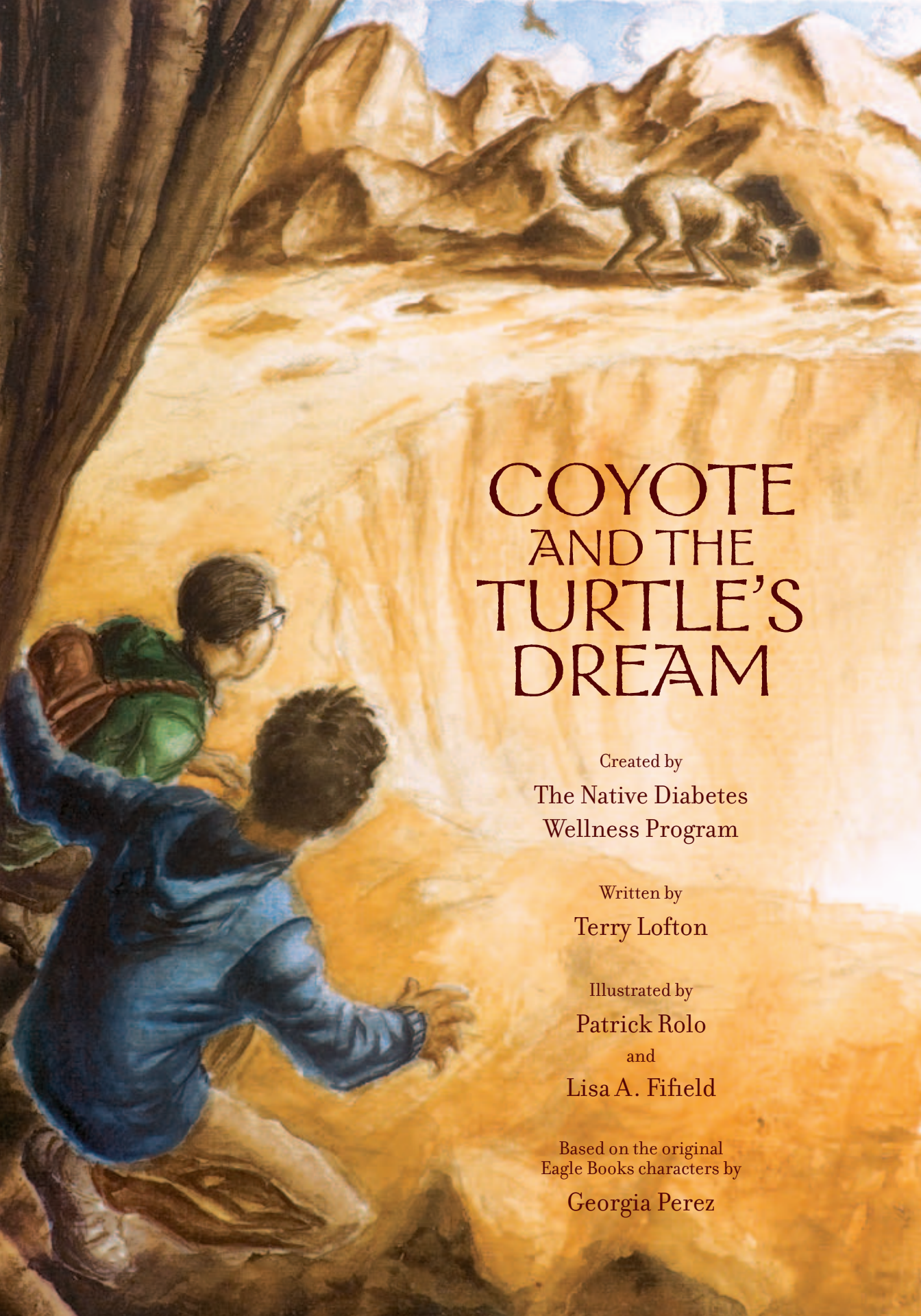


COYOTE AND THE TURTLE'S DREAM

Created by

The Native Diabetes Wellness Program

Written by

Terry Lofton

Illustrated by

Patrick Rolo

and

Lisa A. Fifield

Based on the original Eagle Books characters by

Georgia Perez

The Eagle Books

In the original Eagle Book series, a young boy, Rain that Dances, discovers an unhappy eagle. Mr. Eagle is tearful because many of the people in the community are developing a disease called type 2 diabetes. Rain the Dances invites his friends Thunder Cloud, Little Hummingbird, and Simon, to hear what the eagle has to say about staying healthy. The great bird assures the children that people can help to prevent type 2 diabetes by eating nourishing foods, being active, and following the traditions of their ancestors.

Coyote and the Turtle's Dream

In the original Eagle Books stories, Rain and his friends were about six years old. However, in this new story, *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream*, they are entering the seventh grade. Once again, the eagle gives a warning to Rain, but this time it is about the disappearance of water on their reservation. Never forgetting the health messages taught to them by the eagle, the kids embark on a mystery/adventure to solve a riddle about ancient fossils that will restore the water's flow.

For more information about diabetes and diabetes prevention, go to the National Diabetes Education Program's website, http://ndep.nih.gov. Under "Find Publications for Me," select the drop down box for "Age" and find "Teens and Children." Posted are tips for teens with diabetes, and tips for how kids can lower their risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

Praise for *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream*

For Native people, the eagle is a messenger representing vision, courage, healing, and strength. In *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream*, the eagle brings this wisdom and a new challenge to Rain that Dances and his friends that is full of mystery, adventure, and ways young people can help their communities prevent type 2 diabetes.

– **Buford Rolin**
Chairman, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Alabama
Chairman, Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee

Native children reading this book will find a real connect with their lives. They will be especially encouraged by Rain that Dances, a young boy who has made type 2 diabetes prevention a way of life. I can see this book developing into a series that can have a great impact on young readers.

– **Dr. Judy Goforth Parker**
Chickasaw Nation, Oklahoma
Former Member, Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee

Coyote and the Turtle's Dream is a book of adventure, guidance, humor, and compelling warmth. This book illuminates Native American culture, diabetes prevention, and the beauty of storytelling. It will inspire the imagination of young readers while addressing type 2 diabetes.

– **Dr. Carolee Dodge Francis**
Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.
Executive Director,
American Indian Research and Education Center
University of Nevada Las Vegas

Praise for *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream*

I re-read this book several times, so I wouldn't miss any of the important messages: ways to promote diabetes wellness, protecting sacred sites, passing on the Tribe's life ways through grandmother's stories, the kids' longing to learn these life ways, and the courage and loyalty of friends.

– **Lorelei DeCora, RN**
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska (Ho-Chunk)
Health Educator/Diabetes Talking Circles Facilitator
Former Alternate, Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee

Humans probably first passed wisdom from one generation to the next via storytelling. *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream* continues this ancient practice, seamlessly blending Native American and western knowledge to help all who choose to listen to what Sky Heart, the eagle, has to say to prevent diabetes.

– **Dr. Lawrence Barker**
Associate Director for Science
Division of Diabetes Translation
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

I'm so excited for this new book! Kids who have read the original series and are now older can read this amazing story. I love how it refers to the original Eagle Books and reinforces the importance of healthy choices. It's a great read!

– **Caitlin Baker**
Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma
Competitive American Indians Turning Lifestyles into
New Beginnings (CAITLINB)

About Diabetes

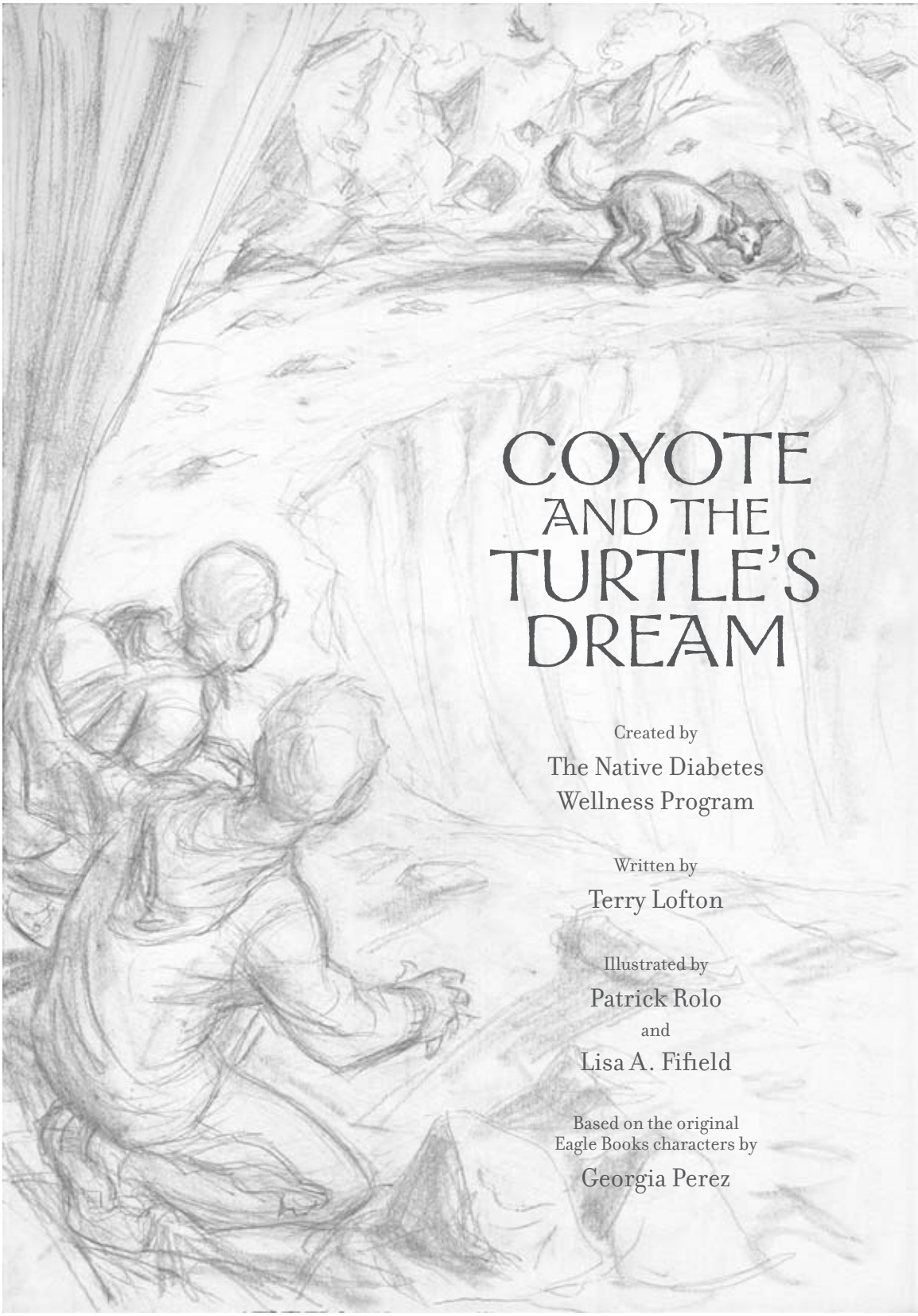
Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose levels are above normal. Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose, or sugar, for our bodies to use for energy. The pancreas, an organ that lies near the stomach, makes a hormone called insulin to help glucose get into the cells of our bodies. When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use its own insulin as well as it should. This causes sugar to build up in your blood.

Type 1 diabetes, which was previously called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) or juvenile-onset diabetes, may account for about 5% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes. The causes of type 1 diabetes appear to be much different than those for type 2 diabetes, though the exact mechanisms for developing both diseases are unknown. The appearance of type 1 diabetes is suspected to follow exposure to an "environmental trigger," such as an unidentified virus, stimulating an immune attack against the beta cells of the pancreas (that produce insulin) in some genetically predisposed people. Researchers are making progress in identifying the exact genetics and "triggers" that predispose some individuals to develop type 1 diabetes, but prevention remains elusive.

Type 2 diabetes, which was previously called non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset diabetes, may account for about 90% to 95% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes. A number of studies have shown that regular physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), a major federally funded study of 3,234 people at high risk for diabetes, showed that people can delay and possibly prevent the disease by losing a small amount of weight (5 to 7 percent of total body weight) through 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week and healthier eating.

For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Diabetes Public Health Resource at http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/consumer/index.htm

This book is lovingly dedicated to the memory of
Dr. Janette Carter (1952-2001).



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Coyote and the Turtle's Dream

Created by the Native Diabetes Wellness Program

Written by Terry Lofton

Illustrated by Patrick Rolo and Lisa A. Fifield

Graphic Design by Linda Beatty

Based on the original Eagle Books characters by
Georgia Perez

Eagle Books

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Division of Diabetes Translation
Native Diabetes Wellness Program

Indian Health Service
Division of Diabetes Treatment
and Prevention

Preface

In 2005, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Native Diabetes Wellness Program introduced elementary school children in American Indian/Alaska Native communities to the Eagle Books. These stories, beautifully written by Georgia Perez, quickly became popular and loved by both national and international audiences.

If you haven't read the four original Eagle Books and would like to request free copies for your family, just call the phone number listed on the inside back cover (or go to our website http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/projects/diabetes-wellness.htm). We think you'll find the illustrations by Patrick Rolo and Lisa Fifield amazing—especially the drawings of the eagle. Plus, you can see what the characters in this book looked like when they were little children.

We decided to develop another book about Rain that Dances (Rain or RD to his friends), Thunder Cloud (Boomer), Little Hummingbird (Bird) and Simon to reveal how talking with an eagle (not to mention a rabbit and a coyote) changed their lives in intriguing ways as they grew up. One thing you'll learn is that by the time they are 12 years old, Rain and his friends know a lot about diabetes. In fact, in this story, they have a new friend, Arianna, who has type 1 diabetes. She teaches the children how eating healthy and being active can help people with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. You will also learn how our young heroes have been helping people in their community eat healthy traditional foods. Oh, did we mention that the eagle comes back and

involves the kids in an adventure about a ring of fossil poachers who are stealing the bones of an ancient turtle? Well, you'll just have to read the story to find out how they use science and a great-grandmother's knowledge to restore harmony to their community.

To help you picture the scenes in the book, Patrick Rolo and Lisa Fifield, our illustrators, have created some dramatic color pages. We also think the map will help you "get around" the reservation and the town of Thunder Rock.

And if there are some words or terms you don't understand, just look them up in the glossary at the back of the book. On behalf of the author, Terry Lofton, and the people of the Native Diabetes Wellness Program, we hope that you enjoy Coyote and the Turtle's Dream.

As Arianna, our new character, would say, "May the insulin be with you!"

Acknowledgements

The Native Diabetes Wellness Program (Wellness Program) would like to thank the following people who played a role in the development of *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream.*

First, we want to recognize the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee (TLDC) for its unfailing support of the Eagle Books project from the beginning. We would also like to recognize Buford Rolin, Chairman of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Chair of the TLDC and Vice Chair of the National Indian Health Board (NIHB); Judy Goforth Parker, Chickasaw Nation Health System, former TLDC member; and H. Sally Smith, NIHB board member and Alaska Area Representative, former TLDC member, who all saw the potential for storytelling as a way to reach children with a message of hope. As a result of their support, children who read the Eagle Books will learn that healthy foods and physical activity can help people to achieve and promote health and prevent type 2 diabetes. The TLDC could not have given the Wellness Program a more wonderful task to fulfill or better partners with whom to work.

Many thanks also go to the Indian Health Service's Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention for their continued partnership and friendship. The Tribal Consultation Advisory Committee for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided appreciated support as well.

We want to express deep gratitude to Georgia Perez, the author of the original Eagle Books. Her work as a Community Health Representative for the Nambe Pueblo and her dream of an eagle who brings healing messages encouraged her to

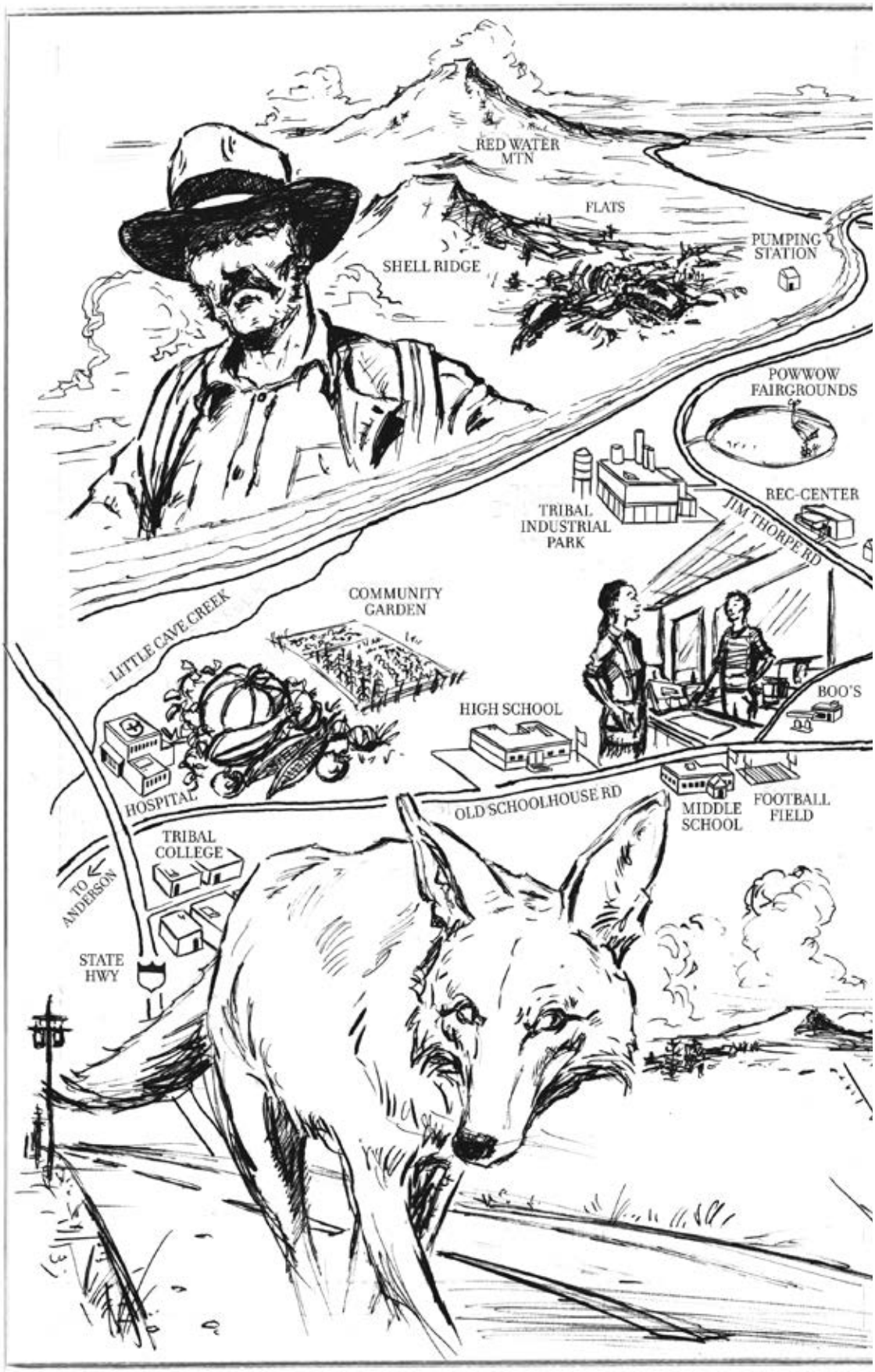
write *Through the Eyes of the Eagle, Knees Lifted High, Plate Full of Color,* and *Tricky Treats.* Now the child characters and animal heroes she created are inspiring more stories about good heath and good friends. We are blessed that the original Eagle Books artists, Patrick Rolo (Bad River Band of Ojibwe Indians) and Lisa Fifield (Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan), are on board as illustrators for this chapter book. With pen and paint, they show Rain that Dances, Thunder Cloud (Boomer), Hummingbird, and Simon as twelve-year-olds.

Reading and reviewing synopses and manuscripts is an important job. Rosalie Carter, mother of the late Dr. Janette Carter, to whom this book is dedicated, read the very first chapters written. She told us we were on the right track and to keep on writing! When we completed the first draft, we were fortunate to have so many people willing to read the whole book and give us feedback. For their perceptive reviews, we would like to thank Dr. Carolee Dodge-Francis (Oneida Nation of Wisconsin), Executive Director of the American Indian Research and Education Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Caitlin Baker (Muscogee [Creek] Nation), founder of Competitive American Indians Turning Lifestyles Into New Beginnings, and Lorelei DeCora (Ho-Chunk), our most valued promoter of Eagle Books Talking Circles, and her grandchildren. We also want to show our appreciation to all the teachers and middle school readers at the Poarch Creek Indian Reservation in Atmore, Alabama, and the Coeur d' Alene Tribal School in Desmet, Idaho. Applause also goes to the speedy middle school

readers from the Winnebago Indian Reservation in Winnebago, Nebraska, and Sioux City, Iowa.

The Wellness Program gives special thanks to the Baros Family for all their insights regarding type 1 diabetes. There is no substitute for the voice of real experience.

Lastly, we acknowledge our great creative partners on the Eagle Books project: Westat, Inc., and Kauffman and Associates, Inc.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FLATS
PUMPING STATION
SHELL RIDGE
POWWOW FAIRGROUNDS
REC-CENTER
TRIBAL INDUSTRIAL PARK
JIM THORPE RD
COMMUNITY GARDEN
LITTLE CAVE CREEK
BOO'S
HIGH SCHOOL
HOSPITAL
OLD SCHOOLHOUSE RD
MIDDLE SCHOOL
FOOTBALL FIELD
TRIBAL COLLEGE
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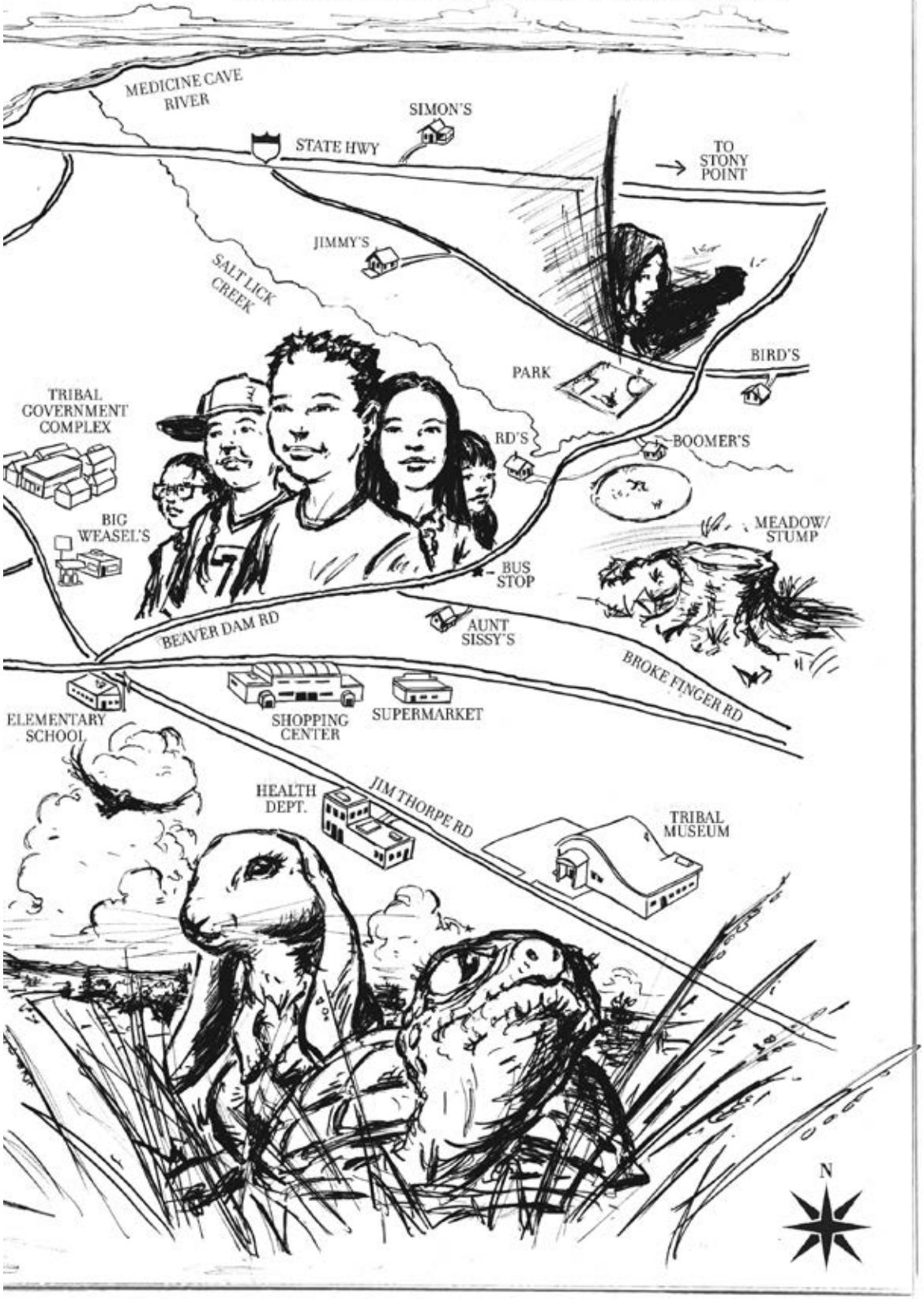
Medicine Cave Indian Reservation



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Chapter 1

Sky Heart twice circled the upturned faces of the rabbit and turtle.

The Animals of Stories

"Thistle …?" The rabbit eyes darted up quickly at the sound of her name, a young dandelion leaf dangling from her mouth. "Thistle …?" Choking down the bitter-tinged leaf, the rabbit whispered, "Who is it?"

The small gray head of a box turtle pushed through a clump of grass, "It's me, Grandmother Turtle."

"Grandmother, what are you doing up here in the high meadow? This time of year you stay down by the creek where it's wet."

The old turtle pushed her stocky little legs into the grass clump and hefted herself forward. Losing her balance, Grandmother pulled her head into her shell and felt herself roll over onto her back. She slowly poked her head out to get her bearings. Gazing up at the underside of the rabbit's chin, Grandmother gasped, "I'm so tired. I've come such a long way."

"Here, don't struggle," said Thistle, as she nosed the shell over until it was upright.

"Thank you, Thistle. Sorry about that. You're right. I would be at the creek if there *was* a creek. Something is drying up the water, and I've come to ask you and Sky Heart for help. I know what the problem is, but I don't know what to do."

"What has happened, Grandmother?"

"I'd rather not say until the eagle comes," she said, looking down.

"Well," Thistle advised, "let's move out into an open spot where he can see us. He's always flying over."

Under usual circumstances, a rabbit and a box turtle would never expose themselves in this way to a bird that hunts small animals. But, these were not common circumstances and these were not common animals. Thistle and Grandmother were and are the animals of stories—those who speak among themselves and call each other by name. They live in their own world but are helpers to the humans who teach their wisdom on long winter nights when people draw close to the fire and the snowy wind howls.

Because she was so old, Grandmother Turtle knew lots of stories, especially the ones about turtles. In her one hundred years, she had helped the people many times and had taught them many lessons. Now, in this place and time, she was ready to do it again.

Within a short time, Thistle and Grandmother saw a shadow pass over their little clearing in the grass. The silhouette of a very large bird shaded the ground, moving from east to west. The short part of its body, the head, led its flight forward, and the long part of its body, the tail, followed behind. If the long part of the body had led its flight, Thistle and Grandmother would have known the bird was a goose or a crane. And they would have ignored it. But this shadow was a large raptor—the eagle—and they were glad to see him.

Sky Heart twice circled the upturned faces of the rabbit and turtle. Then, he folded his wings against his body, descended sharply, and finally spread out his wings to create the drag that brought him to a soft landing on a low branch. He waited quietly for them to speak, not looking directly at the two little animals as that would be disrespectful—and perhaps a little threatening.

"Sky Heart! You're here!" rasped Grandmother as loudly as she could.

The eagle had always liked Grandmother, believing that they were relatives because they both had beaks. He called out a hello to Thistle, and then lowered his head to the little elder. "How can I help you, Grandmother?"

"It's the water, Sky Heart. It's going away!"

The eagle looked to Thistle and confirmed Grandmother's claim. "Yes, it's true. The water is drying up everywhere."

Grandmother stretched out her head to Thistle and to Sky Heart, addressing them both. "My great-great-great-great—oh, so many 'greats' I can't count them—grandmother lies in the bed of an ancient sea that once covered this land right here. She swam that sea for one hundred years and when it was her time, she died peacefully and sank into its sandy bottom. Forever she has dreamed that she still swims in the warm water of that long ago time. But she is not dreaming now."

Thistle drew close to the old turtle and asked gently, "Why Grandmother, what has happened?"

"It's the humans. They are picking her bones apart. I've seen her." A tear formed in the corner of the old reptile's eye and trickled slowly down her leathery face. "But it is more than that. A human, a boy, is hurting, too, and there is great fear. I don't see as much as you Sky Heart, but I feel these things and I know them to be true. Great-grandmother is no longer swimming in her sea. Her harmony is broken and her dream—the water—is vanishing."

The turtle was exhausted after her long speech. She withdrew her head and legs into her portable home and was silent.

The rabbit and eagle looked at each other. Thistle nudged the turtle's back with her nose and asked quietly, "Grandmother, are you all right?"

Her voice echoing from inside her shell, Grandmother

replied, "Yes, don't worry about me—I'm just resting."

The eagle was quiet for a time, then he said, "If the humans are responsible, then only the humans can make the water come back. I will have to go to one who will listen."

"You mean, Rain that Dances?" Thistle asked. The eagle nodded. "Remember, he's older now, and we can't speak directly to him or to his friends," she warned.

"No," he agreed, "only in dreams. And even then we can't speak too plainly." Sky Heart had watched countless children growing up and was always saddened when they became so filled with the things of their world that they no longer saw or heard the things they did when they were very young.

Thistle hopped over to the branch that the eagle grasped in his great talons. She looked up and whispered, "Sky Heart, do you think Coyote could have had anything to do with this? I am an old trickster myself among some people, you know. I am not the magician that Coyote is, but I can recognize his tracks."

"Perhaps. We will find out soon enough," the eagle said. "Look after Grandmother."

With that, the Great Messenger launched himself into the air, flapping his wings and rising upward until he caught a thermal and rode effortlessly on the rising warm air. He flew east, away from the setting sun to the place where he had once unburdened his heavy heart to a small boy and found joy in teaching him the knowledge of his ancestors. Presently, from a great height, he saw what he was looking for—a yellow school bus that trundled down a stony reservation road. He circled and watched Rain that Dances and Thunder Cloud bound

out the bus door. Like boys everywhere, they dawdled, threw pebbles, examined the remains of a dead frog, and laughed their way home—unaware of the eagle's close observation or of the adventure that he would bring.

Chapter 2

"Rain!" Margie shrieked when she saw her big brother.

The Disappearing Water

"Hey, Boomer. Do you ever wonder if the eagle was just a dream?" Rain that Dances had halted on the well-worn path from the bus stop and was looking down the hill to an old stump that was barely visible in the shadows of the late afternoon sun. Boomer didn't look up. He was dribbling an "air" basketball, looking for an opening to make his shot.

"Did you hear what I said?"

Flipping the "ball" off the tip of his fingers, Boomer spun

back to face his best friend, his mouth slightly open in the makings of a smile. "Yeah, RD, I heard ya. We've been over this a million times, man. The eagle, rabbit, and coyote *really* did tell us all that stuff about diabetes." To cut off any further discussion, Boomer proclaimed dramatically in the voice that earned him his name, "Thunder Cloud, the Boomer, says so!"

Ignoring Boomer's proclamation, Rain quietly said, "Sometimes I almost wish it wasn't real." To Boomer's surprised look, he hastily added, "I mean, I just worry we aren't doing enough. I know the projects this summer were really great. Everybody liked Hummingbird's label-reading booth at the grocery store, and the 'everyday' and 'sometime' food stuff we did at Boo's store, but…"

"Lighten up, man. Remember? We're only 12 years old!" Boomer, the affable joker, bounced a knuckle "noogie" on top of Rain's head and ran down the path to the unpaved road that led to his house. Rain, rubbing his head, laughed and followed after, giving Boomer a good elbow block.

"Owww! Who showed you that?"

"Coach Brown," Rain swaggered. "He wants me to try out for the football team. He says I might be a good tailback next year. Hey, can you come over and shoot some baskets later?"

"Yeah, before or after homework?" Boomer asked.

"Since when are you doing homework?"

"Mom says since I got a D in history last year,"

"Then bring your history book and we'll do those questions after we play."

Boomer snapped a salute smart enough for a Marine, and trotted down the road to his house, accompanied by his dog, Bear, who woofed and jumped just as he did every day when his best buddy came home from school.

Rain decided to take the trail to his house along Salt Lick Creek, a small tributary of the Medicine Cave River, where he had fished ever since he first baited a hook. Ambling along, he enjoyed the warmth of the autumn sunlight that played in the few trees overhanging the creek bank. Stopping to see if he could spot a fish jump in his favorite fishing hole, Rain realized that something wasn't right. That's funny, he thought, there's no sound of rushing water. Edging down the slope to the creek's sandy margin, Rain saw that the water was lazily eddying around the rocks and logs in the creek bed, instead of addressing them directly in the gush and splash of full flow. Rain murmured to himself, "I'll have to tell Dad about this."

Rain's house, like many on the Medicine Cave Indian Reservation, was within walking distance of the neighbors. Close enough to borrow a cup of sugar, Roberta, his mom, would say, but not close enough to bother anybody. Mom firmly believed that her kids created more noise than any other children on the planet. Rain guessed she had hollered, "Pipe down!" at least a million times.

One of the noise-makers was his 3-year-old sister, Margie, who was racing her Big Wheel up and down the bumpy concrete walkway that Rain's father had built. Mom said it was a good

thing that Dad worked for the Tribe's business development office — not the road department.

"Rain!" Margie shrieked when she saw her big brother. Dumping the Big Wheel, she ran to greet him, but halfway down the walk, her need to alert everyone got her so excited, she turned and ran back to the house, banging open the front door, and hollering his arrival, "Mommy, Granma… Rain!"

Running to the bedroom that Rain shared with the twins, she broadcasted her brother's imminent appearance, which resulted in an explosion of child racket. Danny and Del, eager to show their hero the picture of themselves in the Tribe's weekly newspaper, burst down the short hallway, pushing to see who could show him first. To overcome the din, Great-grandma Hettie, mostly deaf in both ears, turned up the sound on the TV to "blare."

Before opening the screen door, Rain paused. Peering through the transparent crisscross of tiny wires, he could see his mom lean her head out the kitchen door. "Hey, you guys, pipe down!" Rain liked the predictability. He was home.

Once inside, big brother was instantly surrounded by his admirers. "Look, we're famous!" Danny, grabbing the newspaper from Del, thrust the prize in front of Rain's face. Dumping his backpack on the couch, Rain sat down to admire a photo of the twins, in perfect synchronization, performing in a tiny tots grass dance competition. The caption read: Smokin' Dynamic Duo Wins First Place at Powwow.

"This is great, guys! Cut out the picture and put it up on the corkboard. I'm gonna check out what's for dinner."

Smelling something good, Rain followed his nose to the kitchen where he performed a routine that would have been unusual in most households. He lifted the lids on the pots on the stove and nodded his approval. Then, peering through the oven's glass window, he asked, "What's in the meatloaf, Mom?"

"Bison meat from the co-op, onion, one egg, tomato sauce, pepper, and a sprinkle of salt."

"Okay. Um, the beans look good. You thawed out some of the blackberries we picked."

"Uh-huh," Roberta replied, "I thought some boiled fruit with nuts would be good."

Spying a bag of groceries on the kitchen table, Rain unpacked the bag, examining the food labels. "Mom, here's one that's 52 percent of daily value for salt."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Rain, guess I picked up the wrong can."

"The other stuff looks okay, though." Without being asked, Rain grabbed an armful of canned goods and jammed them, not too neatly, in the cabinet by the sink. Then, he started on the cereal boxes.

Roberta's eyes followed her son's actions. For years now, Rain had been carefully assessing the food that his family ate and how much physical activity they got. She started laughing to herself when she remembered how surprised Gerald, his dad, had been when Rain, only six years old, told him to drop a few pounds or he would get "dunlop"— as in "your stomach done lopped over your belt." Very soberly, he had told his father, "If you don't watch your weight—you might get type 2 diabetes."

That was the first time, but certainly not the last, that Roberta heard Rain talk about type 2 diabetes. She didn't know the origin of his concern about the disease, but he certainly was consistent. Strangely, his best friends were always talking about diabetes, too. In fact, it was information from Web searches the kids had done on diabetes prevention that encouraged Roberta's interest in becoming a community health representative for the Tribe. Her mind wandered to her schedule the next day: a transport to the dialysis clinic, a menu-planning session in the afternoon, and three home visits. Her day would be full.

She started to grab a pencil to jot down a couple of reminders, but the sound of Gerald's pickup truck grinding up the gravel driveway interrupted her planning. He'll be starving and in a bad mood, Roberta thought. Gerald hated Tribal council meetings that went on all day, especially when he was last on the agenda.

"Rain, round up the kids and…" Turning around, a bowl of steaming fresh beans in her hands, Roberta saw that Rain's arm was almost up to his elbow in one of the cereal boxes "Hey, mister, what are you doing?" He smiled contentedly at his mother and crunched a huge wad of granola. "Give me that," she said. Laughing, Rain handed over the cereal and rubbed his stomach, "Mmm, good…" Closing the box flap, she shook her head at her growing boy's appetite. "I'd say you would spoil your dinner, but that would be impossible. Go get Granma. We're eating early tonight."

Hearing Gerald on the back steps, Roberta held open the screen door and he trudged in, carrying an armload of papers and reports. "What's all that?"

"My homework."

"Gerry, you work too hard."

"Yeah, well, tell that to the Bureau of Indian Affairs," he said, kissing her on the cheek.

The children came tumbling in to greet their dad. He picked up Margie and sat down at the table to admire the powwow photo of the twins, now cut out and pasted on a piece of cardboard. Holding Granma by the elbow, Rain accompanied her into the kitchen and helped her sit down. She looked appreciatively at the supper Roberta had prepared and then closed her eyes. The children stopped squirming as Granma began her blessing, the simple thanksgiving that she gave every night for the good food on the table and the well-being of her family. The words, spoken slowly in the family's Native language, entered the neural pathway in Rain's brain that his great-grandmother's songs and prayers had sculpted before he was even six months old. He heard every vowel and consonant that a non-speaker would never hear, and unknown to him, the sounds and meanings that shaped the very contours of his identity and the world as he perceived it.

Rain looked up at the end of Granma's prayer. She was smiling at him. "Come on, boy, let's eat! I don't want to miss the local weather report."

Gerald put Margie in her booster seat and the family followed Granma's lead. They ate quietly for several minutes before Rain interrupted the silence. "Dad, I was down by the creek and it looks like it's stopped up or something."

Gerald put down his fork. He rubbed his forehead and looked at Roberta. The two "worry wrinkles" between his eyes deepening, Gerald answered much more seriously than Rain expected. "The creek's not stopped up, son. We talked about it at the council meeting today. It's all over the rez. The river is running low and some creeks are dry. Some state guys came and told us that the water table has dropped. It's happened so fast and nobody knows why."

"Is the water being taken by someone else?" Roberta asked suspiciously. It wouldn't be the first time that reservation resources had been "legally" appropriated or illegally diverted by powerful public utilities and corporations.

Gerald sighed, "No, it's not that simple. I wish it was. What I'm worried about is the deal we're working with this insulation company… nobody's interested in setting up business in a place with no water."

As the business developer for the Tribe, Gerald had some successes under his belt. Competition from outsourcing to other countries was a huge challenge, but Gerald, using federal development money and offering low taxes, had attracted two "green" companies that provided three hundred jobs on the reservation. Now his plan to land a company that manufactured building insulation from recycled jeans was threatened.

"There's already talk about getting 'water buffalos' to

deliver water over at Stony Point," Gerald added as he ladled blackberries into a bowl.

"What's a water buffalo?" Danny and Del asked in unison.

"A big bull doing the backstroke!" Rain teased.

Seeing the twin's big believing eyes, Gerald laughed, "No, guys, it's really a big tank of drinking water."

Jumping up from the table, Rain said, "Mom, Boomer and I are going over to the basketball court; save some blackberries for us." Roberta always cooked enough food for an army, but Rain knew that on any given evening a dozen cousins, nephews, aunts, or uncles could drop by and would be offered a cup of coffee and what was left in the pot.

Spooning up berry juice, Gerald said, "I haven't had a chance to ask you how the first week of school's going."

"Pretty good. We're going to be collecting family stories for social studies. And three times a week, we get a half hour of Native language. How to talk it, not the reading part. "

Roberta wiped Margie's mouth, ate a couple of meatloaf bites left on the twin's plates, and started clearing the table. "I'd like to sit in on that language class. There's a lot I don't know."

"Well, when you were young, you just weren't interested!" Granma admonished her granddaughter. Granma Hettie didn't talk much, but when she did, she didn't hold back. "Any words you want to know, Rain, you just ask me."

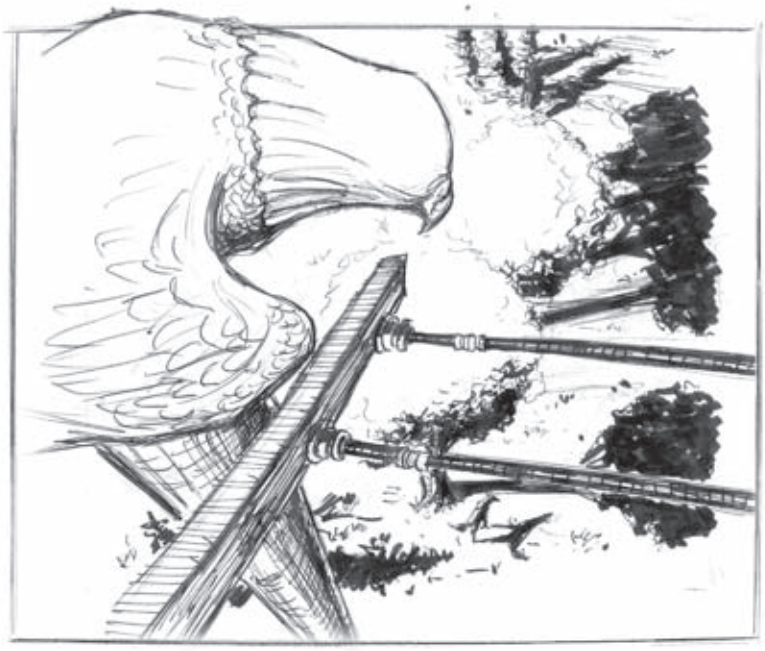
Gerald pushed his chair back from the table and clasped his hands behind his head. "Say Rain, that story thing. Did I ever tell you about the time the deer chased me and Junior into the shed and we…"

Rain thought, Only about a hundred times. But not wanting to hurt his father's feelings, he said, "Mrs. Corn told us this has got to be a story that we haven't heard before." Before Gerald could dredge up another well-worn tale, Boomer banged on the back door. Rain grabbed his basketball and ran out, but he stuck his head back in the door, and called out, "Dad, remember this Saturday we're putting in the winter vegetables!"

Gerald stared after his son. To no one in particular he marveled, "I can't figure out if that boy wants to be a farmer, a chef, or a doctor."

Granma pushed herself up from the table and shuffled to the back door. Squinting, she watched the boys grow smaller as they raced down the hill from the house. Chuckling to herself, Granma called in a small voice after them, "I've got a story you've never heard before. Yes sir, one you *never* heard."

Chapter 3



Then, the eagle's acute vision revealed another performer in the warm twilight.

The Cigar Box

The boys headed over to the old park, its well-played swings, seesaws, and ball grounds a magnet for hundreds of reservation children over the years. One summer, between games, Rain had been amazed to discover the names, "Roberta" and "Sissy" carved deeply into the grain of one of the picnic tables, its surface a patina of thousand-year-old mustard and ketchup. Here was real evidence that his mother and auntie had once been children themselves—a fact that he had found difficult to

believe about his Aunt Sissy.

Rain and Boomer began throwing the ball back and forth, warming up before launching the first bounce on the ancient basketball court—its hoop still serviceable, though the net had long ago rotted away. The boys charged up and down the court, practicing as teammates and opponents. They honed their passing and shooting skills, but they liked one-on-one best.

Taking his turn on offense, Rain rushed toward the basket, dribbling with his right hand. Boomer stepped in front of him and thrust out his arms to stop his forward progress. To get around Boomer, Rain lurched left, shifting the ball to his weaker left hand. A devilish grin playing on his face, Boomer brushed his hand down across Rain's right arm, blocking his ability to transfer the ball back to his stronger hand. Rain lost control of his dribble, and Boomer deftly reached in and grabbed the ball. He spun and ran off the court into the grass. Leaning over, Boomer laughed, "You should see the look on your face, man!"

Rain stood there. "Boom, that was so cool. Where did you learn that?"

"Coach Brown!" Boomer taunted.

"But, isn't it illegal?"

"Yeah, he told us it's a foul called 'reaching in.'"

"Show me," demanded Rain. "Do it again."

In Rain's attempt to get away from Boomer before he could steal the ball again, the boys got their feet entangled and both went down on the concrete with a bash. Rolling over with a fake moan, Boomer raised his head and spotted one of their classmates over by the baseball bleachers.

"Hey, RD, there's Jimmy. Let's make it three." Rain got up and waved, but Jimmy, a shy boy who occasionally played a few games with them, didn't wave back. Instead, he turned toward the garbage bins behind the bleachers.

Boomer hollered a "HEY, JIMMY!" that could be heard in the next county, but Jimmy ignored him. Rain and Boomer watched as the boy lifted the lid of one of the metal bins and threw something into it. The bin must have been empty because the boys could hear a tinny bang echo across the playground. Not looking in their direction, as if he were completely unaware of their presence, Jimmy ran—ran really fast—down one of the many dirt paths that crisscrossed the recreation area, and disappeared behind a line of shade trees. Boomer stood looking with his mouth open.

Rain murmured, "Man, was that weird or what?"

Boomer agreed: "Something tells me he wasn't just taking out the trash."

Haltingly, Rain said, "I wonder…what he threw away? He sure seemed to want to get rid of it."

"You know what they say—one man's trash is another man's treasure."

"Who says that?"

Boomer shrugged. "I don't know. I heard my mom say it."

"If somebody throws something away, it doesn't belong to them anymore. Does it?"

Without an answer from Boomer, the boys started walking toward the bleachers, knowing full well they were going to fish out what Jimmy had tossed in the trash. When they reached the

garbage bin, Boomer lifted the lid and Rain looked inside. At the bottom was a cigar box. Rain reached down and retrieved it. It rattled slightly.

Suddenly the stadium lights came on and the dusky evening was ablaze with white light. The boys jumped, causing them to laugh nervously at each other. Some adults were showing up to play a night game of softball. Under the glare, Rain and Boomer opened the box and stared down at two disc-shaped objects, each about the diameter of a tennis ball.

Boomer asked, "What are they?"

Rain was equally mystified. "I don't know. Rocks? It's getting dark—come on, let's go."

The boys hurried the half mile to Rain's house. They stopped once to take the objects out of the box, but there was not enough light to look at them carefully. Rain saw the back porch light flick on as they turned off the main road. He stepped up the pace before Mom could start hollering for him to get his "tail" in the house.

"Boomer, we'll have to show the rocks, or whatever they are, to Hummingbird and Simon at school tomorrow."

"School . . . oh, yeah, school." Boomer had blissfully forgotten about their homework. "How many history questions do we have?"

"About 10 and there're five pre-algebra problems—big ones."

Boomer groaned, "Man... who invented pre-algebra?"

Sky Heart perched on the crossbars of a telephone pole near the park. He had watched the boys play basketball with some pride, noting Rain's agility and Boomer's strength. They made a good pair, he thought, Rain being slim and long-legged, while Boomer was shorter and more robust. He also had seen the strange behavior of the boy, Jimmy.

Then, the eagle's acute vision revealed another performer in the warm twilight. Coyote was trotting across Jimmy's path. He stopped, sniffed the ground, and started following a fence that zigzagged in the direction where the boy had run.

Sky Heart ruffled his feathers, wondering what the trickster was up to. Then, he launched himself into the night sky and came down in the top of a tree near Rain's house. He carefully folded his wings and waited patiently for the hours to pass until the lights would be turned out and the house would sleep.

Chapter 4

Finally, at midnight, Gerald finished his last report.

The Dream

Each armed with a spoon, the boys shoveled into the pot of blackberries that had now cooled to pudding consistency. They ate until the sides of the pot were scraped clean. Pushing the empty container aside, the boys spread out their homework on the kitchen table. For an hour they ground through the questions and problems. Repeatedly, Rain or Boomer would open the cigar box and examine the sand-colored rocks, but staring at them didn't magically make them any easier to identify.

Glancing at the clock over the stove, Boomer started gathering up his books and papers. "You got a different answer from me on that last problem, RD, but I'm sticking with mine." Thumping the cigar box with his knuckle, he added, "Don't forget to bring it to school tomorrow."

Rain shook his head, "No way I'd forget." Hearing the boys finishing their homework, Gerald appeared at the kitchen door with his manuals and papers now stuffed into a shopping bag. "You guys finished?"

"Yeah, Dad, the office is all yours."

Boomer left hurriedly. His favorite TV show, "Eat or Be Eaten," came on at 8 o'clock. Rain got up and checked out the TV. The weather channel was silent. Entertained by worldwide floods, volcanoes, and lightening strikes, Granma was rewarded by a hurricane "glancing off Cuba and heading for the gulf" before she gave up her meteorological vigilance for the day. Rain picked up the remote and clicked from "Jobs for Jerks" (seen it) to the last ten minutes of "Future Auto World." Finally he settled on "Shark Mania."

Knowing how Roberta loved programs about sharks, Rain called, "Hey, Mom! There's a shark show coming on…" Hearing his invitation, Roberta finished tucking in the twins, and then put a quilt on Margie. The early autumn days were still warm, but temperatures at night were falling. She finished her rounds by checking on Granma who was already asleep in the bed next to Margie's.

Joining Rain on the couch, Roberta asked, "So what's it about tonight?"

"Great Whites. Survivor's stories."

Roberta kicked off her shoes and settled in. They both liked episodes about Great Whites, but after a half hour of shark attacks, Rain was yawning and Roberta was ready to put the TV to sleep for the night. Punching the mute button, she said, "You know, Rain, we used to find shark teeth out around Shell Ridge when we were kids."

Rain was instantly interested. "Really? Could we go hunting for shark teeth sometime? Just think, Mom, there must have been an ocean here a long time ago. Our house could have been under hundreds of feet of water."

"Yeah, maybe, but I think we'd all be happy to have just a couple of inches of water right now." The long day catching up with her, Roberta yawned, too, and agreed that it would be fun to go out to the Ridge.

Rain got his backpack from the kitchen, wished his father goodnight, and walked softly down the hallway. Tiptoeing into the darkened bedroom he shared with the twins, he carefully placed the backpack beside his bed. He undressed and pulled on a favorite pair of baggy pajama bottoms. Slipping under the covers, Rain lay quietly observing shadows from the tree outside his window pattern themselves on Granma's oldest quilt. Mom said the quilt was ready for the ragbag, but Rain wasn't about to give it up; he loved the softness of the old worn material. Comforted by the sound of his parents' murmuring voices, he pulled the faded blue and red diamond shapes over his nose and slept.

Finally, at midnight, Gerald finished his last report. He

switched off the lights, leaving on a dim bulb over the stove that seemed to cast more shadow than illumination, and went to bed.

A dark, winged form rose from the top of a clump of trees and was outlined briefly against a mound of puffy, silver clouds. Three or four mighty flaps and the eagle was orbiting silently over the little blue house. With each round, he lowered his altitude gently until he came to rest on a dead limb of the tree outside Rain's window. Bare of leaves, it provided him space for a proper grasp with his powerful talons.

He waited until the moon had set and the night air was still. Waited until Rain's breathing became regular, and he had slipped into dream sleep, where the mind begins its ungoverned wandering between the waking world and other realities. Then, the eagle tucked his head and slept, too.

As he slept, Rain's brain began to spin out its first dream—one of many that he would dream and usually forget before a night was over.

He was running to his last period class. Looking down, he suddenly realized that he wasn't wearing pants. How could I have come to school wearing only a tee-shirt? He slipped into the classroom and took a seat. Doesn't anybody notice? Oh no! She's going to call on me to read my report. No, Mrs. Corn, don't! I can't stand up in front of the class like this! Hey, wait! I'm saved. The shirt almost reaches my knees…

Rain shifted suddenly in his sleep and kicked the quilt on the floor.

He was in a field. Butterflies were flying everywhere. He could see every vein in their wings, and their colors were so brilliant they were blinding. Looking in the far distance, he could see the stump, too—every detail of its gnarled bark in high relief. He laughed out loud, "I can see forever."

"Let's tap our feet on the ground.
Left foot first and right foot next.
Let's clap our hands and march around
with our knees lifted high as they leave the ground."

Rain looked around. Children were singing somewhere. He listened and could pick out the voices of his friends, Hummingbird, Boomer, and Simon. But there was also a child's voice he didn't recognize. Where were they? Then another voice joined the song.

"Let's hop on one foot and then the other and see
if we can go a little farther."

It was the eagle. He sat on the stump, his beak closing around the final words of the little verse. He turned one eye to look at Rain. "You remember?"

"Yes, I remember," Rain answered. He approached the bird, drawn by the strength and compassion of his powerful gaze—until the eagle's eye filled his entire scope of vision. Then, with trust as his only guide, the boy allowed himself to fall deep into the mystery of the eye's soft blackness. "Mr. Eagle," Rain whispered, "I'm not afraid."

"No, you are very brave," the bird replied gently. "Sing with me,

Rain that Dances." Rain joined the eagle in singing the remainder of the game song.

"Let's flap our arms and pretend we can fly.
Let's all be eagles, flying high in the sky."

Rain felt the bird wrap his wings around his body. He marveled at the sweet sound their voices made, and he giggled. He felt like a little kid. He could see himself jumping and clapping.

The eagle began to sing new words that Rain didn't know—his voice rising higher and higher and higher until Rain was lifted off the ground. The words of the eagle's song enveloped them, and they rose into the air on the words' power.

"Turtle dreams and the water flows
Turtle wakes and the water goes
Earth and body in balance be
Water and blood in harmony
A boy must help us, a boy must help us.

A heart is taken and then is sold
The old ones twist and the wind blows cold
One guides the taker to his grave
One guides the giver to the cave
A boy must help us, a boy must help us.

East or west, up and down, we'll start again and go
round and round, round and round, round and round."

Rain descended slowly in the blackness, until he could feel his foot touch something solid. Looking down, he saw the tree stump, illuminated in sunlight.

The Dream

Chapter 5

Simon bit into his tuna sandwich, swallowed, and solemnly pronounced, "This is a fossil— not a rock."

A Boy Disappears

Rays of early morning sun cut through the open slats in the window blinds and striped Rain's face in yellow warmth. He was awake, but didn't open his eyes for several minutes. Groggy and confused, Rain sat up and swung his legs onto the floor. His foot hit the backpack. Without looking, he reached down and unzipped the side pocket and pulled out his notebook and a pencil.

Shaking his head to clear his brain, Rain thought anxiously, I have to get down everything before I forget. He started writing down the eagle's song in single words and jerky phrases. When he had finished, Rain stared at the page, trying to make sense of it.

"Hey, Mister! I thought you were going to sleep all morning!" Rain jumped. He hadn't heard his mother push open the bedroom door. "Are you still doing homework?"

"Ah, yeah, a little bit."

"Better get moving. I need you to help me load a couple of flipcharts and easels into the truck." Rain just looked at his mother. Widening her eyes, she warned, "Rain that Dances, you're going to miss the bus…"

Grabbing the jeans he had dropped beside the bed, Rain charged to the kitchen and wolfed down a bowl of cereal. He noticed that his toes were tingling. That's weird, he thought.

With no time for a shower, he rummaged through a laundry basket on top of the washing machine for a clean shirt, underwear, and socks. For a moment his mind clouded with an image of being at school without his pants. Where did that come from?

Pulling on his jeans, Rain hopped out the front door to help his mom load the truck. Del and Danny were pressing their noses against the back window. Two days a week they spent mornings at the recreation center—giving Roberta some relief. Roberta fished a couple of dollars out of her purse and gave Rain some money since he had no time to pack his lunch. He ran back into the house for his backpack and stopped for a

second to wave goodbye to Margie who was tucked up against Granma on the couch.

Granma motioned for Rain to come to her. "Rain, I got lots of stories. Some not even your mother's heard. You can interview me if you want to."

"Thanks, Granma!" Rain loved his great-grandmother's stories. "Maybe tomorrow, we could ..."

But Granma's attention had already turned back to the weather channel. "Look Margie, that hurricane's getting closer!"

Rain put the interview on hold and flew out of the house. He almost bumped into Aunt Sissy's car turning off the road. "You better get your head out of the clouds, boy, and pay attention where you're going!" When Mom wasn't at home, Aunt Sissy always came to stay with Granma. Yuk, thought Rain, she'll be there when I get home.

Having hoofed it to the bus stop, Rain hunched his shoulders against a chilly morning wind, wishing he had grabbed his jacket. At least he didn't have to wait long. The yellow bus came chugging up a rise in the road—he was the last pickup on this run. Virgil, the driver, cranked open the door, and Rain hoisted himself up the steps and into the hubbub of 30 chattering kids.

Boomer waved. He always saved Rain a seat. "You got the cigar box?"

"Yeah."

Boomer pulled out a comic from his backpack and tried to engage Rain in one of their favorite superheroes, but Rain's interest in Zel Simba of the planet Stromo was

muted. He kept thinking about the dream. He wanted to tell Hummingbird about the song the eagle sang. She might know what it meant.

Pointing at Simba's struggle with Gladius, one of the series' monster foes, Boomer was impressed. "Look, only half of Simba's body morphed into a lion."

"Huh? Oh, yeah. Whose homeroom is Bird in?"

"I don't know who she has this year. Hey, Boo's probably got in this month's *Mammoth Boy*. Let's check it after school." *Mammoth Boy*, the adventures of a Stone Age boy who is half mammoth, was Rain and Boomer's favorite comic.

"Yeah, okay, I've got some money."

The boys used the rest of the ride to finish a short story they needed to read for English class. Just as they got to the last page, the bus pulled into the driveway of Thunder Rock Middle School, a one-story brick complex with three classroom wings for the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade classes. The auditorium and gymnasium were housed in a separate building that proudly proclaimed over the front entrance, Home of the Thunderbirds.

As Rain and Boomer joined the crowd surging into the seventh-grade entrance, neither they nor anyone else noticed a late model Range Rover parked on a side road across from the school. A shadowy figure sat on the driver's side leisurely sipping a cup of coffee. When the last school bus had departed, the Rover's engine revved up. The driver pulled out onto Old Schoolhouse Road and drove slowly past the school. When the vehicle reached the back fence of the football field, it

suddenly increased speed and roared off through the little town of Thunder Rock.

Starting at one end of the corridor, Rain poked his head into each homeroom until he spotted Hummingbird in Mr. Pence's class. "Hey, Bird. Pssst …!"

Hummingbird was leaning over her desk, talking animatedly with some girls in the next row. "Oh, I know, he just *drools* whenever she …"

"Bird!"

"What?" Hummingbird looked up, her big brown eyes full of play. Waving at Rain, the pretty, apple-cheeked girl murmured to the other seventh-grade gossips, "Stay tuned. More on the big romance later."

Samantha, a B-Team cheerleader, mock-whispered, "Ooh, it's Mr. Eat Your Veggies." Hummingbird turned and gave her a little look. Samantha shrugged and glanced away. Hummingbird was just as popular as Sammie *and* smart.

Rain motioned her over. Tucking an errant strand of long black hair behind one ear, she slipped her foot back in the flip-flop she had been dangling from one toe, and stepped quickly to the door. "Hey, RD, what's up?"

"Meet me in the library after lunch, okay? In response to her quizzical look, he added, "Just something I want to talk to you about before I tell the guys."

Hummingbird nodded. "Yeah, okay. I've got something to tell you, too. "

The second bell rang. Hummingbird retreated to her desk, and Rain hurried down the hall before Mrs. Biddy could shut the door on the stragglers. Being in Old Biddy's homeroom was humiliation enough, since the running joke among the middle schoolers was to cluck and flap when her class filed in for an assembly or pep rally. But to be one of the chickens locked out of the "coop" was worse.

Rain took his seat behind Boomer. Mrs. Biddy called the roll, marking the presence and absence of each student in her black book. Friday always had a lot of checks in the absent column. Not until she had repeated Jimmy's name twice, did the boys notice that Jimmy's seat was empty.

Boomer whispered out the corner of his mouth, "He must still be running." Rain didn't reply; instead, he absent-mindedly ran his fingers over the hard edge of the cigar box in his backpack.

Peering over her glasses, Mrs. Biddy squawked, "Well, I can see that five of your classmates are getting off to a good start this year. The truant officer will be earning his salary!" The class stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, the words "and justice for all" muffled in the "brriinnnnggg" of the next bell.

Joining the crush in the hallway, Boomer yelled to Rain, "Do grownups have bells at work?"

"I don't know, I don't think so. But they do in prison—I saw it on TV."

"Then I won't be a bank robber when I grow up," Boomer shouted.

The morning dragged on endlessly. Rain suffered through social studies and math, his torture finally coming to an end when Coach Brown released the boys from gym class at 11:45.

Rain headed for the cafeteria, which was located where the three building wings converged. All roads, it seemed, led to the characteristic fragrance of school lunchrooms across the world. Hesitating at the entrance, Rain looked to see if any of the gang had already saved four seats at one of the long tables that populated the lunchroom. Simon stood up and signaled his presence near the teacher's lunch table. Rain weaved his way across the room, stopping momentarily to view the food choices provided to the faculty.

"Hey, Simon. I've got to buy my lunch—I didn't get up in time to make mine. Check out the stuff the teachers are getting. We need to put a note in the suggestion box to add that fruit salad to the student lunch."

Moving along the food line, Rain asked for chicken chowder and a big whole wheat roll. He wondered to himself, How come the cafeteria ladies can make rolls better than Mom? He reached for an apple and then saw the bowls of red grapes—his favorite. Selecting the grapes, Rain glanced at the boy ahead of him in line. It was Ronald from gym class. He had piled his tray with two packaged burgers, fries, and two brownies.

Peeping at Rain's tray, Ronald sniffed, "Hey, man, you eat like a rabbit. If you're going to make it on the team next year," he hooted, "you've got to do better than that." Ronald was convinced that Coach was going to pick him for one of the

defensive tackle positions. Apparently, he was beefing up for the part.

Rain laughed, "You're right, Ronald. I take rabbits *verrry* seriously. Ever try to catch one?" Rain slipped around Ronald, paid for his lunch, and headed for Simon's table. Hummingbird and Boomer had joined him. Although the kids had other friends, they always ate together at school. It was generally known that they were "tight," and Rain seemed to be the leader of the small group.

Boomer spotted Rain and hollered, "There he is!"

Hummingbird clapped her hand over her ear. "Hey, Boom, yell in my other ear, why don't you, then I'll be totally deaf!"

Boomer mumbled a half-hearted, "Sorry," but he was too excited to be really sorry. As Rain sat down, Boomer said, "I've been telling the guys about Jimmy. Show'em what's in the cigar box." Rain downed a couple of bites of chowder, and then pulled out the box, positioning it so everyone could see the contents. Slowly, he opened the lid and four pairs of eyes focused on the two stony objects.

Simon looked up, "That's it?"

"Yep."

Simon reached in and picked up one of the objects. Hummingbird followed suit. Both kids held the objects up in front of their noses, turning them in their fingers. Simon adjusted his glasses. He was the big dinosaur man in the group. He had probably seen "Jurassic Park" a hundred times. To Simon, a tyrannosaurus, triceratops, or apatosaurus were the things of childhood. Now he played in the fields of feathered

raptors like the dromaeosaurs, the hyena dinosaur *Kryptops* (he loved the name), and *Quetzalcoatlus*, the pterosaur with wings that spanned 50 feet.

Simon bit into his tuna sandwich, swallowed, and solemnly pronounced, "This is a fossil—not a rock. See, it's knobby, like a bone."

Hummingbird said, "I think it is, too. But, what kind?"

Simon shrugged. "I don't know." He placed the two fossils back in the cigar box and handed it to Rain.

Munching on a roll, Rain glanced at the clock. Lunch was almost over. He gulped the rest of the chowder and stuffed the grapes in his backpack. Each grade got twenty minutes of free time after lunch. Most kids went outside, the girls talking in groups, while the boys tussled and ran around. The library was available during free time, too.

The foursome dumped their trash and followed the exiting crowd to the courtyard outside the lunchroom. Rain, a bit too cheerily, announced, "Um, Bird and I are going to check out something in the library. See you guys in class."

However, before they could leave, Debbie, one of the seventh-grade girls who volunteered as an office assistant, sidled up to Hummingbird and quietly dispensed some gossip. Hummingbird frowned. She turned to ask Debbie a question, but she had moved onto the next little group with her news.

Boomer asked, "What's wrong?"

"She said that Jimmy wasn't out sick. He's not at home. He didn't come home last night, and his mother's been out searching all day."

The kids stopped and looked at each other. Suddenly Jimmy's disappearance made the contents of the cigar box a much more serious matter. Hummingbird said, "I think we'd better show these fossils—whatever they are—to someone."

All eyes on the only girl member of their club, the boys asked, "Who?"

Smiling, Hummingbird answered, "Miss Swallow."

Chapter 6

"Before I go today," Joe said, "let's give everybody a chance to ask how to say a word in their own language."

How Do You Say "Water?"

"Let's meet at Miss Swallow's room after school. She can tell us what we should do next." Hummingbird idolized Miss Swallow, the eighth-grade science teacher. Hummingbird had attended Miss Swallow's sessions during Career Week the previous school year, and had decided that when she grew up she wanted to be a scientist just like Miss Swallow. Although Hummingbird continued to praise her favorite teacher—"You'll love her. She's just so perfect."—the boys didn't have to be convinced.

They quickly agreed to the rendezvous.

When Boomer and Simon went to check out some girls who were practicing for drill team tryouts, Rain and Hummingbird ducked into the back entrance of the school library. They found a quiet table behind a portable bulletin board that hosted student-drawn posters promoting the "thrills and chills" of mystery novels and a new series about the planets called "Cosmic Connections." The Library Club had been busy during the summer.

Rain looked around to see if anybody was within hearing range. Satisfied that they were alone, he took out a crumpled piece of notebook paper from his jeans pocket and laid it on the table in front of Hummingbird. He stared at it and didn't say anything.

Hummingbird picked up the paper. "Is this what you wanted to talk about?"

Rain nodded. "Bird, I think … well, I had this dream and …" Rain didn't quite know how to say it, so he just blurted it out. "The eagle talked to me again, but this time it was in a dream. I wrote down everything I could remember. Part of it was a song."

Frowning, Hummingbird unfolded the paper and read the notes that Rain had jotted down that morning. She summarized his dream memory as she was reading. "You were at the stump … we were singing the song he taught us … there was a song about a turtle and water and a boy has to help us." Hummingbird looked up. Her eyes were full of wonder. "RD, we've been to the stump so many times, thinking he would be there and … he never was. But, he *has* come back!"

Detecting a rule-breaker in her kingdom, Miss Roundtree, the librarian, materialized from behind a wall of books and scowled a wordless, Shhhh!

Lowering her voice, Hummingbird whispered, "But, this is kind of spooky about a grave and a cave. It sounds like something's wrong and we're supposed to do something."

"Yeah, but what? I think it's got something to do with the water drying up."

"We all need to get together at the stump and talk this over. It's like a puzzle. Can I keep this and make a copy?"

"Sure. Um, you said you had some news, too."

Hummingbird looked at Rain. "Oh," she shook her head, "I'm still thinking about your dream. Ahh, I'm going to get a sister."

"You mean your mother is going to have a baby?"

Hummingbird laughed and quickly covered her mouth, but she had not drawn the attention of the ever-vigilant Miss Roundtree. "No, I mean that a girl named Arianna is going to come live with us for a while. My brothers will have to make way for another sister. She gets here Saturday night. Her family is moving to Thunder Rock in November, but she needs to start school now. Her dad and my dad know each other from way back." Hummingbird stopped and then added, "Mom says Arianna has diabetes."

Rain looked surprised. "How old is she?'

"She's in the sixth grade. But she doesn't have type 2 diabetes like the eagle talked about. It's type 1 diabetes. Mom said little

kids can get it and it can't be prevented by eating healthy or moving your muscles."

Rain felt as if the rules had been changed somehow. "Okay… I'll see you at Miss Swallow's room later."

Rain reported to study hall thinking that there was still a lot that he needed to learn about diabetes. He dashed off his math homework (Rain was finding that he was pretty good at pre-algebra). Then he got out his notebook and flipped to the tab labeled "Other Stuff." On the top of a clean page, he wrote "Type 1" with a big question mark. Rain doodled a bit—drawing a turtle on top of a series of stiff-peaked waves and a big-toothed shark swimming below. He wished he hadn't let Hummingbird have the paper with his dream notes. He wanted to look at it again.

Rain jumped nervously when the bell rang, interrupting his thoughts. He stuffed the notebook and hastily merged into the deafening roar of the hallway. Spotting Boomer and Simon on the way to Mr. Pence's science class, Rain yelled, "You're right. When I grow up, bells are out!"

Boomer yelled back, "But I'm not ruling out dinner bells!"

"Wait, I got it…" Simon started laughing, but couldn't get out his joke. When he got tickled, especially at one of his own funnies, Simon would snort instead of "ha-ha." Finally, he squeezed out, "Let me *chime in*…" But he couldn't finish—all the boys heard was an explosive "Lulu-belle!" at the end of a series of inhaled honks.

The guys were on a silliness roll. In science class, the boys built a compound machine — a door wedge (an inclined plane) suspended by a pulley. Making his way among the tables in his 7th grade lab, Mr. Pence laughed when he saw the boys' contraption.

"Wow, this looks cutting edge. What does it do?'

Stifling a giggle, Boomer replied, "Uhhh, well, the door on our tree house won't stay open—so we thought a wedge would do the trick."

Glancing devilishly at Boomer and Simon, Rain expanded the joke: "Yeah, Mr. Pence, pulling up wedges is a tough job!"

Simon simply fell out. Between snorts, he gasped, "We got a tree house?"

A veteran of the classroom, Mr. Pence knew the telltale signs of Friday afternoon lunacy. Luckily, the bell rang. "Okay, everybody! Put your equipment in the tool boxes before you leave." To the boys, he whispered, "Just be glad Mrs. Corn isn't your science teacher."

The boisterous 12-year-olds flowed across the hall to Mrs. Corn's language class. She had to elevate her voice several decibels to be heard above the laughter and chatter.

"Sit down, please. People!"

A Simon snort punctuated the end of the rowdiness as the class came to order.

"We've got to get through the English assignments quickly, because we have Native Language today. Let's turn to page six."

Rain and Boomer were prepared to answer questions about the assigned short story, but Mrs. Corn, like most teachers, seemed to have built-in radar for students who did not do their homework. She could pinpoint slackers like a military pilot targeting enemy aircraft. No matter how many times he raised his hand, Boomer couldn't get called on—while Junior Tuttle, Mary Ann Bryson, and Larry Deer went down in flames.

After twenty minutes of precise shoot-downs, Mrs. Corn shifted the focus to the family interviews. She assigned everyone in the class to a two-person reporting team that would interview someone from one of their families. Boomer had already convinced Junior to be his partner, since his dad raced motorcycles. Boomer thought an interview about motorcycles would be cool. Rain and Simon volunteered to be partners just because they were friends.

Simon passed back the handout that Mrs. Corn said would guide them in writing up an interview worthy of being published in the school newspaper. The class went over "Tips for Good Reporting," with special attention to follow-up questions.

Mrs. Corn confidently assured the class that their interviews, due next Tuesday, would be on par with the best storytellers if they followed this simple guide.

A soft knock on the door signaled that Joe Red Crane had come to give them their first lesson. Like most of the fluent speakers on the reservation, Joe was an elder. A tall, thin man, he usually walked with a cane, but didn't use it today—he wanted to let the kids know he was up to the job.

Joe's first responsibility was to assess the students ability to speak their own language. Grateful for the chair Mrs. Corn provided, Joe sat down and pulled out some forms. Putting on his glasses, he started checking boxes, first asking how many students were Native speakers or lived with a speaker. Some of the kids, like Rain, lived with a family member who spoke the language, but after more questions, it was apparent that most of the class only knew some phrases or maybe some words from a song. None were fluent.

Joe smiled at the kids. "Well, we are going to fix that." He handed out some materials but assured the class that his lessons would be about conversation, not tests.

"Before I go today," Joe said, "let's give everybody a chance to ask how to say a word in their own language." Going down each row, the kids came up with everything from "butterfly" to "wind farm."

When it came Rain's turn, he asked simply, "How do you say 'turtle' and 'water'?"

Joe translated and said to Mrs. Corn, "Now, that young man is interested in a word that everybody on this reservation is talking about."

Mrs. Corn raised her eyebrows. "People are interested in turtles?"

"Water," Joe replied. Apparently, Mrs. Corn wasn't listening to rez radio.

Chapter 7

Although Boomer had never once volunteered to dry a spoon for his mother, he deemed dishwashing a privilege for Miss Swallow.

Science Lessons

After the last class of the day, the eighth-grade wing quickly emptied. Rain's voice echoed down the hallway. "So, yeah, Simon, come over tomorrow morning. Granma says she's got a story for us that *nobody* has heard before. Can you get a ride?"

"You're lucky," Simon grumped. "I've heard all my family's stories—or heard all the ones they want me to know about. Yeah, my brother can bring me over."

The boys waved to Hummingbird who was already at the

door to Miss Swallow's classroom. "She's got a parent or somebody she's talking to—looks like we'll have to wait a few minutes." Boomer peeked through the window in the door. Like the other science classrooms, Miss Swallow's room was outfitted with lab benches and large science tables. A huge bulletin board display called "The Bison Project" covered one wall.

"I've been thinking about this," Rain said. "Maybe we shouldn't mention that it was Jimmy who had the fossils. We wouldn't want to get him in trouble."

The boys agreed, but Hummingbird said, "Okay, but if Jimmy doesn't come home soon, we'll have to tell someone."

Boomer sneaked a quick look again and announced, "Looks like the meeting is over."

As the kids stepped back from the door, it swung open catching Miss Swallow in midsentence, "...so please call anytime. I'm here almost every afternoon after school." After the "good-byes" and "thank-yous," Miss Swallow looked around the door to greet her visitors. "Hi, Hummingbird, I saw you look in a few minutes ago. Come in, you'll have to introduce me to your friends." The kids followed Miss Swallow to the bench in front of the classroom, where she proceeded to wash and dry a set of beakers and graduated cylinders from her last class.

"Uh, Miss Swallow, these are my best friends—RD, Boomer, and Simon." Miss Swallow looked up and smiled at the boys. She had large luminous black eyes and skin so smooth and radiant that she glowed. At school she wore her hair in a sophisticated twist, but Rain had seen her at the grocery store with her hair down. He imagined that if the wind ruffled her

long, heavy hair, it would just swirl around her face and drift right back into place.

"So, have you come to sign up for Science Club?"

The boys stared at Miss Swallow and answered, "Yes," in total compliance. Seemingly they had all forgotten why they had come to see the eighth-grade science teacher.

Since the boys were tongue-tied, Hummingbird provided the real explanation for their visit. "Well, yes, we would like to sign up for Science Club, but we've got something to show you and thought you might know what it is." She nudged Rain, who pulled out the cigar box. He pushed it forward on the bench and opened the lid. Miss Swallow peered inside.

Eager to impress, Simon said, "We thought they might be fossils."

Picking up both objects, Miss Swallow agreed. "Simon, I think you're right. These look exactly like bones that have been replaced with minerals."

While Simon beamed, Rain found his tongue and asked the key question, "What kind of animal do they come from?"

Replacing the fossils carefully in the cigar box, Miss Swallow, the perfect teacher, had the perfect reply. "Kids, do you have to be somewhere right after school?" Their collective "No" invited her next question: "Then how would you like to go over to the college and see Dr. Bamsey? He's the head of the science department—I'm sure he can help us identify these fossils."

The kids were ecstatic. "Yeah!" "Wow!" But before she drove them anywhere, Miss Swallow insisted that they use her cell phone to leave messages concerning their whereabouts.

After calling home, Boomer offered to wash up the rest of the beakers. Although he had never once volunteered to dry a spoon for his mother, Boomer deemed dishwashing a privilege for Miss Swallow.

"Thanks, Boomer. That's very sweet of you. Okay, everybody, I'll be back in a few minutes. I've got to sign out."

After she left, Rain mimicked, "Oh, Miss Swallow, can I wash your pots and pans? Please?" Splashing water in the sink, Boomer just laughed. Hummingbird and Simon wandered over to examine Miss Swallow's Bison Project bulletin board. Big red letters listed the project's objectives: spiritual, cultural, and physical health; environmental restoration; education; and economic development. There were pictures of bulls, cows, and calves in all seasons of the year. Rain especially liked the photos of the skulls of ancient bison from the archeological site at Blackwater Draw in New Mexico.

"Hey Boomer," Rain called, "look at the size of the horns on these giant buffalo skulls."

Boomer replied, "In a second." He was too busy rinsing out Miss Swallow's coffee cup, which advertised a lab chemicals company and the scientific premise: Always Test Your Hypotheses. He carefully dried the cup and polished it with a paper towel before replacing it, gleaming, on Miss Swallow's desk.

Boomer joined the others at the bulletin board. Hummingbird pointed to a picture of a European bison in Poland. "I didn't know buffalo were in other places—I thought they just lived here." Boomer looked more closely at the photo,

"A Polish buffalo . . . ?"

Miss Swallow popped back into the room. "Okay, we're set. Dr. Bamsey is going to meet us, but he doesn't have much time." Gesturing at the bulletin board, she added, "If you're interested in the Bison Project, I'll tell you about it on the way over to the college."

The kids piled into Miss Swallow's old station wagon. It had seen heavy duty, hauling everything from shovels and wildlife feed to animal traps. Transporting a load of students was no problem. Skillfully, Miss Swallow pushed on the gas and lifted her foot off the clutch, shuddering the old car into gear. She turned onto Old Schoolhouse Road and headed for Medicine Cave Tribal College. Neither she nor the kids noticed the Range Rover that pulled out of the same slot where it had parked that morning. The Rover followed the station wagon at a distance but turned right at the state highway—apparently not interested in the teacher's destination.

"So, Miss Swallow, you were going to tell us about the Bison Project?" Rain prompted politely.

"Well, the Bison Project is about tribes coming together to restore the buffalo. They fed American Indian people for thousands of years—until they were almost wiped out. But now we're bringing them back. Not only as nutritious food or a way to make a living, but also to restore a healthy balance between people, animals, and the land itself. In Alaska and Canada, people are using their knowledge of caribou and marine

animals in the same way."

"We had buffalo meatloaf last night. It was good," Rain said.

"What is it that you do on the project, Miss Swallow?" Simon asked.

"Every summer I visit tribes that have bison herds. I study the relationship between the buffalo and animals that live with them—birds, prairie dogs, predators like wolves, coyotes, and ferrets, and even insects. And, I study the plants that feed the buffalo and other animals. One of the things I really like to do is talk to the people about what they know about the whole ecosystem and how to keep the buffalo healthy. There's a lot of traditional knowledge out there."

"You mean traditional stuff like eating food our ancestors ate and being active like they were?" Rain asked, raising his eyebrows and smiling at his friends. "That keeps people healthy. I guess we're healthier if the buffalo are, too."

Miss Swallow signaled a left-hand turn into the campus of the college and drove into the lot behind a prefabricated metal building. She pulled into a parking space, shut off the engine, and turned to her four passengers. Shaking her head in amazement, Miss Swallow said, "You know, you kids really get it. You must have been talking to the right people!"

Boomer whispered under his breath to Hummingbird as they got out of the car, "Not exactly people."

Miss Swallow held the building entrance door open for the kids. Responding to Rain's last comment, she added, "Understanding the relationships between animals, plants, and people keeps the mind and spirit healthy, too. I'm a good

example of that," she laughed, "I'm just plain buffalo-happy!"

Miss Swallow guided the kids to three plastic chairs that were the only furniture in the little lobby of the Science Building. The others sat down, but Rain chose to stand. He handed the cigar box to Miss Swallow and she disappeared through the double doors labeled Biology Laboratories. A few minutes later, she came back with a middle-aged, portly man who looked like Santa Claus, but without the beard. Miss Swallow introduced everyone.

Holding the cigar box, Dr. Bamsey inquired, "Somebody here a fossil fan?"

Simon raised his hand. "I don't have any fossils, but I've got lots of books about dinosaurs and I watch all the TV shows about them."

"Believe it or not, Simon, that's how I got interested in science—in the olden days when they didn't have digitally animated dinosaurs." Dr. Bamsey's face took on a dreamy expression. He was remembering the time his father took him to a museum to see the skull of a triceratops. Ahh, what a day that was! Returning to the present, he asked, "Are you going to leave these with me so I can send them to the state university for identification?"

Rain answered, "Well, ah, we were thinking of taking them with us."

"That's fine—just fine. We'll do the next best thing. Let's take some pictures!" Dr. Bamsey led the group to one of the biology labs. "This is where we keep our camera equipment." They followed him to the back of the lab, where microscopes,

cameras, LED lights, and other equipment were stored. He unlocked a cabinet and took out a high-resolution digital camera and a tripod. He locked the camera onto the tripod and chose a blue daylight bulb for lighting. Dr. Bamsey placed one of the fossils on a nonreflective piece of black paper, fixed the light at a high angle, and started to focus the camera. "Oops, almost forgot. One of you guys got a quarter?

"Yes, sir." Boomer reached in his pocket and pulled out a quarter, three nickels, and a penny. Handing over the coin, Boomer asked, "Is that all it costs—a quarter?"

"No, this is a freebie," Dr. Bamsey smiled. "I just want to photograph something with the fossil that will show how big it is." Dr. Bamsey began shooting the fossils at different angles and levels of zoom, starting with a shot of each entire fossil, and then doing close-ups of surface details. He asked Simon to help him place the light at different angles so that all the fossils' features would be revealed.

As Dr. Bamsey was finishing the shoot, Rain wandered over to a strange apparatus standing in front of the storage cabinets. It looked like a forklift with a video player attached to a black barrel. "Excuse me, Dr. Bamsey," Rain interrupted, "what is *that*?"

"This," Dr. Bamsey declared proudly, "is our homemade microscope camera. Our students made it from old CD-ROM parts, a Web cam, and stuff you can buy at a hardware store. Tribal colleges don't have big budgets," he mock-whispered. "Now, before I give this fossil back to you, Rain, I'm going to ask Miss Swallow and Hummingbird to scrape off a little specimen

of the loose rock attached to it." Dr. Bamsey reached in a drawer and pulled out a small scalpel and handed it to Miss Swallow along with an envelope. "While they're doing that, I want you guys to tell me how you found these fossils."

Rain told the truth. "We found them in a garbage can."

"Yeah," Boomer piped, "one person's trash is another person's treasure!"

Dr. Bamsey laughed. "Well, you may be more right than you know about that treasure part. There are some pretty bad people out there who are willing to pay a lot of money for rare fossils. I say 'bad' because they don't care about understanding how the dinosaurs and other ancient animals lived, like Simon here, or preserving the history of our planet." Dr. Bamsey's cheeks turned pink and he cleared his throat. "Sorry, but this really makes me angry. These black-market collectors just want to own something that nobody else has. The hunters are worse—they just tear everything up and sell the fossils at the highest price."

Hummingbird gave Dr. Bamsey the envelope with the rock specimen and returned the cigar box to Rain. "I'll give this to Dr. Brown—he's a geologist," Dr. Bamsey explained. "He'll identify it and send that information along with the photos."

Hiding a little smile, Boomer asked, "Um, Dr. Bamsey, do you have a hypothesis about what kind of animal this is?"

"My hypothesis? Well, yes, an imperfect one. I'm not sure about the species, but my guess is that it is certainly marine and it comes from around here. I recognize the sedimentary rock that is attached to the fossils."

Glancing to see if Miss Swallow was listening, Boomer replied, "Well, as I always say, 'Always test your hypothesis!'"

"Yes, indeed!" the professor exclaimed. "Congratulations, Miss Swallow, you're doing a fine job of educating these young people. Some of my students aren't this sharp!"

Miss Swallow put her arm around Boomer's shoulder as Dr. Bamsey walked the group to the building entrance. "You are so right. I think we have some budding scientists at Thunder Rock Middle School."

Boomer turned and gave Rain and Simon, who were following behind, a big "eat-your-heart-out" grin. Hummingbird whispered, "I'm gonna barf."

Before leaving, Miss Swallow gathered the kids together, and they thanked Dr. Bamsey for his help. As Boomer shook the professor's hand, he offered him a card he had been using as a bookmark. "I thought maybe you could use this, Dr. Bamsey."

Dr. Bamsey took the card and read it. It was a recipe for low-calorie spaghetti distributed by the Tribal health department. Dr. Bamsey chuckled. "Boomer," he said, patting his ample stomach, "you may or may not be a scientist when you grow up, but if you keep offering solutions when you see a problem—you'll do well. Thank you. My wife and I will make this recipe with meatballs!"

Dr. Bamsey unlocked the front door—it was after hours—and told Miss Swallow that he would call on Monday with the identity of the fossils. Waving good-bye with his recipe card, he assured the kids, "It won't take long—those guys at the state university know their stuff."

Chapter 8

Before waiting on his customer, Boo said, "Come on over here. I've got something new—or maybe I should say 'old' to show you."

Boo

Miss Swallow drove the car back into town. "Do you want me to take you home or drop you off somewhere?"

She could hear excited whispering in the backseat before Rain replied, "Miss Swallow, I think you need some gas."

Checking the gauge, she agreed, "I am getting a little low."

"Why don't you stop at Boo's? It's not far."

"Do you need to pick up something?" Miss Swallow asked.

The boys all exclaimed, "Yes!" And Hummingbird added

mysteriously, "There's something we want to show you."

The station wagon passed Thunder Rock's one shopping center, cafe, and beauty salon and pulled into Boo's, a gas station/car repair/convenience store. A freshly painted sign over the two gas pumps advertised, "If There Is Something You Can Use You Can Find It at Boo's." Miss Swallow pulled in front of one of the gas pumps. As the group piled out of the car, Rain pointed to the new sign. "Boo had a contest this summer for a slogan—and we won."

"Yeah, that's ours—we made it up!" Boomer shouted. Realizing he had gotten too loud, Boomer added quietly, "Simon was the one who really thought of it first."

Boo glanced out the store window and saw his new customers. He stuck his head out the door and hollered, "Hi, Betty! Hi, kids! You want gas?"

Miss Swallow yelled back, "Give me 10 dollars worth!"

Boomer whispered dreamily to Rain and Simon, "He called her Betty." Like many students, it never occurred to Boomer that his teachers actually had first names.

Boo stepped behind the counter and pressed the pump's "on" button for 10 dollars. For the umpteenth time that day, he made a proud inspection of the small store he had bought last year with insurance money from a construction accident. He thought about how far he'd come since his first day of business.

Boo was a good mechanic, but he had no retail experience. He had never even sold lemonade as a kid. He had started out making no profit because he was pricing his inventory too low, and worse—not opening his store early enough to get

the breakfast crowd. His biggest problem was Big Weasel's Jif Mart. Frank Big Weasel advertised heavily in the reservation newspaper and held contracts for fueling most of the Tribe's utility vehicles. The billboard on the main road leading out of Thunder Rock shouted, "Fill up with Weasel's Diesel!" to any driver who would think otherwise.

When Boo announced his store opening in the newspaper (he bought the cheapest ad available), Frank lowered his gas prices and the cost of his "Jumbo Combo"—two hot dogs, large fries, and a milkshake—to drive business away from Boo. He made up any losses on his lunch deal with that afternoon energy pickup, "Big Weasel's Big Snack" (a bag of potato chips, a candy bar, and a canned soda).

But Boo wasn't a quitter. When he heard some of the middle school kids calling him "Boo the Loser," he made up his mind to give Big Weasel a run for his money. Boo ordered a booklet called *Marketing Your Small Business,* which promised financial success for the ambitious entrepreneur who "builds community relationships" and "develops a business brand." Killing two birds with one stone, Boo put up a sign advertising a contest to choose a slogan for his store. That turned out to be the best move Boo ever made.

While Rain pumped the gas, Miss Swallow rummaged in her purse and found two fives. She was still poking around for change to buy some batteries when Hummingbird rushed on ahead and pushed open the glass door. Holding it open for Miss Swallow, Hummingbird radiated excitement. Miss Swallow walked in and immediately realized that Boo's Gas 'n Grocery

looked very different. Boo was standing behind the counter, grinning his head off. "Well, Betty, what do you think?"

The food items and snacks in the store had been divided into two separate areas. A banner that read Sometime Snacks identified the shelves that held cakes, cookies, chips, and candies, and a larger banner labeled Everyday Snacks heralded the nutritious treats and finger foods.

Miss Swallow looked around amazed. "When did you do all this, Boo?"

"This summer when you were gone. But, I didn't do it all. RD, Hummingbird, Boomer, and Simon, it was their idea. I offered them the twenty dollar prize when they won the slogan contest—you saw the sign?" When Miss Swallow nodded, he went on. "But they said they wanted a different prize—they wanted the snacks arranged into 'everyday' and 'sometime' foods. I didn't know what they meant at first, but I do now. So, we made the banners and rearranged the store."

Hummingbird skipped beside Miss Swallow, who strolled slowly along the Everyday Snacks shelves, reading out the items, "unsalted nuts, low-salt popcorn, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, fruit in natural juice, dried fruit, low-fat peanut butter and apple chips, rice patties, and whole grain 100-calorie muffins." She picked up a package of cocoa-covered nuts before stopping to admire the bins of locally grown pears and apples.

Simon called out, "Miss Swallow, come look at the cold drink and dairy case!" The refrigerated foods also had been labeled "sometime" and "everyday," with the everyday shelves

containing water, low-fat and fat-free milk, fruit and vegetable juices, low-fat yogurt, and string cheese.

Examining the dairy case, Miss Swallow asked Boo, "Aren't these foods more expensive for you to buy from suppliers?"

The door dinged and a customer came in to pay for gas. "Sorry," Boo said, "be back in just a minute." After ringing up the sale, Boo continued. "Not really more expensive, I just have to be smart about my orders. Like I can buy healthy snacks in bulk and rebag them to lower costs. My mom and sisters have been helping me out, too. They've been making whole-grain sandwiches and bagging cut-up fresh fruit for the lunch customers. I'm selling out every day."

"And this guy," Boo said, clapping Rain on the shoulder, "he researched snacks online to find the healthy ones not available from local wholesalers. You'd be surprised—some of the healthy snacks are cheaper than the junk food."

Admiring her best friend (of the boy variety), Hummingbird said, "RD brought his mother over from the health department to help us figure all this out."

Rain laughed. "Yeah, she called herself our 'consultant.'" Proudly, he added, "Mom gave us a lot of pamphlets about preventing type 2 diabetes and heart disease." Rain pointed out the pamphlets and flyers about "sometime" and "everyday" snacks that Boo was offering in an old newspaper rack by the door.

The door dinged again. "Hey, Archie—be right there!" Clearly, Boo was enjoying his store's new popularity. Before waiting on his customer, Boo said, "Come on over here. I've

got something new—or maybe I should say 'old'—to show you." He led Miss Swallow and his four "business partners" to some added counter space that held five large trays of assorted snacks. Taped in front of the trays was a poster that said "Traditional Foods."

Rain cried, "Wow, look at all this stuff!" For everyday snacks Boo was offering peppery pumpkin seeds, dried buffalo meat and fruit patties, nut and seed granola, and bean bread. The sometime menu included flavored smoke-dried meat and fish, pumpkin and squash cookies with raisins, and popcorn balls made with real maple syrup.

"My sisters and some of their friends cooked up this stuff—from recipes they got from their grandmothers. We've even got some recipes from other tribes. We'll find out what sells, and then maybe they can make some extra money."

Archie wandered over. "What've you got there, Boo?"

Boo leaned over the counter and swept his hand over the goodies. "Check it out and see if there's anything you like."

"All this homemade?"

"Yep, right here on the rez."

Archie picked up a couple of packages. "I can't remember the last time I had some good dried meat."

"You ought to try the bean bread," Miss Swallow said with her mouth full. "I'm going to take this home and have it with soup for supper. Which reminds me, these kids aren't going to get any supper, if I don't get them home."

Seeing they were getting ready to leave, Boomer remembered the boys' primary reason for stopping at Boo's.

"Has this month's *Mammoth Boy* come in yet?"

"Sorry, guys, I'm not getting my comics until next Tuesday." Because the boys were clearly disappointed, Boo promised, "I'll put a *Mammoth Boy* aside for you when they come in."

Miss Swallow paid for her purchases and told Boo she was going to tell all her friends about his new store. As they were leaving, a bunch from the high school crowded in the front door. Boo quickly turned his attention to his new customers. He thought to himself, Hmm, I just might have to stay open a little later on Friday nights.

Once everyone was on board, Miss Swallow asked her passengers, "Where to, kids?"

Rain answered, "Drop us off at the Tribal offices—my dad can drive us home. He's got the car today."

Miss Swallow turned toward the Tribe's government complex at the center of Thunder Rock. To the kids' delight, the short drive took them past Big Weasel's Jif Mart. "Look," Boomer hollered, "he's out changing his gas prices!"

"Slow down, Miss Swallow, slow down," Hummingbird giggled. The perfect teacher slowed the station wagon to "creep," barely rolling the wheels so the kids could get a good gander at the competition. Four faces, smashed up against the right-side car window, grinned in glee at the evidence of Big Weasel's commercial decline. Huge signs in the front windows screamed, "Reduced Prices!" "Lunch Markdown!" and "Two Hot Dogs for the Price of One!"

Having substituted "95" for "99" on his gas price sign, the owner of the Jif Mart was looking dejectedly at the big "9" in his hand when he saw the station wagon approaching. He thought the car was slowing to turn into his store but was disappointed when it continued its slow crawl. Frank Big Weasel was not a happy man.

Chapter 9

"Sissy, I counted six empty packages. You're giving Margie candy to keep her quiet while you watch soap operas!"

Health Nuts

Waiting outside Gerald's office, the kids made their Saturday plans. Simon would come over early to do the interview with Granma, and then they would all meet at the stump. Hummingbird said knowingly, "There's a lot we need to talk about." Boomer and Simon rolled their eyes—Hummingbird always wanted them to think there was something she knew that they didn't.

Gerald turned off the lights, his car keys jingling in

his free hand. "Why aren't you guys at home by now?" Rain excitedly told his father about photographing the fossils at the college. The kids listened carefully to see if Rain connected the fossils to Jimmy, but he deftly left out certain details.

"Your mother's got a whole collection of fossils, mostly shark teeth, she found up there at Shell Ridge," Gerald said.

"Yeah, she told me." Gerald just nodded. Sometimes he felt as if all the family information had been used up by the time he got around to telling it.

After they'd dropped off everyone, Rain moved into the front passenger seat. He couldn't arrange his legs comfortably because three plastic gallon jugs of water took up the space where his feet should be. "Dad, I'm going to put the water on the back seat."

Gerald smiled ironically. "I didn't think I'd ever be paying good money for 'spring water' from somebody's garden hose. But, your mother called and said that there's hardly any water at the house."

"We don't have any water at home?"

"Just a dribble. We've got water in those rain barrels for flushing the toilet, but drinking water is a problem. I'm afraid we're going to have to put off that garden tomorrow, Rain. Too much going on with this water thing."

"That's okay. Simon and I are going to be doing the family interview with Granma anyway." He looked a little sheepishly at his father, but Gerald was too distracted to remember Rain's assignment about the story never heard before. When Gerald pulled into the drive, they both noticed that Aunt

Sissy's car was still there. When they opened the front door, they noticed that her mouth was, too. Sissy and Roberta were fussing in the kitchen.

"You're all a bunch of health nuts! It was just some jelly beans—not poison!" Sissy protested indignantly.

"Sissy, I counted six empty packages. You're giving Margie candy to keep her quiet while you watch soap operas!" Roberta charged.

"Well, you got to do something for entertainment around this place. I guess I could watch the water dry up. If I let the faucet run full-blast, I could get a whole glass by the end of the day!"

"My goodness, Sissy," Gerald said good-humoredly, "you don't look very happy."

"I was happy once," Sissy pouted. "Yeah, Chester and I were happy for 10 years. And then we met!" Glaring at Gerald, she muttered under her breath, "Between Chester and this crazy family…"

Grabbing her purse and throwing on her sweater, Sissy flounced by Rain. "What are you looking at, Sour Puss? Afraid somebody's going to eat your cabbage?" Sissy kissed Granma goodbye, then paused dramatically at the door. "You people need more excitement in your life than a bunch of carrots. And so do I!" On that note, she swept grandly out of the house.

Open-mouthed, Rain looked at his father. "What did I do?"

"Nothing, Sport." Gerald pulled aside the blinds and watched Sissy tromp to her car. "Sissy's just been reading too many romance novels."

"Come on, Sour Puss," Granma teased Rain. "Help an old lady out of her chair. Let's eat."

At supper, Rain gave the family a rundown on the day's events. Everybody laughed at his story about Big Weasel, but Danny and Del were captured by the hot dog deal. "Mom, could we go get a hot dog tomorrow? We got a dollar."

Roberta laughed. "See, Rain, Frank Big Weasel knows his customers. Don't count him out yet!"

After supper, Rain played a couple of games of "Go Fish" with the twins. But the cards lost their appeal when Danny and Del heard Gerald tuning up the tiller. Apparently, there would be no planting this weekend, but Dad was getting ready. From the bedroom window, Rain watched the twins run across the yard to the old shed—its 60-watt bulb sending a shaft of dim yellow light into the evening dusk.

Now alone, he took the cigar box out of his backpack and placed it safely under an old pillow on the top shelf of the closet. Plopping down on the bed, he tucked his hands behind his head and stared at the ceiling. His mind whirling over the events of the day and previous night, Rain tried to slow down his thoughts by closing his eyes and visualizing the images in his dream.

He had the eagle song pretty well sorted out when sharks started swimming into his consciousness. That was when he remembered the big question mark in his notebook. Rain jumped up and went looking for his mother. He found her in her bedroom, folding laundry.

"Hey, Mom? What is type 1 diabetes?"

Roberta rolled up a pair of corduroys and placed them on

top of the twin's clothes pile. "Well, I don't think anybody really knows why, but for some reason, the body attacks the pancreas like it's a virus or something and destroys the cells that make insulin. Usually kids get it. They have to take insulin for the rest of their lives and really eat healthy to maintain a stable blood sugar level. I thought you would have read about it on all those diabetes Web sites you go to."

"Well, no. But I guess if there's a type 2 diabetes, there must be a type 1. Duh!"

Picking up the towels and heading to the bathroom, Roberta said, "Get those washcloths, honey." Then she added, "So, why do you want to know about type 1 diabetes, Rain?"

Rain followed his mother with the tower of neatly folded squares. "Hummingbird says that a girl is coming to live with them for a while, and she has it. She said her mom was telling her that type 1 can't be prevented."

"Well, from what we know about it now, she's right. But it will help that she'll be hanging out with some kids that know about diabetes. It's tough enough just being the new kid at school. What's her name?"

"Ahh, I can't remember."

Stopping at the door to Granma and Margie's room, Roberta said, "Did you remember to tell Granma that you're going to interview her tomorrow?"

Rain's eyes flew open—he'd forgotten! Piling his laundry load on top of the towels, Rain said, "Here, Mom, have some washcloths." He could hear Roberta's muffled "thanks" as he pushed open the door and whispered, "Granma, you awake?"

"Hmmm?"

"Can you tell me your story tomorrow?"

Half asleep, Grandma murmured, "I'm ready when you are. I got a good one all picked out."

Roberta was serving up whole wheat pancakes when Simon arrived early the next morning. "Simon, sit down," she invited, "and eat this last pancake before you boys get started." Although he had already had breakfast, Simon didn't turn down the offer of a second one. The shortest of the four friends, he was at last starting to show signs of a growth spurt. Simon was hungry all the time.

Margie proudly showed Simon her pancake. Roberta would pour the batter in animal shapes to the delight of the smaller children. "See," Margie said, "it's a rabbit and I'm going to eat its bunny tail."

Rain laughed. "Simon, don't you want a bunny, too?"

"No, that's okay," he said to Rain's mother. "A plain round one is fine."

Gerald came in and poured a cup of coffee. "So you guys are interviewing Granma?"

"Yeah, I brought a tape recorder so we wouldn't forget anything," Simon replied.

Gerald looked in the living room, expecting to see Granma in her recliner. She wasn't there. "Granma!" he called.

Rain got up from the kitchen table and looked in the bathroom. Granma wasn't at the sink, where she would

sometimes stand in front of the mirror examining the lines in her face. Her favorite joke was that her "wrinkles had wrinkles." He glanced out the window, checking the backyard. Her lawn chair was empty. Finally, in the bedroom, he found her rummaging through her old dresser. "I know it's in here someplace," she fretted. Granma pulled at a stuck drawer and found what she wanted—an old valentine candy box. She lifted off the lid, checked the contents, and thought to herself, Sissy, there's plenty of excitement in this box…and it's not cabbage! Turning to Rain, she announced, "I'm ready!"

Chapter 10

Then Granma reached down beside her chair and picked up the valentine candy box.

Granma Tells a Story

Simon finished the last mouthful of pancake and joined Rain and Granma in the living room. Roberta had already issued a "pipe down" order so that Granma's voice could be heard clearly on the tape recorder. The boys settled themselves on the floor in front of her old recliner. Arranging their sharpened pencils and notepaper, Rain and Simon were poised to launch their careers in journalism. Simon punched the record button and Rain gave Granma a thumbs-up that she could start talking.

Granma began her story without any hesitation.

"This is a story about when I was a girl about the same age as you boys. It all started when Delbert and I were walking home from school one day. We went to Sacred Heart Indian School back then. I guess it's been burned down 40 years now. But don't write that down—it's not part of the story."

Simon interrupted a little self-consciously, "Um, excuse me, Granma Hettie, but could you please identify Delbert?"

Rain explained, "We have to ask questions like reporters do, Granma."

Granma eyes drifted toward a yellowed photograph on the little table beside her chair. "Delbert was my brother. He was the best older brother anybody could have. Nobody ever picked on us girls," she smiled, "because Delbert was always there to protect us. He was handsome, wasn't he?"

Simon leaned forward to examine the picture. "Little Delbert is named after him?"

"That's right. That picture was taken when he went in the army."

"He got killed in World War II," Rain whispered in Simon's ear. Picking up his pencil, Rain gently reminded his grandmother, "So what happened that day, Granma?"

"Hmm? Oh, well, that afternoon, we were coming up on the road that splits and goes off toward Shell Ridge, that area around Red Water Mountain. I remember the sky was so blue, and it was real pretty. Well, Delbert saw a coyote in the road. That coyote was a rascal because he would run along and then stop and look over his shoulder at us. Delbert said, 'Looks like

he's asking us to follow him.'" At the mention of a coyote, the boys stopped taking notes and exchanged a quick glance.

"I was thinking how our mother wouldn't like it if we run off—not after no coyote—so I said, 'Delbert, we better not.' But Delbert said, 'Come on, let's see what he wants.' Delbert, he took one step toward that coyote and it took off! With Delbert after him. So, I took off after Delbert!" Roberta tiptoed in with a fresh cup of coffee. Granma thanked her and took a sip. Smacking her lips, she said, "That's just how I like it."

"Well, we ran and ran after that coyote. We got way off the road, running uphill through some trees. Then we saw the coyote go through a hole in some rocks. It was just big enough for us to get through. On the other side was a little canyon that went all around like a big bowl." Granma made a sweeping motion with her arm to show how the canyon wall surrounded them.

"There were lots of little holes in that wall—and some were bigger like caves. We were looking all around, and Delbert yelled, 'There he is!' because he'd seen the coyote's tail disappearing into one of those little caves. We run up to it and looked in. You had to bend over to see inside, and it was dark and real cool in there. The floor was sandy, so you could see the coyote's tracks.

"Delbert took my hand and pulled me after him. But it was too dark—I got scared and told Delbert I wasn't going in there. Delbert said he could see a little light that was way, way off, and he was going to find out where that coyote went."

"Just a second, Granma. Let us catch up," Rain said. Even though the tape was rolling, the boys were scribbling as fast as they could—trying to take good notes. "Okay, what happened next?"

"Well, boys, I waited and waited outside that cave. It seemed like Delbert was gonna be in there all day. And then (Granma smacked her hands together) he came busting out that hole like the very devil was after him." Granma laughed and shook her head, but her face had suddenly grown a bit more serious.

"I hollered, 'Delbert, wait!' But he never even turned around. I chased after him all the way back to the road and all the way home. When I got there, our mother was out in the yard and she was mad. She said, 'That boy come running through here like I don't know what!' I saw Delbert's dog go running off to a little old barn we had. We called it the barn, but it was no real barn. It was all ramshackley—mostly chickens just laid eggs in it."

"What was the dog's name, Granma?" Simon asked.

"Why do you want to know that?" Rain whispered.

"Well, we're supposed to get the details," Simon whispered back.

"Oh, I don't remember his name. I just knew that wherever the dog was, Delbert would be there, too. And sure enough, Delbert was hid in the barn. I went in there and called for him to come down from the coops. He did after a little while, but he wasn't happy about it. I asked him, 'What happened?'

"He told me that he kept going toward that light in the cave. Then he come out in what looked like a big rock room with no ceiling. He could look up and see the sky. There was this big pile of rocks there and a little spring. The coyote was sitting on top of the rocks, looking down at him."

Rain asked cautiously, "Did Delbert ever say what the

coyote looked like or if … well, if he ever said anything?"

Granma looked at Rain. He could tell she was surprised by the question. "No," she replied, "I don't remember him saying what he looked like, but I know the coyote didn't say anything—I would have remembered that!" Simon dotted a period at the end of his last sentence. He looked up and nodded at Granma to go on.

"Then Delbert said he saw something move, but he couldn't be sure. So he started looking around." Granma paused dramatically and then continued. "That's when he saw them! They were in the rock walls of that place—big huge creatures. Only they were skeletons. Some of 'em was curled up so tight that their snouts and long tails almost touched each other. Others had long stretched-out necks, and some were giant fish with mouths full of teeth big as knives." Rain and Simon had stopped writing.

"Delbert said he went up closer to look at them better. It was getting late, and the shadows made it hard to see. He said that there were lots of stones and things on the ground in front of the creatures. He picked up one that looked like a bone. And that's when it happened!" Granma stopped and took another sip of coffee.

"When what happened?" the boys cried.

Granma leaned toward Rain and Simon, her small crinkled eyes as wide open as age would allow. "When the skeletons started moving! They were twisting and turning every which way. And the wind started blowing cold—moaning just like somebody was crying." The boys' mouths fell open.

"Delbert was so scared—he started running out of there as fast as he could go. He'd forgotten all about the coyote, but he heard a sound like coyotes make, and he turned around, and there was the coyote, still on top of those rocks, standing up on his two back legs with his front paws up over his head!"

Simon darted his eyes toward Rain and whispered, "I bet he wasn't exercising."

"No," Rain said breathlessly, "he was *tricking*!"

Not hearing the boys' comments, Granma went on. "That's all it took. Delbert ran out of that cave and never looked back. After he finished telling me what happened, we just sat there for a while. We could see each other because the moon had come up by that time. The dog had gone to sleep waiting for us. But when we come out of the barn—he started howling. That dog never did stop howling, not until your great-great-granddaddy hollered he'd shoot him if he didn't stop."

Granma grimaced as a pain shot down her leg. She gestured to a pillow on the couch. "Here Rain, give me that, will you?" Rain handed Granma the pillow, and she stuffed it behind her left hip. Closing her eyes, she settled into its foam-filled comfort.

"Granma," Rain asked as if he didn't want to hear the answer, "did he shoot the dog?"

"Oh, no, honey, he didn't shoot that dog." Grandma laughed a little bit and pulled a blanket up around her legs. She took a long, deep breath. "Yes, I remember all of it like it was yesterday. Maybe because it was," she hesitated, "well, so scary."

Then she reached down beside her chair and picked up the valentine candy box. Anxiously, the boys watched Granma open the lid and take something out.

She said, "Give me your hand, Rain." Rain held out his hand and felt Granma press a hard object into his open palm. The boys stared at her gift—a disc-shaped fossil that was a stony echo of the living bone it had once been. Granma slid her hand under Rain's. He could feel the love in the softness of her touch and the reassurance it offered.

"Is this the bone Delbert took that day, Granma?"

She smiled and said gently, "Yes, that's the one. I kept it all these years. I don't know why. Maybe because it always made me think of Delbert…and powers we don't always understand. Now it's making me think of you, Rain." Granma shifted up the foot support of her old recliner and leaned back into its well-worn crevices. "Rain," she murmured, "turn on the TV. I want to see what's happening to that hurricane." He picked up the remote and flicked on the TV. Granma closed her eyes, and her breathing grew regular. Within seconds she was napping.

Delbert and the Coyote

Chapter 11

Converging at their meeting place, the kids put down their backpacks...

The Tree Stump

The boys crept out of the living room and then dashed to Rain's bedroom. Rain gave Granma's bone to Simon, who was fumbling to turn off the tape recorder. Then he shut the door and went to the closet. He retrieved the cigar box and emptied the fossil bones gently onto the bed. Simon positioned Granma's bone beside the other two. Now there were three—all almost identical. The boys stared at each other.

"The coyote, RD, the coyote. He's got something to do with this!"

Rain nodded. "Right—the coyote. You sure you got everything on tape?"

"Yeah."

"Come on. Let's go on over to the stump. Bring the tape recorder, notebook, and pencils. Um…what else?"

"How about a sandwich?" Simon suggested.

"You sound like Boomer—but good idea." The boys threw together some sandwich makings and grapes in a paper bag and filled up two empty bottles with water from the plastic jugs.

Before they left, Rain looked in on Granma, who was snoozing peacefully. A wisp of white hair had escaped her braid and lay untidily on the pillow that cradled her head. In her thin brown hands, the skin as translucent as tissue paper, she still held the valentine. Right then, Rain experienced one of those rare moments when a person's intellect and emotions converge to reveal something deeply vital. He was almost overwhelmed by the realization that he loved his great-grandmother and everything she had taught him with all his heart and mind.

Rain was lost in these thoughts when Simon broke in. "Something wrong, RD?"

"What? Oh. No, nothing's wrong."

Seeing Granma asleep in her chair, Simon whispered, "I guess she didn't watch the weather. Say, RD, why *does* your Granma like weather shows so much?"

Rain thought for a moment. "Well, it's like this. She says the weather is the best reality show on TV because it's all about the

power. The weather isn't good or bad—it just is." Rain paused and added, "Granma says storms are always coming—but you don't have to just stand there and let them blow you away."

Simon nodded. "That's deep. Maybe she'd tell us more about it sometime." He tugged at Rain's sleeve. "Come on. Let's go."

The boys left the house. They walked in silence across the road and headed down to the open meadow. They could see the stump a short distance away. The boys sat down under a clump of trees to wait for their friends. Simon unpacked the tape recorder and busied himself with his notebooks, but then he stopped and looked over at Rain. "Man, I'm kind of freaked out by that story."

"Me, too, but we got to start writing it up." Rain thought to himself, If Simon's freaked out now, just wait until I tell him about my dream.

Simon took out the interview guide. "We didn't even ask most of the questions. I forgot about it. How many pages should we write?"

"As long as it takes to tell, I guess."

Referring to the introductory paragraph in the guide, Simon said, "Well, Mrs. Corn says it boils down to who, what, where, when, and how.'"

"Okay, let's start with 'who,'" Rain replied. The boys took turns writing down the key points in Granma's story. Occasionally they referred to the tape to retrieve a detail. They tried to fit her narrative as best they could to the questions they didn't ask. Fortunately, Granma was a good storyteller.

"We better not tell where the coyote led Delbert and Granma—everybody would go looking for the cave," Rain warned. "They'd be tearing …" Rain stopped in midsentence. When he said the word "cave," the eagle's song came flooding back into his memory. Yes, the eagle had sung about a cave, too.

Simon erased the sentences about where the story took place and then asked, "What do you think we should call the story? RD?"

Distracted, Rain said quietly, "I don't know."

"How about 'When the Coyote Stood Up Like a Man'?"

Just then, Boomer's voice came thundering across the meadow. "Hey, RD! Simon!" Holding up a large sack, he yelled, "I got apples, and Hummingbird's got a bunch of other good stuff!" Rain picked up the cigar box that now seemed as if it weighed a thousand pounds, and Simon gathered the rest of their gear. They started through the knee-high grass—unaware that they were being followed by a rabbit.

Screened from view by a clump of switch grass, Thistle had been patiently listening to Rain and Simon talk about Granma's interview. Now she hopped after them, trailing far enough behind not to be detected. Thistle spotted an outcrop of black-eyed Susans near the stump that would give her plenty of cover. She scooted into the flowers and nestled down. Thistle had come to find out if Rain that Dances had heard the eagle's call for help. Now she would find out more. However, she was sure of one thing—her suspicion that Coyote was up to something was right.

Converging at their meeting place, the kids put down their backpacks and squared off around the stump. Rain stood to the north, Hummingbird to the south, Simon to the east, and Boomer to the west. Following a custom they had adopted as they grew older and better understood the eagle's messages, each child quietly reflected on what the Great Messenger had taught them—about nutritious foods, moving their muscles, and the healthy traditions of their own people. Then they sat down and shared their food, eating in silence.

When they had finished, Rain placed the cigar box on the stump. He opened it. To Hummingbird and Boomer he said, "Look inside." The two friends exchanged an apprehensive glance and peeped into the box.

Boomer cried, "Hey, there are three bones!"

But Hummingbird was more direct. Frowning, she demanded, "Where did the other bone come from? Have you been holding out on us, RD?"

"No, my Granma had it. She gave it to Simon and me when we interviewed her today." Hummingbird and Boomer started to interrupt with questions, but Rain quickly put up his hand. "I know this is so weird. But just hold on. You are going to flip out when you hear this. Simon, play the tape." Simon pressed the play button, and the kids listened to Granma's story. Boomer and Hummingbird both let out an "Ah-ha!" when Granma started describing the antics of the coyote. When she told the part about the skeletons twisting in the rock, Hummingbird

clasped her arms around her legs and put her forehead on her knees. This is a little frightening, she thought.

After the tape went silent, Boomer was the first to speak. "Wow, RD, that was like a Halloween movie or something."

Hummingbird was equally stunned. "There's really a place like that around here—with all those creatures?"

"I think there is," Simon replied, "but whether we can prove it or not, we've already started to write up the story for Mrs. Corn's class."

Rain stood up. "But there's more."

Simon said, "Don't think so, RD. That's the end of the tape."

"I don't mean more of Granma's story." Rain took a deep breath and glanced at Hummingbird. "I mean there's another story to tell. I think that the eagle has been trying to talk to me."

"When?" Simon asked in amazement. "Did he come to the stump again?" Boomer opened his mouth, but surprisingly nothing came out.

"No. It was a dream I had night before last. That's why I wanted us to come here today. So I could tell you about it. In the dream the eagle was talking … well, singing, about water and a turtle … and a cave. I don't think it's a coincidence that Granma talked about a cave, too. Anyway, I wrote down most of the things the eagle said." Hummingbird got the copies of Rain's notes out of her backpack and gave one to Boomer and Simon.

"What? We're getting handouts?" Boomer cried.

"Maybe we should just go through the notes, and RD can tell what he remembers," Hummingbird said patiently.

Boomer mocked, "Oh boy, and then if we're lucky, we can

take a test! I just love playing school!" Hummingbird poked her tongue out at Boomer, but Simon didn't say anything. He just started reading while Rain recounted the dream in as much detail as he could.

When Rain finished, Simon said, "Let's compare Granma's story with the dream. I think they're tied together some way."

Boomer suddenly got very serious. He laid the two sets of notes side by side on the grass. "Okay, let's make two lists—one of the stuff in the story and one for the dream. Then we can draw lines or something to connect them." Very smartly, he added, "And let's bring in Jimmy, too."

The four detectives labored over their clues until they came up with a summary and several conclusions. Hummingbird had made a chart that was organized into columns entitled "The Dream," "Granma's Story," and "Jimmy," with numbered rows labeled "Fossils," "Places," "People/Animals," and "Stuff that Happened."

Hummingbird cleared her throat. "Okay, these are our… *hypotheses*," she said, batting her eyes and grinning at Boomer. Hearing Rain and Simon's groans, she said, "Okay, okay, no more kidding. First, the fossils look alike, so they probably came from the same animal, but we don't know what kind of animal. However, Dr. Bamsey thought the fossils were 'marine,' from a sea creature. Second, the fossils come from the same place —a cave at Shell Ridge. Granma said she and Delbert were near Red Water Mountain, and that's out at Shell Ridge; and the eagle's song said something about 'water and blood.' That sounds pretty close."

Hummingbird looked at the boys to make sure they were with her. When they nodded, she went on, "Third, there is a guide that goes to the cave, and there are these 'takers.' The dream says 'one' leads the 'taker' to the cave. In Granma's story the coyote was the 'one' who led Delbert into the cave, and he took a bone—that makes Delbert a 'taker.' Jimmy had two bones in the cigar box. We don't know for sure, but maybe the coyote led Jimmy to the cave, and he is a 'taker,' too.

"Fourth, after Delbert took the bone, the skeletons started twisting, the wind was blowing, and Delbert got scared and ran away—also the coyote was acting weird. The dream says the 'old ones twist and the wind blows cold'…so that lines up. Referring to her "Jimmy" column, Hummingbird continued. "We know that Jimmy ran away. If he saw the twisting skeletons, he would have gotten really scared, too." Hummingbird laughed weakly, "I know I would have run far, *far* away if I saw that."

Boomer pointed out the parts in the story that had no counterpart in the dream. "Granma didn't say anything about a turtle and water, but the eagle's song does."

"Yeah, right here, 'When the turtle wakes up, the water goes away,'" Hummingbird read aloud from her copied page.

Connecting the dots, Simon suggested, "Maybe Jimmy's taking the fossils made the water dry up?"

"Then why, Sherlock, wouldn't the water have gone away when Delbert took a bone?" Hummingbird parried.

"I don't know, Dr. Watson, why don't you tell me?"

Interrupting their banter, Rain said, "Well, if we find out that the fossils are from a turtle…then it wasn't just some

dumb dream. We'll know the eagle is really talking to us."

"You mean talking to you, RD," Hummingbird reminded him.

Rain sighed and looked down at the bewildering pile of scribble that lay in the grass. "But you're all helping. It isn't just me."

Noticing that Rain seemed a bit lost, Hummingbird tried to reassure him, "You're right, RD. We're all in this together." However, secretly, she was glad the eagle didn't come to her in a dream—he was laying a lot of responsibility on RD. After all, there was that part in the eagle's song about "a boy must help us." Hummingbird knew who that boy was, and she was sure that RD did, too.

Boomer shifted into action mode. "So, let's go out to Shell Ridge tomorrow and look around."

"What would we be looking for?" Rain asked.

"Maybe Jimmy left something out there. Besides, I've never been exploring at the Ridge—I'd like to see it. Granma made it sound like a pretty cool place."

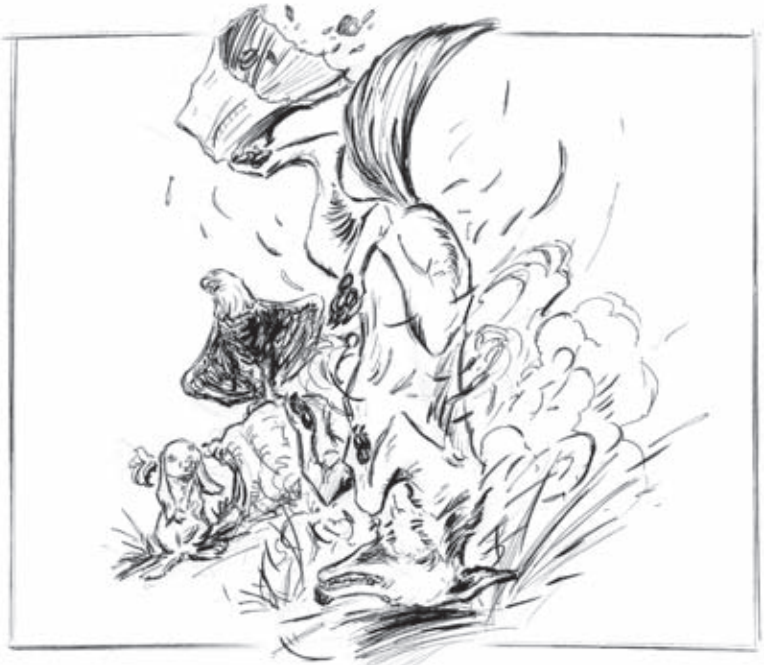
"Yeah, we could go hunting for shark teeth," Rain said.

"I can't go tomorrow," Hummingbird said. She explained to Boomer and Simon about the arrival of her new "sister," Arianna. "She and her mother are getting here tonight."

The four friends started to pack up and head for home. They had put a lot of the puzzle together, and although they couldn't figure it all out, they agreed, at least, on one thing about Jimmy's disappearance—the coyote was messing with him and that was why he ran away.

They could not have been more wrong.

Chapter 12



Finally Coyote bounded out of his minicyclone and landed upside down, his behind exposed in a most undignified manner.

Coyote's Powwow

Thistle watched the kids pack up their things and depart the meadow. "They've gotten so big," she said to herself. "They aren't little children anymore." Thistle looked skyward to see if she could spot the eagle. But there were no wings in the sky—not even a late summer butterfly.

Never a rabbit to worry about time, Thistle simply diverted her attention to her ever-present need to consume vegetation. She had a great deal to tell Sky Heart, but in the meantime she

would nibble blissfully on a succulent clump of clover.

Thistle had chewed her way through the clover and was working on the smooth bark of a young sapling, when her ears alerted her that she had company. She stopped eating and was still. Her nose told her it was not Sky Heart.

"Coyote?"

"Right behind you," he replied very quietly.

She turned and stared directly into the slanted, yellow eyes of the trickster. "What are you doing here?"

"Our friends have been calling out my name all day. Besides, I've brought you a present." Coyote smiled and pushed a paper sack toward Thistle with his nose.

"Another stolen bag?" The rabbit pushed her head inside the sack and smelled. "Humph, cookies. I should have known. I don't eat cookies."

"Good," Coyote said greedily, "all the more for me." Coyote pawed the cookies out of the sack, and chomped two filled with sugar cream in his strong jaws. He licked his lips and laughed at Thistle. "Too bad rabbits don't eat cookies," he said smugly, "these are deli…." Coyote's eyes suddenly flew open and he shrieked as the sugar provoked a bad tooth into firing off a pain that pierced the top of his head. He ran in circles, swiping at his mouth, and spitting and slobbering sugar into the grass. When the pain began to subside, he lay down, breathing heavily with his tongue lolling from his mouth.

Sky Heart, who had just arrived, perched on the stump and looked down on Coyote. "Were you going to say 'delicious?'"

The eagle's mockery, though mild, made Coyote angry,

especially since Thistle was there to hear it. He turned his anger on the paper sack, scattering cookies everywhere. Not content with that, he pounced on the cookies and "killed" them, scratching them to crumbs in the dirt.

"Feel better?" asked the eagle.

"Yes," Coyote answered, "I do." He composed himself and attempted a genial acknowledgment of his compatriots. "I'm glad you flew down to join us, Sky Heart. Now we are all together again."

Thistle hopped forward. She politely nodded to Sky Heart and Coyote. "Normally, I would be more courteous, but today I must speak very directly. Forgive me." To Coyote, she said, "You know all about the water drying up and why it has happened. Because of who you are, Coyote, you have created this situation."

"True, but you can't blame me," Coyote sniffed, dismissing her charge. "The humans are responsible. They follow me for their own reasons. I only like to see what comes of it."

Thistle knew it was useless to argue with him. "Coyote, Sky Heart went to Rain that Dances in a dream to get his help in returning the Old One's bones. Grandmother Turtle says the water doesn't flow because some humans are doing bad things with her body." Coyote listened but said nothing. To Sky Heart, Thistle said, "Rain and his friends know that Coyote led Rain's Uncle Delbert to 'the place where the giants sleep' many years ago. They suspect that he recently took the boy, Jimmy, there too. They believe that he tried to frighten Delbert and Jimmy."

Coyote was indignant. He remembered the incident well. "I did not try to scare the uncle!" he objected. When one had lied

so much, it was hard to get others to believe you. "I only stood up to stretch," he said sullenly. "Delbert scared himself."

"But your games," Sky Heart protested, "have imbalanced the spirit of the land and the people…."

Before he could finish, Coyote interrupted. "You are the messenger, Eagle. The humans are always looking to you—not me. It is not my job to help them when they are in trouble."

"No, you make the trouble," Thistle chided.

"Trouble is how they learn!" Coyote rebuked her sharply. "You did enough tricks in the lands to the south to know that, Cottontail—back when your ears stood up straight like a wild rabbit." He cut a sideways glance at Thistle and sneered, "Now you are just a domesticated 'flop-ear.'"

Thistle flinched and turned away. Coyote realized he had gone too far. Thistle liked these children, and he had scolded her for it. Clumsily, he tried to appease her by making her smile.

First, he prostrated himself on his stomach and started to "swim" in the grass with his tail held straight up like a fishing pole.

Exasperated, Thistle said, "Are you trying to be funny?"

Coyote sat up. "Yes!" he bragged, "I'm a big comedian—people all over the world laugh at me!" Then he flipped on his back and wriggled his hips, slapping his tail on the ground like a beaver. (He also emitted some rude noises that will be omitted from this story.) Sky Heart turned his head to hide a grin, but Thistle was not entertained.

Seeing that he was having no luck, Coyote picked up the remains of the paper sack and wrapped it around his shoulders.

He began to mince about on tippy-toe, swirling the sack around his head in a shawl dance so earnest that Sky Heart couldn't help but laugh. Thistle tried to stifle her amusement. "Look! The fool thinks he's good!"

Circling the eagle and the rabbit, Coyote began to enjoy himself. In his exuberance he abandoned his dainty performance and flung himself into a twirl of pounding and stomping so violent that he was lost in a cloud of dust. Finally, he bounced out of his minicyclone and landed upside down, his behind exposed in a most undignified manner. To complete his humiliation, the sack, impaled on his tail, flapped in the wind like a candy wrapper on a garbage collector's spike.

Thistle was lying on her side. Her mouth was so small it was difficult to know if she was laughing or not. On close observation one could see that her mouth was open, exposing her top and bottom incisors, and she was gasping—but not unpleasantly.

Coyote staggered to his feet. "Ha!" he panted, "I made you laugh." He was triumphant. Looking around at the clumps of gray fur that littered the ground, he asked, "Did I do that?"

Thistle blew a wad of fur off the end of her nose and sat up, her heart still racing. Thoroughly confused by Coyote's mood swings, she sighed, "You are the worst scoundrel that ever lived, Coyote."

"I know I make trouble," Coyote conceded, "but I'm not evil. Once I told Hummingbird I would not trick them, and I've kept my promise."

Returning to serious matters, the eagle pressed Coyote. "I only ask that you don't play games with Rain that Dances."

The sport that Coyote had found in Sky Heart and Thistle was wearing off, and he was restless to find his dinner. He liked games, but whatever the outcome of this one, he knew it would be of his own making. Yawning, he promised, "I will not work this thing against the boy." Coyote scratched a burr from his coat that had hitched a ride during his dance. He turned to leave but hesitated. Looking over his shoulder, he challenged the eagle, "We will know soon if you have entrusted your messages to the right one."

Sky Heart and Thistle watched Coyote trot away. They kept him in view until he disappeared in the trees beyond the meadow.

Thistle turned to the eagle. "The boys are going to Shell Ridge tomorrow. They call it a 'cool' place—whatever that means."

Nodding, the eagle understood her implied request. "They are just being boys. I'll fly over and watch for them."

Thistle turned back to look in the direction the trickster had gone. "One thing you can say for Coyote," she mused, "he certainly knows how to powwow."

Chapter 13

"Maybe," Big Weasel said, "I ought to take this home and read it."

Big Weasel Gets the Message

It was early Sunday afternoon, and the boys were grateful for the cool autumn breeze—they didn't expect much shade at Shell Ridge. While Simon and Boomer thumbed through a guide for identifying common fossils that Simon had printed from the Internet, Rain loaded the trunk of Roberta's car with bottles of water and homemade "shark teeth kits." The kits were grocery bags the boys had stuffed with an assemblage of unnameable gadgets, plus garden spades, old spoons, a small

barbeque brush, and toothpicks.

Roberta emerged from the house with Danny and Del in tow. Buckling them in the back seat, she asked Simon, "Have you got your watch?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Okay, I've got to drop off some stuff for a diabetes talking circle tomorrow at the recreation center. Then we'll head out to the Ridge. You'll have two hours before I come back to pick you up."

"Aww, Mom," Rain protested, "only two hours?"

"That's plenty of time to find some shark teeth."

As Roberta drove into Thunder Rock, they passed a store parking lot where a tanker was dispensing drinking water to people lined up with plastic jugs and buckets. Simon, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, pointed out the window. "My dad said they'll be out our way this afternoon."

"Right, they'll be at the park," Roberta said. "I hope I've got enough containers to last us a couple of days." Crossing the Thunder Rock city limits, Roberta slowed to the speed limit and turned right at Big Weasel's on Jim Thorpe Road. She was accelerating the car when Boomer suddenly yelled, "Stop!"

Roberta stomped on the brake and pulled abruptly off the asphalt, her heart pounding. She wheeled around in her seat, expecting a child emergency. Seeing nothing except two 12-year-olds with stricken faces, Roberta yelled, "What?"

"Go back to Big Weasel's, Mom!" Rain cried.

"Good grief, Rain, I thought Danny had opened the car door!" Putting on her "angry-mother" face, Roberta demanded,

"Why do you want to go back to Big Weasel's?"

Rain started to speak, but Boomer answered. "Cause he's got a sign up about a healthy lunch?" he squeaked.

Shifting her disapproval to Boomer, Roberta admonished, "Don't ever yell like that when a person is driving. That's dangerous!"

"Yes, ma'am, I'm sorry."

Roberta turned the wheel and drove back to the Jif Mart. She parked the car and said impatiently, "So what am I supposed to be looking at?"

"That!" The boys hollered, pointing to new ads in the store windows. Instead of the "artery blockage" he was usually selling, Big Weasel was now promoting his new low-calorie, vitamin-enriched "Start Your Heart" breakfast and the "12 O'Clock High-Energy Special." "He's stolen our ideas! That's not fair to Boo!" the boys clamored.

Closing her eyes, Roberta puffed out a little breath of exasperation. "Guys, you don't own healthy food. Besides, you want other store owners to copy what Boo started. That way the community wins because there's more healthy food for everybody."

"But," Boomer wailed, "won't people stop buying stuff at Boo's?"

"Not if he is a good businessman. I wouldn't worry about Boo."

"Mommy," the twins begged, "can we get that hot dog?"

Unbuckling her seatbelt, Roberta said, "Come on. Let's go in and see what he's got. I think we can find something better than a hot dog."

The boys got out of the car and reluctantly followed Roberta and the twins into the store. Roberta made a quick assessment of the store's shelf content. Big Weasel didn't have the benefit of the organizing that the kids had done for Boo, but he did have more choices, and he was offering chicken tacos made with reduced calorie tortillas and fresh fruit by the checkout. She herded the boys to the counter. "Hi, Frank, got an energy snack for some boys going hunting for shark teeth?"

"Hey, Roberta! I haven't seen you in a while." Big Weasel stepped from behind the counter. He was a big barrel of a man who, apparently, was a fan of his own "Jumbo Combos." Gesturing toward the grocery section, he offered, "I got some new trail mix."

The boys dutifully plodded to the snack aisle. Surveying the choices, Rain grumbled, "Boo's is better than this." Hearing the rudeness, Roberta pursed her lips and darted a look at her son. Ducking behind a soft drink display to escape his mother's reproach, Rain whispered to Simon, "We better watch it—we're getting her riled up."

"What about us, Mommy?" the twins asked, tugging at her jeans.

"Frank, give me a couple of those chicken tacos, and pile on the lettuce and tomato."

Returning with three packages of trail mix, Simon placed them on the counter and asked the big man, somewhat suspiciously, "What's in a 12 O'Clock High-Energy Special?"

"Juice or low-fat milk, turkey on whole wheat, an apple, and a small package of walnuts," Big Weasel replied. "The county

extension service helped me with the menu. Of course, I've still got my usual specials, but I'm diver … uh …"

"Diversifying?" Roberta helped.

"Yeah."

"That's smart. Say, Frank, could I give you some free brochures about preventing type 2 diabetes? I'd appreciate it if you'd offer them to your customers. I have some in the car."

"Sure, I guess," Big Weasel said agreeably. "I'm a little new to this 'health' thing."

Giving Rain the keys, Roberta told him to get a stack from the car trunk. When Rain returned, Big Weasel reached for a brochure and flipped through it. "Maybe," he said, "I ought to take this home and read it." He looked down at his stomach and chuckled, "I haven't seen my feet lately." Rubbing his jaw, Big Weasel said unexpectedly to Roberta, "My brother has diabetes. His kidneys are so bad, he goes to dialysis now. It…it really worries me, you know?"

Rain had been standing beside his mother, waiting impatiently to leave the store. But when he heard that Big Weasel's brother had diabetes, Rain looked at him and saw for the first time, not the "big bad competition," but just a regular guy—who at that moment seemed pretty vulnerable. Rain glanced at Simon and Boomer, who were looking at Big Weasel a little differently, too.

"Where would you like me to put the brochures?" Rain asked. "If they're near the newspapers, people pick them up faster."

"Uh, yeah, thanks. Over there under the bulletin board. Put

'em in one of those racks."

While Roberta paid for the snacks, Rain went looking for the bulletin board. Simon and Boomer had already found it at the store's side entrance. They were urgently motioning for him to come over. Rain dropped the brochures into a rack slot and looked up questioningly. "What?"

Simon whispered, "Look at this, man," and pointed to some yellow flyers that were push-pinned over a jumble of advertisements for home beauty treatments, school raffles, and local roofing contractors. Under a poorly photocopied drawing of a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, the flyer announced: "Become a Commercial Fossil Collector! Work with the Professionals! Earn Good Pay! Call: 555-602-9990."

Rain pulled out the pin and took one of the flyers. He folded it in half and handed it to Boomer, who was wearing a jacket with big pockets. "Here, keep this. We'll talk about it later."

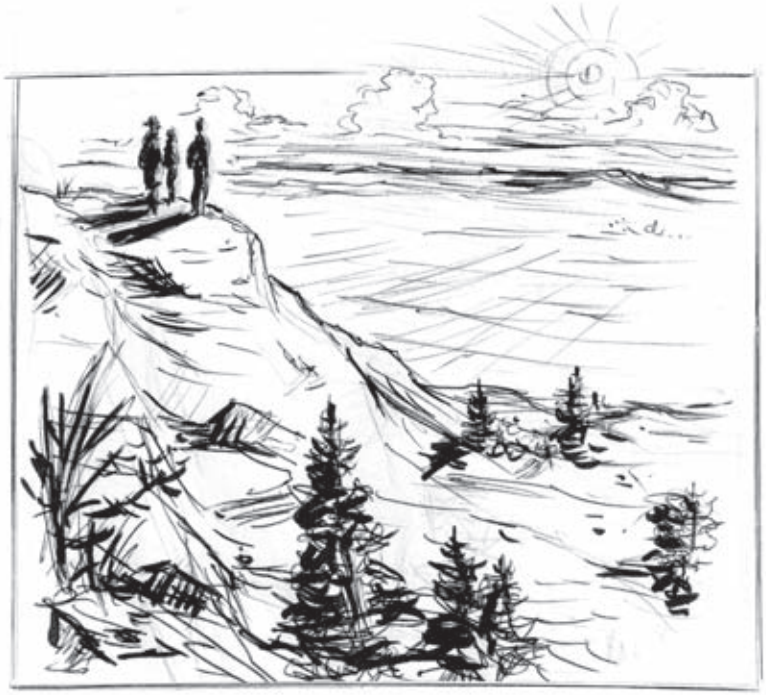
Simon tapped Rain on the shoulder. "Your mother's already in the car."

Hurrying to the door, Rain called out to Big Weasel, "Thanks for taking the brochures…and good luck with the lunches."

Simon gave Big Weasel a thumbs-up and Boomer shouted, "Yeah, sell all those 12 O'Clocks!"

"Thanks," Big Weasel called back. "Good luck with the sharks!"

Chapter 14



The three Indian boys stood in silence, looking out at the geological majesty before them.

Shell Ridge

Rain and Boomer helped Roberta unload food diaries, brochures, and snacks for the talking circle, while Simon struggled with the flip charts. Unmindful of all the activity, the twins sat contentedly in the car eating their healthy tacos.

Exiting the recreation center, Roberta thanked the boys for pitching in. "Whew! That was a big help." She reached in the bag from the Jif Mart and handed each boy a package of trail mix. As all the kids munched on something, Roberta

headed for the low hills that bounded the south side of Shell Ridge. Driving five miles beyond the Tribe's fair and powwow grounds, she finally spotted the old service road she was looking for. Roberta pulled off and drove for about a quarter mile, stopping at an old pumping station. A weed-filled trail started at the back of the station and meandered into a stand of short, scrubby pines that bordered a rocky slope.

She popped open the trunk, and the boys pulled out their paper sacks. Leaning out the car window, Roberta laid down the rules. "Okay guys. Be back, right here, at exactly 3:30. Follow the trail and don't go climbing up on the ridge line—I don't want any broken necks. Stay on the edge of the flats. You'll find plenty of stuff there."

"Mommy, we want some teeth, too," the twins begged.

"We'll bring back a sack full," Rain promised.

To the delight of the little guys, Boomer bared his teeth and ran at the back window of the car, shouting, "You can have mine, too! Grrrr …!" Del and Danny shrieked with laughter.

Turning the car around, Roberta made her usual plea, "Okay, Mommy's got to drive. Pipe down. Pipe down…please!"

Simon waved at the bouncing twins as Roberta drove off, then turned to Boomer. "Let's look at that flyer." Boomer retrieved it from his pocket and they read it again. The only real piece of information was the phone number, which was local. The boys started walking up the trail, talking as they cleared the pines.

"Could it be one of those fossil poachers Dr. Bamsey was talking about?" Boomer wondered.

Rain laughed. "Why don't we call the number and find out?"

Thinking Rain was serious, Simon said, "He's not going to answer the phone 'Fossil Poacher'!"

"I *know* that," Rain retorted, "but we could find out who wants to hire collectors. It could be somebody at the college—like a real science thing."

Being cautious, Simon advised, "Well, if it's a poacher, we don't want to call from one of our numbers. It would come up on his call list."

"Okay, I'll call from the school office tomorrow," Boomer volunteered. "There're a million people at the school. He wouldn't know it was us."

The boys ceased talking—they had reached a rockier part of the trail that was uphill. Finally they crested the rise and looked down on the flats that had once been an ancient seabed. The Tribe called the area Shell Ridge, but the actual ridge, which rose up on the east side of the flats, ran northward for 50 miles. To the west was a jumble of low hills dissected by miles of narrow little gullies and ravines. The three Indian boys stood in silence, looking out at the geological majesty before them. In the early afternoon sun, the flats shimmered like a sheet of hammered gold against a cloudless, cerulean sky. Almost in disbelief, Rain said, "This land is our reservation."

Boomer was in awe. "Yeah. I bet kids just like us stood on this very spot 1,000 years ago—and they saw what we are seeing."

Bringing the boys back to more recent times, Simon said, "My dad says this is the aquifer where all our water comes from."

Simon's comment reminded the boys that they were thirsty. The sun had become very warm on the treeless hill.

Between swigs from his water bottle, Rain said, "Granma's cave is out there somewhere." He paused and then added, "Well, does anybody see Jimmy?"

Gulping down cool liquid, Boomer and Simon shook their heads no. Then Simon smiled and added, "I don't see any coyotes, either."

"Then let's go fishing for shark teeth!" Rain shouted.

Heading to the horizontal ground below, it became evident why the area was called Shell Ridge. The boys were literally crunching their way down on fossil-rich rubble—much of it clearly recognizable as sea shells. It was hard to decide what to pitch into their paper bags. Reaching the bottom, they stopped to reference the fossil guide.

Boomer held up an impression of a shell in a rock. Simon flipped through the stapled pages until he saw something similar. "I think it's a 'bivalve'… like a clam."

"Only millions of years old," Boomer observed.

"What's this one?" Rain asked. "It looks like a little tube."

Rapidly turning pages, Simon found it. "Um, that's a 'crinoid.' It's the arm of a really old starfish."

Happy that they were finding some "real stuff," the boys stashed their heavy paper bags and turned westward toward the low hills to search in earnest for the small, black, triangular fossils that had once been in the business end of a shark. They walked slowly along, bent over, eyes approximately two feet off the ground. After fifteen minutes, Simon hollered, "I

think I found one!" Rain and Boomer rushed over and helped Simon liberate his find, loosely stuck in the limestone soil. It was a beauty about one inch long.

Determined that each of them would find a tooth, the boys fanned out over a wider space and continued prospecting. Within minutes, Boomer whistled. Holding up his trophy, he yelled, "Hey! Got one! It was just lying on top waiting for me!"

Rain called to his friends, "I must be the slowpoke!" But not for long. Exploring the ground near a clump of bushes struggling for survival in the dusty flats, Rain spied the telltale triangle of a shark's tooth. He sat down and jimmied it carefully with a spoon from the weathering crust. Licking his finger, he rubbed the fossil until it was clean and shiny black. Rain stood up to show Boomer and Simon his find, but he stopped when he noticed some white dust in the far distance. Joining his friends, Rain said, "Hey look, somebody's got a car out here."

Still searching the ground, Boomer said, "Yeah, there's lots of different ways to get into the flats."

Looking up and shading his eyes, Simon announced, "It's coming this way…."

Squinting at the approaching dust, Rain agreed. "Come on. Let's get up higher to see what we can see." With Rain in the lead, the boys scrambled up the loose soil between a tumble of boulders and lay down on a flat rock. Soon, a Range Rover came roaring into view. It slowed and turned on an old, washed-out road. The vehicle bumped gingerly over a big rut and then stopped. The driver remained behind the steering wheel, while a tall man jumped out of the passenger side of the

car and started unloading several heavy bags from the back of the Rover. He then dragged the bags to a rocky outcrop, half-hidden in scrub brush.

Stopping to wipe his face and neck with a bandana, the man nonchalantly surveyed the surrounding terrain. He stared momentarily in the direction where the boys were hidden, but looked upward when the call of an eagle distracted his attention. The boys glanced at the sky, too, but like the man, saw nothing. They were relieved when the lanky figure hopped back in the car, which drove slowly through a narrow aperture in the hills. The boys could hear the grinding of the Range Rover's engine for several minutes. Then there was silence.

Simon was excited. "Do you think that was a fossil poacher?"

Boomer sat up. "Maybe. What do you think, RD?"

Rain was already making his way down the slope. "I don't know, but let's go see what's in those bags." The boys trekked the short distance to the outcrop. It wasn't difficult to find the bags, since there had been no real attempt to hide them. Expecting to find a cache of shovels, pick axes, or maybe even some explosives, the boys were disappointed to find nothing more than four 50-pound bags labeled "Commercial Grade Plaster of Paris."

Boomer nudged a sack with his foot. "Wonder what they want this for?" Rain shrugged. He didn't have a clue what people did with Plaster of Paris.

"Hey, guys!" Simon raised the alarm. "It's 3:15!"

"Oh, man! We got to run!" Rain shouted. "Mom will kill me!"

The boys took off running and retraced the path they had taken on the periphery of the flats. Each of them was in excellent physical shape, and they had no trouble covering the ground quickly. As they stopped to pick up their bags of fossil fragments, Rain paused and looked back.

Boomer ran around him and hollered, "Come on, RD!" But Rain ignored him. He wanted a few more moments to savor the view of the landscape they had just departed. Fixing the entire vista in his memory, he would be able to recall its detail many years into the future. He would be glad that he could.

Chapter 15

"Look, Daddy! These are teeth!" Danny and Del yelled, holding up handfuls of shell fragments.

Buffalo and Sharks

Rain looked for Hummingbird in the small crowd that waited at the park for the arrival of the water tanker. He spotted her unloading plastic containers from the back of her dad's pickup truck. Rain waved and ran over. "Hey, Bird! You should have come with us today! We found lots of…." Running around the bed of the truck, Rain had almost collided with a young girl who wasn't Hummingbird. "Oh, hey. I'm sorry…."

Hummingbird appeared holding an armload of empty gallon milk jugs. "Arianna, this is my friend RD. Seeing Rain's fluster, she teased, "He's usually not in this big of a hurry."

Arianna smiled and said, "Hello," holding up her hand in a little wave. Rain noticed that when she smiled, her eyes twinkled in a way that made her whole face look friendly. He also observed that she had come to haul some water. Her glossy, dark hair was pulled back in a no-nonsense ponytail, and she wore well-worn cutoffs and a tee-shirt that read, "St. Anne's Middle School, Field Day Winner." Rain also noticed that she was wearing a necklace—a turtle necklace.

Rain managed a small "Hi." To be more polite, he added, "You got here last night?"

"Yes, we came in kind of late." Arianna looked around at the gathering families. "This is really something, running out of water."

Nodding toward her tee-shirt, Rain asked, "Do you like track?"

Arianna replied, "And basketball and cycling, too."

The crowd suddenly stopped chattering when someone yelled, "Here comes the water buffalo!" A few people clapped as a truck hauling a water tank pulled up on the grass near the baseball field. Everyone grabbed a container and began to line up in family clumps. Roberta, Aunt Sissy, and Rain queued behind Boomer, his mother, and two brothers; followed by Hummingbird's family (including Arianna and her mother) and Simon with his sisters and cousins. All told, approximately 40 neighbors stood waiting for water.

A young man stepped out of the truck's cab and began to set up the hose line. He stopped repeatedly to refer to an instructional manual that he gripped tightly in his left hand. One of the men in the crowd called out, "Hey, Buddy! I thought Raymond was delivering the water."

"Yeah, well, Ray went home sick, and they called me."

"Have you done this before?" one of the waiting mothers asked.

"No, but if Ray could do it," Buddy replied good-naturedly, "then I guess I can—if somebody will give me a hand."

Two dads came forward to help him, and in ten minutes they had the apparatus assembled. Buddy signaled to the crowd, "Okay, first person in line, get ready!"

Boomer's mother stepped forward and held her jug up to the spout. Buddy engaged the pump, and she waited for the release of water, but there was no gush.

Boomer hollered to Buddy, "You better do that again. Nothing happened!"

Buddy tinkered with the pump and called, "Anything that time?"

Boomer yelled back, "No!" Buddy gestured for the helper dads to come up front again. They were scratching their heads over the manual when Arianna stepped out of line and walked confidently up to the water buffalo. The watching crowd began to murmur as she waited politely for the men to acknowledge her. However, engrossed in the mysteries of hydraulics, they did not notice Arianna.

Hands behind her back, she leaned forward and said,

"Excuse me, maybe I can help."

Buddy looked up. "Sorry, little girl. You'll have to wait your turn." The crowd grew quiet.

Arianna persisted, "I think I can help you get the water started."

The men exchanged amused glances. Buddy smiled and said, "Oh, really? So what do you think the problem is?"

"You probably didn't prime the pump. The water won't flow if the water doesn't go all the way through the hose line and into the pump."

Buddy's mouth fell open, and he started to laugh. To the dads he said, "I think she's right—I didn't prime the pump." Chuckling at himself, Buddy looked up "priming" in the manual. Referring to the instructions, the men made the proper adjustments, and Buddy started the pump. Boomer's mother turned the valve at the end of the hose and water poured forth. The neighbors applauded and whistled.

Arianna walked modestly back to Hummingbird's place in line. As she passed, Rain, Boomer, and Simon stared admiringly. Hummingbird was disconcerted. "Well, I guess that was a good way for everybody to meet you."

Picking up an empty jug, Arianna said in an unassuming way, "Well, I'm sure they would have figured it out anyway." Hummingbird stared at her new friend. She had never had to share the spotlight before. Apparently, she was going to have to make room for another smart girl in the "club."

Having their water needs filled for the next few days, the families vacated the park with the knowledge that the next

fill-up would be Wednesday evening. Once at home, Rain's job was to unload the water jugs. Some he lugged to the shed, and others that would be used immediately, he placed on the floor in the kitchen. Danny and Del watched his labors patiently. When they saw Rain pull out his "shark kit" from the car trunk, they ran eagerly to see what he had brought them. Having already removed some of the nicer specimens, he set the heavy paper sack on the back porch, and the twins dug in like it was a treasure trove.

Gerald looked out the back door to see what the twins were so excited about. "Look, Daddy! These are teeth!" they yelled, holding up handfuls of shell fragments.

"Wow," Gerald marveled, "better not let 'em bite." To Rain he said, "So, did you have a good time?"

"Yeah, Dad. It was beautiful out there. We each got a shark tooth." Rain pulled his tooth from his pocket and handed it to his father.

Gerald held it up to the light. The twins jumped up, clamoring to hold it. "Now, just hold on, guys. Yeah, that's a nice one. Small, but perfect."

"Dad, we saw something funny out there today."

Still looking at the tooth, Gerald said, "What was that?"

"There were some guys driving around, and they dumped off some bags of Plaster of Paris. Why would they do that?"

"Did you talk to them?"

"No, they didn't see us."

Gerald rubbed his chin. "I don't know. There are some big gypsum deposits out there. That's what you use to make Plaster

of Paris—gypsum. A few years ago I thought about gypsum mining as a business for the Tribe, but I let it go. Too much environmental destruction." Looking a little troubled, Gerald added, "I hope nobody is thinking about mining. I'll check it out. By the way, how did the interview with Granma go?"

"She was great. Our first write-up was kind of messy, so Simon is copying it over tonight. I'll get the tape so you can listen to it." Proudly he said, "Mrs. Corn is going to love it."

Rain and Simon stood outside the school office on Monday morning, watching through the glass partition as Boomer explained to the office secretary that he needed to make a call. She nodded and pointed to a row of chairs where he could wait. A tearful girl already had possession of the phone. Boomer grinned and gave the guys the OK sign.

Keeping an eye on the clock (they still had fifteen minutes before Miss Biddy sealed off her room to all late-comers), Rain asked, "How does the interview look?"

Simon took out the three-page story from his backpack and handed it to Rain. He scanned the pages quickly to see that there were no references to specific locations at Shell Ridge or to Granma's fossil. Satisfied, he congratulated Simon. "This looks great. The title is just the best—'When Coyote Stood Up Like a Man.'"

"Hey look," Simon said. "The girl's off the phone." They watched Boomer grab the phone and punch in the number. He looked at them through the window with no expression as

the phone rang. Shifting from foot to foot, Boomer listened impatiently—then suddenly hung up. He picked up his books and joined them in the hall.

Rain and Simon crowded around him anxiously. "Well?"

"I got voice mail. It said I had reached Nelson's Rock and Smoke Shop, then a whole bunch of stuff about their hours and how to get there."

Simon said, "That's in Anderson—over there in Whorter County about 10 miles from the rez. My dad's taken me there a couple of times."

Boomer was disappointed. "I guess it makes sense that a store like that would hire people to find rocks and stuff. Doesn't sound like a fossil poach …" Boomer stopped when he saw the expression on Rain's face. "What?"

"The cigar box," Rain said, almost whispering.

"Cigar box," Simon repeated.

"Yeah. There's a sticker on the back of Jimmy's cigar box. It says 'Nelson's Rock and Smoke Shop!'" The boys exchanged glances. Apparently, they had discovered another very important clue.

The Water Buffalo

Chapter 16

Spotting the kids, Miss Swallow hurried over, smiling and holding up some papers in her hand.

Turtle Revelations

Before they could discuss this new information, the bell rang, demanding that they hurry to homeroom. Entering Mrs. Biddy's class, Rain and Boomer quickly scanned the classroom for Jimmy, but he wasn't there. Without conferring with Boomer, Rain marched over to Mrs. Biddy's desk. Boomer quickly followed. "Excuse me, Mrs. Biddy," Rain asked politely, "could you tell us why Jimmy's not at school?"

In response to his question, Mrs. Biddy looked guardedly

over her glasses at the boys, as if students could not be trusted with such top-secret information. Finally, she said, "I'm not at liberty to discuss Jimmy's absence, but it appears to be a family matter that is keeping him from attending school. Let's take our seats, please."

The boys filed down the row of desks, with Boomer muttering, "A family matter? What kind of family matter?"

"Well, at least," Rain offered as they took their seats, "she didn't say he'd been kidnapped." The boys brightened somewhat at this interpretation of Jimmy's disappearance and actually managed to get interested in their first-period class. Mrs. Cooper was teaching the ancient civilizations unit in "Yesterday and Today around the World." This week the focus was on the great pyramid builders—the Egyptians and the Maya. Although pyramids and papyrus were interesting, Boomer was most impressed that the Egyptians mummified people—and their cats. He contemplated what it would be like to mummify his dog, Bear. "I could wrap him up in sheets and sit him up in a little dog house. What do you think, RD?"

In response to this proposal, Rain simply observed that the Egyptians were "cool," but Boomer was "mental." However, despite the appeal of ancient civilizations, neither of the boys could keep any scholastic momentum going, and Simon wasn't doing much better. It was with great relief that gym class finally came to an end and they could reconvene at lunch. Rain had missed talking to Hummingbird yesterday and needed to catch her up. Making their way to "their" table in the lunchroom, Rain said, "Hey, look, Arianna is sitting with us."

Boomer cheered up considerably. "Hey, yeah. I got to ask her about that pump thing yesterday—that was fun-nee." The boys plopped down at the table and pulled out their packed lunches. Boomer cut right to the chase. "Hey. My name's Boomer. That's what people call me because my name is Thunder Cloud. I saw you at the park yesterday."

Arianna smiled. "Hi. I saw you, too."

Talking around a chomp of turkey sandwich, Boomer asked, "So, how did you know what was wrong with the pump?"

Rain and Simon leaned in to hear her response. Shyly, Arianna replied, "I know a little something about pumps because I wear one."

Simon looked at Arianna. "You wear one?"

"Uh-huh," she answered casually, popping a small can of tuna. Addressing the boys, she continued. "I've got type 1 diabetes. I don't know if Hummingbird told you. Anyway, I have this pump on my waist that gives me the insulin I need all day long. I was showing it to Hummingbird last night. I like it because I don't have to get shots all the time."

Boomer was incredulous. "You got shots every day?"

"I did before I got my pump, but I still have to get 'fingersticks' four times a day to test my blood sugar."

"Boy, you must have guts. I'd faint," Rain said, laughing and chewing at the same time.

Getting a little sensitive to the attention the boys were paying to Arianna, Hummingbird shot at Rain, "You look like you're about to faint right now."

Arianna shrugged a little bit at Rain's last comment. "You

gotta do what you gotta do, or like my mom says, 'tienes que hacer, lo que tienes que hacer.'"

"You speak Spanish?" Simon asked.

"Yes, but not as well as my mom and dad. My family is Latino."

"So, how did you know how to fix the pump?" Rain persisted.

"I have to make sure that my pump is primed with insulin or it won't flow properly—so I figured the water tanker pump would have to work the same way." To Simon this was irresistible. She's brave, he thought, *and* smart.

Arianna looked around at what the kids were eating. "This is amazing. Your lunches look a lot like mine. I have to watch what I eat all the time so I can stay healthy. If I don't, I can really get sick. Most kids just pile up with whatever they want."

Rain smiled to himself. Apparently the eagle's messages helped people with type 1 diabetes, too. Replying to Arianna, he looked at his old friends and laughed, "We pile up 'sometimes,' but just not 'every day.'"

Simon moved over beside Arianna. "Um, Arianna, RD and I did this interview with his great-grandmother, and it was really interesting. We have to turn it in tomorrow. Would you like to read it? It isn't very long."

"Sure. How old is your great-grandmother, RD?

"She'll be 86 this year."

"Mine is 83," she said as she opened the interview folder. Giving them both an encouraging smile, Arianna fell silent as she read.

The lull in conversation gave Hummingbird the opportunity to ask, "Well, anything happening that I should know about?"

Rain noticed that there was just a hint of "pout" in Bird's voice.

"Yeah, a lot. Boomer, have you got the flyer?" Boomer handed the yellow sheet to Hummingbird. "See the phone number? We called this morning, and it's this rock shop." Pausing to add significance, Rain said, "Jimmy's cigar box came from there."

Looking at the flyer, Hummingbird was immediately drawn in, forgetting her annoyance with the boys. "Is Jimmy at school today?"

"No, he's absent," Boomer said.

Before she could think about the meaning of the flyer, Rain cut in. "Bird, you have to come out to Shell Ridge. We found some shark's teeth," he said, proudly handing over his discovery.

Taking the tooth, Hummingbird ran her finger along its serrated edge. Admiring it, she said, "It's so sharp."

"We even saw this crazy guy out there," Boomer said, amplifying their adventure. "He was hauling around some Plaster of Paris." Hummingbird frowned. Plaster of Paris? she thought.

She started to ask a follow-up question, but Arianna already had Rain and Simon's attention. "I haven't finished it yet, but this story is so good. Does stuff like this really happen around here—caves and coyotes and everything?"

Before anyone could answer, Boomer hollered, "There's Miss Swallow!" Standing in the lunchroom door, Miss Swallow was scanning the rows of tables. Spotting the kids, she hurried over, smiling and holding up some papers in her hand.

Hummingbird gasped, "Oh, my gosh, I forgot. The bones—Dr. Bamsey said we would find out about the bones

today!" Arianna looked at her new friends, totally confused. "I'll have to tell you later," Hummingbird assured her.

The kids greeted Miss Swallow as she sat down—a bit out of breath. "I've only got a few minutes before my next class. But here it is. She laid out a multipage fax on the table so everyone could see. "Congratulations. You've got the biggest turtle that ever lived! It's called *Archelon ischyros.*"

"What does that mean?" Boomer asked.

"It's Greek for 'chief turtle.'"

"The chief of all the turtles," Simon marveled quietly.

"She's late Cretaceous—about 65 million years old. She lived at the same time as the dinosaurs," Miss Swallow continued. "She could have weighed as much as five thousand pounds and been fifteen feet long. As big as a car. The bones you have are from her flippers. Here, they sent you some pictures of what she would have looked like when she was alive."

Boomer took the photos, which had been downloaded from a website. "Wow, look at this one. She has a beak like a bird!" But Rain was not looking at the pictures. His only thought was that it was a turtle—just like in the eagle's song.

"Kids, I've got to go. Here's the fax with all the information. Maybe you can do a presentation for Science Club next week."

Simon picked up the fax. With lunch over, he invited Arianna to go out to the courtyard. "Come on. I'll tell you about the bones and you can meet some of the other kids."

As they left, Hummingbird turned to Miss Swallow and asked her a question that the boys did not think to ask. "Miss Swallow, what would somebody be doing with Plaster of Paris

out at Shell Ridge?"

Miss Swallow stopped immediately, her brow furrowed. Rain hastily filled in. "We saw this guy with bags of it out there yesterday."

"Well," she replied, "Plaster of Paris is used in building and making casts." Then speaking more slowly, she said, "And for stabilizing the removal of fossils—big fossils." She narrowed her eyes, "Kids, I'm going to report this to Dr. Bamsey."

Hummingbird handed her the flyer. "Maybe you better show him this, too," Rain said. "We got it off the bulletin board at Big Weasel's."

Glancing over the flyer, Miss Swallow declared, "This is very important—that man could have been a fossil poacher." Pressed by the responsibility of her waiting class, she hurriedly added, "Good work, kids," and dashed from the lunchroom.

Rain, Hummingbird, and Boomer looked at each other, clearly relieved. Finally the burden of what they knew was unloading from their shoulders. When the bell rang, they were ready for some regular school routine the rest of the day. Clearing away the milk cartons, Hummingbird remembered, "Oh, I've got to show Arianna where her next class is!"

Boomer laughed as he helped her dump the trash, "Don't worry, Bird. I think Simon can handle it."

Opening the entrance door to the sixth-grade wing for Arianna, Simon was expounding, "You know the part in the story about the skeletons swirling around. I think one of those big creatures was the turtle Miss Swallow showed us."

"Really, Simon? This is just awesome." Arianna was clearly impressed.

"What's your next class?"

"Math. Mrs. Otter."

"It's right here—the first room on the wing. You'll like Mrs. Otter. By the way, I like your necklace. Seems like turtles are everywhere."

"Yeah, I wear it every day. It's just special to me." Hesitating at the door to her class, Arianna asked, "How do you know so much about dinosaurs and everything, Simon?"

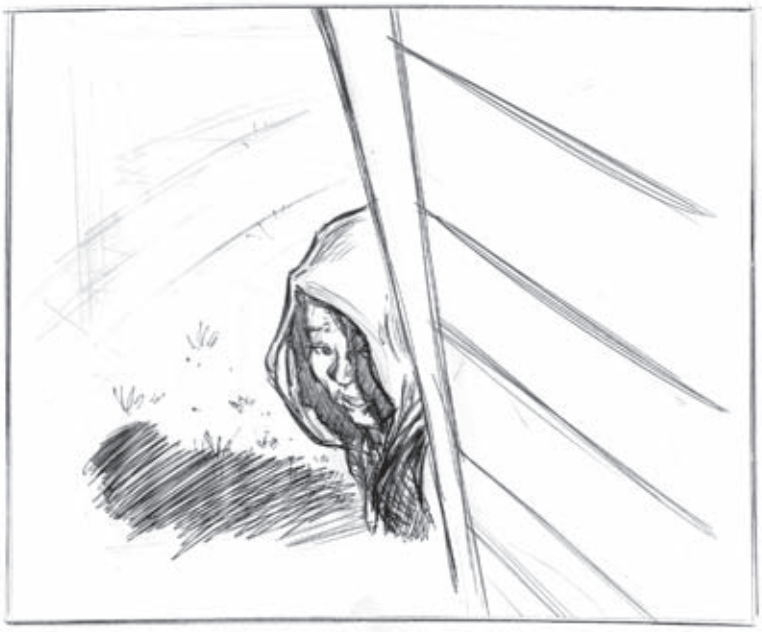
"Oh, just reading and stuff. We lived off the reservation for a while and my dad took me to a lot of museums. We went to the Smithsonian once on a trip. But around here," he said a bit sadly, "some kids don't think that's very special." Brightening at his next thought, Simon added, "If you'd like to, we could all go out to Shell Ridge next Saturday."

"That would be fun. I never thought a whole lot would be happening here—but it's a lot more exciting than at home." She waved good-bye, leaving Simon at the door pondering his next move. Suddenly, he had an inspiration. Simon ducked into an empty classroom and pulled out the interview. Referring to one of the faxed sheets Miss Swallow gave them, he flipped to the last page and wrote a concluding sentence. "The reporters

have found out that one of the big creatures described in the story is the great turtle, *Archelon ischyros.*"

Imagining that Arianna would be greatly impressed if the story was published in the school newspaper, he exited the sixth-grade wing and made his way to Mrs. Corn's class. Eager to receive his teacher's praise, he turned in the assignment a day early, congratulating himself on his stroke of genius and on RD's confidence in his abilities—an easy delusion for a young man whose heart and ego had just checked in, and his brain had checked out.

Chapter 17



Rain followed Boomer's gaze and saw Jimmy standing deep in the shadows of the concession stand.

A Boy Returns

Rain and Boomer headed out to the park, eager to blow off a little steam at the end of the day. The boys were feeling pretty relaxed. Jimmy's problem was just a "family matter," and Miss Swallow was on the case about any potential fossil poachers. Rain didn't even have Granma's interview to worry about anymore—Simon had turned it in early.

Hitting the court, Rain and Boomer ran, jumped, and dodged until they were out of breath. Suddenly, Boomer

stopped. "Oh, man, I almost forgot!"

"Forgot what?" Rain panted.

Boomer ran off the court, beckoning Rain to follow. "Come over here on the grass."

The smile on Boomer's face made Rain suspicious. "Why?"

"Come on. Just get over here, RD!" Rain sidestepped slowly onto the grass. "Okay. Put down the basketball. Now, pretend you are a pirate—or some really bad guy— and come at me like you're going to grab or hit me."

Rain frowned. "What are you going to do?"

"Trust me. Just do it."

Rain had heard Boomer's "trust me's" before, but he played the game because that's what boys do. Laughing, he gave Boomer fair warning: "Okay, here I come!" Rain ran at Boomer with his arm upraised in a mock attack, hollering his best pirate "Arrrrrrh!" But to his astonishment, the "Arrrrrh" suddenly morphed into a "Whoaaaah" and Rain was lying on his stomach with a mouth full of grass.

Releasing Rain's left arm which had been twisted up behind his back, Boomer pulled his friend up to his feet. Beaming, he shouted, "Well, was that great, or what!"

Rain spit out some dirt. Coughing, he said, "I don't guess Coach Brown showed you that."

"No. Sam showed me. It's all about leverage and surprise. He said that's why even a little guy can defend himself." Rain was aware that Sam, Boomer's older brother, was home for a few days on military leave.

"That's the second time this week you've done a 'magic

move' on me, Boomer." Rain narrowed his eyes and put on his best tough guy voice. "And…you…are…going…to…pay…."

Boomer waited for the joke that usually followed, but Rain just kept squinting. He knew exactly how to play Boomer's weak spots. Boomer couldn't stand it if he thought his friends were really mad at him. When Boomer started to droop a little, Rain hissed, "Pay…by showing me how to do it, punk."

Boomer grinned and pulled a piece of notebook paper from his pocket. "Sam must have flipped me a hundred times before I got it! Well, maybe five times. Anyway, here's how it works." Boomer handed a stick figure diagram to Rain that Sam had sketched.

With the diagram as reference, Boomer and Rain rehearsed the proper position of feet, hands, and elbows until Rain felt confident enough for Boomer to play the bad guy. Performing the steps in slow motion, he was elated to understand how the "magic move" really worked. Then, speeding it up to real time, Rain grabbed, shifted, and swiveled so perfectly that Boomer the Pirate was pinned flat on the ground, his dirty deeds foiled.

Rain got up off his knees. Looking down at Boomer, he asked, "Can I take this paper home and show it to Dad? This is like magic—you can protect yourself without being really strong or even hitting back."

"Yeah, that's what Sam said, but he told me not to show off and do it at school. Somebody could get hurt. But one thing's for sure—it sure makes you move your muscles!" Boomer puffed.

Rain got up and walked over to the water fountain, brushing the twigs and dirt from his shirt and jeans. He pressed down

the handle on the old fountain, but it was dry. Laughing, he turned to tell Boomer what a dope he was to have forgotten about the water, but Boomer wasn't interested in Rain's mental limitations at that moment. "Look over there, RD. Is that who I think it is?"

Rain followed Boomer's gaze and saw Jimmy standing deep in the shadows of the concession stand. He emerged for a moment and beckoned them over—then withdrew into the dark. The boys looked around to see who Jimmy might be hiding from, but the park was deserted. Rain picked up the basketball, and they jogged over to the concession stand where they had lined up for ice cream on many summer evenings. Only now the little shack looked forlorn and slightly spooky in the fading afternoon light.

The boys walked up to the counter and looked inside. Jimmy was standing in a corner beside an empty candy machine.

Boomer spoke first. "Hey, man, where have you been?"

Jimmy didn't answer Boomer. In a strained, whispery voice, he wasted no time. "I saw you guys take the cigar box out of the garbage can."

"We thought you were throwing it away," Boomer replied lamely.

"Just get rid of it," Jimmy warned, ignoring Boomer. "Just do what I say. Don't show it to anybody—just get rid of it—or they'll be after you, too."

Rain asked quietly, "Who Jimmy? Who'll be after us?" Jimmy stared at Rain as if the answer had frozen in his throat.

Impatiently, Boomer pushed Jimmy with his own excited

curiosity. "Are they fossil poachers—you know, guys that sell fossils for a lot of money? Are they over at Nelson's Rock Shop?"

Jimmy's eyes grew wide. "How did you know? Does everybody know?"

Frowning at Boomer, Rain shook his head. "No, not everybody. We showed Miss Swallow the bones, and she helped to identify them. She thinks there could be some fossil poachers around, but nobody knows about you. You're mixed up with those guys, aren't you?"

Gaining a little confidence, Jimmy edged from the corner into the dim light. Clasping his spindly arms against the thin cotton of his hoodie, Jimmy looked like he hadn't slept in a week. "Yeah, I guess," he replied. "Is that what they're called—poachers?"

"How did you get into this, Jimmy?" Rain asked.

Jimmy thought for a moment and then tried to sequence his story so the boys could follow. "I started hunting rocks out at Shell Ridge. I'd look for quartz crystals—stuff that the rock shop would buy. After a while I was selling $25 or $50 worth every week."

Boomer was impressed. "That's a lot of money for rocks."

Jimmy cleared his throat nervously. "Yeah, then I found these fossils that were really worth some money."

"Yeah, we know. Man, you really messed up," Boomer charged recklessly. "You took those fossils and made the water dry up all over the reservation."

Jimmy looked at Boomer like he had grown horns. "What? You're nuts. You're blaming that on me?" As the accusation

sank in, Jimmy's voice began to rise with more than a hint of hysteria. "The water?"

Not hiding his exasperation, Rain snapped, "Jeez, Boomer, can't you ever shut up?"

Under his breath, Boomer muttered, "Well, it was his fault."

Looking back to Jimmy, Rain overrode Boomer's claim. "No, we're not blaming that on you. But you shouldn't have taken those fossils, Jimmy. That was wrong. "

Jimmy turned on Rain. "Why was it wrong? I wasn't hurting anybody! Your parents have got good jobs and you…you've got friends. Everybody thinks you're so smart. Well, my dad's dead and my mom can't find a job—we don't…we don't…." Jimmy choked on his words and looked away, wiping his eyes angrily with the back of his hand.

Boomer tried to back it down. "Hey, it's okay, Jimmy. It's okay. I'm sorry."

But Jimmy wasn't finished with Rain. "I was giving my mom $25 a week. That money bought our groceries. And a lot of it, Mr. Veggie-Man, was stuff you wouldn't eat! But it's all we could afford!"

Rain felt reality slap him in the face. He stepped back, shocked by the intensity of Jimmy's outburst but fully realizing that he had shamed Jimmy when he'd had no right.

None of the boys spoke for what seemed an eternity—which was agony for Boomer. He looked back and forth from Rain to Jimmy, hoping that one would break the silence, but they were not even looking at each other.

Then Rain did something surprisingly mature for a boy his age, but full proof that the eagle had chosen well. Instead of retreating into self-condemnation, he reached out beyond his own feelings to the person he felt he had wronged. And he did this in a language that required no words: basketball.

Rain picked up the ball and slowly backed outside the concession stand. Without warning, he threw the basketball to Jimmy. Instinctively, Jimmy caught the ball in both hands—then threw it back to Rain. The next ball Rain aimed just shy of where Jimmy was standing, forcing him to catch it outside the refuge of the little building. Jimmy caught the ball, hesitated, then turned and threw it at Boomer—with a velocity that was not friendly. The threesome continued the game, passing the basketball one to the other, until the anger faded and the ball's trajectory drew them together once again.

Finally, Jimmy stopped the play and sat down on the grass. He spun the ball on his fingertip several times, then halted its revolutions abruptly. Very quietly, he asked, "Do you want to know how I found the fossils? You'll think I'm a wacko."

Understanding that they had a ceasefire, Rain and Boomer sat down, too. Rain smiled. "Trust us. You couldn't be any wackier than we are."

Jimmy wrapped his arms around the basketball and propped his chin on its rough surface. "Well, I was out at Shell Ridge. There was this…" Jimmy's words trailed off and he stopped. Remarkably, Boomer kept his mouth shut. Before he went on, Jimmy looked directly at Rain and Boomer, anticipating their reaction. "There was this coyote. I followed

this coyote into a cave." The boys nodded as if following coyotes was something they did every day.

Somewhat mystified by their lack of surprise, Jimmy continued. "There were all these…fossils in this rock wall. I knocked out some bones…" Jimmy hesitated, not telling RD and Boomer what had happened in the cave when he took the bones. "And I took them to Nelson's. There was this guy there—I'd seen him before. He told everybody he was a travel writer. He asked me what I had in my cigar box, and I showed him. I had six bones and he gave me $5 apiece. He asked if there were more bones, and I told him there was a whole skeleton." Rain had opened his mouth to ask who the travel writer was, but Jimmy was on a roll.

His voice growing stronger, Jimmy went on. "Okay, now this is where it gets bad. The next time I went in Nelson's—I didn't have any fossils, just some crystals. Mr. Nelson gave me $15 for 'em. Well, this travel guy was there again, and he told me he would buy all the fossils I could bring him. Mr. Nelson said the ones I found might be worth a lot of money. I could get rich and maybe even be famous. The two of them said they'd give me $200 to show where I found them."

"Did you show them?" Rain asked.

"No, I said I found them at Shell Ridge, but that's all. I didn't want to show them the cave—because I never, ever want to go back to that place again. Not for all the money in the world." Jimmy thought that Rain and Boomer would want to know why good money couldn't lure him back in the cave, but they didn't ask.

"So what happened then?" Boomer prompted.

"I told them my uncle was waiting for me—and I left. But I forgot the $15 for the crystals —I left it on the counter. So, I went back to get it. They were talking in Mr. Nelson's office. I heard them say that the fossils were a turtle that could be worth thousands of dollars …and as soon I took them to the cave… they would get rid of me." Jimmy swallowed hard. "They were laughing when they said it."

"You mean like kill you?" Boomer gulped.

Jimmy nodded tensely. "I was really scared and stopped going to the shop. Then last Thursday morning, I got off the bus and was going over to Boo's when I saw him. He was parked across the road from the school."

"The travel guy?" the boys asked almost simultaneously.

"Yeah. I ran back to the buses, but he followed me. He said I'd better take them to the cave or they would hurt me." In a hoarse whisper, Jimmy added, "Then he said if I told anybody about this—they would get my mother." Figuring that was all they needed to know, Jimmy ended his story. "That's when I threw away the cigar box and hid out."

"Where did you go?" Rain asked.

"I'm staying with my Uncle Luther over in Sky Bluff. I told my mom I wanted us to live with his family. She didn't argue because we weren't doing too good. My uncle always helps us out when things get bad." Then he added, "My mom doesn't know anything about this."

"Jimmy," Rain offered, "we could go to my dad. He could help out—he would know what to do."

Boomer was on the same page. "Yeah, this is real grown-up stuff."

"No, don't tell your parents or the cops or anybody!" Jimmy cried vehemently. "Just wait for it to blow over. It'll blow over. Promise me you won't tell," he pleaded. "Promise me!" Reluctantly, each of the boys agreed, but Rain was worried that their promise wasn't very smart.

At the sound of a vehicle turning off the main road, Jimmy drew back in alarm. But he quickly relaxed when the driver of a truck flashed his headlights. "Sorry, I'm kind of jumpy. That's my uncle and cousin. They went over to get some of my clothes at the house. I gotta go."

The three boys walked across the ball field to the truck. Uncle Luther greeted Rain and Boomer and asked them if they knew his son, Randy, a big guy who gave the boys a brief nod. Rain thought that if the fossil poachers were going to mess with Jimmy, they would have a hard time getting through Randy.

Jimmy jumped in the bed of the truck with Uncle Luther's dog, Chaser. The old Shepherd wagged his tail as the boys reached over and patted him on the head. Stepping back when the truck's engine started up, Rain asked, "When will you be back at school?"

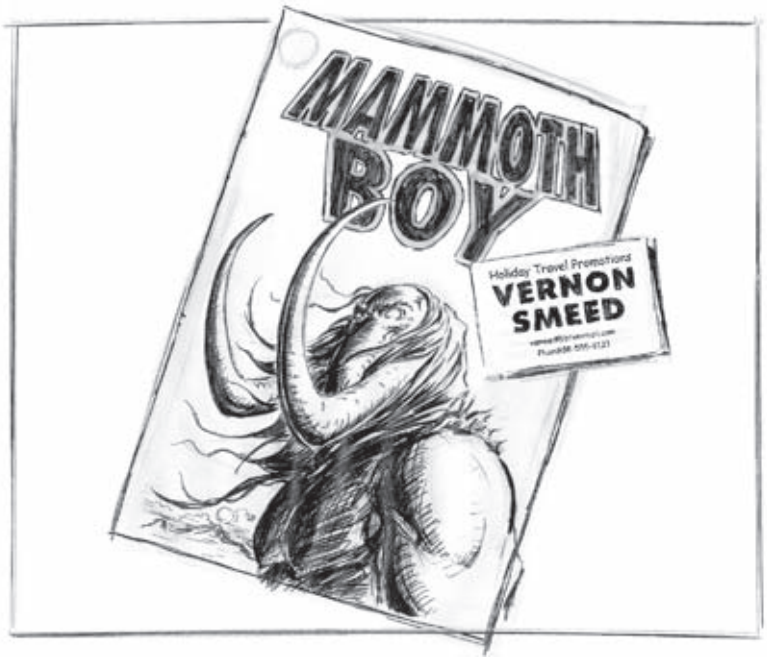
The nervous boy shrugged, smiling for the first time that day. "I don't know, but I was glad to see you guys."

Uncle Luther backed up the truck and was turning onto the road when Rain realized they still didn't have an important piece of information. Rain punched Boomer. "We don't know the name of the travel writer."

Boomer took off, running alongside the moving vehicle. Employing his most memorable talent, he bellowed, "Hey! Jimmy! What's that guy's name? The travel writer."

Jimmy's small face, pale in the evening twilight, appeared over the truck gate. "Smeed," he called back, "Vernon Smeed!"

Chapter 18



Rain slammed Mammoth Boy on the counter and squeaked, "We're late for homeroom, Boo!"

The Fossil Poacher

Rain and Boomer were much quieter than usual on the school bus Tuesday morning. Neither boy had slept well, knowing that there was a bad guy out there named Vernon Smeed. The last ones to get off the bus when it arrived at school, they scanned the crowd for their friends but didn't see them.

Seizing the opportunity, Boomer said, "Let's run over to Boo's and get *Mammoth Boy.* He said it would be in today."

Rain shrugged, "Yeah, why not?"

The boys slipped across the road and followed the well-worn path to the convenience store. They knew that Boo's was off limits for students before school, but this morning they just didn't care. Apparently, a lot worse things could happen to a kid than detention. Simon's bus, late this morning, passed the boys on the road. Banging on one of the bus's side windows, Simon let them know he had seen them. He would soon follow, since buying monthly comics required a contribution from each of the three friends.

When Rain and Boomer reached Boo's parking lot, they had to dodge several cars pulling away from the gas pumps. Noticing three trucks waiting their turn to fill up, Boomer said, "Shoot, there's going to be a line."

The jingling door alerted Boo that he had more customers. When he saw it was Rain and Boomer, he smiled and reached under the counter to pull out the promised copy of *Mammoth Boy*. Pointing to the magazine rack, he said, "You might want to take a look at the new issues before you buy just one." Lured by the pantheon of Fantastik Comics superheroes, the boys hurried over to the "library," where three other "Thunder Rockers" were already checking out the pristine comics inside their plastic covers.

"Hey, RD, *Simba* looks good this month," Boomer observed.

"Yeah, *Albina* does, too. The white wolves on the cover look really cool. How much money do you have?"

"Not enough for *Mammoth Boy* and those, too. Maybe Simon's got enough money." Looking around the store, Boomer said, "Is he here yet?"

Rain and Boomer pooled their dollars and got in line behind some regulars and two customers who weren't locals. It seemed Boo was getting the tourist trade, too. As he was ringing up the usual morning fare, Boo shoved an opened *Mammoth Boy* down the counter to the waiting boys. "You might as well see what you're buying." Rain and Boomer eagerly grabbed the comic and started flipping through the pages.

When it was his turn, the man in front of them tossed a package of donuts and a couple of local newspapers on the counter; he also asked for a black coffee. Boo made small talk as he rang up the sale. "Out-of-town folks usually don't find much news in our reservation papers."

"Well, you got an interesting little town here. I'm doing a story on this part of the state for a tourist guide."

"A tourist guide? I could do with some advertising in a tourist guide. You got a business card?"

"Sure." The man reached in his wallet and handed over a card.

Boo looked at it and nodded. "Nice to meet you, Mr. Smeed."

Engrossed in the comic, the boys had not been listening to the voices around them. When Boo said, "Mr. Smeed," it took their distracted brains several milliseconds to register the sound. When the name finally bobbed to the surface, it detonated like a mine. Rain and Boomer jerked their heads up simultaneously and beheld Jimmy's nemesis. In profile, he looked like an adventure guy in a movie: Indiana Jones hat, leather jacket, khaki pants, and desert boots. But when Smeed casually turned to glance at them, the boys stared directly into

the cruel face of a man who was no Hollywood character.

Rain slammed *Mammoth Boy* on the counter and squeaked, "We're late for homeroom, Boo!" As for Boomer, he made a noise that could only be described as dialogue in a Three Stooges movie. The boys ran to the back of the store in adrenaline shock. Cowering behind pallets of stacked soft drinks, they began inching their way slowly to the store's side entrance.

Outside, Simon had slowed to a walk as he approached Boo's. He was feeling for the crumpled dollar bills stashed in the bottom of his pocket—when he stopped dead in his tracks. A Range Rover was parked at the side of the store by the restrooms. Simon glanced around quickly to see if the driver was nearby. When he saw no one, he walked to the back of the Rover and checked the license plate. Scooting behind the Bag-O-Ice freezer, he slipped out his pocket notebook and jotted down the license plate number. Then Simon shrank further back behind the big metal box, determined to spot the owner of the Range Rover. Too well hidden, he didn't see Rain and Boomer race across Boo's parking lot.

Back inside the store, Boo craned his neck to see where the boys had gone. Shaking his head, he muttered, "Crazy kids—they've been waiting a month for that comic." Boo put the book back under the counter.

"Yeah. They can be hard to figure sometimes." Smeed paid for his purchases and gave a little nod. "Thanks."

Boo smiled. "Sure. Anytime."

Smeed pushed open the door and paused in front of the store to glance at the headlines on the front page of the reservation weekly. Scanning the lead story and sipping hot coffee, he walked around to the Rover, hitting the unlock button on his key. Simon heard the characteristic click as the locks opened. He froze—the driver was coming.

Simon heard the Rover's door open, then the deep, almost inflectionless voice of a man say, "Smeed." There was a long pause, then: "Right, the operation's all set up. Yeah, the plaster's been delivered. No, there's no problem. Just a delay." At first, Simon thought the man was talking to someone in the Rover, but he realized he was listening to one side of a cell phone conversation. "Yeah, the shipment will be out of here in a couple of days. "Oh, yes," he laughed smoothly, "you're going to like it. Sure, I'll update you tonight."

The man shut the door and powered down the window. There was a pause, and Simon heard another cell phone exchange. The slick, reassuring salesman from the first call had become an angry interrogator. "You got him yet? I don't know—he just said his name was Jimmy. You checked the house? So, where does the uncle live? I don't care how many relatives these kids have got—just find him! Find him!"

Simon desperately wanted to take a peek at the driver, but he retreated even farther into his hiding place when the man began to swear violently. Not until he heard the Range Rover pull out of the parking lot and accelerate down the road did Simon dare to creep out from behind the ice machine.

His heart racing, Simon banged through the store's front

door and charged down the aisle to the magazines—but no members of the Fantastik Comics fan club were in attendance. He ran to the counter. "Boo! Were RD and Boomer in here?"

Still baffled by the boys' strange behavior, Boo replied, "Yes, but they left in some kind of hurry. Something wrong, Simon?" Simon didn't answer. He darted out of the store, leaving Boo scratching his head.

Running as fast as he could, Simon reached the schoolyard just as the first bell was ringing. He joined the stragglers crowding into the seventh-grade wing. Turning toward Mrs. Biddy's room, he bumped headlong into his three friends and Arianna.

"Simon!" Hummingbird said with some alarm. "We were wondering what happened to you. A fossil poacher was in Boo's!" It was obvious that Rain and Boomer had been breathlessly telling the girls about their encounter with Smeed.

Realizing that they were drawing the attention of passing students, Hummingbird pulled Simon over to her locker, and the others followed. Boomer didn't break stride for a moment, "Yeah, we were standing right next to him! And, boy, is he a bad-looking dude!"

Turning to Simon, Arianna said, "RD and Boomer know who the poacher is." Apparently, their little group had officially grown from four to five, since Arianna now seemed to know about Vernon Smeed.

Hummingbird noticed that Simon was very pale. "Simon,

are you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm okay." He smiled shakily at Arianna. "I know who he is, too. I was over at Boo's and heard him on his cell phone. He's after Jimmy, but he doesn't know where he is yet." Looking at Rain and Boomer, he said, "I saw the Range Rover. That was him at Shell Ridge, guys. I got his license plate number."

"Man, that's it," Rain said. "I'm calling my parents. Mom will call Willard." The kids understood Rain's reference, since Willard Fox Chief, the Tribe's chief of police, was his mother's cousin.

Rain's plan, however, was swiftly interrupted. Sammie and other members of the *Thunderbird* newspaper staff were suddenly crowding around Rain and Simon, mobbing them with congratulations. Sammie gushed, "I just loved the story about your grandmother—it was so mysterious! Mrs. Corn says we should enter it in the state contest." A couple of boys pushed through the girls to give them high-fives.

Rain and Simon were dumbfounded. "What's going on?"

Mrs. Corn came sweeping down the hall with her entourage of eighth-grade editors, photographers, and advertising managers. She was beaming. "We've got a surprise for you! Your story was so good that yesterday afternoon we added it to this month's paper. We just picked up the copies—do you want to see yourselves in print?"

"Ah…yeah," Rain smiled weakly.

Simon was a little more animated. "Really, it was that good?"

Mrs. Corn frowned a little. "Well, I thought you boys would be happier about it." Checking her watch, she said, "You better

get along—you'll be late for homeroom."

Sammie handed a stack of the *Thunderbird* to Hummingbird and Arianna. "Here, take some and pass them around. We've already dropped off a bunch around town. We're charging nonstudents 25 cents a copy!"

Arianna took a paper from her stack and opened it, looking for the interview. She found it on the back page. "Wow, Simon, it looks so professional." She scanned the story quickly. "Hey, you added a P.S.!"

Suspiciously, Rain took the paper from Arianna's hand. Looking at Simon, he asked, "What did you add?"

Reaching over Rain's arm, Arianna pointed out the unexpected sentence. "There at the end—about the turtle." Rain read the last paragraph, which ended in Simon's "stroke of genius."

Nervously, Simon tried to offer an explanation. "I didn't say anything about Shell Ridge or Granma's bone—just like we said. I only wanted to give it a better ending."

"It's the end all right." Rain was fuming. "Smeed is looking for this turtle, Simon! If he reads this, he'll think we know where the cave is!"

"Oh no. We're dead," Boomer croaked. When the sound of Mrs. Biddy locking her door echoed down the hall, he moaned, "Make that double-dead."

Arianna came to Simon's defense. "But Simon didn't know about Smeed when he wrote this."

Staring at Simon, Rain was still mad, but he started to back down. "No, I guess he didn't."

"Well," Hummingbird interrupted, "I hate to break this up, but we've got to round up these papers before Smeed can read the interview!"

"Wait. Don't everybody run off," Rain said quietly, his leadership qualities surfacing as the situation grew more tense. "Let's make a plan."

"Okay," Hummingbird volunteered, "Arianna and I will find out where they delivered the papers this morning."

Rain said, "I'll go to the office and call my father. I'm going to tell him about Jimmy and Smeed. Then we'll meet over at the gym and go from there."

"We're going to get in trouble for leaving school," Boomer warned.

Rain was defiant. "We're already in a mess. You ready to get in trouble with us, Arianna?"

"Yeah, I guess this is worth getting in trouble for. Let's just hope nobody asks us for a hall pass," she laughed.

Rain challenged Boomer: "See if you can get a teacher to write us a note to be out of school."

"I'll go along and try to help," Simon said guiltily. "I got us into this."

Twenty minutes later the kids reassembled at the gym. Rain told them his father wasn't in his office at work. "I left him a message that I'd call back later," he explained to the others, "but I didn't say too much. I was afraid it would freak him out."

The girls were more successful—they had the list of

locations around Thunder Rock where the newspaper staff had delivered the papers. The kids would have to hit the gas stations, the Wash 'n Fold, Thelma's Sandwich Shop, the "Gag and Heave" (otherwise known as the G&H Café), and the Tribal museum.

"Did you get a pass?" Rain asked Boomer.

"Of course," Boomer answered coolly, handing over a note from Mrs. Corn.

Rain just shook his head, "Man, you're a genius. What did you tell her?"

"I said that you and Simon made up the whole story—none of it was true. So, I said we would pick up all the papers and tear off the last page. Yeah, I told her that it would be real embarrassing to have to print a…what did you say it was, Simon?"

"A retraction," Simon said gloomily.

"Yeah. A retraction. Boy, was she mad! She said she was going to call your parents."

Rain was in awe. "Boom, that's just terrible—but brilliant! I wouldn't have thought of that in a million years." Returning to the job at hand, Rain said, "Okay, let's split up the town. Bird and Arianna, you take the restaurants, Boomer, you do the gas stations, and Simon and I will hit the other spots."

Depressed that his writing career would be so short, Simon asked, "What are we going to do with the papers?"

"We'll dump them at Boo's," Rain replied.

Hummingbird turned to Arianna,"How's your blood sugar?"

"I just did a fingerstick. I'm feeling good," Arianna answered, pumping her legs. Then, waving her hands dramatically over the heads of her new friends, Arianna intoned (trying not to laugh), "May the insulin be with you…."

Rain whispered loudly to Boomer so that everyone could hear, "I like this girl."

Chapter 19

An irrational thought ran through Rain's mind, Got enough excitement in your life now, Aunt Sissy?

The Poacher Strikes

The kids headed for town, then scattered. Hummingbird and Arianna zipped into the town restaurants. At Thelma's, Arianna picked up the papers that were stacked beside the cash register, while Hummingbird explained that a new batch would have to be delivered later. The girl behind the counter made no objections. They had a similar success at the G&H Café, only Hummingbird was quick to spot two copies that breakfast customers had left on the tables.

Rain and Simon had the longest distance to run, since the museum and self-service laundry were on the other side of town. At the museum, the boys lifted the whole stack of papers from the information desk, confident that none had been picked up. No visitors were visible at the exhibits. The Wash 'n Fold was a different story. Johnny Hawk Tail, the attendant, had handed out copies to several ladies who usually socialized while the coin washers chugged away on the family laundry. Today, the washing machines were silent, but the regulars had convened anyway to discuss the water shortage. Johnny just stared but didn't say anything when Simon scooped up the remaining papers.

Boomer had the biggest challenge. Dashing into Big Weasel's, he ran to the news rack, but the papers weren't there. The newspaper staff had put them on the counter, right under Big Weasel's nose. Boomer decided to use the "retraction" ruse again.

He sidled up to the counter and started to pick up the papers. "Uh, hey. I've got to take these papers because there's a big mistake in one of the stories. I'll deliver some more copies later."

Big Weasel plopped his hand on the stack of papers. "All I know, Sport, is that the school dropped off 25 papers, and they're 25 cents apiece."

"Have any sold yet?"

"Nope. That'll be $6.25." Boomer reached in his pocket and pulled out his two dollars for *Mammoth Boy*. With considerable reluctance, he put the money on the counter, and Big Weasel reached for it. When he took his hand off the papers, Boomer

grabbed them and ran for the door, yelling, "I'll have to owe ya!"

Jetting down the road, he looked over his shoulder and saw Big Weasel standing, hands on hips, in front of the Jif Mart. Between puffs, Boomer hollered, "I hope your '12 O'clock Highs' stink!" True to his vocal gift, the deafening insult reached Big Weasel's ears with no difficulty.

From three different directions, the kids ran for Boo's. Hummingbird and Arianna got there first, but Bird dropped her copies of the *Thunderbird* in the parking lot. Churned aloft by a gust of wind, the papers scattered like falling leaves. The girls were chasing them down just as the boys came running up the road. The boys scooped up the strays and without stopping to catch a breath, they all headed for the front door. Boo was filling out some food order forms when five disheveled kids, their arms full of newsprint, came bursting into the store.

Rain started talking before Boo could even register the scene. "Boo! That guy that was in here! He's a fossil poacher—he's after Jimmy because he knows where this turtle is, and we had to find all the school papers because our teacher put a story in it that we wrote about my Granma and some fossils." Rain stopped. He knew he was making no sense.

"Yeah, now he'll be after us!" Boomer shouted.

Boo waved his hands. "Whoa. I can't follow this, kids. You'll have to slow down."

Arianna asked, "Where can we put these papers?"

Boo opened the door to the storeroom. "Dump them in here."

Simon followed Boo. "It's that Smeed guy. He's the one, Boo. We can't let him get hold of a paper."

Pointing to copies of the *Thunderbird* neatly slotted into the newspaper rack, Boo said, "You're too late, guys. He bought one of those papers when he was in here this morning."

Five mouths dropped open. "Oh, no," Hummingbird wailed, "we did all this for nothing!" The kids were just shattered. Boomer slid down the side of the counter and plopped on his behind—now he really didn't like Big Weasel.

Rain's brain was churning—rapidly linking facts to fears. Suddenly he understood the terror that Jimmy felt. "We're not the ones in danger," he said quietly. Everyone turned and looked expectantly at Rain. "He won't come after us. It's Granma!"

Simon got it immediately. "Boo, we've got to get out to RD's house right away. We'll fill you in on everything—you'll understand."

"Boo, please, we've got to go now!" Rain cried.

Boo trusted these kids—they had come through for him when he was down, and now they needed him. Boo reached for his keys. "Okay, let's go." He flipped the Open sign to Closed and locked up the store.

The kids piled into Boo's service truck, which luckily had a four-door crew cab. Boo insisted that everybody buckle up—he was a real safety freak, not even letting his dog, much less a person, ride in the truck bed. Boo kept to the speed limit in town but gunned the big truck once they crossed the city limits.

He tossed Rain his cell phone and told him to call home. Rain dialed and waited, but ominously, there was no answer.

"I'm calling my dad," Rain informed everyone. Unfortunately, the receptionist said that Gerald was still out of the office and asked if he wanted to leave a message. Rain replied, "Yes, just tell him to go home right away—there's an emergency." Next, Rain tried to reach Roberta, but cell service was unreliable in the remote parts of the reservation where she was making home visits.

For twenty minutes, Boo drove fast but not recklessly. By the time he pulled into the gravel driveway to Rain's house, he had the whole story, thanks to Hummingbird. Boo braked hard and Rain jumped out of the truck, running up the walk. He stopped and looked back at Boo when he saw that the front door was wide open.

Boo ordered the kids to stay in the truck, then he joined Rain. Quietly he said, "Wait here, RD. Let me go in first."

Boo slowly entered the house. He saw Margie sitting on the floor in front of the TV. She got up and followed him as he quickly checked the kitchen and the bedrooms. No one else appeared to be there. Boo went back to the door and called, "RD, get in here."

As soon as she saw Rain, Margie ran into his arms. Only then did she start crying. Between sobs, she managed to tell her brother what he needed to know. "There was a man, Rain. There was a man…"

Boo checked the backyard, then rounded the house and went back to the truck. He shook his head at the four fretful faces staring through the cab window. Boo flipped open his cell phone and dialed the preprogrammed number for the Tribal police department. To the officer on duty, he said in a clearly enunciated voice, "I want to report a kidnapping."

Simon's stomach sank. He whispered, "This is all my fault."

"You didn't do it on purpose," Arianna assured him. "Smeed did this, not you, Simon."

While Arianna was comforting Simon, Rain was comforting Margie, who apparently was unhurt. Rain thought, Thank goodness the twins go to the recreation center on Tuesdays. He wiped away Margie's tears with his shirt and gave her a reassuring kiss. Margie stopped crying and slid off his lap. She smiled at Rain and then ran to the back of the house. Pointing to her parent's bedroom, she said, "Sissy."

Afraid of what he might find, Rain ran to the front door and called, "Boo! You better come back in!"

Boo charged back into the house, "What?"

Slowly turning his head toward the back of the house, Rain croaked, "Margie says our Aunt Sissy is in Mom's room. It's at the end of the hall."

Boo pushed Rain aside and ran back to the bedroom he had given a short glance only moments before. With Rain standing at the door, Boo quickly jerked aside the curtains to let in light, looked under the bed, and turned over a stack of laundry in a corner of the room. Nothing there. Next, he yanked open the closet door. Two giant eyes stared at him from the darkness.

Boo called out, "RD, help me. I found your aunt!" They pulled Sissy out of the closet, her arms and legs trussed up with clothesline. For the first time in her life, Aunt Sissy couldn't say a word. Her mouth was blocked by a double row of duct tape. Although he would never admit it, Rain wanted desperately to laugh. An irrational thought ran through his mind, Got enough excitement in your life now, Aunt Sissy?

Boo pulled out his pocketknife and cut the ropes. Sissy reached her hands up to her face and started to pull off the tape. Boo tried to assist, but Sissy glared at him and let out a scream in her throat that sounded like the whine of an incoming missile. Boo stopped, afraid of the bomb that would explode if he did anything so stupid as rip off the tape.

Unable to stay in the truck any longer, Hummingbird and Arianna had entered the house followed by Simon and Boomer. They stood in the doorway gawking at Aunt Sissy.

Rain pulled at Boo's arm. "We're wasting time here. I know where Smeed's taken Granma."

Hummingbird stepped up. "Go on! We'll look after Margie and Aunt Sissy."

"Look, the police will be here in a minute," Boo said, trying to calm the kids.

"No, we've got to go out to Shell Ridge, now! Simon and Boomer can tell the cops where we've gone," Rain pleaded. The tape still over her mouth, Aunt Sissy nodded at Rain and waved her arms toward the door. Her eyes screamed, Go!

Rain dissolved in relief when Boo finally said, "Okay, you convinced me, RD. We'll go. But," he added, "I want some

insurance. Boys, don't wait on the police to get here. Call the station now and tell them to get a squad car out to Shell Ridge. Give them the directions." Following orders, Boomer and Simon headed for the old wall phone in the kitchen.

Taking a big shuddering breath, Rain said, "Go ahead, Boo. I'll be just a second." Rain went to his bedroom closet and got down the cigar box from its hiding place. Taking out the fossilized bones, he stuffed them deep in the pockets of his jacket. He closed his eyes, held his hands protectively over the bones for a fraction of a second, then turned and dashed out of the house. Rain jumped in the truck and Boo started the engine. Hummingbird and Arianna came out on the front porch and watched as Boo reversed the big old service vehicle down the gravel driveway. If any truck could negotiate the terrain at Shell Ridge, that one could.

After the sound of the truck disappeared in the distance, it was suddenly very quiet. The girls walked down to the road to see if they could spot a police car, but there were no flashing lights.

Hummingbird muttered, "Where are the police?"

"It's only been ten minutes since Boo called," Arianna replied. "But it seems like ten years."

"How are you doing?" Hummingbird asked.

"I'm a little shaky. I could probably do with some juice."

Hummingbird smiled. "I'm so glad you came, Arianna. It's just like you've always been here. I didn't realize it, but I think I needed a sister."

Arianna smiled back. "Me, too. We ran really fast, didn't

we? I guess the insulin was with us."

"Boy, was it ever. We could have won a track meet. Come on. Let's go call my mother and let her know where we are. Then we'll see what RD's mom has in the refrigerator."

"Hummingbird," Arianna asked, "do you think RD and his great-grandmother will be all right?"

"I hope so." Then she stopped and looked at Arianna. "No," she corrected herself firmly, "I know they will." Laughing a little, she looked up to the sky and added, "We have friends in high places."

The Paper Chase

Chapter 20

When the man drew nearer, coyote started walking slowly; turning frequently to make sure he was being followed.

Return to Shell Ridge

"RD, tell me about this place where you saw Smeed drive off the flats," Boo said.

"Um…well, Mom took us out by the old pumping station. We walked in from that spot. We saw Smeed drive out west of there. I don't know if there was actually a road."

Boo had lived on the reservation all his life. He knew every creek, cranny, and deer path on its entire square mileage. "Yeah," he said, "I know the place. It isn't much of a road—more like a

wide trail. Don't worry. We'll be through town in a few minutes. Then we can make time once we hit the state highway."

Within fifteen minutes Boo was doing seventy miles per hour, headed to the western side of Shell Ridge. Rain leaned his head against the window as the truck hummed down the smooth, divided highway. His face was a study in misery. He couldn't quit tormenting himself with accusations: Why didn't I tell Mom and Dad about Smeed last night? None of this would have happened if I hadn't promised Jimmy! I'm so stupid! Agitated, he ran his fingers through his hair and kept shifting in his seat. He thought, What if Smeed really does something bad to Granma? Jimmy said Smeed was going to *kill* him …

Noticing Rain's restlessness, Boo said, "You want some gum, Buddy?"

Drumming his fingers on the console, Rain said, "No thanks. I just want to get there." Realizing that the finger drumming was probably irritating, Rain stuck his left hand in his pocket to control his nervousness. He felt the now familiar contours of the turtle bones, and not so strangely, they gave him some comfort. Rain closed his eyes and let the bones remind him that they were going to Shell Ridge to rescue Granma and the Great Turtle. The eagle had sung that there was a "taker" and a "giver." Rain realized it was not really Jimmy who was the taker, it was Smeed. He was the one who was trying to sell the turtle's "heart." Rain also knew that he, Rain, was the giver—the one who would give back the bones so that the turtle could dream again. How he would do that he didn't know.

Boo looked at Rain, thinking he was dozing. Poor kid, he thought, he looks pretty strung out— at least he's settled down. Boo checked his rearview mirror, hoping for once to spot a cop car, but there were none. He had not been out to the western part of the reservation in a long time, but as the elevation rose he saw Red Water Mountain in the distance. The landscape started looking familiar. Boo recognized certain rock formations that were in the vicinity of the trail he was looking for. He turned onto a dirt road he remembered and drove slowly, searching for bare dirt and weedy gravel. Seeing some flattened brush and what he thought were tire tracks, he stopped the truck and got out. Squatting by the side of the road, Boo picked up some soil and ran it through his fingers.

Rain opened his eyes. "Is this it, Boo?"

Boo came around to Rain's window. "Yeah, this is it. Smeed was here not more than a half hour ago." Boo walked around to the truck bed and untied the tarpaulin that covered his tools and the usual garage junk. He fished out a red flag and tied it to a bush beside the tire tracks. Boo thought, Some of the guys on the force aren't too swift, but they can't miss this.

Getting back in the truck, Boo asked Rain, "Are you thirsty?" He reached in the back and pulled out some bottles of water. Rain opened one and chugged it down.

"There's a sack of food, too," Boo said. "You're looking a little puny." Rain grabbed the sack off the back seat. It contained packages of bean bread and the dried buffalo/fruit patties that Boo was selling in the store. He tore the wrapping off the patties

and bit into the chewy mixture, full of protein and sweetness. The patties lasted only three bites and the bean bread not much longer.

Wiping his fingers on his shirt, Rain said, "That was really good. I was starving."

Boo had been driving on the trail for several minutes. He knew it would be bumpy, but the truck was lurching violently in the ruts. As they entered the hills, the rocks rose sharply on each side of the old service vehicle, casting it in deep shadow. They had driven about three miles when Boo rounded a clump of squat bushes and suddenly halted. A giant boulder filled the passage way. A gap was open to the left of the boulder, big enough for a Range Rover to pass, but not Boo's wide-bodied truck.

Boo slammed his hands on the steering wheel and swore. "I'm sorry, Buddy, this looks like it's as far as we can go." Looking over his shoulder, Boo started backing up the truck under an overhang. "At least we've got a big enough space to turn around." He switched off the ignition and reached for his cell phone on the chance that he could pick up a signal. The phone powered up, but the screen showed no bars. "Don't worry," he reassured Rain, "the police should be here in no time."

Rain had been watching the horizon whenever the trail would take them up a rise. During the last mile, he had recognized the ridgeline where he, Boomer, and Simon had stood only three days before. Rain knew he was close to where

Smeed would come out on the flats. Rain glanced guiltily at Boo, then jerked open the door handle and jumped out. He took a deep breath, and before Boo could stop him, he took off running.

Boo hollered, "RD! No!"

Rain rounded the boulder and yelled over his shoulder, "She's my grandmother, Boo!"

Boo muttered, "Man, I don't *need* this," and leaped out of the truck. By the time he got to the other side of the boulder, Rain had disappeared. Boo ran down the trail toward a tangle of small trees and brush. Skirting the trees, he came to a three-way fork. He stopped momentarily and then continued down the trail scored by the tires of the Range Rover.

But Rain had taken a more direct route, over the tumble of rocks that bounded the flats. He pushed upward, bruising his legs as he squeezed between the smaller boulders, seeking a high spot that would give him the broadest view. Reaching the top, Rain flattened himself and swept his eyes over the hot white plain below.

Spotting the Range Rover, Rain let out a breath he didn't realize he had been holding. The Rover was about a quarter mile to his left. Rain began to move downward, careful to remain hidden behind a blind of low rocks. He followed a narrow path that he could see would take him to the bottom. Then, trying to edge around a huge rock, he slipped and badly scraped his left leg against the stump of an old sapling that had tried to lay down roots in the poor soil. But Rain didn't even feel it—he had spied them!

About fifty feet from the Range Rover, Smeed stood over

Granma. Rain could see the pink of her old housecoat fluttering in the hot wind. She was lying on her side, barefooted; her loose, white hair drooping across her face.

Rain got up, trying not to dislodge any pebbles that would create a clatter. He continued down the slope until he found a crack in the rocks that gave him full view of Granma's tormentor. For a brief moment, Rain was overcome by rage—rage that was fueled by Granma's helpless innocence and his own inability to protect her from Smeed. A tremor, not of fear but fury, shot through his body. His hands shaking, Rain entwined them behind his neck, closed his eyes, and envisioned the eagle. He breathed slowly and deeply. The Great Messenger had sung to him that he was brave—but losing control was not bravery.

His heart calmed, Rain slid down the remaining distance into a narrow gully that opened into the flats. He ran quietly to the opening and looked out. What he saw tore at his heart. Smeed had jerked Granma up by one arm and was pulling her forward, forcing her to walk. She stumbled to her knees, but Smeed pulled at her again, dragging her legs limply over the hard-baked limestone. Tears running down his face, Rain whispered, "No, please, please, don't hurt her."

At that moment, in his peripheral vision, Rain saw movement. A gray, scruffy shape emerged from a clump of scrub and began trotting across the field of vision of all three humans. It was Coyote!

Sniffing, Rain wiped the back of his arm across his eyes. He watched Coyote swing his head from side to side, as if he were making sure that his audience had seen him. Then the old trickster, his tongue hanging from his mouth, stopped and sat down.

Granma raised her free arm and pointed. Rain could see her lips moving, but he was too far away to hear what she said. Smeed looked in the direction of the coyote and dropped Granma's arm. Rain thought, She's telling him to follow Coyote!

Smeed started walking uncertainly toward the animal. Coyote stood up, watching the human patiently. When the man drew nearer, Coyote started walking slowly, turning frequently to make sure he was being followed. When Smeed picked up speed, Coyote broke into a slow trot, angling away from Granma and toward the flats.

Then suddenly…with no warning, he changed direction and began to run directly toward the gully where Rain was hidden!

Standing in the shadows, Rain was obscured from Smeed's view. But within seconds, he knew Smeed would see him. Rain's mind screamed, Why is Coyote helping Smeed? Why does he want him to find me? Then remembering the dream, Rain understood: he is *bringing* the "taker" to me!

Although the old con artist's head was down, low to the ground, Rain could see Coyote's yellow eyes, fully enjoying the game. True to his nature, Smeed was following his own greed and treachery. As the trickster drew closer and closer to the gully, Rain's brain spun in a vortex of images and feelings. He

thought about the trust that the eagle had placed in him, the fear in Jimmy's eyes, the dry creek beds and families without water, his family and friends and everything they had done to help him. At the center of it all, was Granma. So much depended on him! His next action would be critical.

Understanding the advantage of surprise, Rain quickly decided, I won't wait for Smeed to discover me. He whispered, "Mr. Eagle, I am not afraid" and stepped out into the light.

Chapter 21

Confident in his belief that he could overpower the youngster, Smeed attacked.

The Taker and the Giver

At the very second Rain revealed himself, Coyote, having achieved his purpose, darted into the rocks and disappeared.

Startled, Smeed halted abruptly, lurching before he steadied himself. Arms outstretched, the poacher crouched slightly as he sized up the Indian boy who had suddenly appeared in his path.

Rain stood with his feet planted firmly, looking directly into the eyes of a man with no honor—a man who threatened children and abused old women. He knew Smeed valued

nothing that was important to Rain and his family and would do anything to feed his own insatiable greed. He now understood that this man was more evil than any bad guy he and Boomer could ever have imagined. But Rain's heart was strong—he wasn't running this time.

In a 12-year-old voice that was as courageous as any man's, Rain called out, "That's my great-grandmother out there."

Rising up to his full height, Smeed drew back his lips in a twisted grin and sneered, "Well, what a coincidence. The boy in the store. You ran away because you know where the cave is, don't you, boy?"

"Yes," Rain lied, hoping that Smeed would forget Granma and focus on him. Like a mother bird pretending a broken wing, Rain wanted Smeed to chase him or hit him, anything to draw the predator away from his prey.

Not only was Rain mentally prepared to confront Smeed, his physical body was, too. The threat of danger had already caused his brain to order the release of adrenaline that sped up his heart rate and increased his intake of oxygen. His pupils even dilated so that his vision was more acute. The ancestral food he had eaten was now entering his bloodstream as molecules of glucose, triggering a surge of insulin into his fast-moving blood. Taut as a pulled bow, Rain's healthy body was ready to fight for Granma.

Confident in his belief that he could overpower the youngster, Smeed attacked. He ran toward the slender boy, his

arm reaching out to grab him. Instantly, Rain exploded into action. Glucose blasted energy into his young arms and legs, while adrenaline contracted his skeletal muscles, doubling his strength. Before Smeed could close the distance between them, Rain rushed him using the arm block that Coach Brown had taught him. The force of the blow drove Smeed to the ground, grazing his head against a rock.

While Smeed was down, Rain raced to position himself between his opponent and Granma. The poacher got up on one knee, taken off guard by Rain's unexpected power. Shaking his head, he cleared his vision and stood up.

Laughing, Smeed snarled, "You don't think that's going to stop me, do you, boy?" He reached down and picked up a thick stick with his right hand that was half-buried in debris on the gully floor. "How'd you like it if I hurt your old grandma—you'd show me the cave then, wouldn't you?"

Smeed charged back toward the open ground where Granma lay. He grabbed Rain's right shoulder to push him aside—which proved to be a major mistake. As a 12-year-old, Rain was not knowledgeable about self-defense, but he did know Boomer's "magic move." Instinctively, Rain stepped back with his right foot, causing Smeed to fall forward; then he stepped in toward his attacker, grabbing his elbow and right hand and simultaneously turning his right hip to Smeed's left. Thus leveraged, Rain pushed the poacher flat to the ground on his face.

The boys' playground antics had ended at this point, but Rain was not defending his great-grandmother from an imaginary pirate—this was real! Having no knowledge of any

other martial arts moves, Rain fell upon Smeed, fiercely trying to hold him down with his boy's strength.

His heart pounding in his ears, Rain could hear someone yelling very far away. Suddenly, he felt himself rising upward; but Rain, still locked in the battle with his enemy, thought that Smeed was trying to get up. Pressing himself down—even more violently—Rain screamed, "No! No!"

Finally, Boo's voice broke into Rain's consciousness. "RD! Rain! Stop! Let go!"

Shaking and confused, Rain loosened his grip and was lifted up by powerful arms that hauled him, still struggling, to safety. Willard Fox Chief was gripping Rain's shoulders. "Whoa, boy! Look at me! We got him!"

Dazed, Rain stared vacantly at Willard. He whispered, "Granma."

"She's all right, Rain. She's all right."

Boo's anxious face rose up over Willard's shoulder. "RD, are you hurt?"

"Boo?" Rain gasped. "I don't think so…I'm sorry…sorry I ran off." His head clearing, Rain asked, "Where is she? Is my dad here?"

Willard said, "Boo, take Rain out of here. We gotta deal with this guy." For a big man, the police chief was very light on his feet. He quickly reached down to the prostrate poacher (now held down by two officers), cuffed him, and hoisted him up in one muscular motion. It was no coincidence that Willard was a lean meat and veggie man himself.

Boo put his arm around Rain's shoulders and guided him

toward the pack of squad cars that were parked in a protective arc around his great-grandmother. Feeling the tremor in Rain's body, Boo said, "See, there she is. They're looking after her right now."

Granma had been moved to the shade of a rocky overhang, where she was lying on a blanket. A police officer was stooping over her, holding a water bottle to her lips. Rain ran ahead of Boo, yelling, "Granma!" Seeing him coming, she held up her arms to her great-grandson. Rain kneeled down and hugged her with all the love he could give.

The cop stood up and said, "An ambulance will be here in a minute, son."

"Rain, you saved me," Granma said weakly. "You are so brave. Are you all right?"

Rain sat down on the blanket beside her. "I'm fine. But I could sure do with some of that water." The officer gave Rain the rest of the bottle. He took off his jacket and poured water over his head and wiped it away with his shirt. Smiling, he said, "This shirt has seen some action today. I'm a real dirt bag now, Granma."

She smiled a little. Taking her great-grandson's hand, Granma said simply, "The coyote came." Then she looked down at her feet, a bit confused. "I don't know what happened to my shoes." Lifting herself on one elbow, Granma tried to explain. "That man. He wanted me to show him where the cave was. But I couldn't remember."

Rain squeezed Granma's hand and coaxed her into lying back down. "His name is Smeed. He wanted you to take him to the cave so he could get all the bones and sell them."

Granma smiled and nodded, "Ohh…" But Rain didn't really think she understood. Suddenly, her smile faded and she gasped, "Oh, Rain, he tied up Sissy!"

Boo came over and squatted down beside Granma. Gently he said, "Granma Hettie, Sissy is okay and Margie, too."

Rain looked back to the gully and saw two officers, one on each side of Smeed, dragging him toward one of the police cars. He watched with satisfaction as Willard pushed his head down and thrust him into the back seat. So, Rain thought, the "taker" goes to his "grave." He also watched Willard toss Smeed's car keys to another officer who opened the side doors and the back of the Rover.

Rain got up. "Boo, stay here with Granma. I'm going to see what Smeed had in his car." He walked over and watched the police pull several boxes stamped Nelson's Rock and Smoke Shop from the back of the Rover and stack them on the ground. While Willard was checking under the front seats, Rain slipped unobtrusively behind the vehicle and lifted the lids. He finally had some luck when he raised the lid of the last box—just high enough to glimpse one of the flipper bones of the Great Turtle.

"Better not mess with that, Rain," Willard said, interrupting his search. "That's evidence we'll be taking back to the station."

"But," Rain protested, "I have to have these bones."

"Sorry, son. Absolutely not."

Not knowing what to do, Rain ran back to Granma. Leaning

down beside her, he whispered, "Smeed had some bones just like the one Delbert took. That's why the coyote came back—to make sure they go back where they belong. Even Delbert's bone." Looking over at his mother's cousin, Rain said, "But Willard won't let me have them."

Granma was exhausted, but she understood everything. Looking up at Boo, she said, "Ask Willard to come over here."

Just then one of the police officers shouted to Rain, "They're coming in with the stretcher!" Two paramedics were rapidly making their way to the overhang, well prepared with a rolled stretcher, backboard, and other emergency medical equipment. Rain recognized Billy, Simon's older brother. He had graduated from Thunder Rock High School only two years before and now worked for the Tribe's ambulance service. It was Billy who had introduced the boys to *Mammoth Boy*.

"Sorry, RD, we couldn't get here faster," Billy panted. "We responded to a call at your house first—that's where we thought the problem was. But we picked up another 'emergency responder' while we were there." Looking back over his shoulder, Billy called, "Where's Simon? Hey, Simon!"

Rain jumped up. "Did Simon come?"

"Yeah, all the others wanted to, especially Boomer. But I told them I'd get in enough trouble just letting my brother ride along." Simon came dragging up the rear. He was hauling a large trauma kit in addition to his usual backpack.

Rain hurried to meet him. "Boy! Am I glad to see you!"

"We heard that they got Smeed," Simon said excitedly. "It was on the ambulance radio." Noticing that Rain looked a little

scruffy, he asked, "Did you get into it with Smeed?"

Rain nodded. "Yeah, we had a fight."

"Man, this is great. Boomer's gonna love it!"

"Boom will flip, all right, but we got a problem." Taking Simon aside, Rain said quietly, "Mom's cousin, Willard, won't give up Jimmy's turtle bones. We gotta get them. And you know why."

While he talked to Simon, Rain was keeping an eye on Billy who was checking Granma's vital signs. Billy called Rain over. Quietly he said, "Her skin's a little dry and her temp is up. Her heartbeat is a little fast, too. So I'm going to give her some fluids." Simon unloaded the trauma kit and Billy set up the emergency IV. In a short while Granma actually started to look better.

Packing up, Billy explained to Granma, "We couldn't get the ambulance around this big rock. So we're going to take you out on foot." They picked her up gently and placed her on the backboard for more stability, and then onto the stretcher. Before they had gone more than ten feet, Granma stopped them.

"Hold it, boys," she said, her voice strong in spirit, if not in body. "Put me down. My nephew's come to tell me something."

Willard took off his hat and wiped the sweat off his forehead. When he stood over his great aunt, his chest and shoulders were so broad they actually shaded her from the sun like a living umbrella. "Aunt Hettie, we just got Roberta and Gerald on the radio; they're going to meet you at the hospital. We told them that Rain was okay and not to worry."

Granma nodded, but passed over that bit of information

quickly. "Willard, give Rain the bones he wants."

"But it's evidence, Aunt Hettie."

"You got enough evidence to bury that man under the jail for a thousand years."

Awkwardly, Willard tried to explain to the old lady, "Legally, I just can't do that."

Granma's voice grew stronger. "When you were born, I took you out, even before you were cleaned up, and showed you to your great-grandma. This is the generations talking to you, Willard, not just me."

The police chief pursed his lips. He looked down and back at the Range Rover. He had been the head of "law and order" on the reservation for fifteen years. His officers respected him and he had a lot of authority—but he knew when he was outranked.

He sighed, "Okay."

Rain looked gratefully at Willard. He leaned over and kissed Granma. She whispered, "I'll be fine, Rain. You just go where the coyote takes you."

Rain and Simon watched as Granma was carried off the flats. Simon turned to Rain, "I'm really sorry about putting the part about the turtle in the interview. It sure caused a lot of trouble."

"It's okay, Simon."

"No, it's not okay, because I was thinking about what I wanted and not about other people."

Thinking about Jimmy, Rain said, "I've done that, too. But don't think about that stuff right now. Let's go get those turtle bones."

The boys went over to the Range Rover and Willard gave

the box to Rain. "Looks like we'll be making a visit to Nelson's," he said. "You guys cracked this case. Those bones or fossils, whatever they are, must be really important."

Rain nodded. "Yeah, they are."

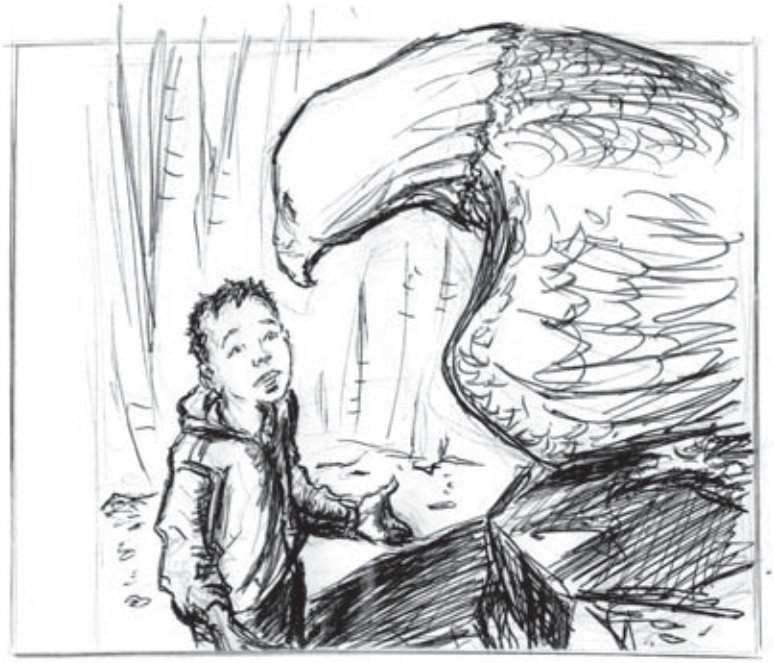
Willard put his hand on Rain's shoulder. "You did real good today. I'm going to tell your mother how proud she should be of you." Then Willard turned back into a police chief and rounded up his men. "All right," he commanded, "let's get out of here!" Blue lights flashing, the squad cars formed a row and sped off toward another exit that was a greater distance from Thunder Rock than the route they had taken into the flats. But the cops were in no hurry now. Smeed was history.

Boo sauntered over, hands in his pockets. "I guess there's something you've got to do, buddy."

"Yeah, there is. Something that Simon and I both have to do. Will you wait for us?"

Boo smiled. "I'll be right here. I guess my customers will just have to eat at Big Weasel's today."

Chapter 22



The eagle ruffled his feathers, but offered no advice.

A Boy Must Help Us

The boys prepared themselves for the trek to the cave. They didn't know how far it would be or how long it would take them to get there and back. One thing was for sure—they didn't need any excess baggage. "Here," Rain suggested, "let's dump the box and put the turtle bones in your backpack."

Rain opened the box that contained the six bones Jimmy had sold to Smeed. He was surprised to see that two of the bones were not round in shape. Picking up one of the odd ones, he

said, "Look, Simon, this bone looks like a long finger."

Taking the fossil from Rain's outstretched palm, Simon said, "Yeah, it looks just like those skinny flipper bones in the pictures of the Great Turtle." Simon slung his backpack off his shoulder and unzipped it. He carefully inserted Jimmy's bones, including the two "fingers," then added the two from the cigar box, and lastly he slipped in Delbert's bone. Lifting the backpack, Simon realized the fossils were not a light load, but he knew he could handle it. However, one thing still worried him. Turning to Rain, Simon said, "I have one question, RD. How are we going to find the cave?"

"Coyote. He's out there. He led Smeed to me. And he'll take us to the cave—just like in the eagle's dream."

Simon tucked a bottle of water into his jacket pocket and handed a full bottle to Rain. Joking, he said, "Think we ought to bring an extra one for Coyote?"

Rain laughed, "I wouldn't worry about him. He probably invented water."

The boys went over to the overhang where Boo was settling himself in the shade. Rain smiled, "Wish us luck …"

Boo chuckled. "I would if I knew what you guys were up to."

Teasing Simon, Rain replied, "Don't worry. If Simon has anything to do with it, you'll read about it in the newspaper."

The boys waved to Boo and started walking northward, hugging the border of the flats. Rain led the way—back to where he last saw the coyote. It took the boys only a few minutes to cover the short distance to the gully. Leaving the bright sunlight, they entered the opening where water had once flowed from

the hills, eroding the soil to a sandy mix. Simon looked down at the disturbed rubble and hodgepodge of footprints. He could detect sneakers and various sizes of rounded and pointy-toed boots. "Is this where you had the fight with Smeed?"

Rain sat down. "Yeah, right here." He reached over and picked up a stick. "See this? Smeed was going to hit Granma with it. But I stopped him."

Simon said, "Let me hold it, RD." Taking the stick from Rain, he ran his hand along its splintery edge. "Gosh, I'd probably keep this forever. Man, I can't believe you took him down."

"I can't either. I was really scared," Rain confessed. Explaining the unbelievable, he added, "I used this wrestling move Boomer showed me. And it worked! We'll show it to you—just in case we ever have to arrest some bank robbers—or run into Smeed again," Rain joked.

The boys stopped talking and turned their heads, listening. In the far distance they heard an ambulance siren. Rain smiled at Simon. "There goes Granma."

"Yeah, she'll be at the hospital in no time. You know, there's one thing I don't get. Why did Smeed think somebody as weak as your Granma would be able to lead him through these hills to the cave?"

"I don't know. Maybe the thought of making a bunch of money turned him into an idiot."

The siren wailed again faintly, only this time it was punctuated at the end by a small "yip." Rain swiveled his head in the direction of the sound. "Look! There he is!"

Coyote was lying stomach down on a flat rock several yards

up the gully. He hopped down and glanced at the boys only once, then turned and faded into the shadows. Rain jumped up and ran after the trickster, yelling, "Come on, Simon!" Simon saw Coyote's tail flick in a shaft of yellow sunlight before it disappeared into the dimness. He knew this old runner was going to set a fast pace.

Coyote led Rain and Simon deep into the low hills. In miles it probably wasn't a far distance, but the twists and turns through a challenging landscape made it seem like they were running a marathon. Before long Rain's leg started aching. He managed to ignore it for a short while—until he tripped and fell heavily on a bed of loose gravel.

Simon slid to a stop and pulled Rain up by his arm. "Hey, look, you got blood on your sock! Did Smeed do that?"

Rain was surprised by the blood. "No, I fell a while ago, but it didn't hurt then."

Realizing that he would have to move more cautiously, Rain saw with great relief that Coyote had stopped just ahead. He'd halted long enough for the boys to see him and then darted into a small break in the rocks. Rain hurried as fast as he could and squeezed through the break first. The opening was so narrow that Simon had to take off his backpack. He pushed it through, then followed.

Both boys came to a sudden stop. Rain drew in his breath, "Wow, it's just like in Granma's story." In front of them was the "bowl" that Granma had told them about. Her description was perfect—there were hundreds of little holes and caves pockmarking the surrounding valley wall.

"Look, RD," Simon cried, "the coyote is way ahead of us!"

Coyote was loping across the bottom of the bowl, making brisk progress. Rain pursued him as fast as he could go but he was limping a little now. The boys didn't try to keep up at this point. They couldn't lose Coyote because his tracks were too easy to follow. Eyes trained on the ground, Rain and Simon tracked his paw prints until they vanished into a small dark cave.

They stopped at the cave's entrance. Simon's heart was thumping with excitement. "I guess this is it. Now we'll see what Delbert and Jimmy saw." Rain nodded but thought, Yeah, and now I have to put right what they messed up.

The boys entered the darkness and followed a narrow, dusty path. Within a few minutes, they saw a patch of light just as Delbert had seen so many years before. They approached the exit with apprehension as the light grew brighter and brighter.

Suddenly, Rain cried out, "Ooww!" He leaned up against the tunnel wall and pulled up the leg of his torn jeans. The wound on his left leg was encrusted in dirt. Simon looked down at the cut. "You must have gotten something in it when you fell." Rain pulled out his water bottle and gave it to his friend. Simon poured water into the cut and instantly the sharp sting disappeared as the water flushed out the sand.

"Whew, that feels better." Rain looked up to say 'thanks,' but the word never made it past his lips. Instead, he was staring intently at the cave wall behind Simon's head.

Simon turned to see what had grabbed Rain's attention.

Although the cave was dark, there was enough light for them to make out the imprint of a human hand, and beside it, an ancient drawing of a turtle–its outline a faded finger line of red ochre.

Rain suddenly felt very small and very young. "Our ancestors were here a long time ago, Simon."

Simon asked softly, and with insight, "RD, could this be *the* Medicine Cave—like in the name of our reservation?"

Rain offered no answer. The significance of the turtle drawing was too much for him to really ponder at that moment. Surrendering to the mystery, Rain said, "This is just something we'll have to think about later." Rolling down his pants leg, he gestured with his chin toward the light. "Go on, I'm right behind you."

Simon paused and then ran on ahead. Rain was fumbling with his shoelaces when he heard Simon gasp and then call out, "RD, you have to see this!"

Rain abandoned his shoes and quickly followed Simon. When he emerged from the cave there was no way he could have been prepared for the scene before him. When he told Hummingbird about it later, Rain would say it was like in that old movie, "The Wizard of Oz" when Dorothy opens the door and everything is in Technicolor. For Simon, it was the dinosaur equivalent of Disneyland and a trip to the moon.

The cave opened into a roofless gallery that displayed on its walls some of the masterworks of all creation. Unknown to the boys, this was the place that the animals called "where the giants sleep." Rain and Simon began to walk tentatively along the periphery of the rock wall. "Look!" Simon pointed, "there's

Delbert's long-necked monster and the fish with the 'teeth like knives!'" The boys saw great-winged lizards that "flew" in their rocky tombs and mega-vegetarians grazing on petrified forests. As close observers, they also witnessed that nature preserved the miniature as well as the gigantic. Simon was enchanted by the tiniest bones he had ever seen—having no idea that they were the disarticulated remains of a furry little shrew scampering after his insect dinner.

The boys were simply overwhelmed by the way the sun illuminated the high relief of the weathered bones, and the bluest sky framed the remnants of their life force. Lost in this wonder, Rain did not see but heard Coyote. He turned in the direction of his "yip" and glimpsed the trickster watching them from a high rocky platform. His face turned upward, Rain's heart leapt when he saw the eagle, his wings breaking the air, descend and join Coyote on a nearby rock ledge. Despite the magnificence of the cave, the white-feathered profile of the eagle was still the most striking image of beauty that Rain had ever seen.

Simon cried, "They're here! They're going to tell us what to do, RD."

The eagle peered down at Rain and Simon and stretched out his wings. He flapped them only once, but Rain interpreted this as a greeting. No longer aware of the pain in his leg, Rain ran under the ledge where the eagle perched, and called, "I've come to help like you said!"

Rain thought the eagle would answer, but he only rocked from leg to leg, flexing his huge talons. The Great Messenger

offered no communication except through the sympathetic tilt of his head and the kindness of his eyes. Rain was disappointed, but not discouraged. He knew the eagle was not abandoning him.

Rain said to Simon, "Let's get out the bones and then look for the turtle. Maybe we can figure this out ourselves."

Simon walked over to a small depression that looked like an old spring and sat down. He reached into his backpack and took out the turtle bones, one at a time, and placed them in a circle on the ground. Several of them were too close to the crumbling edge of the old spring and they started to slide downward. Simon grabbed them and put them back in the circle. Seeing another bone on the spring bottom, he reached down and picked it up, too.

Watching closely, Rain cautioned, "Simon we only had nine bo…"

Instantly, the atmosphere and mood of the cave changed. A light wind suddenly began to blow, chilling the air. At first it only purred and puffed over the knobby skulls and along giant vertebrae, before turning toward the boys and ruffling their hair. Then it began to moan. Rain heard sounds in the wind that drifted down into his consciousness like layers of strange sediment. He heard the rippling of old waves on ancient shores, the exhalation of breath long dead, and the low cries and shrieks of animal prey.

The boys drew closer together. "Simon, are you hearing what I'm hearing?" Rain whispered. Simon only nodded, his lips pressed tightly together in alarm. But it was the eerie sound

of rock scraping against rock that focused their attention most sharply. Spooked, the boys shrank back from the source of the noise—the rock wall behind the old spring.

Rain and Simon stared open-mouthed, not believing the sight before their eyes. The limestone wall was roiling, like angry waves in a stony ocean. A massive beaked skull, its jaws creaking open in a soundless cry of grief, plunged down and upward, down and upward, propelled by bony flippers on a ghostly current. It was the Great Turtle!

To the boys, their senses distorted by awe and fear, her fossilized remains appeared to loom above them, monstrous in scale. Stumbling backwards, Simon dropped the offending bone. The cave instantly grew silent, and the cold wind sank softly to the fossil-strewn floor. The Great Turtle, her empty eye sockets staring vacantly at the boys, had ceased her terrible swimming, and was once again a captive in the rock wall.

Rain stammered, "You … you picked up one of her bones just like Delbert did."

Simon struggled to find his voice. When he did, he could only peep, "She freaked out!" Looking down at the bone that now lay in the spring bottom, Simon cried, "I always do the wrong thing—why is it always me?"

Suddenly Rain had an inspiration. Thinking that apologies seemed to work pretty well at setting things right, he said, "Simon, why don't you tell her that you're sorry?"

Simon didn't question the strategy. He cleared his throat and addressed the Great Turtle respectfully, "I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to steal your bones." Edging back next to Rain, Simon

asked, "How do I know she forgives me, RD?"

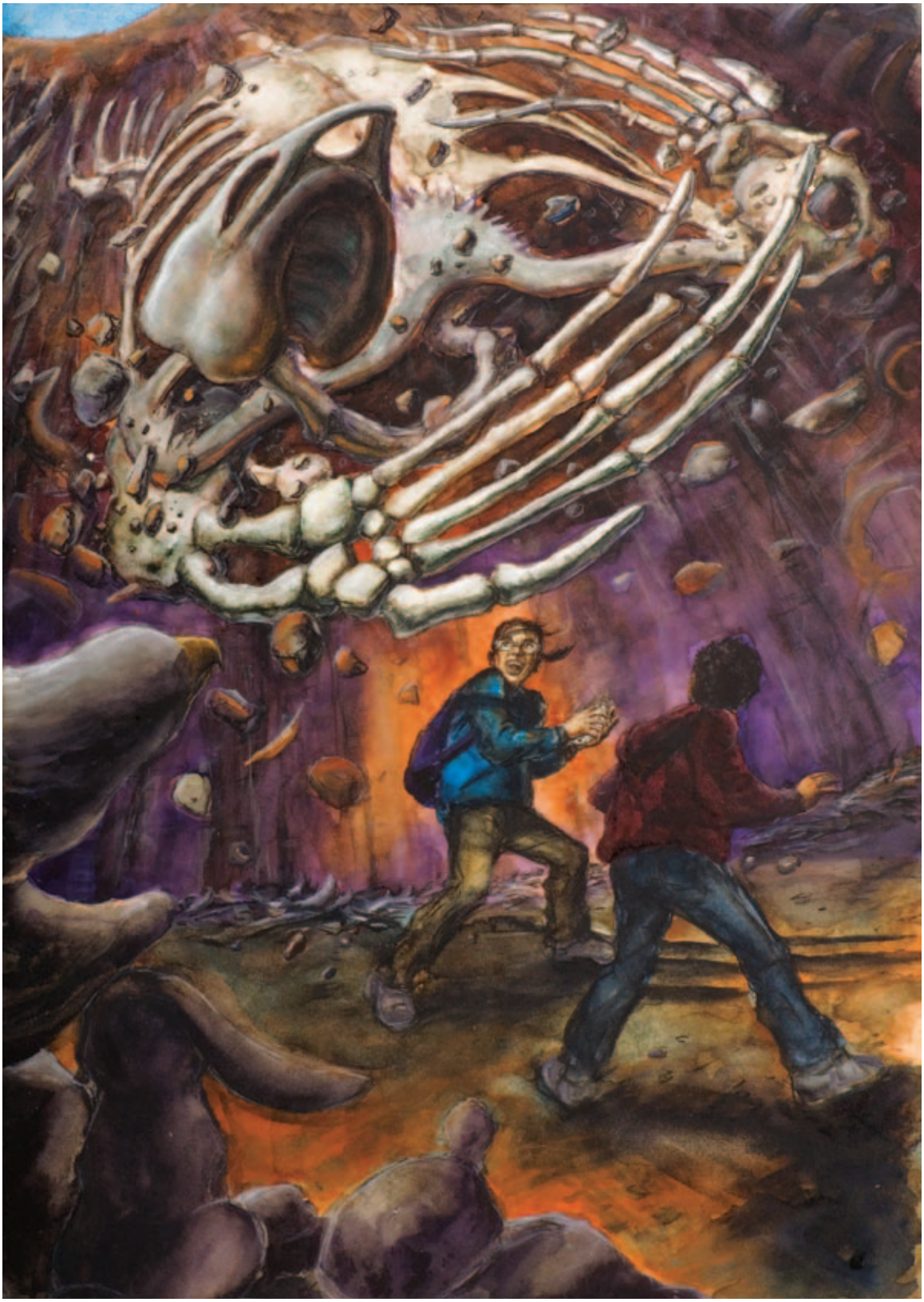
Rain took a few steps closer to the Great Turtle. Wonder was beginning to overcome his fear. Rain said, "I don't think she wants to hurt us. Look at her, Simon; she's even bigger than the pictures we saw. She really does look like the whole world could ride on her back. Come on," he motioned, "help me."

Simon pulled back. "Not me. You do it. The eagle said you were the one."

Trying to avoid looking at her eye sockets (which were really scary), Rain approached the Great Turtle. He gingerly touched one of the struts that had supported her leathery shell—and quickly withdrew his hand. Nothing happened. Encouraged, Rain closely examined her remaining flipper bones, but he couldn't tell which flipper the stolen bones had come from or where they should be reinserted. Rain was stymied. He thought, This is a jigsaw puzzle!

Rain looked, pleading, to the ledge where the eagle sat. The eagle ruffled his feathers but offered no advice. Rain couldn't understand why the eagle would not speak. Coyote, who lay nearby with his head hanging over the side of his roost, merely yawned.

Rain despaired. Had he come all this way just to fail? To both animals, Rain cried in exasperation, "Help me! I don't know what to do!"



It was the Great Turtle!

Chapter 23

...he fanned the smoke into the still night air.

The Blessing

Before Rain's anxious voice had stopped echoing, the answer came—but from one much closer to the ground. A gray cottontail hopped from behind a pile of pebbles and looked directly at Rain. Her eyes, black and unblinking, seemed to observe him with great expectancy.

Simon whispered, "Do you think that's our rabbit?"

"She looks the same..." Rain whispered back.

The rabbit placed her forepaws on the ground and looked

behind her; then she took a couple of tenuous hops. A small brownish rock followed the rabbit and started to amble slowly toward the spring. Watching its progress, Rain soon realized that the "rock" was a little box turtle.

Painfully slow, the turtle finally reached her destination —the circle of bones Simon had placed on the ground. She stuck out her head from its protective armor and picked up one of the smaller "finger" bones in her beak-mouth. She looked benignly at Rain with her old eyes—then turned toward the Great Turtle, thrusting her clawed toes against the rubble-strewn earth.

Under normal circumstances, a human would have been astonished by such unusual animal behavior. But Rain was simply grateful. He watched the laborious "scratch-push," "scratch-push" of the little elder as she made her way to her ancient relative. When she reached the wall, the box turtle stretched up to the lowest of the Great Turtle's flippers and pushed the bone into its rightful place.

Then she turned and looked at Rain. He picked up one of Jimmy's bones and brought it to her. He held it down to her mouth, but she turned away and looked up toward the flipper. He saw that she wanted him to insert it. Rain poised the bone over several empty places, waiting for a signal. When she blinked, he pressed the bone into that spot. In this manner, Rain and Grandmother Turtle began the reassembly of the Great Turtle's flippers. She got frustrated with him only once, snapping her beak at him when he mistakenly turned a bone upside down.

They even reinserted the ill-fated bone that Simon had picked up accidentally.

Now, there was only Delbert's bone left. Rain knew where it should go because there was now only one empty space in one of the flippers. He pressed the last fossilized bone firmly into its rocky home.

Suddenly, the boys heard again the peculiar creaking and groaning of moving rock. They stepped back and beheld the huge skeleton of the ancient reptile shifting once more. The Great Turtle turned her skull away from this strange new world and tucked it under the plates of her enormous chest. Folding her flippers neatly beneath her body, she sank to the muddy bottom of the sea where she had died millions of years before.

Rain heard a sigh from the old box turtle, or what he interpreted as a sigh. He looked down at her and thought, Well, I guess we did it.

But Grandmother Turtle was not finished. She waddled slowly to the edge of the old spring and began to sing. It was a sound like none Rain or Simon had ever heard before, nor would they ever hear again. It was a sacred song that had no rhythm, melody, or lyric to which the human ear was accustomed.

Yet the boys understood its purpose because they saw its effect. A thin stream of water began to trickle from beneath the Great Turtle's body. The box turtle's song was a lullaby that had transported her back to the time when she swam the warm tides of the ancient seaway that covered the land on which the people now lived. The song had set her free to swim and dream forever of water…water…water.

The little turtle sang on and on until the harmony between then and now was restored; the fears of children and elders were put to rest; and water once again balanced the health of the people and the land.

The water increased from trickle to gush and soon the spring was filled. Beneath the spring, it flowed down and outward through underground layers of permeable rock to reanimate the parched rivers, streams and wells of the reservation.

As the water began its life-giving journey, the box turtle sang the last refrain of her song, and it drifted away on the cool breeze that now filled the cave. Her glistening eyes sought out Rain and Simon one more time, and then she slipped with a tiny splash into the pool—never to be seen again.

Rain and Simon stood looking down at the little ripple where the box turtle had disappeared, and suddenly they felt very lonely for the company of this little creature. The boys looked around—for the rabbit first and then for the eagle and Coyote—but they, too, were gone.

Thirsty, Rain kneeled down beside the spring and drank. Simon drank and also filled his water bottle with its pure goodness. They had a long walk ahead of them. Savoring the quiet stillness and the sweet sound of the flowing water, Rain looked at the Great Turtle, now sleeping, once more. Whether one called her *Archelon ischyros*, Turtle Island, the aquifer, or a thousand other names, to Rain she would always be the harmony where water and the blood of the people became one.

Rain and Simon stood at the entrance to the cave's tunnel. They took one last, very long look at the "place where the giants sleep" and then stooped into the dark passageway that would take them back into their own world. The boys headed east, retracing Coyote's paw prints and their own tracks. They did not try to hurry. Every so often as they climbed over a high spot, they would stop to consider the miles of low hills that stretched far away from north to south. Rain was glad of the opportunity to rest his leg and Simon just appreciated the view. They did not talk much.

Finally, Rain began to recognize the signs that they were approaching the little gully from which their journey had begun. Simon went on ahead a bit—he was much faster on his feet than Rain at this point. Spotting the exit onto the flats, he called, "RD! We're here!

Rain caught up with Simon and sat down to retie around his shin a bandage he had fashioned from an old bandana he found in Simon's backpack. Simon sat down beside Rain, looking out at the whiteness of the flats. He said quietly, "It's going to take a long time to tell this story, isn't it, RD?"

"Yeah, I know." As always, Rain was eager to tell Boomer about the adventure, but it would be to Hummingbird that he told his innermost thoughts about the Great Turtle. "Just think," Rain said, "Boomer and Hummingbird are the only people in the whole world who will believe and understand everything we say."

"And Arianna," Simon added, knowing that Rain would understand what he was suggesting.

"Yes, and Arianna," Rain agreed, smiling. "She will be the first person that we tell about the eagle, rabbit and coyote."

Simon laughed. "After giant turtles and fossil poachers, she'll probably believe anything we say—even animals talking to us about diabetes!"

Rain stood up and tested his bad leg. "I think I might need a stitch or two."

"The wounded warrior! I wonder if it gives you any bragging rights?" Simon teased.

"Only to Danny and Del!"

Leaving the sound of their laughter within the walls of the little gully, the boys moved out onto the flats, suddenly subject to the late afternoon heat that shimmered on the old white seabed. They had only gone a short distance when Simon grabbed Rain's arm and said, "Look, RD, up there—to your left."

It was the eagle. He was flying so high that he was only a small black silhouette. The boys watched as he descended toward them—the sun transforming the white tips of his wings into flaming gold. The Great Messenger seemed to hang in the air on these magic wings before rising up once again—higher and higher until Rain and Simon lost him in the clouds.

Looking at the sky, Simon asked, "Do you ever think he'll talk to us again?"

Rain considered the question. "No, but… I think we'll always be able to hear him if we listen." Simon was thinking about Rain's response when he spotted the shaded overhang where Granma had sheltered from the sun earlier in the day.

Under it, the boys saw a figure stand up and start to wave. It was Boo. Faintly, they could hear him call their names, "RD!" "Simon!"

The boys waved back and yelled, "We're coming, Boo! We made it!" In sheer exuberance, Rain started singing the eagle's old game song as he hobbled along, trying to keep up with Simon. "Hop on one foot and then on the other, see if we can go a little bit further. East or west or up and down, we'll start again and go round and round." Laughing at himself, he thought that he would *really* be hopping if he had to go much further.

Shell Ridge, the heart of the Tribe's land, captured Rain's song and replicated Boo's greeting in a resonating embrace that welcomed the boys home. Boo ran to meet Rain and Simon—so proud to be their friend. Later, in the shadow of Red Water Mountain, he would bundle them into his old truck, and taking special care of Rain, deliver them safely to their families.

Sky Heart, still soaring beyond the view of human beings, heard the echo of their homecoming and was glad. Thistle, too, was content when their safe return reached her ears.

As for Coyote, he still had some business to do. He had remained close to the cave, considering his next move. The game had been a good one, and on the whole he was pleased. The tricks, he thought, had been first-rate, and he would have to admit that Rain that Dances had stood up to them very well. Perhaps in the future, the old trickster thought, he would have to ramp up his traps and deceptions. Coyote always liked to test the mettle of those with true courage.

As for this game, Coyote decided to end it. He positioned

himself in front of the cave, and "reaching for his power," as the old people used to say, he gulped an enormous lungful of air. He held it for a moment and then blew a huge blast that thrust a cascading wall of sand into the cave. He blew and blew until the cave was filled, and there was almost no evidence of its existence. Then he stepped back to look at his work. He approved. No one would ever tamper with the giants again—unless…well, unless Coyote decided that they could.

With that, Coyote left the Great Turtle to her dreams and decided to go south toward Thunder Rock. He was always inclined to places where the people lived. He began to follow little trails leading out from Shell Ridge and by nightfall was trotting in parallel to one of the state highways that traversed the reservation. As he crossed the bridge over Little Cave Creek, his sensitive nose detected a pleasing scent that caused him to pause. Opening his mouth to more fully sample the green, woodsy perfume that drifted from the creek below, Coyote sensed a vanilla-like aroma. With gladness, he turned off the highway and sniffed his way to a small patch of sweetgrass that grew in the moist soil near the creek bank. With the summer now past, several of the plant's tall, hollow stems lay dry and curled on the ground. The old trickster lowered his head and inhaled deeply of the plant's fragrance. His spirit smiled.

Deciding to share the goodness of his find, Coyote carefully rolled the dried stems together with his nose. Then, picking up the "braid" in his teeth, he returned to the side of the road, where he began his ceremony. Coyote held the holy grass between his paws and soon the twisted stems began to

smolder (his power was very near). Exhaling a long, magical breath upon the sweetgrass, he fanned the smoke into the still night air. He watched the gray plume rise to a great height, touch the clouds, and then fall gently back down to earth, placing a blessing upon the land.

Coyote closed his eyes and was satisfied.

Cast of Characters

(In Order of Appearance)

The Animals

Grandmother Turtle: A turtle elder. Grandmother Turtle goes to Sky Heart and Thistle for help. She is frightened because the resting place of an ancient relative has been disturbed by a thief—causing the water on the reservation to dry up. Grandmother Turtle knows she must do everything she can to restore the long sleep of her ancestor.

Thistle: The Rabbit. Thistle advises Sky Heart about Grandmother Turtle's cry for help and cautions him about the coyote's tricky ways.

Sky Heart: The Eagle. Sky Heart now speaks to Rain only in dreams. In this story, he warns Rain about threats to the community and asks for his help in restoring its harmony.

Coyote: The Trickster. Coyote kept his promise not to trick Rain and his friends into eating unhealthy foods. However, now he entertains himself by entangling the human and animal characters in a game that is won only when the reservation's creeks flow once again and friends and family are safe.

The Kids

Rain: (Rain that Dances; also called "RD" by his friends). The boy chosen by the eagle. Everyday Rain tries to spread the eagle's messages about eating healthy and being active. At school, the kids call him "Veggie-Man," but Rain doesn't mind because preventing type 2 diabetes is all-important. When the eagle asks for his help in a dream, Rain must draw upon all his courage to face down a real "bad guy" who threatens his family and the health of his Tribe.

Boomer: (Thunder Cloud). Rain's best pal. Friendly and loud, Boomer is the joker always ready for excitement and a game of basketball. When Rain gets too serious, Boomer can snap him out of it with his good humor. Although he often speaks before he thinks, Boomer is very resourceful when the kids get in a tough spot.

Jimmy: A lonely boy. Rain and Boomer occasionally invite Jimmy to play basketball, but he usually keeps to himself. Trying to make some money to help his mother, he gets involved with a bad crowd. Not meaning to, Jimmy sets in motion the events that lead to Grandmother Turtle's warning and Rain's dream about the eagle.

Hummingbird: (Bird). Rain's confidant. A great friend, Hummingbird listens carefully to Rain's innermost thoughts about the eagle's messages. Like Rain, she is totally committed to helping the community become healthy. Smart and popular, she can be bossy at times, but the boys count on her clear thinking and determination.

Simon: The "nerdy" kid. Simon's family has recently returned to the reservation after spending several years in the big city. Now he is re-connecting with his friends. All of Rain's friends are considered nerds because they hang out with "Veggie-Man," but Simon is the biggest egghead. He loves comic books and reads everything about dinosaurs.

Arianna: Hummingbird's new "sister." Arianna is temporarily living with Hummingbird's family. She is from a Hispanic family that will be moving to the community later in the fall. Arianna has type 1 diabetes. She teaches the kids about this form of diabetes and joins them in their adventures. The character of "Arianna" is based on a real girl whose name is Arianna. Like the character in the book, she is very active and loves sports.

Rain's Family

Margie: Rain's little sister. Margie is the youngest member of the family and Rain's only sister.

Del and Danny: Rain's 5-year-old twin brothers. The loud and boisterous twins worship their older brother who always has time to play games with them.

Roberta: Rain's mother. Roberta works as a community health representative for the Tribe. She is proud of Rain and always tries to support his interest in type 2 diabetes prevention. Roberta and Rain are very close and enjoy doing things together.

Granma: Rain's great-grandmother. "Granma" is Roberta's grandmother and the heart of the family. She tells the story about Coyote and a hidden cave that further complicates the mystery that Rain and his friends must solve.

Gerald: Rain's father. Gerald works long hours as the economic business developer for the Tribe. His favorite time of day is when he comes home to enjoy supper with his family. He is sometimes puzzled by Rain's obsession with healthy foods and physical activity, but believes that these concerns foretell a special future for his son.

Aunt Sissy: Rain's aunt. Aunt Sissy, Roberta's sister, is the grumpy member of the family. She thinks that Gerald and Roberta take health issues too seriously and that Rain is an overanxious dreamer.

The Teachers

Ms. Betty Swallow: The eighth-grade science teacher at Thunder Rock Middle School. Hummingbird's role model, Miss Swallow helps the kids identify the fossils they find in a cigar box. During the summer when she is not teaching school, Ms. Swallow manages the Bison Project, an ecology program that includes Native Science.

Mrs. Biddy: Rain and Boomer's homeroom teacher. Mrs. Biddy has a reputation for running the strictest classroom in the school.

Mrs. Corn: The seventh-grade language teacher. Mrs. Corn assigns her class to write up a story told by a family member. When Rain and Simon turn in their report of Granma's story, Mrs. Corn prints it in the school newspaper.

Dr. Bamsey: A biology professor at Thunder Rock Tribal College. Dr. Bamsey helps the kids by photographing the fossils and sending the photos to the state university for identification.

Joe Red Crane: A Tribal elder. Joe teaches Native language classes at the middle school.

Other Characters

Boo: The owner of Boo's Gas'n Grocery. With guidance from Rain and his friends, Boo offers healthy foods in his store that have boosted his sales. Boo is very appreciative and does all he can to help the kids when they get in trouble.

Frank Big Weasel: The owner of Big Weasel's Jif Mart. Big Weasel tries to run Boo out of business when he first opens his store. He sells unhealthy foods that are "heart attacks in a sack." In the story, he learns about healthier foods—and their commercial potential.

Vernon Smeed: A mysterious travel writer. Smeed hangs out at Nelson's Rock and Smoke Shop where he buys rocks and fossils.

Willard Fox Chief: The chief of police. Willard, Roberta's cousin, is the well-respected head of "law and order" on the reservation.

Billy: Simon's older brother. Billy works for the Tribe's emergency medical service.

Glossary

A

Accelerating (to accelerate): to increase speed.

Accusation: blame; finger pointing.

Acknowledgment: recognition.

Admonished (to admonish): to rebuke; to give corrective advice or warning.

Adrenaline: a hormone secreted, often in response to stress, by the adrenal gland into the circulatory system, which stimulates the heart, blood vessels and respiratory system.

Advertising (to advertise): to publicize; promote; market.

Affable: being at ease and pleasant in personality; friendly.

Altitude: the distance an object is above the ground or above a given level.

Ambitious: being determined; striving or pushy.

Ambling (to amble): to walk in a slow, leisurely manner.

Amplifying (to amplify): to make bigger or louder.

Angling (to angle): to tilt; to slope.

Animated (to animate): to bring to life; to be lively.

Animatedly: full of life and energy; lively.

Apatosaurus: also known by the popular but obsolete term *Brontosaurus*, is a sauropod dinosaur that lived about 150 million years ago, during the Jurassic Period. It was one of the largest land animals that ever existed, with an average length of 75 feet and a mass of 25 tons.

Aperture: an opening or a hole.

Apparatus: the equipment or material used for a job or to make a device work.

Appease: to soothe; settle down.

Apprehension: fear; anxiety.

Aquifer: an underground layer of water-bearing rock or materials like gravel, sand, silt, or clay from which well water can be drawn.

Arc: a part of a circle; a semicircle.

Archeological: pertains to the scientific study of past cultures and the way people lived based on the things they left behind.

Artery blockage: a metaphor for a food that will cause heart disease.

Assemblage: a group of things or people.

Assessing (to assess): to find out the importance, size, amount, or value of something.

Atmosphere: general feeling of a place or environment.

Awesome: breathtaking or remarkable.

B

Baffled (to baffle): to confuse; to puzzle.

Banner: a long sign made of cloth or paper; a flag.

Banter: to tease or talk in a joking way.

Beaker: a deep glass with a wide mouth and a lip for pouring.

Beaming (to beam): to be full of joy.

Beckoned (to beckon): to summon or motion to come over.

Bench: a long table used in laboratory that is equipped with water and sinks.

Benignly: kindly; with no intent to do harm.

Bitter-tinged: having a slightly bitter taste.

Bivalve: a mollusk, like a clam, with two shells.

Black market: the illegal trade or sale of things that are regulated by the government.

Bleachers: a stand of benches arranged like steps for people to sit on.

Blind: an object behind which one can hide.

Blurted (to blurt): to say something suddenly and without thinking.

Booster: an object that lifts or pushes up from below.

Brand: a product that buyers recognize and understand because they have seen or bought it before.

"**Break stride**": an expression meaning to slow down when walking or running.

Broadcasted (to broadcast): to transmit or relay information; make known.

Brochures: booklets that promote a program or product.

Budding (to bud): to just get started or show promise of growth.

Bulk: large quantity or size (as to buy in large quantities).

C

Cache: a supply of items, usually hidden.

Career: a long-term job or way of making a living.

Cascading (to cascade): to pour in; to spill or tumble down.

Casually: in an informal way; relaxed.

Cerulean: a very deep blue with green tones.

Challenging: demanding; difficult.

Characteristic: a trait that is normal or expected.

Charge: to accuse; to blame.

Chattering (to chatter): to talk idly, continually, or rapidly.

Chided (to chide): to scold or reprimand.

Churning (to churn): to stir up; to shake.

Circumstances: conditions at a certain time or place.

Clamored (to clamor): to holler; to try to get attention.

Clumsily: awkwardly; without grace or ability.

Clutch: a part on an automobile used to change gears.

Coaxed (to coax): to persuade; to wheedle; to sweet-talk.

Coincidence: happening by chance; by accident.

Collective: involving all members of a group.

Commercial: describes a business that sells things for a profit.

Compassion: sorrow, pity, or love felt for others, especially for those who are troubled.

Compatriot: a neighbor or fellow citizen.

Competition: a contest or struggle for the money, prizes or rewards.

Compliance: being in agreement or obedient.

Conceded (to concede): to admit or give in.

Conclusions: what is assumed to be true after evidence has been examined.

Concurred (to concur): to agree.

Conferring (to confer): to award; to give.

Congratulations: to tell someone "good job" or to give "best wishes."

Consciousness: awareness.

Consistency: the degree of thickness, firmness, or stickiness.

Console: a small fixed armrest in a car that often divides the passenger seats.

Consultant: a guide or advisor.

Contractors: a group that provides a service.

Contour: the outline or shape of something.

Corduroys: a pair of pants made from a thick, ribbed fabric.

Corporation: a business or group of businesses.

Corridor: a passageway (as in a school) into which rooms open.

Crested (to crest): to arrive at the top of.

Cretaceous: a geological age that occurred between 135 million and 63 million years ago.

Crevice: a long narrow depression on the surface of something.

Crinoid: an echinoderm, like a starfish or sea lily.

Croaked (to croak): to speak hoarsely or with difficulty.

Crumpled (to crumple): to press, bend, or crush out of shape.

D

Dainty: delicate; graceful.

Debris: rubbish; messy remains.

Decibels: units for measuring the loudness of sounds.

Deemed (to deem): to believe or have an opinion.

Defiant: disobedient; bold.

Deftly: quick and skillful in action.

Delusion: a fantasy; a misunderstanding.

Depression: sadness; feeling "down."

Descended (to descend): to move from a higher to a lower place.

Destination: the goal of a journey; a place to which something is sent.

Detention: a place where one is detained or held as punishment.

Detonated (to detonate): to blow up.

Diagram: a chart; an illustration of a plan.

Dialogue: a conversation; talk between two people.

Dialysis: the process of removing wastes from blood and returning it to the body.

Digitally: characterized by electronic and computerized technology.

Disarticulated (to disarticulate): to pull apart, as in the bones of an animal that have been separated; no longer together.

Disc: an object that has a flat, circular shape.

Disconcerted (to disconcert): to disturb, trouble, or distract.

Disheveled: messy.

Dispensed (to dispense): to distribute or give out.

Dissolved (to dissolve): to melt; to collapse.

Doodled (to doodle): to scribble or sketch while thinking of something else.

Dr. Watson: the physician who assisted Sherlock Holmes in solving mysteries. Sherlock Holmes frequently engages in spirited discussion or disagreement with Dr. Watson regarding the meaning of clues.

Dramatically: doing something in an exciting or theatrical way.

Dusky: somewhat dark in color.

Dutifully: to do something without protest; respectfully.

E

Economic: based on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Ecosystem: a community of living things interacting with their environment.

Ecstatic: extremely happy or having overwhelming emotion.

Eddying (to eddy): to move in a way that forms little circles.

Editing (to edit): to select or cut out information.

Eerie: weird; creepy.

Elevate: to raise; go up.

Embrace: to hold close; accept; welcome.

Enchanted (to enchant): to captivate; to charm; to enthrall.

Engrossed (to engross): to hold attention; to engage or be absorbed in an activity.

Entourage: a group of followers; a staff.

Entrepreneur: someone who starts and runs a business on his/her own.

Entwined (to entwine): to interlink, as in putting one's fingers together.

Enunciated (to enunciate): to speak clearly.

Enveloped (to envelope): to surround; to be enclosed by something.

Environmental: describes the surrounding conditions that influence the lives of living things.

Envisioned (to envision): to see in one's mind; to foresee.

Eroding: wearing away; grinding down.

Errant: describes something that is not in its proper place.

Ever vigilant: always on guard or watchful.

Exasperated (to exasperate): to frustrate; to annoy.

Exasperation: irritation.

Exchange: a conversation between two or more people.

Exhalation: breathing out.

Expectancy: anticipation; hope.

Expectantly: in anticipation; anxiously.

Exuberance: enthusiasm; energy.

F

Ferociously: intensely; wildly.

Flinched (to flinch): to draw back; to shy away.

Flounced (to flounce): to prance; to stomp about.

Foiled (to foil): to outwit; to halt in its tracks.

Food diaries: daily records of what someone has eaten.

Forlorn: unhappy; hopeless.

Fossil: a bone, body, or print of a dead plant or animal preserved in rock, earth, or tree resin.

Fossil poacher: a thief who steals fossils.

Fragrance: a pleasant smell.

Fretful: to be nervous; upset.

Fuming (to fume): to be angry; to be furious.

G

Gander: a long look in which one stretches the neck for a better view.

Gawking (to gawk): to stare; to look at someone rudely.

Genial: in a friendly way.

Geological: referring to the physical environment.

Gesturing (to gesture): to make a movement of the body that expresses an idea or a feeling.

Giggled (to giggle): to laugh with repeated short high sounds.

Gingerly: cautiously or carefully.

Glimpsed (to glimpse): to take a quick look; see a little bit of something.

Glistening (to glisten): to be shiny or glimmering.

Glucose: blood sugar.

Gossips: persons who talk about others, usually revealing personal or sensational facts.

Graduated cylinder: a tall narrow container used for measuring liquids.

Granola: a mixture of oats and other ingredients, such as brown sugar, raisins, coconut, or nuts.

"Green": a term meaning "environmentally friendly."

Groggy: weak and unsteady.

Guardedly: cautiously; suspiciously.

Gullies (gully): an opening between rock or dirt walls that has been cut by running water.

Gushed (to gush): to flatter; to admire too much.

Gypsum: a soft white mineral composed of calcium sulfate. Used in making plaster.

H

Half-hearted: lacking spirit or interest.

Harmony: everything working together in balance or in agreement.

Heralded (to herald): to announce an arrival; to signal that something has happened.

High resolution: pertains to an image shown in a high level of detail.

Hobbled (to hobble): to hop; to walk with difficulty.

Hodgepodge: a jumble; a big mess.

Honed (to hone): to sharpen or make more intense or effective.

Hoofed (to hoof): to walk with haste.

Hooted (to hoot): to utter in scorn; to "put down."

Horizontal: flat, level or straight.

Humiliation: loss of pride or self-respect.

Hydraulics: a topic in science and engineering pertaining to the way that liquids act under pressure.

Hypothesis: an idea that is not proven but is assumed to be true for purposes of argument or further study.

I

Idolized (to idolize): to love or admire a great deal.

Ill-fated: unlucky; causing bad fortune.

Illuminated (to illuminate): to shine a light upon.

Imbalanced (to imbalance): to make unsteady; to cause to be out of harmony.

Imminent: being about to happen.

Impatiently: eagerly or rashly.

Incisors: front teeth.

Inclined (to incline): to lean toward; to prefer.

Indignant: offended; resentful.

Inflectionless: speaking in a flat voice with no feeling.

Innermost: deepest; secret; personal.

Innocence: being without blame.

Insatiable: greedy; hunger can't be satisfied.

Insight: having a deep understanding.

Inspection: an examination; a "going-over."

Inspiration: motivation; encouragement.

Insulation: a substance that prevents transfer of electricity, heat, or sound.

Insulin: a hormone, secreted by the pancreas, which is needed to convert sugar, starches, and other food into glucose (blood sugar). Glucose provides the body with energy.

Intellect: brain power.

Interpreted (to interpret): to figure out; to explain.

Interrogator: one who asks questions in an unfriendly way.

Inventory: a supply of goods for sale or use by a business; a list of things.

Irrational: unreasonable; foolish.

Ironically: in contrast to what is usually done, believed, or expected.

IV: abbreviation for "intravenous." Usually refers to a tube inserted into a vein to give medicine.

J

Jimmied (to jimmy): to pry open.

Journalism: newspaper or television writing and reporting.

K

Knobby: being bumpy or irregular in shape.

L

Laboratories: facilities equipped for scientific experiments and tests.

Laborious: very difficult; taking a long time to do.

Labors: efforts; hard work.

Ladled (to ladle): to take up with a spoon or dipper.

Lanky: long and lean.

Launching (to launch): to take off with force.

LED lights: bright lights that do not use a filament as in a standard light bulb.

Leisurely: unhurried; at ease.

Leverage (to leverage): to gain power or force with limited effort.

Liberate: to free or release.

Limitations: limits; restrictions.

Lolling (to loll): to flop or hang down; to move in a relaxed, lazy manner.

Loping (to lope): to run in long, slow strides.

Lullaby: a song to make one sleep.

Luminous: shining; full of light.

Lurched (to lurch): to suddenly jerk, sway or tip.

Lyric: a word or words in a song.

M

Magnificence: glory; brilliance.

Majesty: splendor; beauty; magnificence.

Manufactured: something made.

Marathon: a run over a very long distance.

Marine: of or relating to the sea.

Marketing: advertising or promoting the purchase of an item or use of an idea.

Marveled (to marvel): to fill with surprise or astonishment.

Materialized (to materialize): to appear suddenly.

Mega-vegetarians: big plant-eating animals.

Melody: the tune of a song.

Merged (to merge): to absorb into something else; to combine.

Meteorological: refers to the atmosphere, weather, and weather forecasting.

Mettle: courage; spirit; bravery.

Milliseconds: a very short period of time.

Mimicked (to mimic): to imitate something or someone very closely.

Mince: to take tiny steps; walk in a dainty way.

Minerals: solids formed through geological processes that have specific chemical compositions and physical properties. They appear as rocks, metals, or crystals.

Miniature: very small.

Minicyclone: a little tornado.

Moaned (to moan): to groan; to whine.

Mobbing (to mob): to crowd around.

Mock: to tease; to make fun of.

Mock-whisper: a fake or "pretend" whisper.

Modestly: humbly; without arrogance.

Molecule: the smallest particle of a pure chemical substance that still retains its chemical composition and properties. It is always composed of two or more atoms of different elements. For instance, a water molecule is composed of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom.

Momentarily: for a moment (a brief portion of time).

Momentum: force or energy going forward.

Morphed (to morph): to change into something else.

Mummify: to preserve a dead body.

Mused (to muse): to think about; to consider thoughtfully.

Mystified (to mystify): to thoroughly confuse; to be puzzled.

N

Narrative: a story that has been told or is being told.

Negotiate: to get past or go around something.

Nemesis: an enemy; opponent.

Neural: describing nerves or the nervous system.

Nonchalantly: casually; without much interest.

Nonreflective: not capable of reflecting light, images, or sound waves.

Nudged (to nudge): to touch or push gently.

Nutritious: foods and drinks that provide good nutrients.

O

Objectives: aims or goals.

Observations: spoken or written notes about what has been seen and heard.

Ochre: an earth color, usually yellow or red.

Ominously: causing worry; threatening; not favorable.

Omitted (to omit): to leave out.

"**On par with**": "equal to" or "as good as."

Orbiting (to orbit): to move in a circle.

P

Pallet: a platform for moving and storing goods.

Pamphlet: a small book or leaflet.

Pantheon: a group of heroes or gods.

Papyrus: paper that the Egyptians made from the papyrus plant.

Parallel: to match; to go alongside.

Paramedics: emergency medical workers.

Parried (to parry): to dodge; to block a blow (as in sword fighting) or comment.

Partition: a divider.

Patina: a shiny layer or covering on the surface of an object.

Peered (to peer): to look at closely.

Peripheral: to the side, as in seeing out the corner of one's eye.

Periphery: on the edge.

Pessimistically: negatively; gloomily.

Photographer: one who takes pictures with a camera.

Plodded (to plod): to walk wearily or without enthusiasm.

Pockmarking (to pockmark): to have little holes or scars.

Poised: getting ready to do something.

Pondering (to ponder): to think deeply.

Populated (to populate): to provide with inhabitants; to occupy.

Portable: able to carry or move about.

Portly: chubby; overweight.

Predictability: ability to see in advance or to foretell.

Prefabricated (to prefabricate): to construct an object, like a building, from low-cost, manufactured parts or sections.

Preprogrammed (to preprogram): to enter a set of set of instructions that will be used at a later time (as in a computer).

Prey: animals that are food for other animals.

Prime: to prepare; to get something ready.

Pristine: untouched; like new.

Proclamation: an announcement.

Professionals: those educated or trained to do a special job.

Profile: a side view of an object.

Proposal: a plan or request.

Prospecting (to prospect): to hunt or search for.

Prostrated (to prostrate): to lie flat or face down.

Provoked (to provoke): to irritate; to force into doing something.

Public Utilities: public services that provide water, electricity, natural gas, or telephone service.

Pulley: a simple machine that has a wheel with a grooved rim through which a pulled rope will lift an object.

Punctuated (to punctuate): to interrupt.

Pyramids: structures with three sides; the burial places of Egyptian pharaohs or the temples of Mayas and Aztecs.

Q

Quizzical: showing puzzlement or curiosity.

Queue: to form a line.

R

Radar: a device that sends out radio waves for detecting the position of an object.

Radiant: vividly bright and gleaming.

Raffle: a competition in which players buy a ticket, hoping that theirs will be drawn to win a prize.

Ramshackley: broken down; falling to pieces.

Raptor: a hunting bird; a dinosaur with bird-like qualities.

Ravine: a narrow valley; a little canyon.

Reassembly: act of putting something together again.

Reassurance: support; encouragement.

Rebuked (to rebuke): to scold or admonish; to "tell off" someone.

Recklessly: without thought; not being responsible.

Reconvene: to bring together again.

Recounted (to recount): to tell or describe.

Reference: to remember; to orient to a place and time.

Refrain: the part of a song that is repeated.

Refrigerated (to refrigerate): to keep foods cold so that they will not spoil.

Refuge: a hiding place; a safe place.

Register: to realize; to enter one's consciousness or understanding.

Rehearsed (to rehearse): to prepare; to repeat an activity until it is perfectly done.

Relief: the raised outline of an image in stone.

Reluctance: not wanting to do something.

Reluctantly: unwillingly; half-heartedly.

REM sleep: (Rapid Eye Movement) stage in the normal sleep cycle in which dreams occur.

Remnants: the leftovers; what is remaining.

Rendezvous: a meeting or an appointment.

Replicated (to replicate): to copy; to imitate.

Reproach: to reprimand or scold.

Research: to investigate, study, or explore.

Resolved (to resolve): to reach a decision or settle a problem.

Resonate: to echo; reverberate.

Restoration: the act of returning an object to an earlier or original state.

Retail: describes a business that sells things to the public.

Retorted (to retort): to reply quickly, sometimes with annoyance.

Retraction: a withdrawal; an admission that something is not true.

Retreated (to retreat): to return to a safe place or pull back from a difficult situation.

Retreating (to retreat): to pull back.

Retrieve: to get back or take back.

Revelation: an understanding; surprise; something that is exposed.

Revolutions: movements that go around and around.

Rhythm: the beat of a song or tune; how fast the song is played.

Roiling (to roil): to twist and turn.

Roost: to settle on; to perch.

Rummaged (to rummage): to search quickly through the contents of a place or container.

Ruse: a trick; a deception.

S

Sapling: a small or young tree.

Sauntered (to saunter): to walk without hurry; to stroll.

Savor: to take pleasure in; appreciate.

Scalpel: a small, thin-bladed knife used in surgery or to cut/scrape delicate materials.

Scampering (to scamper): to run quickly.

Scanning (to scan): to look over quickly; to look across a wide view.

Scholastic: pertaining to school or education.

Scored (to score): to make grooves or marks.

Scoundrel: a rascal; someone up to mischief.

Sculpted (to sculpt): to shape, carve, or form.

Sediment: a deposit of sand or dirt.

Sedimentary: usually refers to rocks made from accumulated layers of soil and/or microscopic plant and animal life.

Self-condemnation: blaming oneself for a wrong.

Self-consciously: unsure of oneself; somewhat embarrassed.

Sequence: an arrangement of things in order.

Serrated: jagged; having a cutting edge like little teeth.

Serviceable: still useful; lasting or wearing well in use.

Shattered (to shatter): to break; to crush.

Sheepishly: done or said with feelings of guilt.

Sherlock: refers to Sherlock Holmes, the famous fictional detective, created by Sir Alfred Conan Doyle.

Shoveled (to shovel): to dig or clean out.

Shuddering (to shudder): to tremble or shake.

Shushed (to shush): to stop talking.

Shy: to be short of a certain distance or other measure; almost there, but not quite.

Sidled (to sidle): to move forward in a sideways manner.

Silhouette: the outline of an object seen against the light.

Simultaneously: done at the same time.

Skirting (to skirt): to go around; to avoid.

Slobbering (to slobber): to drool; salivate a great deal.

Slogan: a saying, jingle, or catchphrase.

Smugly: arrogantly; with conceit or self-importance.

Soberly: having a serious attitude.

Sobs: crying; tears.

Socialized (to socialize): to get together and talk; to mix and mingle.

Sophisticated: very stylish.

Species: a group of living things that are related to each other.

Specimen: a portion of something that is taken for testing or examination; an example of something.

Spike: a long stick with a sharp end; often used to spear and pick up trash.

Splintery: having little slivers or pieces of wood sticking out.

Spurt: to burst forth; erupt.

Squat: to crouch; sit on one's heels.

Squinting (to squint): to strain to see with narrowed eyes.

Stability: steadiness; firmness.

Stabilizing (to stabilize): to become steady; to calm down.

Stammered (to stammer): to speak in a halting manner.

Stifle: to choke back; suppress.

Stocky: compact, sturdy, and relatively thick in build.

Stooped (to stoop): to bend over.

Stragglers: those who come in last or wander on their own.

Strategy: a plan; an approach.

Stymied (to stymie): to block; to be stopped; to be unable to figure something out.

Subject: as in 'to be subject to.' To be exposed to or under the influence of.

Substituted (to substitute): to replace with something else.

Succulent: juicy; luscious (usually describes vegetables and plants).

Suit: as in "followed suit." To be or act in agreement.

Summarized (to summarize): to reduce a lot of information to just the main points.

Surrendering (to surrender): to yield; to give up.

Suspicion: feeling of doubt and mistrust.

Suspiciously: distrustfully; warily.

Swaggered (to swagger): to walk with a proud strut or in a boastful manner.

Sympathetic: kindly; sensitive; caring.

Synchronization: happening or existing at the same time; together.

T

Talking Circle: a group of people that get together to discuss a subject, like diabetes prevention.

Talons: claws of an animal, especially of a bird of prey.

Tarpaulin: a canvas covering.

Taunt: to tease; to provoke.

Telltale: revealing; giving information about something.

Tentatively: with hesitation; timidly.

Tenuous: shaky; not certain.

Terrain: the land or environment.

Thermal: a rising body of warm air.

Threatening (to threaten): to cause to feel fearful or anxious.

Tingled (to tingle): to have a prickling sensation.

Tormentor: one who causes pain or distress.

Tow (as "in tow"): being pulled or dragged along.

Trajectory: the path or route that something takes (like when a ball is thrown).

Transparent: fine or sheer enough to see through.

Trauma: an injury; a pain.

Trek: a hike; a long walk or journey.

Tremor: a shaking; a quiver.

Tripod: a stand or support with three legs.

Triumphant: having won a victory and being proud of it.

Truant officer: a school officer whose duty is to investigate the absence of students.

Trudged (to trudge): to walk with much effort.

Trundle: to move on wheels.

Trussed (to truss): to tie up.

U

Unassuming: ordinary or "down-to-earth."

Undignified: unbecoming; improper; shameful.

Ungoverned: not guided or controlled.

Unnameable: having no name or ability to be identified.

Unobtrusively: to do something without drawing attention.

Utility vehicle: a hardy vehicle that has multiple uses, such as transporting passengers and hauling heavy loads.

V

Vacantly: blank; with no expression.

Vacated (to vacate): to leave or quit.

Vehemently: strongly; intensely.

Velocity: speed; swiftness.

Vicinity: surrounding area.

Vigilance: the state of being alert, especially to signs of danger.

Vista: a scene or very wide view of a landscape.

Vital signs: those measures that can indicate if a person is healthy or sick, such as heartbeat, temperature, or blood pressure.

Vocal: pertaining to the voice or speaking.

Volunteer: a person who does a job without pay.

Vortex: a whirlpool; the center of something that swirls around.

Vulnerable: helpless; weak.

W

Waddled (to waddle): to walk from side to side; to wobble.

Witnessed (to witness): to observe; to be able to tell others what was seen.

Wriggled (to wriggle): to squirm; to twist.

Z

Zoom: to focus a camera or microscope on an object using a lens that causes the object's apparent distance from the observer to decrease.

About the Native Diabetes Wellness Program

The mission of the Native Diabetes Wellness Program is to work with a growing circle of partners to address the health inequities so starkly revealed by type 2 diabetes in Indian Country. With social justice and respect for Native and Western science as grounding principles, we strive to support community efforts to promote health and prevent diabetes.

To request free copies of the Eagle Books series, or for more information about the program, please contact the CDC. Phone: toll free 1-877-CDC-DIAB (877-232-3422). E-mail: diabetes@cdc.gov

About the Author

Dr. Terry Lofton is a senior study director at Westat, Inc. She has been Westat's project director for the Eagle Books project since 2002 and has worked in public health for almost thirty years. A former middle school science teacher, Dr. Lofton often drew on the lessons of Native science in her classroom activities. She says that the collaboration with the illustrators of *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream* and the Eagle Books project's many friends in Indian Country has been the highlight of her career.

About the Illustrators

Patrick Rolo, Bad River Band of Ojibwe, draws from his rich Native American heritage to co-illustrate the Eagle Books. Mr. Rolo's career includes newspaper, magazine, comic book, and court room illustrations. Also a painter, his works in oil hang in galleries in Minnesota and Washington.

Lisa A. Fifield, Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, Black Bear Clan, uses time-honored Native American tales and beliefs as the inspiration for her work. Her color palette is unique as she mixes paint to her own aesthetic. Ms. Fifield's art has been exhibited in numerous museums in the Western U. S.

Praise for *Coyote and the Turtle's Dream*

Coyote and the Turtle's Dream is a cool book with lessons about science, our ecosystem, healthy food choices, and the power of family and friendship. There is a lot of intrigue and mystery. Being able to share some of my day-to-day struggles with type 1 diabetes was very empowering for me. I can't wait for the next book! Salud!

– **Arianna Baros**
(The real Arianna)
Albuquerque, NM

It was one of the best stories I've read. I don't think I have ever read a story of Indian boys and girls who are all friends and work together to solve a problem—like the water drying up on the reservation. I also liked this story because it was all about mystery and suspense.

– **Lily**
Sisseton Dakota Oyate
Dakota Valley Elementary,
North Sioux City, SD

When I started reading the book, it interested me. So I kept reading and my mom made me stop so I could get ready for bed. The next morning as soon as I got up I kept reading the book until I finished it.

– **Averi**
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska (Ho-Chunk)
St. Augustine's School,
Winnebago, NE

I liked Simon best because he's smart, into fossils, and likes to do fun stuff. I liked Grandma, too, because she knows her Indian ways and tells it to the kids. My favorite animal character was the trickster coyote because everyone learns something when he's either being bad or being funny. After I read this story, I would like to work with protecting our fossils when I grow up.

– **Tony, Jr.**
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska (Ho-Chunk)
West Middle School,
Sioux City, IA

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