

THE HUNT FOR HOME

I-i: April 1876. The moon shines across the Black Hills. Today, a small tribe of Lakota-Sioux are bivouacked along the marshy bank of the Little Big Horn River. Tendrils of smoke pull from between tepee lodge poles. THUNDER-IN-ONE-EYE-RAIN-IN-THE-OTHER, a majestic sixteen-year-old-half-breed Indian, bathes alone, hidden from the rest of the camp. YELLOW HAIR, a young blonde officer from the 7th U.S. Cavalry, arrives on horseback. He disrobes and slips into the river. He surprises STORM EYES by erupting from the water beside her. He stifles her open-mouthed scream with his mouth and they kiss deeply. He breaks their kiss and tells her he's re-assigned. She divulges her pregnancy. He orders her to kill the child upon its birth: there can be no living proof of their affair. STORM EYES races from the river and lurches from the water as shots ring out in the distance. The slumbering Lakota camp scrambles to the defense. YELLOW HAIR leaps from the water onto the opposite bank, pulls on his uniform, climbs his mount, and shoots STORM EYES. Shot in the thigh, she falls back into the river. The sun breaks the horizon and a renegade band of Cheyenne horse thieves race down the mountain to raid the camp. YELLOW HAIR, unable to wait for visual proof of her death, rides away. STORM EYES appears from the water and watches the murder of her tribe from the river. STORM EYES is discovered and taken prisoner by the Cheyenne. She is spared because of the magic in her half-breed eyes: one blue as rain, the other dark as thunder... together a fury that can't be tamed.

I-ii: STORM EYES is brought into the Cheyenne camp and stripped. Her body is painted with vermilion by the elder women in an ancient Cheyenne Menses ritual. She is wrapped in white linen. Although she is pregnant, her abdominal pout is nominal and un-noticed. The rest of the tribe surrounds STORM EYES as they accept the "magical virgin" into their family. STORM EYES is presented to the chief for marriage. She doesn't need a man. She grabs a spear and violently thrusts it through the chief's foot. She steals a Mustang and escapes into the black night still wrapped in white and dyed bright red.

I-iii: A U.S. government/United tribal conference is in full blossom. YELLOW HAIR, now a general in the 7th Cavalry, is passed the peace pipe by the same Cheyenne leader STORM EYES maimed. To celebrate their new treaty, the chief calls for the Sun Dance. The best warrior from each tribe shall compete for the honor of bravest tribe... as each warrior steps forward... Cu Brulé, Hunkpapa, Ojibwa, Cree, Blackfoot, Teton, Minneconjoux, Cherokee, Santee... a MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR materializes from a curtain of smoke ringing the camp. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR is dressed in a war bonnet and double-stitched beaded war regalia thefted from each participating tribe. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR'S body is painted in gradations of red. The eyes are masked with eagle feathers. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR silently strides over to YELLOW HAIR and begins a seductive, slow dance of aggression. YELLOW HAIR rises with recognition in his eyes and takes the MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR'S hand.

I-iii (Cont'd): They dance together in a private mix of Montana Waltz and Indian War dance. They dance as if they have been partners since birth. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR stops and stares deeply into YELLOW HAIR's eyes. YELLOW HAIR slowly reaches out to remove the feathers covering the MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR'S eyes. Silence. The instant his hand touches the mask, the MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR spits angrily into his face and pushes his arm away. A moment. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR stands proud and defiant against YELLOW HAIR. Another moment. YELLOW HAIR reaches for his pistol. The Indians stand ready with cocked bows and arrows. STORM EYES turns to leave when YELLOW HAIR offers a challenge: this warrior must compete in the Sun Dance to prove bravery against all enemies... not just against a Cavalry officer. STORM EYES stops... caught between Indian expectation and self-revelation. STORM EYES takes a reluctant position by the Sun Dance proving pole. The drums sound and the contest begins! Every warrior, clad only in a loincloth, pierces each breast with a wooden stake tethered to the pole by buffalo gut. Each warrior is hoisted ten feet off the ground. The last warrior to fall wins. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR, still in full war attire, plunges the stakes deep into each full breast and signals the MEDICINE MAN start the hoist. The Sun Dance continues as each brave, except for the MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR, falls. The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR is lowered from the pole in victory. All the Indian tribes are curiously silent. The Cheyenne chief asks which tribe claims this great warrior. The drums cease. When the MEDICINE MAN pulls the bloody stakes from the MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR'S breast, he lets out a whoop! The MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR is a woman! The Cheyenne chief pulls off the MYSTERIOUS WARRIOR'S mask, revealing one blue eye and one dark eye: STORM EYES! The Cheyenne chief claims her as his runaway wife. STORM EYES, weak and hungry, manages to stand and assert her right to live with the Sioux. The Cheyenne chief says that she cannot be trusted: she has the Wasicu (the White man) in one eye, and betrayal darker than a raven in the other. STORM EYES proves her Sioux blood by revealing the Scared Circle of Lakota Sunbursts tattooed around her right wrist: physical proof she's a Sioux. The Oglala-Sioux chief declares her one of his own missing tears and accepts her back into the tribe. A MESSENGER rides in with news that YELLOW HAIR and his 7th Cavalry are attacking. Over 7,000 Indians are here for the treaty: no one believes the report. YELLOW HAIR is suddenly visible driving hard along the Northern horizon. BENTEEN pinches in like a crab from the Southwest. RENO attempts an Easterly puncture of the middle. The warriors rush to the defense. YELLOW HAIR and his men enter the camp with blazing rifles. In the eye of this tempest, STORM EYES crumples to the earth in pain. The MEDICINE MAN carries her to the safety of the riverbank. She gives birth to an infant son with hair whiter than the sun. The MEDICINE MAN tells STORM EYES to leave immediately or she and her half-breed-bastard child will be killed for betraying the will of the Cheyenne and the kindness of the Oglala-Sioux: she gave birth to the enemy! Through tears of anger, STORM EYES takes a fistful of ashes from an extinct campfire and harshly rubs them into her son's hair, disguising him by coloring the fine strands black like hers. In the distance, the Cheyennes scalp YELLOW HAIR and shoot the rest of the 7th Cavalry. STORM EYES crosses the river with her child. As if by magic, the vermillion body paint that decorated and shrouded her, vaults from her maimed flesh, instantly staining the river blood red.

II-i: STORM EYES races along the mountain ridge overlooking the Little Big Horn massacre. It's night now, and the only evidence of the massacre are brush fires circling the skirmish lines struck between the Cavalry and the Indians. From STORM EYES's POV, the entire prairie appears to be a fiery circle. STORM EYES offers a bruised breast to her braying child. He is unable to suckle: her nipple is a scab. How will she feed him? Should she turn herself over to the Cavalry and risk being killed? Or does she face Oglala wrath and certain death? She decides the child has a better chance of passing as a White than as an Indian because of his light skin and blonde hair. She will leave him with the Cavalry. Before she surrenders him, she first plucks a porcupine quill from her shirt strip, dips the sharp end into red pigment, and tattoos a Lakota Sunburst on her child's tiny wrist, guaranteeing that even though he will live with the Wasicu, he will be forever claimed in the blood and branded on the flesh as a proud son of the Sioux nation. As she finishes the tattoo and kisses the Sunburst on his wrist, a scream for help penetrates the silent night. BLACK COYOTE enters carrying his wife and infant child. BLACK COYOTE, who is deaf, signs frantically to STORM EYES for help. BLACK COYOTE'S wife is hysterical as she tries to stop the flow of blood from her baby's stomach. BLACK COYOTE pleads for STORM EYES to help his wife give up the dead child. STORM EYES begs his wife to breast feed her child since she cannot. The wife's hysteria calms, and she exchanges her dead child for STORM EYES' kicking, hungry baby. BLACK COYOTE builds a funeral pyre for his child and lights the body afire. As STORM EYES cleanses the wife's wounds and yearningly watches her child suckle at another mother's breast... scores of wounded and disfigured Indian outcasts seep from the cover of the trees and help each other recover from the massacre: a fire is built, food is shared and a makeshift tepee is constructed out of foliage. The warriors are thirsty, but there is no fresh water. STORM EYES, the only one strong enough to act, performs the Rain Dance. As if by magic, raindrops tear from the clouds to quench the dying. Rejuvenated, the Indians wash and drink and dance in the healing downpour. Then, BLACK COYOTE's wife shrieks! She pulls STORM EYES's baby from her nipple and holds out the miracle child... his hair has turned from black to white in the rain conjured up by STORM EYES! Mother and child, the wife declares, are a gift from the gods... STORM EYES is the brightness of hope, the boy is warmth from the sun... together they are a fire raging in the dark! The others join in celebrating the miracle and name STORM EYES' child, FIRE-AT-NIGHT. STORM EYES declares that a new tribe must be created: "We are no longer Sioux or Cheyenne or Cherokee" she shouts, "We are now the Tankata-Caska! (the United Exiles)" BLACK COYOTE proclaims that STORM EYES will lead them: she has quenched the dying and gave birth to hope for a new breed of people. The rest of the clan holler their approval and select STORM EYES'S new chieftain name: Aitan-can-Wacinta (Leader of the Forgotten). STORM EYES is ceremoniously blessed and decorated with each person's most cherished belonging. As their chief, she will be forever reminded of her new responsibility by the tokens of respect entrusted to her keeping. The tribe dances feverishly with the fresh spirit of a tomorrow reborn.

II-ii: The corpses of the 7th Cavalry litter the blood-soaked soil of the Little Big Horn basin. YELLOW HAIR, scalped and distended, rots in the sun. His disgraced regiment flag flutters loudly in the morning breeze. Birds peck at the moldering eyes of the dead soldiers. THREE STARS CROOK and his expedition ride in slowly to survey the extent of the Cavalry's biggest historical loss of life. The dead are mutilated beyond recognition. As his men unceremoniously bury the dead in a mass grave, THREE STARS CROOK, with tears in his bloodshot eyes, vows to avenge the massacre. He will hunt down every wild Mustang, kill every buffalo, and annihilate any living proof that Redskins ever walked the earth beneath his boots.

II-iii: STORM EYES is faced with a dilemma: more outcasts arrive daily to join her tribe because of the systematic Cavalry eradication than she can feed. There is a call to arms by a new outcast, HAWK DOG, an ex-Cavalry Crow scout branded with a "D" on his hip for "deserter." HAWK DOG tells STORM EYES that a final stand must be made now, even if it means the end of the Indian race. STORM EYES refuses to fight: what's the point? Their buffalo are dead. Their land belongs to gold miners. She will keep the tribe alive by surrendering. The Wasicu will let them live in peace on a Reservation. Her wounded tribe can heal there, feed the starving children, then sign a new treaty to keep a section of the Black Hills sacred. STORM EYES vows that the Tankata-Caska spirit shall live beyond tomorrow by sacrificing the body today. HAWK DOG and a few other dissenters rip their gift of belonging from STORM EYES'S buffalo robe, grab their rifles and leave. STORM EYES leads the remainder of her people in the GHOST DANCE to make their bodies impervious to Wasicu bullets.

II-iv: STORM EYES leads her tribe into the Cheyenne River Reservation. The camp appears deserted at first until the discovery of fresh Cheyenne women and children corpses. BLACK COYOTE checks the bodies: still warm... murderers left distinctive hoof marks... metal shoes... Cavalry horseshoes. STORM EYES realizes that they were murdered in their sleep. As STORM EYES orders her people to retreat, the Reservations are a Wasicu trick, STORM EYES is met by YELLOW HAIR'S old 7th Cavalry regiment.. she can smell fresh gunpowder on them. BLACK COYOTE, with his prized Winchester rifle cocked above his head, angrily pleads with STORM EYES to fight. THREE STARS CROOK orders them to drop their rifles. STORM EYES tells THREE STARS CROOK that BLACK COYOTE is deaf and cannot hear his warning. THREE STARS CROOK motions to his sharpshooter, and BLACK COYOTE is shot dead. The regiment circles the small band of Tankata-Caska. The Hotchkiss guns are loaded and aimed. STORM EYES holds her child above her head. She tells THREE STARS CROOK that they came in peace. Their mission was to only return this lost White child to its mother. THREE STARS CROOK demands the child. STORM EYES will turn him over, unharmed, only if her tribe is allowed to leave. She alone will remain. HAWK DOG, the Crow deserter, rides up from the rear flank. HAWK DOG reveals to THREE STARS CROOK that the child is Indian, not White. STORM EYES argues that the child is a half-breed! He is the son of YELLOW HAIR! HAWK DOG laughs and tells THREE STARS CROOK to look at the Sunburst tattoo on the child's arm: proof that the boy is 100% Lakota-Sioux. THREE STARS CROOK nods once sharply.

II-iv (Cont'd): STORM EYES silently pulls a knife from her thigh scabbard, and flings the blade deeply into HAWK DOG'S throat, killing him. THREE STARS CROOK tips his felt slouch hat to STORM EYES, turns his mount around and breaches the rules of engagement by giving the signal to open fire. The 7th Cavalry takes its revenge and murders each of STORM EYES'S without remorse... even killing their own troops caught in the hissing cross-fire. Snowflakes descend slowly from a slate-grey sky. The 7th Cavalry files out in formation. Silence. The forgotten Tankata-Caska have become their own frozen headstones. Then, as if by magic, FIRE-AT-NIGHT whimpers. STORM EYES raises her head to the sound of her child. STORM EYES struggles for a breath and pulls herself close to him. She places her hand on his head and divulges that together they will ride free on the back of the wind. They are forever Lakota-Sioux and the fire in their blood cannot be tamed. She smiles at him. She withdraws her hand from his blonde hair, leaving behind a smear of her warm blood... coloring the strands of his fine hair red. She fights against the pain in her body to insert a pinky finger in FIRE-AT-NIGHT'S mouth. As the snow continues to fall, and FIRE-AT-NIGHT's cries are silenced, STORM EYES realizes that her hunt for home has ended. She has forever been home; for home is anywhere the river escapes to the sea, home is anywhere the breeze lifts an eagle's wing in flight, home is anywhere a fire burns the night warm. Smiling and finally at peace... STORM EYES dies. Her finger slips from FIRE-AT-NIGHT's mouth. FIRE-AT-NIGHT'S angry wail echoes, cold and disenchanting, across the vacant Black Hills. FIRE-AT-NIGHT... the last proud Sioux warrior... is a shining beacon in an ever darkening world.