then Dean moved to the far end of the L-shaped room and found a big chunk of sandstone to sit on.

“Alex, can you cover me from down there a little way? I don’t want him sneaking up on us.” He started drumming softly, and then increased the volume as he got the rhythms he was after. Soon the whole chamber was pulsating. Alex, who had crawled down to the place where Regina had jammed the boards

across the fissure, began to let sound flow up through his throat as a lament or wail. He followed Dean's lead and the two made the caverns echo and pulse, vibrate and throb as if a hundred ancients were lamenting the crimes committed against them.

Dean drummed harder and louder. I couldn't contain the chants and cries that sprung from somewhere inside me. The rock seemed to vibrate. The air flowing through the fissure came alive and wrapped around and around us. Then, above our coursing music, we heard a high-pitched voice in counterpoint to our own. Then, explosions assaulted our ears, making them ring. Willis was firing his rifle at our ghosts. When the explosions stopped, and our blasted cilia at last came to rest, it was over. Dean had stopped drumming, and far below us only the last of C.J. Willis's curses and pleas echoed up through the fissure.

Anasazi Bill remembered a special "fort" he had used as a kid. He found his way up through and over the rocks in the dark. The glow from the ruin's mouth oriented him. He settled-in and tried to keep his teeth from chattering. He was no more than fifty feet from the entrance. It had seemed further away when he was small. He was unarmed, and comfortable that way. His old 30-30 had never hurt anyone, and he wasn't going to change that now.

He was warming his hand in his pits when the drumming started. At first, he could barely hear it. Within minutes it increased in volume and then someone started to chant. He watched the doorway, hoping Willis would come out and he could jump him. The drumming got louder, the air seemed to pulsate.

He was so focused upon the fire-lit doorway, that he didn't see the shadow in the fire's glow moving from rock-to-rock on his left. When he did see movement, it was Willis entering the ruin. The man had been out, probably waiting to get another fix on someone's voice so he could shoot at them. The drumming was frenetic and it sounded like dozens of voices were wailing to its beat. Inside the ruin, he heard Willis scream out, begging and pleading for the spirits to leave him alone. "I didn't kill you! I wasn't the one! It was them others, the diggers!" Then the ruin echoed another voice and a different song. He heard the first shot...followed by three others. The caverns belched the ugly sound into the cold air. Then, with an emptiness Bill feared he would fall into, the drumming suddenly stopped.

Babbling and talking to stars and rocks, CJ Willis came staggering out of the Johnston ruin. His eyes were on the starry heavens and his mind was where the ghosts of his deeds would forever reach him. He slumped down beside the frozen body of Skullcroft and sat making self-comforting mewing sounds, the kind his mother had once made as she held him. In his nightmare the graves were open.

Anasazi Bill stood up and yelled that all was clear. The sound of his voice echoed through the cold night, chasing lost pieces of drum voices through the canyons. Those gathered near the sagebrush fire in the gully looked up and smiled, all but one, who's shoulders slumped even lower as he cursed.

I heard the "all clear!" as I poked my head out of the ceilingless tunnel of rock above the trail down and away from the storage room. I called to Dean and Alex, and without comment or expletives, they

followed me down. We left the little girl alone there, again, knowing that soon, strange but loving souls would give her a place of her own to rest.

The smoke of the sagebrush is purifying, though acrid, with bright odors that one can never forget. Bill didn't tie the old man. He led him into the circle of firelight and pushed down upon his shoulder until he got the idea to sit. He sat, staring at Quentin, his head cocked first to one side then the other. His lips moved as he seemed to argue his case and explain the motives that possessed him as a younger man.

"He thinks Quentin is the Ute we found." Dean observed.

"He took him to Sedona, but he didn't kill him. Who did? And why?" Regina leaned forward, expecting an answer.

Getts' face tightened and the power lines that ran from his cheekbones to his chin deepened. He knew, but there was no way he would share the information he got from his old aunt. Knowledge was power, and what he knew gave him the advantage.

Susan turned to face Bobby Willis, still sitting slumped and dejected; obviously in pain, wanting to sleep. "Bob, do you know?"

Instead of a diatribe of hate, the younger grave robber and antiquities dealer let out a sigh. "I don't know. Pa never told me." There was no doubt in anyone's mind that he was telling the truth.

Avery was confused and angry that he was being discounted. "That's really what this is about? You were trying to solve his murder? They really want to know?"

"I told you Sir!" Bill Jefferson said, "That man they found in Arizona... Well, wouldn't you want to know what happened to one of your family?"

Avery gave out a contemptuous "humpf," while shaking his head. "You really don't understand Indians, Jefferson. It's just not something they would do. They live for today: pain and pleasure! We come along and we stamp our values onto them. We value history so we assume they do. Sure, if they are taught our values like the Beardancers here, they are interested in history. Why can't you people understand, there's nothing wrong in that, it's just a fact!"

Getts broke the anguished silence. "What time is it? I can't seem to read my Rollex."

"10:45. We should go up above and see if they left any grub." Silas was on his feet, helping Quentin to his. "What I don't understand is why are Willis and his son here, Getts and...? Well, whoever else... Why were they willing to *kill* to keep you from solving a murder that happened over a century ago? Those that did it are dead. I just don't understand."

"Tain't that Injun!" Bobby Willis said as Anasazi Bill helped him to his feet. "Ya jest cain't get it, can ya? Getts' grandpa and my granpap did somethin' regretful. They had their men steal fresh from the graves. They set-up here and dried 'em out. Then sold 'em." He was shaky on his feet, and he kept moving his head from side-to-side like he was trying to clear it. "Them recurds and others tol the story. We wanted 'em... Getts and his smarty-assed bunch wuld pay...pay big! That's what he's here fer, to keep us from 'em."

Chapter 45

We're learning about what our ancestors gave us, and it hurts!

IT WAS PAST MIDNIGHT. We could see the lights of two vehicles making their way along the track toward us. We had eaten, and warmed our bones. Quentin was resting and feeling much better. Dean was drumming softly as he relaxed. Norman sat next to me, our backs against the warm sandstone. Susan and Regina were using our legs for a backrest.

Norman spoke softly. "We're never going to know who killed him, are we? I want to believe that he was the young man in the story who was on his way to Ignacio to unite the Utes against those who wanted to checkerboard the reservation. Maybe Brownfield and Willis were paid by the Colorado politicians to kill him? Maybe they let their diggers---the degenerate miners and cowboys Anasazi Bill was told about---kill him? Maybe that is as close to the truth as we'll ever get. We'll bury him and thank him for bringing our past back to us. One thing I know, my friends, we are learning to respect those who gave us life. We are learning about what is in us that they gave us." He paused, looked down and then over to me. "Arnie, this is our blessing, there's no reason for tears..."

I rubbed my eyes and tried to blink the tears away. "I know Beardancer. I guess the tears are for me and Susan and all of us conquerors. We're learning about what our ancestors gave us, and it hurts!"

EPILOGUE

K.O. Dells finished processing the last plastic bag of material from Arizona. She had systematically documented her findings and was writing her final report. She hadn't learned anything spectacular, but she had been able to identify the human materials and get good DNA-Velcro reading on each. 'Someone will be pleased,' she thought as she finished writing.

Tom Lanard came into her lab with an armload of catalogs from supply houses. "These came! You sure you need all of these?"

"I just finished my report for the archaeologist in Arizona. I'm ready to get on with my research. Sure I need them. I must find a better fluorescent tagger."

"So, what did you learn from the samples? Were they all human?"

"Well, I learned a lot. I hope what I learned matters to someone. Three samples had definite Mediterranean links, Southern Italian, probably Sicilian. The other two matched perfectly with Northern Italian markers. All were from prepubescent females. All were from European gene pools."

APPENDIX 'A' CHARACTER REFERENCES

- Arnie Cain** - Investigator. Ex-Yavapai County Marshal.
- Susan Cain** - Popular Sedona waitress and wife of Arnie.
- Norman Beardancer** - Ute Spiritual leader.
- Regina Beardancer** - Wife of Norman.
- Anasazi Bill** - "AKA Tom Johnston whose father was a trader on the Ute Reservation.
- Charles P. Willis** - Early pot hunter and grave robber on the Ute Reservation.
- C.J. Willis** - Father of Bobby Willis - pot hunter, grave robber and artifacts trader - owned Rocks and Ruins Gallery in Sedona, Arizona.
- Bob Willis** - Son of C.J. Willis - Grave robber and artifact trader.
- Phil Long** - Director of Prehistoric Society in Denver.
- D. Paul Kingsley** - Early Sedona artifacts trader.
- Darrell Kingsley** - Sedona trader, son of D. Paul.
- Doctor Ferner Getts.** Head of Curatorial Programs and Documentation. Academic. Author of: *Southwest Collections: The Definitive Study of the Origins of all of America's Great Southwest Collections*. This was the baseline work for all museums and private collections.
- Ferner Brownfield** - Early days grave robber and antiquities trader.
- Edith Brownfield and Ferner Getts** - Cousins, grandchildren of Ferner Brownfield.
- E. Val Skullcroft** - Grave robber from Utah and partner of **Bobby Willis**.
- Doctor Norma Curts** - Curator at a Denver museum.

Kathy Owens Dells - K.O. Dells. Scientist doing research on DNA genetic materials.

Alex Sturdy - Archaeologist, friend of the Utes.

Bill Jefferson - BIA agent at Towaoc

George W. Avery - Department of Interior, troubleshooter, Advisor to the President on Indian Affairs.

Quentin Coats - Tribal police officer and friend of Beardancer.

Silas Cutclaw - Tribal police officer

APPENDIX 'B' ARNIE CAIN'S NOTES

Historically, Weminuche Utes lived in the parts of Colorado drained by the San Juan River and west into Utah. The Muache Utes lived in southern Colorado near the San Luis Valley. The Capote Utes lived in north central New Mexico and southern Colorado.

From native Ute speakers like Ouray and Ignacio, and from men like Mears and Carson, who spoke the Ute language, we get an insight into the Ute People's ability to express intellectual, epistemological, and ontological ideas. They were fine orators and their oral traditions were often passed-down by the "grandmothers."

Treaties with the Americans were signed in 1849, 1864, 1868, 1874. An 'Agreement' was signed in 1880 and re-enforced in 1885 which established the boundaries of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation generally as they are today. In 1871 Congress stopped using the word "treaty" to describe "Agreements," with the Utes and other Indian tribes. After 1871, Agreements, not Treaties were forced upon the Ute people.

In 1895 the Hunter Bill was signed into law by President Cleveland. The Bill disapproved the intentions of the Coloradoans to remove the Southern Ute Indians to the Territory of Utah. It required the Utes and others to abide by the provisions of the Agreement of 1880, thus reaffirming the 1880 boundaries of the Ute Reservation.

In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act or General Allotment Act, which provided 160 acres to adult male Indians. Coloradoans saw an opportunity,

if the Dawes Act could be applied, to break into the reservation and “buy” the best lands from the Utes. When Utes like Ignacio opposed this “checkerboarding” of their lands, the government found leaders that would agree. Pressure on Ignacio is one reason he led his people to the western lands where there was little arable land or water. Most whites didn’t want the area. After replacing Ignacio, the government placed Utes in power who would allow “Checkerboarding.” Although Ute males were allowed to vote on the allotments, there is considerable evidence that the results of the voting were falsified. The final vote was 153 for, 148 against. As a result, the Southern Utes lost their best lands.

Women played a powerful role in Ute society. The term “Grandmother” is used to describe older women who had a say in what happened to the people. The non-Indians had not yet evolved a system wherein women were a part of governmental structures. As a result, they ignored Ute women and dealt only with men. Non-Indians interpreted Indian values through their cultural filters. That is why we do not get a clear picture of the position of women in Ute society from non-Indian observations and records.

In 1906, Congress passed a bill creating the Mesa Verde National Park. President Roosevelt signed it into law. No Ute lands were included within the boundaries of the new park, primarily due to Ute objections to giving up their land. But by misrepresenting their intent, Congress in effect took Ute lands while going on record against the taking of Ute land. This subterfuge was accomplished by including a provision within the act which gave the government control of Ute land. It stated: “...all prehistoric ruins that are situated within five miles of

the boundaries of said park ... are hereby placed under the custodianship of the Secretary of the Interior and shall be administered by the same service that is established by the custodianship of the park.” There was never a question that the major prehistoric ruins were on Ute land. The process was dishonest.

In 1911, the government moved to “formally” take the Ute lands that held major prehistoric ruins. The Utes refused to give up their land. The representatives of the government stated that the government had the right to take Ute lands for “public purposes,” and would take the land and pay the Utes what it believed it was worth. Coerced, the Utes “agreed” to sell. The agreement was ratified in 1913, but at that time the government cheated the Ute people once again by trading them some land that was already Ute, and by extending the southern boundary of the cession by one half mile, or 1,440 acres. The Utes weren’t afforded the courtesy of being consulted about the theft. Years later this “error” was corrected.

It is interesting to note that Mesa Verde National Park is the only park in the system that preserves the works of man. Millions of dollars are spent each year to preserve the remains of the Native American culture called Anasazi. At the same time, a living people, the Ute Mountain Utes, are generally ignored. Ute viewpoints and history have been intentionally left out of the history of the Park. Ute leaders are often discounted and there is a record of contemptuous treatment of Ute leaders by the National Park Service.

Navajo Springs was the gathering point at the foot of Ute Mountain which was used as a distribution

center for food and goods until the town of Towaoc, Colorado, about a mile north, was established.

Ignacio, AKA Lion or John Lyon, (1828 - 1913) was the Weminuche leader known to the Americans as 'Chief among the Chiefs.' He was a contemporary of Ouray, the Apache-Ute of the Tabeguache Band. Ignacio spoke many languages and was thought brilliant. He was a charismatic leader who at first cooperated with the Americans. This great Native American was essentially written out of history when he led his small band of followers, mostly Weminuche Utes, to the west end of the Southern Ute Reservation, thereby rejecting the American's culture, gods, and situational morality. Today, the ancestors of his followers are known as Ute Mountain Utes. Interesting, is the fact that the Capitol of the Southern Utes is still known as Ignacio.

Chief Jack House (1886 - 1972) was the son of Asa House, AKA Acowitz. He led the survivors of those who had gone to the western side of the reservation to be let alone and to be allowed to die following their own ways. His brilliance and leadership brought the Ute Mountain Ute people into the modern age.

Jack House was an athlete and artist. As he wandered the canyons of his homeland he found special places where he could paint, often with red, sheep-marking dye. He drew scenes depicting his people, favorite horses, and events. Today, these works are being searched-out, recorded, and shared as part of the rich cultural heritage of the Weminuche Utes. Most visitors to the tribal park stop at the site of House's burned "hogan" and view the panel of "rock art" created by this great American.

Otto Mears was interpreter, counselor, and friend of the Ute People. He and Kit Carson, "The Rope Thrower," did all they could to represent the Utes and to try to save them from the Americans. Mears is famous as the "Road Builder." In many ways, his routes opened Ute lands to conquest. In the last days of the Utes as a free people he was thought by many to have turned against them. He helped remove all Uncompahgre (Tabeguache) Utes to Utah, and is thought to have played a role in denying them a place near where Grand Junction is today. In his own defense, he said he was getting them out of Colorado to save them the grief of having another place torn from them.

Gustav Erik Adolf Nordenskiöld, 1868-1895, a young Swedish scientist visiting America, who dug archaeological sites on Ute lands, on the Mesa Verde, in 1891.

Today, those who do not look closely at the historic record assume that the Ute's concerns were presented in court and that the courts ruled against the Utes and in favor of Nordenskiöld. As a matter of fact, only the interests of non-Indians who wanted to possess the "relics" were heard. The case was dismissed because there was no law protecting antiquities, not because there was no law against stealing resources from Ute lands. Thus, the Utes were deprived of justice. In all of their communications to those who were appointed to represent them, the Utes were clear that they wanted the digging stopped and the possessions of the old ones returned.

The eggs and the young of a louse are called 'nits.' Militia Colonel John M. Chivington, called the "Fighting Parson" because he was a Methodist

minister, led what became known as the Sand Creek Massacre on the plains of eastern Colorado on November 29, 1864. Chivington attacked friendly Cheyenne Indians led by Chief Black Kettle, killing old men, women, and children. When some of his troopers balked at killing women and children Chivington commented that “nits become lice.” His analogy was popular among many who believed that all Indians should be killed. After the massacre he led his troops through the streets of Denver and received a hero’s welcome. Many of his men had mutilated the cadavers of the Cheyenne and wore sexual body parts as mementos.

People like Virginia McClurg of Denver, sought agreements and leases of the Ute lands which contained the ruins. McClurg claimed to have dealt with, and come to agreement with, Ute leaders. She lied when she claimed to have negotiated a lease with the Utes, via “Chief” Ignacio, which gave her group rights to the Mesa Verde archaeology. No record of a lease or other agreement has ever been produced. It would have been totally out-of-character for Ignacio to have entered into such a lease or agreement. Her story is improbable. When the Utes would not cooperate, she made up ugly stories about them, which are now presented as historical fact.

About the Author

Descry was born in Colorado and grew up exploring wild places in search of pre-historic peoples and the wonders of nature. In his twenties, he was captured by the magnitude and magic of the Colorado Plateau and melded his life into that region.

Descry's work emerges out of one of the most exciting and mysterious regions on the Planet, the American Desert Southwest. His works are filled with vivid descriptions of real places and events. His writings explore possibilities that are so plausible that the reader has a difficult time separating truth from fiction.

Descry and his family live, depending on the season and their whims, in Sedona or Prescott, Arizona, and Cortez, Colorado. They also spend quality time near the Sea of Cortez. He is actively involved in family, education, archaeology, environmental issues, and business. In his writings, he shares his insights and love of the land and its peoples in a way that charges one with awe.

This historical-mystery, ***The Spirits in the Ruins***, challenges the reader's detective abilities with a century old murder. Descry provides insights into the illegal trade in Anasazi grave goods, and a previously untold history of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian people.

The second book in the series, ***The Spirit of the Sycamore***, is a tantalizing and complex mystery that explores discord and harmony in Sedona, Arizona, one of the Planet's important spiritual energy centers, and one of the Earth's most beautiful places.

The Spirit of the Estuary, Descry's third in this series, will be published soon. It is a historical-mystery told through the life of a murdered Seri Indian woman. It is set in Arizona and the northern Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California) region of Mexico.

**A MYSTERY-THRILLER THAT WILL TAKE
YOU BACK IN TIME TO A MURDER THAT
MAY HAVE CHANGED HISTORY**

“After reading Descry’s *The Spirit of the Sycamore*, I knew I had discovered a new author and a new style of mystery writing. I love historical fiction and I love a good mystery. Descry does both well! *The Spirits in the Ruins*, is his best yet. I couldn’t put it down!”

J. Paul White
Durango, Colorado

“I choose what I read carefully. Books published in America are very expensive here. I read a review of Descry’s new mystery and decided to read it. I accessed *The Spirits in the Ruins*, on the 1stbooks.com web page, paid the small fee, and downloaded it to my computer. I was immediately transported to the two places on the planet I dream most about: Arizona and Colorado. I also love Native American history! Descry has a way of writing a mystery that is based upon love of people, the land, and fact.”

Dieter Schloss
Frankfurt (an der Oder), Germany

