

Copyright © 2011, David Edward Walker. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No portion of this document may be reproduced, copied, or distributed in any form whatsoever, electronic or otherwise, without the expressed written permission of the author.

PLEASE RESPECT COPYRIGHT LAW ON BEHALF OF THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT ART.

Disclaimer: All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictionally.

Interested parties can obtain a full manuscript by contacting:  
David Walker, 7005 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE, Newcastle, Washington 98056  
(509) 307-0967, [info@tessasdance.com](mailto:info@tessasdance.com)

# TESSA'S DANCE

DAVID EDWARD WALKER

## CHAPTER ONE

### ROUND DANCE

"At the creation, Coyote was present, the symbol of power –  
teacher of balance, the creator of confusion . . ."

*–Andrew George, Palouse*

"You should get over here. She started banging her head on the bars and we had to cuff her."

I do not have a fan club at the tribal jail. Last year, Rory, a 12-year-old 'inmate,' was brought to me in his underwear in a public hallway there. Female officers paraded by as he tried to cover himself. I asked Tork, the lead officer, if he might bring the boy his striped jail coveralls and slippers.

"This is jail. Those are optional."

He delivered them eventually, handing them to Rory, saying "Here's your warm and fuzzies," ambiguously referencing the boy's anatomy, the uniform, or my services. After he left, Rory explained how some other kid, not him, plugged the cell toilet with a roll of toilet paper and flooded the whole cell block. At 3 am, Tork ordered all seven boys stripped to their underwear and deprived of their mattresses and blankets. The bed frames are stainless steel and this was in mid-January.

After I finished with Rory, I drove to the state child welfare office and filed a child abuse complaint against tribal jail. Of course, the state was not about to investigate. But word got around: I didn't care – shit like this has been going

on since before boarding school days and has to stop. I did piss people off and I haven't liked going around tribal jail unless I have to since then.

"She's been asking for you," said Rena, the youth probation officer.

"Yeah, OK. I'm coming."

The jail is only a couple of blocks away so I walked. A tricked-out blue Mercedes, sporty BMW coupe with darkened windows, and a variety of late model trucks and SUVs, all in pristine shape, sparkled across the parking lot. Some Public Health Service Commissioned Corps colleagues pull down twice what I can make in the Civil Service. I'd have resented it but a homeless Indian man limped across Fort Road with a cane and a prosthetic foot before I could get started.

The sky, mostly overcast, held a promising cut of blue above the foothills to the south and the winds shifted to a chilly whip. I pulled my flannel close while I lit a smoke, a bad habit I blame on the availability of single cigarettes for a dime at Yakamart. Inhaling deep, I strolled past the elder program office and vet center, housed in beat-up old modulars. Out of nervousness, I hotboxed my cigarette.

I recognized Ron among the several tribal cops standing next to the new unmarked Challenger, wearing dark wraparounds with his hair buzzed and military-like. We rode around together not too long ago so I could get a feel for the projects—Apus Goudy, Adams View, Wolf Point, Totus, and Momachut—mid-60s HUD developments in pastel blues and greens, run-down and some overcrowded with families of ten or more in two or three bedrooms, leaking roofs, broken windows, bad plumbing, and lots of kids running wild on the streets.

I said "hey" and he nodded. Unable to relight my overworked cigarette in the wind, he handed me his to use. A paucity of words followed— "how's it going?" and "alright, 'n you?" and "doin' alright." The wind kicked hard and stung. He turned to leave and I crushed out the butt prematurely so as to follow him through the steel security door into the front waiting area. I thought maybe walking in with him would help.

It didn't. Tork glanced at me and looked back down, didn't say a word, certainly not "hello"—as if I expected him to. He glimpsed at me again and his pitted, pock-marked face narrowed, a slightly-raised lip exuding contempt. He'd sighted a bug he'd squash if he could get away with it.

"What?" he asked finally.

"I'm here to see Tessa Miyanashatawit."

"So?"

"Yeah, so?"

He gets my dander up.

"So I am supposed to care about that?" His eyes stayed fixed on mine.

Rena popped out from the back and his facial expression changed only slightly. A clipboard slid hard along the counter at me.

"Sign in. And don't be giving any of these kids, including her, shitty little books that make 'em suicidal."

"Not sure what you mean."

"Don't be as stupid as you look, giving these kids books about surviving child abuse- 'Boy Named It' or whatever you gave some little girl here last year who tried to hang herself."

"Wasn't me."

"Hell it wasn't."

"Tork, hush," said Rena.

"Yeah," I tried to be the peacemaker. "OK. No books."

"And no outside food."

"OK."

"Wait around in back."

I walked back to a small room, empty except for a grey government-issued desk chair in the middle of the grey linoleum floor. Kids usually like to spin in it while they talk to me. I tugged in the chewed-up plastic chair outside next to the portable breathalyzer and sat down. The only décor, a dog-eared black and white poster, held on at a cockeyed angle, dropping a hair closer toward the floor as I passed. Two Indian youths dressed in regalia and on horseback now trotted downwards over the words: "We respect our traditions. Yakama Nation, buckle up and don't drink and drive."

Rena peered in. "Can you come back inside? She won't come out. Maybe you can talk to her."

There are no juvenile detention facilities, just very old cells housing either adults or kids, whatever the need might be. I followed Rena's oversized posterior as she waddled through several security doors to the last block of jail cells. I'd never actually been inside one of the cells before – usually kids were brought out to me. Bending around a corner, the old-fashioned bars were filthy with black from gripping hands with flecked paint revealing rust underneath. Behind them, I saw a chipped concrete floor, dirty yellow walls, stainless steel toilet, and a steel bed frame. It was dark and dank, smelling of sweat and mildew.

Rena tugged at my shirt sleeve, mildly irritated at me for lagging behind, while hoisting a huge set of keys from her belt. She is also key-keep. Her struggles with the lock echoed through the hallway. Tessa, her back against the wall, sat cross-legged on the floor with a moth-bitten surplus blanket draped over her from the front because her hands were cuffed behind her back. Her pose reminded me of some Remington image of the Old West at first. The dim bulb over her head spoiled this effect and she became a little Indian girl, alone in a jail cell, like her mother before her. There was a cut and bruise on her forehead.

"She won't eat," said Rena.

"I hate bologna sandwiches," Tessa slurred.

"Then listen to your grandpa and behave," Rena chimed back.

"Fuck that."

"That kind of talk counts when you go before the children's court judge."

"I ain't a fucking child."

Rena ignored the expletive. "OK, we'll put you in adult court and you can have a longer stay with us."

Rena looked at me, shrugged slightly, and explained. "Arnold found her out in the orchard near his place with some boys." She looked at Tessa, indirectly lecturing while talking to me. "These boys run around out there making trouble and aren't in school, don't have nothing going for them . . ." She shook her head at Tess and turned back toward me, "Arnold told the officers he can't control her. She blew point one nine when she came in."

"I didn't know that. I should talk with him."

"Fuck that," Tessa said from somewhere beneath her garb, "You don't talk with my grandpa." Except for a brief meeting with Arnold when we first began working together, contact had always been between Tessa and me.

"Come out and explain to me why."

"I like being in here instead."

"I was told you wanted to talk to me. Come on out and tell me why I can't talk to your grandpa."

She reluctantly struggled to her feet with Rena's help, who then removed her cuffs. Tessa then wrapped the blanket around her head, hiding in such a way that we couldn't see her face. I figured she was ashamed, which was a much better situation than if she'd had no regrets. Rena arched her eyebrows doubtfully at our tentative success in getting her this far and took us back to the little room before waddling off to her office. Tessa's hand reached through the blanket and spun the government chair; then she thought better of playing, sat

down, and didn't move at all except to cover her head more completely with the blanket.

"Why are you here?" I asked, being a bit of a hard-ass.

"Why would you care?"

"I get paid to care."

"Paid to care means you're a whore."

"Ha, good one," I countered. "I'm not paid enough to face down jailers who don't like me so I can visit with people who don't belong here."

I only got stony silence for that one. "So who are you getting loaded with?" I continued.

"I didn't get loaded."

"You blew point one nine. You were loaded. How'd you get the bump on your head?" More silence. "Let's see . . . you've got Miyanashatawit cousins in ESP, Westside, Southside, LVNs, right, even DVKs. I see that name all over the place."

No response.

"Surenos, F13, Lower Valley Locos, who else? Whose bitch are you, Tessa?" I'm way too old for gangster rap but kids find it so irksome; they'll start talking just to shut me up. Still nothing from Tessa, however.

"Oh never mind," I sighed with mock impatience. I pulled out a package of Hostess Twinkies, the ultimate tool for youth interrogation.

"Here." I held the package forward. I could see her trying to peer through a small hole in the blanket without letting me see.

"I don't want any."

"OK, gangbanger. I know you're hungry. Have something to eat." I held the Twinkie package at the tip of my fingers with both hands. A hand finally crept slowly from beneath the blanket and took them into her private shelter.

"Just because I'm eating these, doesn't mean I'm going to tell you shit."

"It's a gift. Indian way. No expectations," I said but knew differently. I could hear the package being opened beneath the blanket.

"If Tork finds out you brought me these, he'll lock you up."

"I doubt it. He can't lock up white people here." Tork wouldn't want me in his jail.

"It's against jail rules. It's contraband."

"You might hold a Twinkie to his head and scare him into letting you go."

No laugh. "Tork bounces people off locker doors," she said, eating while she talked.

"Impressive for a man of his size. So . . . not to change the subject but why are you in here?"

"I told you I'm not talking about it." She dropped the blanket to her shoulders. Her forehead was swollen and bruised and she looked dirty. She sat there, her mouth filled with an entire Twinkie, chewing, staring blankly into space. I'd seen many kids in this jail falling under the Twinkie trance.

I started to get up. "OK. I'll ask your grandpa."

"Fuck that." She moved the mouthful aside, "You don't talk to my grandpa."

I sat back down. "I've got news for you—you signed a release when we first met. I talk to him if I feel I need to."

Her Twinkie chewing stopped and she struggled to raise her voice behind it. "I never signed anything and, if I did, I take it back. I don't release you." She continued chewing.

"Oh, very interesting, so you want to cancel your release when you're putting yourself in danger. I don't roll that way—I'm not waiting until you're tweaking full-time and on the run."

"What's that supposed to mean?" She knew exactly what I meant so I didn't answer. I paused and looked around. Grey floor and yellow walls the color of puke, already terribly depressing before you put depressed people in it. No wonder kids tried to hang themselves in this place.

"Fine. I'll talk," she relented.

"Tell me why you're here."

"I got drunk."

"With who?"

"Whom. You don't know how to speak English. And none of your business."

"Tell me or I'm leaving." I made to get up again.

"Tiller and James."

"Who are they?"

"James is my cousin. Tiller is my uncle. They live in Medicine Valley."

"Oh, Tiller, I remember him, the football guy from Wapato. He was good until he got mixed up with East Side Pirus and tweak. Right?" She shifted away, second Twinkie in hand as I spoke. "I thought you told me you wouldn't be caught dead in that shit. Now you're hanging with tweakers. Are Tiller and James your connection?"

"That's stupid. I hardly ever been around them."

"Probably got to know them through Parker Heslah."

This surprised her. "How would you even know Parker Heslah? He'd never talk to anybody like you."

I know most kids around here. "Is he still tagging 'Native Blood' on all the viaducts?" She gaped at me for a second, a little crème filling on the corner of her lip. I didn't seem so dumb now. "Does your grandpa know about your new crew?"

"You're so stupid! I don't have a crew. I told him the truth—I don't really know them."

"I'm sure he knows better," I said skeptically. "Geez, Tessa, so you were out drinking and tweaking with Parker and East Siders. Great."

"That's bullshit. I don't tweak," she flared.

"Let's have Rena take you over to the clinic and run your blood right now." A subtle look of fear broke her tough demeanor then resolved into defensive anger. She couldn't detect the bluff—any methamphetamine she used was already through her system—yet her momentary anxiety was my own little drug test. I had little doubt she'd used meth now. "We need to talk to Arnold and get you out of that shit right now."

At this, she swung her head and spit the remainder of her Twinkie onto the floor next to my feet.

"Fuck that!"

"Nice, Tessa. You really need to work on your language. Tork can mop that up. Your grandpa's got to know what's going on. Do you talk to him or do I?" I got up.

"No. He doesn't need to know!" She leaned her head back to look me in the eye murderously. "Don't expect me to ever talk to you again if you talk to him." It was the only card she had left.

"I'd feel sorry about that—we've been working hard together. But don't expect me to sit by and watch you screw your life up tweaking and getting loaded. I don't want your grandpa or your sisters dealing with another funeral and I'm not having your death on my hands."

"Hah. I'm not going to die."

"Last words of a tweaker. Tessa, do what's right and talk to your grandpa. I won't do it if you will."

"No." Her arms crossed and she never looked up again.

"Yeah. OK." I put my jacket on. "You let me know if you change your mind. I'm going back to the clinic. You can have them call me if you want." I

glanced down at her, immobilized and tiny in the chair. "I'll even help you talk to him, Tessa. But if I don't hear back from you in a couple of hours, I'm going to ask Rena to help me set up a meeting with him myself."

"God, I fucking hate you. I don't know why I told them to call you. I'll never talk to you again."

"OK."

At this point, she jumped out of her chair, shot past me, tugged the door open, and shouted, "Take me back and lock me up!"

Tork appeared, gratified at my apparent incompetence.

"Sure," he reassured, "Not into talking to the doctor today, huh?" He nodded with an expression of feigned compassion. "You know, you don't have to, if you don't want. Just let me know." A helpful guy, he glanced back at me smiling. I grinned back at him. We were pals forever.

I caught Gail, one of the night officers, as she walked by the door a few seconds later. I partnered with her rambunctious little sister, Cissy, a couple years ago and she now has her GED and is studying at the community college.

"Can you keep an eye on Tessa? I don't think she's suicidal but she's a cutter. Just keep an eye and let me know if anything comes up. Are you here later?"

"Sure. I'm here until midnight." She nodded as I walked out.

Tork was back in his bull pen, muscular and uniformed, mace and baton hanging at his side, and shaking his head as I strolled up to sign out, leafing through a book called "Vehicle Extraction, Suspect Pacification, and Handcuffing Manual." He disapproved of me, which really broke my heart.

"Um . . . somebody seems to have spit a goober on your floor back there," I nodded casually toward the white, mushy Twinkie mound on the floor, just visible in the other room. His eyes met mine again as I opened the steel door and left.

It wasn't the right thing to do, I admit.

I walked back with yet another cheap no-brand smoke dangling from my mouth, number three or four. Our clinic looks like a military bunker with its low, contemporary architecture. It's landscaped so the lawn rises up to meet the building ledges on the Fort Road side, as though it's partially built into the ground. We even have people working inside wearing military uniforms. The sign near the street reads "United States Public Health Service, Indian Health

Service, Yakama Comprehensive Health Care Center.” It’s a federal government facility, neither Yakama nor Indian, a compulsory provision of the Treaty of 1855.

Nobody gets asked their Indian name when they check in. The clinic clock runs on federal, not Indian time; we’re not open late or on weekends. If you’re sick, take time off, if you’re lucky enough to have a job on a rez with eighty percent unemployment. That doesn’t mean people aren’t working in ways that aren’t counted—like fishing, hunting, root and berry gathering, making jewelry, off-the-books farm and ranch labor, hustling something, or running tobacco, weed, or crank.

In our clinic lobby, children run loose, elders struggle with walkers, sick people doze, caretakers and others whisper. Everybody’s waiting to learn ‘what’s wrong,’ waiting for diagnoses and recommendations for surgery, chemo, insulin, antibiotics, nutrients, anti-anxiety or anti-depressant pills, x-rays, health education, counseling, hearing evaluations, optometric exams, or physical therapy. I don’t fit in although IHS pays my bills, and I’m partially responsible for that.

We’d never even been to Washington state before and didn’t even know what it looked like. Neither Ruthie nor I had ever heard of Yakima (the city) or the Yakama people (as they spell their name in the treaty) when I was offered this job during the second phone interview. Being hired over the phone should have told me something. After moving from Oklahoma on the federal government’s dime, we bought a small ranch house on South 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in the city, situated in Upper Valley. Ruthie got a job with Yakima School District. Yakama reservation itself is in Lower Valley, south of Union Gap, just one of the many boundary lines I cross on any given work day.

My first day on the job, I noticed how being a Commissioned Corps officer or white got you an office with a window, being Indian did not. I was the only apparent exception to the rule—the new psychologist had been relegated to the ‘Indian side’ of the hall. I opened my new office door using keys the personnel guy signed out to me and gazed at a totally empty office. I mean there weren’t even chairs or a desk. I waited around expectantly—but no one brought me any furniture. I walked back to personnel and learned the key man went to an all-day training. My hiring manager was out sick. So I had no place to sit except for the little waiting area by Deborah, the mental health department receptionist. I worked on a massive packet of governmental ‘new employee’ paperwork until she casually mentioned I’d displaced a Yakama co-worker from the space she’d been using for nine years. There’d been no advance notice of my arrival; she had

to move all her stuff out the day before I started. And there wasn't time to locate and deliver any furniture.

I felt awkward about taking over somebody's office space, especially 'on the Indian side.' So I stopped by the refugee's new cubicle, where she sat on the floor unpacking boxes into a space that couldn't possibly contain her things. I introduced myself and apologized for what had happened. She was cordial and minimized the whole situation—"no big deal at all—you have to have a door that closes." I knew there was more than that—but neither of us felt comfortable delving further into the situation.

Eventually, Jim, the custodian, rolled up to reception pushing a desk on a dolly, saw me, and said, "Hey, this is for you."

"Great, I need chairs too."

He shrugged and didn't respond, huffing and puffing the desk into position after I unlocked the door. He rolled back out and down the hall without another word.

I started unpacking boxes of books I'd brought in from my car in the afternoon. Ruthie would rather not have my technical books cluttering our limited shelving space. Displayed at work, she joked, they're another coat of varnish on my thin professional veneer. I can look up the effects of untreated diabetes on cognition and emotion, unusual facets of alcohol-induced dementia, or electrolyte imbalances and sensitivities in the elderly. I understand what I'm reading, others might not, which reassures me I'm relevant and needed. I felt kind of stupid lining the books up on the floor against the wall. I kept my door open while I did so; several folks walking by glanced inside. A man and woman saw me hanging my framed diplomas on the wall but kept moving, the guy said "hello" in a deep and formal tone as he passed. She said nothing.

I had lunch alone sitting on top of my desk my first day. A nearby door opened at one point and I stepped around the corner in anticipation. A small Latino woman walked up to reception and whispered something to Deborah. She turned, smiled close-lipped at me as I started to move in her direction, went back into her office, and closed the door. I read names on doors, thinking I might bring about an impromptu encounter. I paused in front of the door of the Latina's office. What kind of name is Dominia, I wondered. Next was Leo, another dominant name. Deborah saw me perusing and waved me over.

I leaned over her counter and she whispered to me:

"You haven't been exactly welcomed, but try not to be offended. Your new colleagues are not thrilled about the creation of your position. They really

don't want you here so don't expect much. Try not to take it personal. Other people are glad you're here." She winked.

I found coffee in the clinic kitchen and also noticed two comfortable chairs and a small table. Here, at least, I could truly sit down. I might even be noticed. A family practice nurse in military uniform strolled in.

"Welcome to IHS," she said, somewhat bemused, as though she already knew a welcome hadn't been forthcoming.

"Thanks," I said. "My name's Ret Barlow."

"Dr. Barlow," she nodded. "Cheryl Lynn, FRNP, Army Reserve," she shook my hand firmly. Her eyes gleamed. She reached back and opened the door, peering out to see if anyone was coming, then she spoke quietly, "Geez, at least they could give you furniture."

She pointed to the chair and the table. "Take them . . . don't make a big announcement about it. Take them." She grinned at her subterfuge. I pushed and pulled the furniture down the hall and into my office by myself. No one stopped me or said anything.

My first day at Yakama Indian Health Clinic, I displaced an Indian woman from the space she'd called home on the Indian side of the hall, pushing her into a much smaller, boxed-in space. Then, I stole community property in order to make my claim habitable.

I figured this sort of thing had happened here before.

*Walak'ikláama* was the first Yakama word I ever learned. I picked it up from the first native elder I ever met here, Elisi. She sounded it out and then asked me to repeat it, which I did poorly. She then explained the word literally means 'a person who ties another up in bondage.' It's the Yakama word for police.

"We were free!" Elisi explained as she paused to sip the cup of water I brought her. As she spoke, she lowered pouted eyes to survey my books, still lying on the floor three weeks after my arrival. No bookshelf yet. They sat there for nearly six months, actually.

"We were free . . . and we didn't have any need for police. That's the first thing you need to understand in coming here."

Her eyes swept my room. "Why would we need them? We looked closely after our young. No youngster would ever think to bring shame on his family or community. We saw to that. We had no need at all for police. Police came with the white people. They were very strange and frightening to our people. They

tied you up, they imprisoned you; they locked you up — this was a torture for us because we had always been free. It is one thing when the police are part of your society. Can you imagine what that was like for our ancestors who never had anything like them?”

“It must have been hard,” I said.

“Yes. That’s why I am asking you to explain to me what a psychologist does. Are you some sort of *walak’ikláama*?” she asked as she peered at me. I sensed she might be a sort of community emissary.

“No, Elisi, I am not *walak’ikláama*,” I struggled to repeat. “At least, that’s not something I would ever want to be to people here.”

“Good” she responded, and then succinctly: “I expect you will refuse the request to do competency evaluations over at the BIA office when my nephew calls you.”

“I’m sorry?”

“My nephew was asked by his supervisor to call you after you started here and ask you to evaluate a variety of Indian people for the BIA. They want you to evaluate their competency to make appropriate decisions regarding their own money and land allotments. If you truly mean what you say, I expect you’d refuse.” Her momentary stare carried intensity.

“I’m not interested in that kind of work . . .”

“Time will tell,” she answered as she got up to leave. Our entire first encounter lasted no more than five minutes.

The call came about an hour later from a soft-spoken young man wondering if I might help determine whether an elderly Yakama man, a “known alcoholic,” was competent enough to reasonably refuse access to his land for construction of a cell phone tower. His relatives were very interested in seeing it built and thought he must be demented in refusing the money offered by the company.

I politely declined to be involved.

“Well, we’ll just have to find someone else,” he answered.

Tessa Miyanashatawit wasn’t going to talk with her grandfather Arnold with me or without me, Rena’s husky voice distortedly announced over my voicemail. I never thought she would. She apparently had to be cuffed again after throwing a tray. Rena said it might help in Children’s Court if I’d drive out and visit with him.

White Swan is a straight shot twenty miles from the clinic out Fort Road, past Laterals A, B, C, Harrah Road, and the delicious smell of huge spearmint fields. After that, it's mostly sage, scrub, and range until you pass the Head Start, the old government housing, and the rodeo grounds. If you're still not quite sure, you're already there when you hit the combined high school and middle-school athletic fields.

Cougar Den, the Laundromat, and a gas station with a convenience store are toward the right. Totus housing project is up the road. St. Mary's Catholic Church has been around since before the treaty was signed and Wilbur United Methodist and the post office are nearby. Dilapidated barnwood buildings with broken windows were stores fifty years ago; now they lean over, nearly picked cleaned of paint by the wind. Small frame houses are scattered along dirt roads. When you don't have much, getting rid of a 1984 Ford Impala, a broken washing machine, or an old tractor costs money, and you might be able to pull some parts off to fix something else.

Two gutted deer hung from a tree branch next to a shack covered with a blue tarpaulin and an old man laboriously pulled himself from beneath a rusted-out pickup truck. There's no playground, no community center, no movie theater, no parks. Kids were running down the street and throwing small stones at each other, spotting my car as I slowed down and waved. I usually wave at kids. A couple of small stones popped off my fender as a little boy about seven or so waved back.

I pulled in next to the 'White Swan Station' or annex, an IHS-owned building next door to Cougar Den. Rena said Arnold would meet me there instead of at Cougar Den. Nonetheless, I hoped to pick up a double bacon cheeseburger and a diet Coke later. Marta works dispatch with a couple of EMTs, and I called ahead to use the tiny office next to her. I didn't recognize Arnold's beat-up F-150 in the annex lot as Rena had described it. Speaking of the devil, however, Parker Heslah was sitting in a rusty Corolla two spaces down from me. His long black hair was stuffed under a reversed Steelers cap and his jeans were ripped. His feet were only half hidden under the steering column; he had on a nicked-up pair of steel-toed Caterpillars. He looked asleep. I guessed this was a ruse and ignored the cue. I leaned over his open passenger window and peered in.

*"Shix pawchway. What's up?"*

*"Just chillin', what's up wit you, doc?"* His eyes were half-mast.

"I've got some business here." I said, nodding toward the annex. "How's your sis?"

Florence swallowed a bottle of tricyclic antidepressants last year provided by an IHS nurse only a few months after her first overdose. Just trying to help, I guess. I did her psych eval at bedside at Toppenish Community Hospital and saw a different Parker there, stone cold sober, eyes rimmed red, up all night having held vigil. They grew up together, moving around from relative to relative. No mom or dad. Liberty Willis at Totus Park eventually took them in, having already had some of their younger step-brothers and sisters. She wasn't a bad person but, let's face it, she was probably more interested in the food and clothing allowance from the state.

"Flo's good. She's down to Chemawa."

That's Chemawa Boarding School in Salem, Oregon, where Indian kids once drilled daily at 5 am in uniform before being forcibly reeducated as cobblers, woodworkers, cooks, and maids, civilized servants to white people. I'd been down there myself doing evals next door at Western Oregon IHS Clinic for a week. Not long ago, a Yakama girl from a revered family suffocated in her own vomit on the Chemawa jail cell floor. She came in from partying, dead drunk, and the staff locked her up but forgot about her. Her death brought back the many generations when bereft Indian boarding school kids died under so many mysterious circumstances. Chemawa—a modern Indian boarding school, still had its old jail and cemetery.

"Ah. Maybe that's a good thing," I wondered aloud, not knowing whether it was or not.

"Yeah. She's out of trouble."

"And you?"

"Me? You know me, doc." His eyes remained sleepy and his smile was closed. I began to suspect he was totally ripped. "I'm just chillaxin'."

"Yeah," I said doubtfully, "I'm not sure how, Parker. In fact, I heard you got shot at."

"Where'd you hear that?"

"People. I heard you might have been in a bad place at a bad time and somebody shot at you." I paused to see if he'd bite. There wasn't a flicker of concern on his face.

"Me? I'm not into that kind of shit no more. I'm grown since you known me."

In the talking circle Sherry and I used to hold weekly before funding cuts, I caught him off-guard one day by suggesting he didn't know how to properly make a fist. I stood up alongside him holding out his best punch, critiquing it and explaining the perils of bending your wrist upward or downward, and how the first two knuckles are more supported than the latter two, less likely to break on impact. It may seem counterproductive to teach a gangbanger to punch—yet here we were still communicating two years later.

"I remember you saying you were going to set an example for those little ones." That's six younger step-siblings living with him and Liberty in the oversized trailer at Totus. "So I won't believe the rumors I hear, then."

"Huh? Rumors?" He stretched his arms out across the steering wheel, his right hand momentarily gripping the wheel. I could still make out 'THUG,' the home-made tattoo he'd made across his knuckles when he was around 16.

"Yeah. Like a rumor you've been crewing young ones, stealing guns, and selling tweak for some Mexican mafia dudes in Tri-Cities."

His eyes became steely but he maintained his easy drawl. "Sounds like a movie when you say it, doc. You know, people are crazy 'round here. They got nothing to do so they're always gossiping."

"Tribal cops too? They gossip? I didn't know that."

"Oh yeah, doc. They're the worse. they're like the *ayat*, the women. I'm gainfully employed. I been clean." He smirked at my expression. "I know you don't believe me."

"What gave you that idea?" He shook his head but he didn't respond. "Well, say 'hi' to your sis and Liberty for me."

"Later, doc," he said, as his head eased back onto the headrest with an opiated stare and I turned and walked away.

Marta looked up and her dimples jumped, revealing imperfect, overcrowded teeth. She was wearing a "Yakama Firejumper" sweatshirt.

"Hey, Marta."

"Hi, Barlow. Did you see Parker out there?"

"Yeah, he looked stoned."

"Probably. He likes to pull in there." She set her book down and sat up. "He just sits there, sometimes for hours. I think he sleeps there some nights. Leon goes out every now and then and tells him to move along."

"He says he's working."

"He was up to the mill for a while part-time. But he spiked a urine test and blew his probation, so they laid him off. Arnold Miyanashatawit called for

you. He can't make it. Can't get the truck started. He wanted to know if you'd drive out."

"I'm not sure how to get there."

"His place is back of Williams' longhouse." A call came in over the radio and she eased her palm onto a large button on an old dispatcher microphone. Although the technology is thirty years old, most cell phones don't work very well out here.

"37, service code 4, 31-A, possible 32."

"37, 10-4. Do you need an escort, Ricky?" she responded.

"Negative, Marta."

"Stay in touch." Sirens blared in the background of the radio and also in the distance outside. She turned back to me, nonplussed.

"You know the two-track by Genkel's logging mill? You take that and veer right. That's outside Mathis' orchard where Tessa's been running to."

"Why are you telling me that?"

"Because you're going to see Arnold," she smiled again. "If you're going to see Arnold, it's about Tessa. She's been moving sideways around here for the last year or so." She acted like this was obvious. Anyone at the communication hub of a small town is a good person to know. "She was sitting right out there in Parker's car with him just the other day," she pointed for emphasis, like I must have noticed when I stopped by last week, even though I was only in town for an hour.

"Oh . . . Tiller and James too?"

"You know about those wannabes? Tiller's just released from county and not playing with Parker right now that I've seen. But he's not far away. James and him come as a package. No, just Tessa and Parker. They like to kiss it up out there. That's her man."

"She's only fifteen to his what? Nineteen, twenty?"

"Parker likes young ones who look up to him. Anyway, Frank Mathis was over to the community meeting and said he sees Tiller, Parker or those little East Side Piru kids crewing around in back of his place again, he's going to shoot first and ask questions later."

"Mathis. I've heard that name."

"His family used to be big on Tribal Council years back. He's just a big old bear, I think, getting older, tired of that bullshit. He don't like these kids gangbanging around together. Nobody from among our leaders gives a shit about these kids anymore."

"Marta, does Arnold know about Parker and Tessa hooking up?"

"I imagine he does." She opened a book titled "Dispatch Log" and jotted some notes down, then looked up. "I heard his call come out to the sheriff a few nights ago. The county dispatcher talked to the deputy who comes out here to take his naps. I forget his name. He said they don't have jurisdiction over kids running on the rez. Not that they told Arnold that. So I guess he called tribal police eventually and got her locked up somehow."

I thanked her and said goodbye, noting Parker looked sound asleep as I got back in my car.

I'd been out in that direction before but not nearly so far. Brush and tumbleweeds and small conifers spread out on either side of me. The gravel became heavy with larger stone—the cheap stuff. Every now and then, old cars or trucks passed by going the opposite direction. We waved at each other even though I didn't recognize the drivers. That's rural good manners. I savored my bacon cheeseburger in several two-handed bites, driving with my knees for a few seconds, continuing through the expanse before seeing anything more than rocky, washed-out, green scrub and sage behind miles of range fence.

A forest harvest was being brought into the mill to process, load on rail, and send across the southern Cascades. Stacks of timber were being organized by yellow loaders and haulers; log trucks were parked at various spots. The train is on the job 24-7 with no crossing guard, just a stop sign—you have to watch carefully. I patched out as I crossed the tracks. A couple of guys looked up from near a loader and one waved but I didn't recognize him. People see my 1989 Grand Fury and think I live around here. My shocks are very soft; she bounced up and down as I shot off into the foothills. I saw them laughing in the mirror.

I was across the Mathis property line for a few minutes and a little nervous. A hawk dove down and hoisted some unfortunate rodent as I rolled my window open. I guess I wanted to hear my own demise if Frank Mathis shot me. Arnold Miyanashatawi's place proved really hard to find. I made the decision to turn off one two-track onto another with the usual sense I couldn't possibly be going in the right direction.

Then the sky cleared completely to a brilliant blue and the sun started bearing down unseasonably hard. I passed a few ancient wrecked cars in front of a hand-built house and small barn, drove through an open gate, and immediately heard a barking din rushing toward me. Three ferocious rez dogs came crashing along, announcing my unfamiliarity. Rez dogs are deeply

interbred, typically smart, and often semi-feral. I got their message—I could be chewed up and spit out easily. I opened the door and got out trying to maintain absolute disregard while my heart pounded out of my chest.

The leader growled deeply and bared his teeth, which were big. Doberman, Shepherd, and Rottweiler were all in those teeth. I didn't like them much. The lab moved in closer but scampered back when I put my hand out for him to sniff. The third, small, stocky, and ugly, pushed between these two toward me. This was how I was going to die, and it didn't seem fair.

"It's alright boys; it's alright," I whispered, keeping my trembling hand held out. "We're all going to get along." Growler moved forward toward my hand and took a brief sniff. Then he turned and walked away as though I'd immediately lost all interest. The others jumped over one another and followed him. I'd passed muster.

I had a smudge kit in the back of the car but was unsure of Arnold's beliefs. We would be talking about his worries about Tessa and I usually have a smudge available even if the practice isn't truly a Yakama tradition. Many clients I knew liked to burn sage and cedar on their rocks at the start of sweat lodge. Some disapproved of the 'imported' Plains Indian way of smudging, others liked to bless themselves with sage smoke periodically while we talked. As I'd been taught, I kept the northern California sage I bought at Wapato Pawn and Trade inside a large abalone shell and wrapped in red cloth. It's considered medicine. I had a box of kitchen matches too. I didn't want to drop this stuff and break the shell but forgot to bring a paper bag along. I gathered everything up in my arms.

Late March was impossibly early to have bees hovering around in the back of my car but there they were. You never see yellow jackets like this until June or July, I thought. I didn't like them scampering across my rear window and tried to pull out my things quickly. How is this even possible? I pondered the variety of local ecosystems for an instant before a truly critical thought occurred—I might get stung. A hot poker skewered me left of my navel, then again to the right, and then a prolonged, searing pierce above both made me yelp loudly and obscenely. I jumped back, holding the shell and sage loose in either hand with the red cloth dangling. Bounding backwards, I almost fell, regained my balance and swerved sideways. Many yellow jackets started moving toward me.

Where the hell were they all coming from? Were the ones who stung me still inside my shirt? Was this a swarm? Frantically, I pushed my shell and sage toward my chest, committed to not dropping them, holding them with my elbow

and desperately trying to unbutton, even rip the buttons off with the other hand. This was one of my good shirts too. The bees pursued me as I turned rapid circles, fighting to get my goddamned shirt off. A yellow jacket peered back at me from inside the shirt and eased out as I got a button loose. He flew at my face and I almost dropped everything. Were these killer bees? I have an unreasonable fear of bees, built upon an early masculinity lesson spent cleaning out a live nest in daylight with a garden hose.

Somehow, I recalled having one remaining cheap smoke from Yakamart in my shirt pocket. I'd seen on TV how beekeepers used smoke to calm bees. With painful and continuous movement, I managed to get the smoke lit with a kitchen match while continuing to twirl in circles still grasping my smudge kit. I began blowing smoke all around me while I revolved. Fewer and fewer bees came at me and I had just begun to sense a modicum of control and safety.

"I should have warned you about parking near the bee people, doc. They're out very early this year." Arnold said conversationally from a seat on the front porch only about fifteen feet from me. "You parked where we toss the salmon guts for them to eat. I guess you made 'em kind of mad coming so near. Lucky it's still cool and it rained or there'd be more of them."

"Yeah." I stopped spinning. "Ouch. I got stung."

"Sorry about that too, doc," he said, mostly unmoved, "those yellow jackets bite too. I think that's worse." His tone said real men got stung, noted it, and got over it. They certainly didn't go on complaining about it.

"Yeah. I think I got bit too."

"Oh, that's bad. Yeah, that's no good. Well, come on up and have a seat."

I set the smudge kit down on one chair while painfully easing myself onto the other. It felt like hot needles.

"How are you?" I struggled to be sociable.

He looked at the smudge kit. "Fine as frog hair, thanks. Appreciate you bringing that along too—but we don't practice that way."

"Oh, OK. I wasn't sure." I looked down at my heroically-defended smudge kit.

"I know some of the younger ones like it. We're Indian Shakers. Not New England Shakers like your white tourists always think of when they hear that name. On occasion, we cross over to the Waashat way at the longhouse, and I like to go sweat with my brother or cousins from time to time. My grandfather was a longhouse drummer and my cousins are still. But we're Shakers here and have no need for a smudge."

"OK. I hope I didn't offend. I just knew you're dealing with a lot with your granddaughter."

"I appreciate that. Yes, it would be good to get some healing for Tessa. She's going a wrong direction and don't listen to me anymore. Like her mom sometimes."

"I'm making efforts to build a bridge to her."

"And I told her it's good for her to talk with you, doctor. She used to come to our Shaker meetings when she was littler. I been trying to get her to one again sometime."

He pulled out a package of Pall Malls and lit one up, staring straight ahead toward the field. He paused, glanced at me, and saw the curious look on my face. "Excuse me for smoking, doc. It's not the Shaker way as you may've heard. But I gave up drinking fifteen years ago and this is one of my few remaining vices."

"No problem."

Bees continued circling at the edge of the porch. To my dismay, one of them began investigating my foot, and I became preoccupied with the idea he might go up my pant leg. My belly felt like hot oil was dripping on it and I lifted my shirt a little to have a look. Three bright welts were forming and swelling.

"Got you good, didn't they?" He noted, sounding very serious as he leaned forward, his face turned slightly away. I could see he was doing his best to control his amusement.

"Yeah, Arnold . . . it does hurt, you know?"

"You're man enough, though, doctor," then unable to hold on any longer, he observed, "Of course the *twate*, the medicine people out this way, they get a little jealous if you IHS docs come around. Hardly ever happens we get one of you from the clinic come all this way. And I don't doubt they put a little something out to get you dancing around and blowing smoke in the four directions. Ha ha!" His laugh burst into a guffaw.

Less amused, I only grunted, "Can I bum a smoke from you, Arnold?"

"Sure, sure." He continued to struggle to suppress himself.

We sat and smoked together for a few minutes. Then, the screen door opened and a very small girl, no more than five or six years old, emerged carrying a big tray with a huge Mason jar filled with powdered lemonade.

"That's very good, Cecelia." Arnold reached down by his chair and picked up his own smaller Mason jar, half-filled.

"Thank you, Cecelia," I said as I quickly reached out when her little hands began to struggle to keep their grip on the tray without dumping the lemonade in my lap. "You're a good helper. Thank you very much."

Her torn t-shirt was pink with 'Barbie' written across it in sparkles and she was walking barefoot in the chilly shade. She said nothing, didn't even look at me and, as soon as her task was done, set the tray down on the floor by the door so she could run over to her grandfather's knee and hug it with all her might. She then burrowed her face into his shirt.

"Be a good girl and go on inside. *Pusha's* going to talk to this man for a bit about your big sister. I'll be back inside in a little while." She didn't move. "Go on now." He gently pushed her away.

"She hasn't been close in to many white people, except just for a minute or two at the IHS or the Head Start. Never here, to home," he said. Cecelia picked up the tray, struggled over to the screen door, and raced inside without giving me as much as a sidelong glance.

We sat and smoked some more. I blew smoke toward the bee at my foot and he drifted back. I could defend myself. A northern mockingbird's song blended with the kip of the western kingbird, filling our silence. It was getting late in the afternoon and the distant clouds were turning slightly purple. Arnold will speak when he's ready, I thought. Through sometimes painful social correction, I'd learned to avoid speaking to elders until spoken to.

"Thanks for making your way out here, doc," he said after several minutes. "I hear you're still visiting with Tessa over to the school."

"I do my best to sit with her once a week or so."

"That's good. Easier for her than having to walk over to the IHS. But she's not going to be in school for a while." He stamped his butt out on the porch with his boot heel.

"Yeah, she's got in some hot water."

"This is the first time I've had to do something like this," he continued, gazing across the scrub, "Lock her up. And I hated doing it . . . I know some other people make a habit of putting their children in that jail when they feel disrespected. But Tessa and I only had trouble like this over the past year or so . . ." He glanced my way for a moment and then stared back toward the old orchard. "Since her grandma died, I been needing her help with the little ones. But I want her to do her schooling. I don't keep her home, even though at times I wish I could with these children . . . it was Georgina's wish that they would all get their education. Tessa loved her a lot. Her *ella* was her only connection to

being treated like a real child. Georgina couldn't do as much as she wanted to with Tina and her drug addiction in the way but she always tried to let the girls know they were loved . . ."

He pulled on his cigarette, "Tessa's come through a lot with her mother locked up and grandma passing on. Still, I can't abide that kind of disrespect. I have to stop her from going around with those boys." He glimpsed me again for a moment, his cheeks wrinkled and his brows smoothed by the wind, grey hair thinning and pulled tight into two braids tied together beneath his chin. "Indian Indian" some might say.

He lit another smoke. "That young Heslah boy and Tiller and James from the other side of the Miyanashatawits—they aren't from good stock. You know Frank Mathis?"

"Not really. I know people say he doesn't want folks in his orchard."

"He's gotten kind of private since his wife died three years ago. Shot one of my dogs last year after I couldn't stop him digging his garden and pissing and shitting all around there."

"He did?"

"He did. I think he felt bad about it. Stupid dog anyway—I tried to keep him tied. Frank come and laid him all gentle right inside that gate to where you came through," he pointed toward the two-track, "The others come up and sniff their buddy and got the message. They don't run over his way, been a lot friendlier to our guests too since that happened." He smiled toward me knowingly. "Even though he'd never hurt Tess, he might not make her out at night. He's warned everybody, including those boys and especially Tiller, who he don't like. Tess and I were waiting for food at Cougar Den some time back. Frank walked right up to Tiller, standing in front of us, and told him 'Stay off my land and I'm not saying anything more about it.' Tiller tried to stare him down, which didn't work. But I could tell right then Tessa knew more about Tiller and his friends than I wanted her too. I told her, stay away from them and Frank. It ain't about his trees. It's about what these kids get up to. He don't want no part of it. His wife was killed by a drunk driver, you know."

A tussle broke out inside with several shouts and two pre-teen girls came running out. Eloise bolted through the door chased by Emily, holding a training bra. I think I had the order right, although I had only seen them twice and might have confused who was who.

"I have it! I have it!" Eloise exclaimed. She dodged back and forth around Arnold's pickup as Emily shouted "Give it!" Eloise shot toward the outhouse

only to be tackled and pinned by Emily, who quickly pulled the bra free of her grasp and then began slapping her face.

"Excuse me," Arnold said quietly to me as he jumped off the porch.

"That's enough!" Emily looked up at his raised voice. "Get off her now! Can you see we got company?"

At this, Emily jumped up and Eloise struggled to her feet.

"What is wrong here?" Arnold continued. Both girls looked down and said nothing. "Come on over and apologize to the doctor here."

"Really, Arnold, that's not necessary," I pleaded.

Both girls ambled over with their heads down. "*Tm'āākni . . .*" he said. "*Tm'āākni*. You two know better than to act foolish in front of a white man." I suddenly felt very awkward.

"Sorry . . ." said Emily.

"Sorry . . ." repeated Eloise.

"It's quite alright," I answered and they glanced at their *pusha*.

He looked at them for a few moments. "Go back inside and clean up the kitchen. Tend your little sister and brothers . . ." Without speaking, they made their way back through the screen door. Neither of them looked at me during the entire interaction.

I felt embarrassed and uncertain how to behave. "Arnold, it really was OK. They seemed to be just playing." He nodded. I had to say more. "I'm sorry my white skin would make you feel you or your kids have to behave some certain way."

He sat back down and leaned back, staring straight ahead. "I appreciate it, doctor. You didn't grow up around here, I suppose. When I was little, my mama would fly into a rage anytime white people came near our home. She'd run around shouting and yelling, picking up and tossing things in the closet or the cupboard, convinced if there was a mess, we'd be taken away. That was considered the Christian thing to do, you know—save the Indian children from their mothers." He flicked his cigarette. "Truth is, I usually don't like white people much." He squinted at me, "Present company excepted, of course."

"I guess I'm glad to be an exception."

"Another cig?" he responded somewhat apologetically.

"Sure." I wasn't doing my health or his any favors chain-smoking with him but I knew we were bonding a little. After we lit up, he stood up at his chair and stretched. "I'm sore from hoisting salmon at the fishery last two days. Temp work down to Goldendale . . . I come home tired and told Tessa I didn't want her

going out. Then little Ce Ce come over and woke me in my chair telling me Tess climbed out the bedroom window. This was about 11 pm. I thought they'd all gone to bed. I followed her to the other side of Mathis' land. His spread is pretty big."

"How could you find her?"

"You don't hunt, do you doc?" I shrugged. "She'd only just left five minutes before. People make more noise than animals. I just walked out, listened, walked further, listened more, heard a little, and followed." He chuckled to himself and looked me over some more. "Not easy to slip an old Marine. She had a flashlight with her and I spotted her easy once I caught her sound. I crept along by her until she got to their little campfire. These orchard orphans sometimes build fires that are kind of hard to see until you get to a certain angle along the tree line. They hadn't a clue I was anywhere near."

"How'd she take it when you came up on her?"

"I didn't go about it that way. I watched them instead—she snuggling with that Heslah boy. Then they started drinking. I didn't even do anything then. I wanted to see how far this went, since she won't tell me anything."

"Were they smoking anything?"

"I saw something get lit and passed around a couple of times."

"I'm worried about methamphetamine."

"Me too."

"You were already thinking about it, then."

"Doctor," he seemed to change the subject, "do you know there's a white man at the BIA office thinks we're hard of hearing?" I shook my head, pretty sure I'd pushed things too much somehow. "He's in check disbursement. I had to deal with him a couple of times trying to get a little loan money against my Indian Trust fund, which was all froze up since that Blackfoot girl caught on to the feds. This man talks as quiet as a mouse to his white coworkers but shouts or talks very slowly to all the Indians coming by his window. Makes you wonder who's simple-minded." He paused to take a puff. "I got no problem hearing and I got no problem seeing or I'd never caught up with her. And I'm old but I still know what happens on our land with our kids . . . including the poison these Mexican gangs been bringing their way."

"I didn't mean to suggest . . ."

"We haven't been able to do anything to stop it . . ." he ignored my interruption. "So I sat down and had a smoke. After a while, Tessa got up and started circling back. I made sure I got here first. I know this land like my own

hand. I was sitting here on the front porch in the dark before she tried to sneak past toward the window. I called 'Aye, Tessa.' She jumped like a rabbit then started acting like she had a devil in her."

"She might have been high . . ."

"Couldn't tell but I feared so. She was very jumpy, that's true. I told her 'come sit with me' and she said 'no' and I said 'do as I say' and that's when she used the 'f' word with me and walked back off into the dark. I was afraid I might lay hold of her if I followed. I grabbed the phone to try the sheriff instead of tribal because they're so slow. I could smell alcohol when she was near. I thought 'I can't stop her or reason with her.' Never reason with a drunk, I always say and I should know . . . As soon as I hung up the phone, she come slamming back in through the front door calling me a worthless bastard in my own home. Never heard her like that. Devil's whispering, I thought."

He paused for breath and took a drag instead. This was followed by a long fit of coughing. "I can't have the little ones listening to that kind of talk. They were all up and out of bed. She banged along into her room, and I just left her there. She kicked the door and made a big dent in it which scared hell out of Ce Ce. Of course, the deputy never showed. So then I called tribal and they eventually come out. The Whitcomb boy, Charlie Whitcomb, the newer officer with them; he's from a good family. I told him what happened and he went and got her out of her room."

"She cooperated?"

"She was more like a little bobcat. I thought he was going to have to mace her or something. She ran at him screaming and he threw her down on the bedroom floor, wrestling with her until she was finally cuffed up. It was an awful thing for the little ones to see, standing in the hallway. I told them her spirit was sick and don't believe their sister would really act that way."

"I'm sorry to say I'm pretty sure she smoked meth from what you're describing. So he cuffed her and took her in."

"I'm supposed to go down to Children's Court tomorrow. Whitcomb said he wasn't going to make a big deal out of the resisting, as he called it. But he did a breath test with her, and that's going to count for the judge."

"She's been struggling with bad memories."

"Jack Brie. Cowboy Jack Brie." He already knew.

"Is he considered a cowboy?" I asked.

He waved his hand. "He ain't no cowboy. He's a pumped-up *pashtin*, a white man into hustling Indian women. Nothing good about him . . . and I

consider him a dangerous person. I met him a couple of times when Tessa's mother was with him. I haven't seen him since she went to prison. I heard he headed north after getting off without a mark," he hesitated and eyed me, ". . . and I never do want to see him." He paused again as if contemplating sharing a confidence with me. "You know, doctor, there's the written law but there's also the unwritten law, part of this land from time immemorial, as people like to say. We never had assaults or predation in our families before the white people came. Something like that happened on a rare occasion, families would look the other way and that person wouldn't see sunrise. But since then, we had to keep our women, especially our young women, out of the way all the time."

"How do you mean?"

"We couldn't let our girls walk the roads around here. Still don't let them do so at night, even these days; it isn't safe. There's white men rape and kill our women to this day." He leaned back through the screen door. "Emmy? Help get Ce Ce and Franklin on their chores; I got to get them up early tomorrow and want them done early." He shifted towards me with a ponderous gaze. "You probably don't know how, back during Ft. Simcoe days, they whored our women just to humiliate our men. That was the brutality back then, only the beginning of it, really. White people run around complaining about drunks on our reservation but they brought us the alcohol. They also brought us the rape and the destruction," he flicked the glowing end of his cigarette off on the porch post, "I have white blood, you know. My own great grandmother was raped by a white soldier."

"I'm sorry such things happened. It makes me feel ashamed. "

He laughed out loud. "Wasn't your grandpa, doc!"

"No but I . . ." and here the awkwardness took over again and I stopped.

"Look, doctor," he said, "I can see you're conscientious. I would seldom ever talk to a white man about such things but in your case, it's different." He shook his head. "You're helping my granddaughter. You're respectful. I feel a need to teach you. I'll bet, in your dealings with families, that happens to you from time to time. My advice is to just listen. White people need to listen because they forget easy. Indian people, we have longer memories. I'm just explaining as to why I have a different feeling for white people like Jack Brie than a white man like yourself." He thumbed back toward inside his house. "In fact, I heard you got some native blood. Is that true?"

"I'm part Cherokee."

He shook his head. "You either ain't or you're all Cherokee. You got the bloodline, your blood runs red; why don't you own it?" He smiled. "Anyway, think about that. You're always welcome here. But for Jack Brie, I keep a Marlin 30 odd 6 with a scope on it loaded for bear sitting on the top shelf in that front room. I had that with me many years. Maybe I took it traveling to South Dakota in the 70s, I forget." I thought I had his drift and turned wonderingly at what he said, but his expression stopped me from asking more. "My grandkids know better than to go anywhere near it."

We sat out there as the sun went lower. He offered me dinner and, although I knew he was poor, I knew declining would have been impolite. So I ate two hot dogs while Ce Ce, Franklin, and Samuel spied on me from the hallway near the kitchen or even came as close as the edge of the old sofa I was sitting on, refusing to respond to a word I said except to giggle and run away. Arnold sat with me and told me his greatest wish for Tessa—to get her brushed off at an Indian Shaker meeting. He gave me a little baggie of salmon jerky for the drive home. Yes, he thought it a good idea for her to continue talking with me. He told me I should continue to try talking with her even if she was angry with me.

"The old people say if she don't bring out what's on her heart with someone she trusts, she's going to get sicker and sicker."

"Not sure she trusts me much now."

He pondered that for a moment. "My granddaughter will grow past that, doctor."

I reached for the door of my car with some trepidation but the sun was pretty low in the sky and the bee people had settled for the evening. I caught a whiff of spoiled salmon on the breeze, started the engine, and drove off. Dusk held long as a huge full moon floated just above the horizon. In what remained of daylight, I drove by Fort Simcoe State Park, not exactly a major attraction. I walked around and smoked the Pall Mall Arnold offered me as I was leaving. I could have refused that one, but I didn't.

The park is where the original fort was once located. It's not standing anymore. The governor's house still imposes over a wide meadow, and its shadows stretched toward me. If you were poor and Indian, you'd approach across this front lawn, diminished, reduced to begging—a 'fort Indian.' The white man's civilization glared back from the ornate, Swiss Gothic facade of this house, built tall and stout to purposely contrast with your destitution and poverty. It was like an old plantation home, just a different architecture—a place

of safety and privilege for white people, a mirror of domination over the Yakama and their children. I strolled past three old mountain howitzers—1850 prairie-carriage 12-pounders, originals from the days of the Yakama Wars. I considered how they still bear down on these families, even though it's been a very long time since they had to be kept loaded.

In the fading light, I could see pretty far—twenty-five miles, all Yakama land. I turned around 360 degrees to take in the grounds. Fort Simcoe Boarding School once stood to the right and, behind me, the jailhouse and stockade. A stretch of stockade fence behind the governor's house ended in a small, elevated guard station. Uncooperative men and women were pilloried in front of the fort and bullwhipped by the governor himself; captive men were tied up, forced to kneel with guns to their heads and watch as white soldiers compelled their women to provide sexual favors to them, while a rope swung in the wind from the nearby oak tree where numerous Yakama warriors were hung.

The place had come up in conversation with Arnold and I already knew where I was heading. There's no roof or much left to identify it, only a few stacked-up logs beneath imported elms. Indian children, beaten with sticks, were locked inside this stockade by the school matrons and their helpers. I stood inside and my mind turned to Tessa sitting on the floor at tribal jail. Yakama people learned how to lock up their children here. I'd never noticed the latrine Arnold mentioned but found it now; its outline was barely visible on the rear of the old dirt-floor, a trench where little Indian boys and girls squatted before each other, no longer able to hold it. Some slept overnight in this squalor, having spoken their native language deliberately, willing to be locked up rather than force-fed the white man's ways. I stared at the cracks between the remaining timbers on the ground. No one bothered to mortar them; the cold winds ripped over the children huddling together. Yakama children would choose to be in here instead of inside the warmth of the school. These fields were converted by white people into a picnic park, a 'heritage park' as the state of Washington called it, right here on sovereign Yakama land. I'd never seen a single Indian person out here. There is a chain ring anchored in the ground near the back wall of the stockade.

"Someday, it will be gone," I told Arnold. I found it the first time I came out to the park.

Now I found it again, bent down, and pulled hard. I told him I did so from time to time and he stared at me with a puzzled expression. He didn't say anything one way or another.

"Don't want to be *walak'ikláama*," I blurted out in explanation. My diction wasn't so bad, but it still took him a moment. Then his brows lifted and his broken, stained teeth opened into a knowing smile.

But he said nothing more.

[end Chapter One]