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## **Holding the World Together**

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***HOLDING THE WORLD TOGETHER***

**Marilyn Mehr**

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### Chapter Three: Two Boys in a Clearing

*"The end to be gained is complete civilization of the Indian...(and) the sooner all tribal relations are broken up, the sooner the Indian loses all his Indian ways, even his language, the better it will be."*

- Richard Henry Pratt, Founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1879

It was the snap of dry cottonwood that awakened him. The young man opened his eyes and lay still, listening for a repetition of the sound, as he tried to locate the direction of the break of dry reed along the banks of the river. Only the sounds of the Uintah churning along beside his hiding place could be heard. His body was tensed, ready to sprint, waiting for any signal that he should flee.

*Cra-ack!* There it was again, this time closer, but still across the river...a man, not an animal, one not familiar with the river bank...clumsy, heavy-footed, inept...not one of his own, that was sure, and not the Indian Police, but an agent, a white man unable to move through the thicket in silence.

"Ben, I know you're in there," a man with a deep, husky voice called confidentially, as though he were throwing a lure to a fox. "You can come out now, Ben. If you don't, son, we'll find you later." Then there was a long pause in which the younger man could almost hear the agent's breathing. "We don't want to hurt you, boy."

He knew the voice. It was Jack Beasley's, one of the agents from Fort Duchesne. A tall man, with an uneven gait, he walked like a crow, shifting his weight from side to side. They called

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him *Lamefoot*, because he had been injured in a war somewhere far away, in a place called *Cuba*. The man was easy to track, crunching the dry brush as he stepped awkwardly toward the culvert where the young man lay covered by a layer of stacked willows and squaw bush.

*Cra-ack, swoosh, snap!* Now the sounds were on his side of the river. Someone else was with the agent Beasley, probably his partner, the fat one, Earl Harris, a devious man with a handlebar mustache and the oily skin. He, too, was clumsy, a Mormon from Heber City, a failed farmer turned bounty hunter who chased down Indian children trying to escape from the reservation school. Harris knew nothing about the valley, was unable to tell a mule deer from a mud hen. The fat man muttered to himself, then stopped for a smoke, the sweet pungent smell trailing downstream. Ben inhaled deeply, satisfied that he knew where the men were located.

"He's not over here, Jack." Harris stood up and waved to the agent on the other side of the river. "Guess the little sonafabitch is down near White Rocks. 'Probably at his mother's." He set his rifle down on a rock and seemed to scan the brush one more time.

The other man, Beasley, called back. "Yeah, he's probably with his sidekick, the kid from Ouray. We'll get 'em." The tall man peered into the willows, craning his neck in the dim light of morning. His large yellow Stetson was tipped back, exposing his baldhead and narrow face, with a long hooked nose, that made him seem hawk-like.

By parting the strands of willows sheltering his nest, Ben could watch the two men from his dugout beside the river, a space he had made last spring when the snows melted into the Whiterocks River which merged with the Uintah just a few yards from his hiding place. In the summer, the dry desert heat

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dried up the waters, leaving this inlet which Ben had covered with leaves and grass preparing for the day when the Indian police would round up all the children who were truant from the reservation school run by the Presbyterians. Any one of his brothers could have found him here at once, but these ignorant men from Dry Forks knew nothing of the secret hollows of the river or the movements of the land. They never observed the changes of seasons, how water erodes, how sun evaporates water, how willows and camas grass make a bed for a Ute Indian boy wanting to hide and not be heard. They were ignorant, these men and only wanted the money their prey could offer in bounty.

Beasley threw the stub of his cigarette into the stream. "Come on, Earl. We'll find the little bastards and take away their mother's rations for the month. Hurry up, let's get the hell outta' here."

Harris searched for a path up the side of the bank, stepping along the rocks near the hollow where Ben now held his breath waiting for the men to pass as they, crashed into the brush, slipped on rocks, giving off the odor of burned tobacco and sweat. In a few moments, both of them were gone.

As they traveled upstream, Beasley and Harris would probably stop at the small town of Whiterocks and awaken Ben's mother in the small tipi where she lived with her two other children, Pava and Tom. Her younger children attended school willingly, never minding the regimentation and uniforms, the white man's twisting of history. Of course, Ben thought to himself, they had never known another way. Pava was still only eight and Tom now twelve. Neither could remember the time when their father had been killed in an uprising at Ouray. Neither had met their grandfather, the brave

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Chief Colorow, who led the battle against the Indian Agent Meeker, in Colorado.

Ben had tried to tell his brother and sister the story of the "Meeker Massacre," how the Utes had fought back when the agents destroyed their racetrack. The battle had nothing to do with racing and everything to do with freedom, to hunt, to race horses, to migrate with the seasons. For a few golden days they savored victory and then the federal troops came and drove them to these dry lands of the Uintahs. His brother and sister listened, but they didn't feel the tribe's humiliation in their bones. They were docile and sweet, schooled by nice Presbyterians from the East, taught to be grateful for the bounties bestowed upon them. For those who felt no gratitude and escaped to the river, there were agents with rifles and sour smells who would force them to school and threaten to take away rations from their families.

Ben knew what the whites thought of his people from overhearing conversations at Wong Sing's general store in Duchesne. "They're all lazy, every one of them," Will Jessup announced over a cracker barrel. "Give those Indians 40 acres, a cow and chickens and they still come begging. 'Come right up to yer window and ask for handouts. Lazy good for nothings, if you ask me.'" The owner, Wong Sing, had rolled his eyes in protest, but said nothing.

What his brother and sister didn't understand was their history. They didn't know why Utes couldn't be turned into farmers, that digging into the ground was an attack upon the sacred shell of the earth. The Utes were hunters and were proud of their skill and prowess.

Ben remained in a crouching position listening for the agents. As he remembered the history of his people, the *Nuche*, his face flushed with anger. He recalled the great Chief Ouray

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and his wife Chipeta who had urged their people to comply with the white men's rules, send their children to school so they could learn, only to see them return with red pocks covering their bodies. The massacre, the measles and the Mormons--the ruin of our nation, Ben thought, as he lay waiting. Before these men had arrived, the Utes had lived in these lands for 10,000 years, running their horses all the way from the Oquirrh Mountains on the West to the Yampa River on the North, to the San Juan River on the South, through the Middle Park of the Colorado Rockies, rank upon rank of ridges and peaks. These white men with their bibles and rifles would never understand about the love of his people for these granite mountains, sculptured mesas, deep river valleys and crystal blue lakes. In these sacred places, spirits lived whose presence should neither be owned nor disturbed. The Utes would never dig and furrow into the earth disturbing the underworld where spirits and ancestors reside. Tom and Pava must learn this lesson.

When he could no longer hear any sound from the agents, Ben peered through the bunchgrass covering his hiding place. Past the river, he could see fields of camass grass where yampa and wild potatoes grew. He was hungry, but still afraid to move and give away his position. Perhaps his friend Arthur would arrive soon, he hoped, carrying a supply of muledeer jerky and pinon nuts. If not, Ben had wrapped some flatbread and dried fish in his waist pouch which would make a morning meal. Perhaps he could even find a few chokecherries and currants growing along the riverbank.

Satisfied that the men had moved on, Ben slipped between the branches and emerged into the morning light. First, he dipped his arms into the clear water, washing his face with pieces of yucca. Then, he removed his woolen pants and shirt, and waded into the river where he cooled himself in the cold



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waters flowing from the Uintahs. Even though the summer had been hot and dry, the river was still icy from the melting of the snow pack.

Soon, his friend Arthur would appear and they could continue to Dry Forks for the Bear Dance. As he swam with the current, he scanned the banks, looking for his friend. Arthur was from the Tavaputs plateau while Ben was from White River, originally a Parusanuch, from Northern Colorado. The two boys had met on a hunt last spring and stayed up late telling one another the stories of their families.

Returning to the riverbank, Ben sensed a small shifting of the wind and looked up to see his friend Arthur, standing behind him. Ben turned and saw the man, not even twenty, his broad face framed by the leather band, beaded with signs of the hunt, his face marked with two thin stripes of yellow and blue, partially dressed in buckskin. Arthur was tall with high cheekbones, almost Asian eyes, pale brown. He wore a hair plate of German silver and an ornament of braided buffalo, which was attached to his own hair in a long braid behind his back. Under each arm he had tied a cloth medicine bundle, one red, the other blue. Seed beads, dark green and red triangles on a light purple background were sewed along the shoulder and arm seams while painted yellow lines ran down the front. A small medicine bag of red and brown cloth was tied to the lower rosette with a buckskin thong. On his feet were beaded elk skin moccasins with hard soles, the cuffs lined with red stroud. Ben was stunned, breathless in his admiration of his friend.

"Arthur, you look so fine!" He paused, stirred by the beauty of this man prepared for the Bear Dance.

"I knew they wouldn't find you, those fat federals."

Ben nodded, silent for a moment as he listened for sounds. "Hey, Arthur, come down here. They're still around, I'm sure."

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The young man parted the willow and sat beside his friend. "I dressed for the hunt. I brought clothes for you, too. Throw those wool pants away."

"They cut my hair and gave me this stupid uniform." He held up the wool suit with the high collar and matching pockets, the breeches buttoned at the calves. "The principal dragged me to the barber."

"They want you to look like them."

"I know. Give me those clothes. I'm leaving these here."

"Yes, burn them."

"I want to, but even those dumb bastards would see the smoke. Arthur, even if they catch me, I'm not going back."

"What are you saying?"

"I would kill myself before I let them drag me back to that school."

"Ben, don't be a fool. They're not going to catch us. We'll join the others in Ouray tomorrow, and then we'll fight. They can't take our lands."

Ben shrugged, unconvinced that they could prevail, but he knew that they could fight. "Did you bring a rifle?"

"Yes...over there, by the horses."

"Food?"

"Only desert cake." He held up the dry cakes, compressed slabs of fruits and seeds, for his friend's inspection. "Why don't you pick some wild strawberries?"

"I will and I have flatbread, from Mother." Ben quickly found the berries from the bushes along the river and the two young men ate in silence.

"The federals wanted me to dig ditches for the canals. I told them to go to hell."

"Good place for them, Arthur." He looked through the willows and listened for sounds from the agents. Hearing

nothing, he said quietly, "It's clear. Let's get going. Where are the horses?"

"Black Canyon. I tied them to a tree."

They crept along the bank of the river, Arthur leading the way. His body was more muscular than Ben's, but the younger man was only seventeen and was still growing, his body becoming leaner and more sinewy, the physique of a warrior. Ben had no moccasins, so he walked barefoot rather than wear his school shoes, which creaked and left heavy footprints.

"Who were the agents?" Arthur whispered.

"The tall one and the fat one...Beasley and Harris. "Oh...*Mr. Can't Shoot* and *Mr. Can't Ride*."

Ben considered Arthur a friend, although he had only known him a few months. His mother and brother had moved from Ouray to Whiterocks. Arthur's grandfather had been Chief Shavanaugh, a man killed by his own men, stabbed in the back in a land dispute. Arthur inherited his grandfather's name as well as his outrage, a deep hatred for the whites who had forced the Indians to battle over land and minerals when, in fact, no one owned anything. Ben shared his friend's anger, but was troubled by his manner, a tendency to rush forward without consideration of the consequences, even his inclination to decorate himself, wearing raven feathers in his headdress just for simple events. Of course, his preparation for the Bear Dance was impressive. Ben admired his friend's ability to hunt, his skill as a rider, but he disapproved of his bragging and boasting when it really wasn't needed. For an Indian, he talked too much.

"The horses are over there, Ben, by the red spruce." Arthur pointed the way through the willows into a clearing where the animals, a chestnut pony and a dappled mare, were tied to a tree. Ben ran swiftly through the bunchgrass following Arthur into the clearing, now in the shadows of the morning sun. They

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were half-way to the trees when the horses suddenly began to shinnny and neigh, stamping their feet in the dust, too signaling too late the presence of the agents who burst from the side of a mound of red rocks, like ancient reptiles striking from layers of the earth. Their rifles were drawn, each pointed at one of the boys.

Beasley was shaking, excited at his discovery, stuttering as he barked his orders.

"Stay there, you bastards! Put your hands on your head and don't move, either one of you!"

Beasley and Harris crouched at either side of the clearing pointing their rifles at the youths who stood frozen in place. Harris nodded toward the horses.

"All right now, walk--single file, hands on your heads--over there, to your horses, hear?" He shouted as though the two were deaf. Suddenly, the fat man ran towards them, huffing and pointing his rifle.

"Put your hands out, put them out in front of you, stupid!"

The two boys stretched out their arms, exposing their wrists to the rope which the agent bound tightly and then tied the opposite end to the horn of his own saddle. It was obvious to both boys that if either attempted to run, he would be dragged behind the agent's horse.

"Beasley, cover me, I'm gonna' get them on their horses!" Harris set his rifle down near the other agent and returned to make a cup of his hands, which he extended to each of the boys to boost them onto the backs of their animals. There was something unexpectedly kind in this gesture, a softness that Ben had never seen in this nervous little man. It was a necessary act, but one done with a moment of tenderness, as he lifted each boy on to his horse.

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"Guess you boys going to miss the Bear Dance. We got a Captain Abbot, coming in from Fort Duchesne, waiting to have a talk with you."

"What for, Harris? You going to send us to jail for missing school?" He looked down at the agent as though he were assessing the value of a pile of old rugs.

"I'll tell you what, red man, this captain's gonna want to know just where you got them horses!" He laughed as the tobacco juice trickled down his stubbled chin. There was no compassion in his face, only an oily triumph at capturing two unarmed Indian boys from the reservation. He was already counting his bonus.

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about, Harris."

"Yeah, we'll see...we'll just see."

The four riders proceeded through clusters of sage brush, winding their way single file through Dry Fork Canyon, past the drawings on the sheer face of granite, "The Three Kings," the noble king wore a helmet with rays of lightening extending from either side. In awhile, they passed Prayer Rock where the Indian Sundial was located, the home of the "Mocutz" who had occupied the land for centuries.

All that Ben feared had now happened. *Why hadn't he guessed they would be waiting in ambush? They weren't smart, these rangers, but they had outsmarted him, Ben Colorow, son of an Indian Chief. Grandfather would have been ashamed of his carelessness. He should have approached from the opposite side and taken them by surprise.*

They rode for another hour in silence, stopping once for water, allowing their horses to rest. Beasley and Harris followed the boys' every move, noting the smallest gesture of their quarry. As the four trotted in single formation, Ben watched the sun shift along the copper mesas, over layers of sediment that had taken nearly 22 million years to compose, at least that's

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what his geography teacher had said. His grandfathers had told him that the earth held its children in these layers, pressed together with fossils, teeth, fragments of bone. His teacher had called these fossils "micro vertebrates," bones that looked like dark pieces of sand, and said there were marsupial or opossum teeth. First, there were the marsupials, pressed like stamps on the lower levels, then higher up, the fossils of sharks and bony fish from the times when oceans covered this whole basin. Even higher up were the clams and turtles, lizards and crocodiles, and even higher up the mammals. The white man's school had given him names and dates, while his grandfather had explained the presence of the spirit world underneath the layers of sandstone and shale.

If he could remember his grandfather's lessons about his place in the earth's history, he could endure the stares of the villagers when the agents would lead the two of them into Whiterocks. Ben sat up straight, astride his pinto, and recalled how his grandfather had carried him on his back as they walked these canyons, telling him the story of the planet, how "The earth was once hotter-- no polar ice caps to trap water. "The seas were higher, too, covering this entire region of the Uintah Basin." His grandfather spoke slowly measuring each word. "Then, when the waters drew back, we had this crater of steep slopes and dry valleys." In geography class, the teacher had pointed to the Kaiparowits Plateau and the Wahweap formation, never acknowledging that these were Ute names, ignorant of the vast presence of the dead layered into these copper walls.

As the sun faded, the steep slopes eroded into a soft bluish gray and the four men on horseback approached Whiterocks, a town built around a central square bordered by white frame buildings, resembling nothing so much as a New England village set in the lap of a sagebrush covered plain. On the North

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end were the school buildings, two-story brick houses with wide front porches, one for faculty, one for the girls and one for the boys. Every morning at 7:30 A.M., the students all lined up separately in front of school house for inspection by the superintendent, then saluted the flag and sang, "My country, 'tis of thee" and scratched their legs from the roughness of their woolen uniforms.

On the right side of the square was a long wooden sidewalk running in front of the blacksmith shop and a general store; on the other, the Marmion home for the superintendent, and a three-room schoolhouse for white children; on the third side, the jail; and on the final side was the home of the Indian agent and the doctor's home. In the center were an Episcopal church and a playground. Ben gazed beyond the outskirts of the town where the where the slaughter house lay and beyond that, a few teepees formed a small encampment, smoke curling from the tops of their cones.

"Straight ahead, boys. Sheriff Murdock's waiting for you."

Arthur turned his head far enough to see the ranger, "Why the jail, Beasley? We were just going to the Sun Dance."

"Yeah, Arthur, on two stolen horses, property of the U.S. government. I call that *stealing*, boy!"

As they approached the small red brick jailhouse, the sheriff appeared in the doorway, a small, portly man with thinning gray hair and wire-rimmed eyeglasses. He wore a tarnished silver star on his vest and his holster draped low around his waist.

"Well, found you, did they?" He turned to the agent, "Down by the river, just like I said, 'right Harris?"

The fat man slid from his horse, nodded at the sheriff and proceeded to help the boys untie themselves. A group of small children, Indians and whites, had gathered around the

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encampment, staring and giggling as the two boys were led into the jail.

"Stick them in that cell over there, Beasley, the only one we've got."

The two boys, who were still tied to each other with a long braided rope, shuffled to the cell where they managed to sit across from one another, their faces locked in a mask of opaqueness. They sat as mutely as two mountain lions locked in a cage, a pair of wild animals, captured and drawn.

After boasting of their cunning, the agents finally left, cautioning the sheriff to "keep them over night and teach them a lesson." Murdock nodded and drew up a chair in front of the cell. "O.K., boys, give me your full names."

Neither spoke. The afternoon sun sent splintered rays against the wall of the jail as the sheriff smoked and waited.

Finally, Murdock ground his cigarette under the heel of his boot and sighed, "All right, damn it, I know who you are. Everybody in Whiterocks knows you-- Arthur Shavanaugh and Ben Colorow, two damned fools headed for the Bear Dance." He rolled another cigarette in his hand, twisting the ends over the tobacco, then lighting it and drawing slowly on the smoke.

"Let's get right to it, shall we? Ben, you're supposed to be in school. We're tired of chasin' ya. Either you go and stop running around stirring up trouble for your mother or she loses her rations and goes hungry. Take your choice...that's all ya' got."

Ben looked out the window at the sun setting over Marsh Mountain. His mother had two other children and a small check from the government. Sometimes, she sold a few rugs at the trading post, but needed the food rations to take care of her children. He scratched his neck where the wool jacket had



rubbed at his skin, trying to think, but not willing to respond to the grim choice offered by the sheriff.

"Hey you, Arthur, you're in worse trouble. You stole two horses from the federals, and that's not the first thing 'round here gone missing when you're in the neighborhood. Ever since you came up here from Ouray, lots of things have disappeared--chickens, flour, whiskey--all with Arthur Shavanaugh's signature. You got good fingers, Art. 'Hardly a sign of a break-in..don't know how you do it."

Arthur glared at the sheriff, his cheek muscles working, flexing his fists. Ben raised his fingers to his lips, hoping that his friend would read his signal to keep quiet and withdraw.

The sheriff sensed the young man's arousal and pressed his advantage, hoping to frighten the boys further. "Now, we got a man arriving tomorrow, a Captain Abbot, coming up from Fort Duchesne. He'll be the judge here, Arthur, and he'll probably let you serve time in the hoosegow or go back to your mother's place in Ouray and dig ditches for the canal. You gotta' choice, too, Chief!"

The sheriff ground the stub of his cigarette on the wooden floor and stood up. For a moment, he simply looked at the boys through the golden fog of a gas lamp, then shook his head and picked up a set of keys from the drawer and set a large straw hat firmly on his head.

"Someone'll be around in an hour or two with some bread and a bowl of soup. There's a chamber pot in the corner. He checked the lock on the cell door and nodded at the men. "Take it easy, fellas!"

The sheriff lurched out onto the porch, slamming the door and locking it from the outside as the last light of the sun faded,

Arthur stood up, slamming his fist against the wall. "Damned bastards! Take our land, our women, give us seed,

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and turn us into squaws! We're the fools! We gave them meat and skins and they gave us treaties. *Give us your land and we'll take care of you.* How? Measles, whiskey, death and broken promises! Is that right, Ben?"

For the moment, he had exhausted his rage, and stood hovering over his friend, awaiting a response. After a long silence, Ben looked up at the son of an Indian chief, dressed in the full ceremonial costume of the warrior, and wondered what he should say. At last, he knew.

"Arthur, did you take their whiskey?"

"So what? They steal from us. Whiskey is nothing."

"It's so small, Arthur...petty thievery...and it just makes them believe what they already believe. *Utes are no good, can't take care of their kids... just want to sit around and get drunk...give them whiskey and they'll give you anything.* Arthur, you were stupid. Can't you see that?"

"I don't care. I'm going back to Ouray. This time I'm trading hides for rifles."

"Listen to this, Arthur, from your own Chief Ouray, 'My beloved brethren, it's no use your kicking. The white man has a gun for every tree.' Do you know why he said that?"

"Who cares?"

"I do and you should. Chief Ouray went to Washington to meet his son, Queashegut, who was captured by the Sioux when he was five. The whites lured him to the Capitol, promised he could meet his son who never wanted to meet him, anyway. He was tricked, but he wasn't bitter. He made the best treaty he could and forgave his son. His wife was Chipeta, an Apache, who couldn't have children, so they adopted three. He made peace."

"Why are you switching sides like a yellow-haired coyote? Making peace hasn't gotten us a damned thing. We were chased

out of Colorado! All because you White Rivers killed everyone at Meeker, then they sent us out, too, along with you."

"I know, Arthur, but we can't win. They've got us and if we don't agree to their rules, they'll send you to jail and my mother to starvation. We must *Makepeace*. "

"It's too late, Ben."

A key turned in the lock of the front door and slowly, the light of a candle revealed the shape of an Indian woman they both knew. Her name was Peerat and she seemed lacking in reason. Some of the villagers said she had been injured at birth and would always be slow, but she was diligent and methodical, enabling her to find work with the sheriff, cleaning his house and serving meals to prisoners when the jail was occupied. She was in her twenties, but seemed older, a stout figure with a blank, childlike expression, stepping over the threshold cautiously, balancing the tray of food and a lantern as she maneuvered around the room.

She drew a knife from a bag tied around her waist and began to cut the bread into slices, then offered each of the boys a sandwich of cheese and dried meat on a metal plate.

"Thank you, Peerat," Arthur said softly. "This looks like a good sandwich." He turned the bread over carefully, examining its weight and texture.

She smiled, apparently flattered by his remarks. "I know you," she said to Arthur. "Aren't you Pava's brother?"

"Yes, you know my sister? Maybe you could tell her where I am?"

"All right, Arthur. I will tell her." She waited for a few moments, gathered their plates and left, locking the door as she left.

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Ben sat across from his friend on one of the narrow bunks in the cell, watching him as he calculated how to reach the bread knife that Peerat had left behind on the corner of the desk.

"Arthur, don't be stupid. If you're thinking about making a break, don't do it. We'll get caught, things will get worse. We have to think this through this time, not act like damned fools!"

"Do you think you can reason with the whites? You'll get more broken promises--give us your land and we'll take care of you--measles, whiskey and death!"

It was too dark to see his friend, but Arthur tried to divert him from his plans. "You know, Escalante gave us horses and we defeated the Comanches. Don't forget that."

"Sure, and then we had peace. One good governor, Anza, helped us make peace with the Comanches... Chief Mora and Pinto were smart leaders...Ben, that was 150 years ago."

"Yeah, and then we got the Mormons, the measles-people. Thirty-six children in one grave and then they still try to convert us."

"The Mormons got us over and over again. First, Chief Wakara, poor fool, leads the Mormons to the gold mines. Why? So they can make coins with the face of the hairy one, Brigham Young, and all his squaws."

"Arthur, I know our history. We've given away everything--our land, our water, even our trees."

"I'm not done yet...at last, Chief Wakara gets pushed into a corner and fights, when it's all too late. Big Brigham meets him at Chicken Creek and once again, more land goes to the white men. More Utes pushed out here to plant seeds in the dirt."

"What else can we do, Arthur? All the big animals are gone...we have to farm, plant seeds and graze cattle. All we need is water."

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"Don't forget White River! Meeker found out what happens when white men break promises. He gives us wormy rations, insults us, forces us to farm, and then, plows up our racetrack. We attacked those white leeches; eight hundred of us attacked Thornburgh and his men, killed thirteen of them and took his women hostage. They won, moved us to this reservation. What for? Revenge? No, silver. They found silver in our Colorado hills. That's why they wanted us out of there."

"Yeah, Arthur, and they shut us up with whiskey. Gave us whiskey for land."

The two men faced each other in the darkness, reflecting on loss, vengeance, humiliation and hardship, growing silent as a dry breeze blew through the windows. Ben wrapped a blanket around his shoulders and threw another one to his friend. "We still have the Bear Dance, Arthur. Last year, I sat tagu-wuni, didn't eat or drink for two days. We had a good hunt, too, always when the moon is full."

"I know a few things. Grant Bullethead held the first one at Wind River, fifteen years ago, in 1890. We're going to miss it this year unless we get out of here." He moved forward on his bunk, trying to peer through the bars of the cell. "Did you know the government opened up the reservation for whites? Did you hear that?"

"Yes, I heard it at Wong Sing's"

"We can't allow it, Ben. This is our land."

"I know. What can we do? They have the guns."

"We'll get their guns. I know where they're locked up...Fort Duchesne. We can get their guns and we can kill the bastards, that's what we can do. And, we will do it, too."

"Who is *we*, Arthur?"

"Our brothers are waiting in Tridell. In the morning when they lead us away, I'll hold the knife to Harris' neck, you grab

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the horses and we ride off in different directions, but we both end up at Tridell, at Henry Arkansas' cabin, north of the town. That's where we'll meet."

Arthur unwrapped the braided leather belt from his waist, making a loop at the end. He pulled the silver earring from his ear and bent it into a hook, which he tied to the loop. The moon was rising over the mountains sending shafts of light into the room, which allowed Ben to watch the preparations of his friend.

"Don't do it, Arthur. We'll get in worse trouble!"

Arthur laughed. "Now, let's see what kind of fish I can catch." He put his arm through the bars casting the leather rope as wide as he could, each time missing, but approaching the desk more closely. At last, he snagged the handle of the knife with the hook.

"Damn, look at that! I've got it!" and he dragged the bread knife slowly across the floor, careful to keep the handle locked in the hook.

"There, I've caught myself a fish!" He held the knife in the air letting the light shine against the blade.

"Arthur, don't use the knife. It will never work. They'll win, they always do."

"We don't have to give up, like dogs rolling over on our backs. We can fight...what else is there?"

"There are laws." Ben felt an urgency to convince his friend that there was another way, one that didn't end the same way for the Indian, one that wouldn't ruin their young lives. "Arthur, I met a lawyer in Vernal. He works for the Indians, says we can fight this in the courts. "

"Remember your grandfather, Ben. It won't happen." His voice was low and resolute. They sat quietly, sharing a cigarette, then, finally sleeping for a few hours before the sun

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began to rise in the east sending rays of morning light over the peaks of Diamond Mountain, heating the skeletons of dinosaurs buried in the basin one million years ago, waking up the farmers in their one-room log cabins homesteading in the harsh prairie earth, signaling the Utes at Dry Forks to begin the fall hunt.

Ben raised himself from his bunk as he heard the front door of the jail pushed open. It was Peerat, holding a tray of coffee and biscuits. She wore a skirt and a white peasant blouse, her dark hair pulled back and knotted at her neck. Her eyes glistened as she spoke, "Good morning, friends, I have brought you food for the morning."

In a quick spasm of awakening, Arthur tumbled from the cot and stood before the bars extending his arms for the food. She slid the cups between the bars, then handed each man some bread, a few pieces of jerky and an apple. Then, wordlessly, she sat down and watched the men eat.

"I had to tear the bread. I can't find my knife."

"What did it look like, Peerat?" Arthur questioned.

She glanced at him for a moment, suspecting his concern, then shrugging away her thoughts. Holding her hands about six inches apart, she said, "This long. It's really a hunting knife with a pearl handle."

"If I see it, I'll let you know, Peerat."

"I hope so. I need it to clean fish." She smiled and sat in the straight-backed chair, pulling the magenta blanket around her shoulders. Peerat was an Uncompaghre, simple, trusting and untroubled by notions of loyalty to Indians or whites. She did what she was told and accepted a small offering in return. Ben had seen her many times, shaking blankets, sweeping the sidewalks in front of the sheriff's home. There were rumors that she was his mistress, but no one knew for sure. Her face revealed nothing as she placidly smiled and rocked, waiting.

*HOLDING THE WORLD TOGETHER*

Ben stood at the window facing his friend, speaking in a low voice. "Arthur, they have guns. Don't use the knife. You will only get hurt."

"There will be a moment, Ben, when we can escape. The horses are tied at the hitching post behind the icehouse. We make a run...you go North past Rose Marmion's house and into the canyon, I go South past the post office and on to LaPointe...at night we meet at Dry Forks, then find the others in the morning at Tridell."

"Arthur, they will *never* let us go."

The door of the jail burst open as Sheriff Murdock led Beasley and Harris into the small foyer he used for an office. They scuffed their boots on the wooden floor, talking loudly and ignoring the two boys. Finally, the fat one turned to Arthur and said, "Hey, you little bastard. We found someone saw you steal the horses. Now we got your ass."

Arthur folded his arms and looked at the ceiling. Murdock pulled the keys from his vest-pocket and approached the cell.

"All right, boys. Captain Abbot's waiting for you at the Government House...gonna' give you a real five dollar trial. Now, gimme your wrists."

He clamped metal handcuffs on each of the boys and guided them from the cells. The September sun was high in the sky and hot gusts of wind blew through the valley. A few people were in the square, an old Taviwach woman drying long reeds for baskets, a few children crossing to school, Sam Woolley, the school teacher rounding up the laggards, Sarah Logan, the wife of the principal. They watched the party moving across the square, feigning indifference, and watching every move.

Murdoch stepped ahead of the others into the large room where county records were kept, judicial hearing and



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community meetings held. At the window was a tall man in his forties, dressed in an army uniform, crisp collar, tight tie, handlebar mustache, blue eyes that changed with the light, piercing, perceptive, direct. He wore a shoulder holster, which he laid on the table.

"Gentlemen, be seated. Beasley, take off the cuffs."

"But, sir...."

"Take them off, Beasley."

"Yes, sir." The tall man with the lop-sided gait approached the boys and unlocked their cuffs, which he attached to his own belt loop. Beasley and Harris sat on either side of the boys as the sheriff took a chair in front of the captain's desk.

"I am Captain Stephen Abbot," he said in an even tone as he walked from behind the desk with his hand outstretched to the boys. Ben was surprised by the gesture and after a moment, extended his own hand. Arthur folded his hands in his lap and turned his gaze slowly toward the window.

"Do you know who I am?"

Ben replied, "No."

"I am sent from Fort Duchesne to act as a magistrate, or judge, for Indian disputes. My job is to make peace, if I can. I will need your help."

Ben and Arthur remained silent.

"Your name is Arthur Shavanaugh, I believe," he said, looking at the older boy. "Your grandfather was killed by his own people at Ouray. He was shaking hands with John McAndrews, Chief Herder of Cattle at the agency. They said the chief had made bad medicine for their children. Do you know about that, Arthur?"

"He didn't do it."

"No? What did he do?"

*HOLDING THE WORLD TOGETHER*

"He was a shaman, made salves of juniper and camphor for the White Plague. Your measles killed our children."

"I know. The McAndrews were trying to save your grandfather. Do you know what he said when he heard his friends had killed the man who shot him?"

Feeling he was being drawn in, he simply nodded.

*"One is gone, and I will soon be gone. That's good. Now don't have any more trouble."*

The two prisoners were still as stones, waiting for resolution.

"Arthur, we don't want any more trouble. We know you stole these horses for the hunt. Your ancestors were hunters. Ben, your grandfather, Chief Colorow, led a famous hunt to Colorado, in 1880. Then, you could hunt. Now, there are no more big animals. You must learn to farm."

Arthur spat a large stream of spittle across the floor landing in front of the captain's feet. "We are hunters, not squaws, white man!"

The captain ignored the provocation and continued slowly, as though speaking to a child. "At one time your people needed hunters, Arthur," he said patiently appealing to the young man. "Now they need farmers." He paused, waiting to introduce a new idea. "They need people who can read and write, who can make treaties, who know better than to accept whiskey for land."

Ben studied the Captain and decided to answer, "We have lost our land through treaties, all broken treaties."

"I know, Ben Colorow. Your people need a man who can read those treaties, who can talk to the white man. Soon the buffalo will all be gone. There will be no more hunting."

"Liar!" Arthur stood up, his arms raised in defiance. He had not intended to harm the captain, but Harris grabbed him,

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placing his neck in a hammerlock and pushed him back to his chair.

"Sit down, Arthur, and listen to me once more. I am sending you to jail for thirty days and then you will go back to Ouray where your mother lives. You will stay there and stop inciting your friends. If you are caught stealing we will put you in Fort Thornburgh for a long time. Take him out, Beasley. You can go with them, Harris. Ride with him to Leland Bench. That's far enough. He'll either go on or come back. If he does, we arrest him."

They each grabbed one of Arthur's arms and led him out of the door. Then, the captain turned to Ben.

"Ben, they tell me you are smart, like your grandfather. He tried to take his people back, back to their land, to the earth, their home, but it was not to be. Ben, it's too late to turn back. The future is in that school over there. As much as you hate it--the uniforms, the haircuts, and the marches--you must return. Do you want to help your people? Forget about buffalo. Go to school, graduate and the day you do, I'll see that you go to college. Come and see me at Fort Duchesne. I'm a man of my word."

Just then, the door flew open as Harris blustered in, his eyes popping, his face the color of prickly pear.

"Arthur just stabbed Beasley and has taken his horse! Beasley's on the ground, bleeding. I think he's dead!"

A captivating adventure, a touching love story and an evocation of the American West in all its wildness, solitude and splendor. Swiss converts to the Mormon church encounter the Ute culture, their own religious doubts and forbidden romance.

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