

Crying Blood

THE CUBAN PROJECT



BY **RUBE WADDELL**



In An F-105 fighter pilot over North Vietnam is shot down, captured, and placed in a Hanoi prison known as 'The Zoo'. The pilot's torturous interrogation by an overzealous Cuban Military Officer, dubbed 'Fidel', leads to his death. The pilot's son steeped in family heritage as a native American views his father's death as "Crying Blood".

Folklore demands crying blood be redeemed by the eldest son.

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by Rube Waddell

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The Cuban Project

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ISBN 978-0-9852736-2-0

Library of Congress Control Number. 2005907594

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and events are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, locales is entirely coincidental

Printed in the United States of America.

Lexis Publishers 2005

Cover design is by Ron Johnson of Value Print, Inc.

CRYING BLOOD

The Cuban Project

Donald R. Waddell, Col. USAF Ret

OTHER BOOKS BY AUTHOR

“Forget Me! Not!”

“Twisted Justice”

FOREWORD

***Operation Homecoming* brought back into U.S. Custody 591 men. A majority of those spent in excess of six years in the POW camps in Hanoi. The tales they brought to light on their return made us all weep at the horror some endured. In addition to that total, another 113 men were captured who subsequently died in captivity. To this day 44 of those captured who died in captivity, have not been accounted for nor have their remains been returned to their loved ones. A Cuban Project was identified and blamed for some these deaths.**

Interrogators from Cuba were sent to North Vietnam as trainers for the Peoples Army of North Vietnam. These trainers were to display their methods of gathering information and re-educating imprisoned dissidents in the new Post Revolutionary Cuba. Three of these trainer/interrogators from Cuba were instrumental in the deaths of American Prisoners of War.

Repatriated POWs upon their return declared their extreme hatred for these three Cuban Nationals. To this day none of the three have been positively identified by the U.S. Government. The DIA, the CIA, and the FBI joined forces to make this proper identification but to no avail.

This book, *Crying Blood*, is a work of fiction, exploring the possibilities as to how these three Cubans might have been found. These acts of torture, mayhem, and physical disfigurements inflicted by three Cubans were truly War Crimes that have never been pursued. The names *Fidel* and *The Bug* were taken from official documents, books, and articles. Using those names seemed appropriate. All other names are fictional.

I was a pilot with The United States Air Force and went through Escape and Evasion, Survival Training, and lectures on the Code of Conduct. Nothing would have prepared me for what those 591 returnees faced during their incarceration. It

is doubtful in my mind that I could have survived with such honor and dignity.

Many times we challenge ourselves to see just how strong our character might be. After reading and truly absorbing the contents of the book, *Honor Bound*, by Stuart I. Rochester and Frederick Kiley, I still wonder if I am made of the right stuff those men possessed.

There is a quote I have remembered for a long time and I am uncertain of its origin or of its true wording. The essence is this; “A hero is an ordinary person who, when faced with an extraordinary situation requiring extraordinary measures and extraordinary sacrifice, directly accepts the challenge with personal sacrifice and honor”. This quote well describes those 591 men who returned during *Operation Homecoming* and the 113 others who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

By Donald ‘Rube’ Waddell

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This work is a novel. Any similarity to actual persons or events is purely coincidental. What isn't coincidental is the use of the names *Fidel* and *The Bug*. I have done a vast amount of reading about our POWs languishing away in prison camps in North Vietnam. Camps with names like Plantation, The Zoo, The Hilton, Little Vegas, Briarpatch, Dirty Bird, Alcatraz and numerous others. I was struck by the proclivity of the American fighting man to make something acceptable and even humorous out of the worst possible conditions. That spirit was most evident in the book, *Honor Bound*, by Stuart I. Rochester and Frederick Kiley. I was compelled to use the names of *Fidel* and *The Bug* which I found in nearly every reference document. I wanted to locate someone in some document who might have originally coined these names and attribute the names to them. If that person is out there, let me apologize for using those names without attribution. Those two names were critical to this novel and were used throughout the work. It made the work come to life and for that I am grateful.

I interviewed four individuals with knowledge of past and present day Cuba. Two of the individuals were Cuban born and two were visiting tourists. I hope I have fairly displayed their comments and visions. Names and locations in Cuba were used freely to provide authenticity to this work.

CHAPTER I

“Penny, are you awake”? He spoke softly, gazing down into the night through the upstairs bedroom window. The amber security light on a utility pole in the garage area lit up his face.

“Penny...Penny.” He raised his voice as he turned toward the bed. “Penny, are you awake”? His voice louder, more determined to get an answer.

“Well, I am now.” She spoke with disdain at being forced out of a perfect sleep. Her body, immobile from a paralytic sleep, began to move slowly under the sheets. Her sluggish fingers found the right temple and she subconsciously scratched at her hairline, bringing life back into her sleep filled body. It was never easy for Penny to awaken; being pulled from a sound sleep made it even more difficult.

“I need to talk.” Jay spoke quietly, trying not to further injure his wife’s wakening moments. Most of the window was filled with his 6 foot frame and broad shoulders shutting out the light from the security pole.

Penny raised herself with an elbow digging into the plush mattress. With half opened eyes she squinted toward Jay. Her body was awake but her mind was yet to absorb the moment. Resting on one elbow, she looked toward Jay who remained in a fixed stare out the darkened window. Penny peered at him for a moment, then turned toward the clock on the nightstand. Glaring in digital red letters was the time, 2:35 a.m. Her squint became more pronounced. Her head dropped as if to say ‘what now’? She pushed soft blond tresses away from her face. The astonishment on her face became more dramatic.

She pouted a complaining thought, “What is it?”

“I’m going to Cuba.”

“You’re what?” She didn’t comprehend, her thoughts still muddled.

“I am going to Cuba!”

Now Jay had her full attention. Penny sat up, placed both hands over her eyes and after a gentle rubbing, responded, "What are you talking about? Why are you going to Cuba?" After having her sleep invaded, she needed a good answer. Her brow wrinkled automatically as she squinted through half opened eyes.

"I am going to find my father's killer." He spoke with conviction.

"You're what?" Penny recoiled upward. She reached toward the nightstand, fumbling for the lamp switch. She flinched against the sudden glare. Turning back toward Jay, she searched his face for explanations. This was unbelievable!

She spoke in disbelief, "You've got to be kidding! She stared through him. "You are going to Cuba to do what?" She imagined a misstatement from her husband of four years. She sat straight up in bed. Pulling both legs to her chest, she encircled them with her arms and leaned forward. Penny, with soft blond naturally curly hair, buttermilk white skin, and pinkish cheeks, was a wife Jay was proud to call his. His family joke was to refer to her as his 'trophy wife'.

"I don't know what!" He shrugged his shoulders. It was obvious he hadn't thought this through. "I feel compelled to find my father's killer. Since my mother and I returned from our trip to Washington, I have been obsessed with the thought that a Cuban national killed my father in North Vietnam."

"Did they tell you that in Washington?" She threw the question. "That a Cuban killed your father?"

He reluctantly offered, "No!" Penny's questioning was expected. Jay just wanted to talk to someone who might understand. Talking this over with his mother was out of the question. It would upset her and she would be negative about the entire thinking. He walked away from the window toward the bed, and sat beside Penny. The bed sagged under his 210 lb. weight. His mind, wrestling with these disturbing thoughts had kept him awake all night. He had to talk.

"Then I don't understand." She looked deep into his eyes, penetrating straight into his brain. "I know you haven't slept well since you returned and you've been forgetful. You don't talk to me. We sit through our meals like we are strangers." She used both hands to push her hair behind her ears. "This thing you have, what brought it about? I knew when you returned something was wrong. You

weren't yourself. You were too quiet. I knew something was bugging you. I asked you several times what was on your mind and you merely shrugged your shoulders."

"It wasn't just the trip, although the trip certainly had the most to do with it." He paused before continuing, "It's a culmination of things...the retracing of past events...the suspected cover-up...the idea that my own government tried to keep information from my mother and me about my father...this whole thing is growing into a nightmare all over again, much more than it ever was in the past." Jay looked for understanding in Penny's eyes, hoping for acceptance. He knew beyond all doubt she would be confused and shocked. He needed for her to understand. He tried desperately to read some acceptance in her eyes.

Penny was overwhelmingly blank; she was dumbfounded, not comprehending his thoughts. Still held hostage to mid-sleep arousal, all she could do was question his thinking.

She offered a solution. "If you'll wait just a little, I need to use the bathroom. After that why don't we go downstairs to the kitchen, put on some coffee and finish this conversation?"

Jay found her remarks to be right on target. He wanted nothing more than to talk. He needed feedback. It was important to know if Penny thought he was crazy. He had to tell her everything before he could respect her verdict. He raised himself slowly from the bed. His harried expression spoke louder than words, he was disturbed and in mental anguish.

Jay's father had been thoughtfully responsible for making certain arrangements before leaving on his tour in South East Asia. When he first received notification for training into the F-105F with subsequent duty in Thailand, he immediately made permanent plans for his family. He went to Tulsa to sell the mineral rights to his family's 320 acre homestead, 30 miles north of Claremore, Oklahoma. He negotiated for a price that allowed a per barrel royalty on all future production. He used the money to build a home for his wife Marcie and their two children, Jay Jr. and Melanie. Marcie had made it into a perfect home. A brick and stone structure with two floors. The upper floor had three bedrooms and three

separate baths while the lower floor housed the living quarters, the master bedroom, bath and a huge kitchen. Since they lived thirty miles from the nearest grocery, he knew a big kitchen with lots of storage space was needed. The kitchen area should have had more warmth built in. It was all white tile and stainless steel giving it an institutional look. Functionally complete but missing the hominess; a chef would have thought it was ideal. A wife would only accept its functionality. Otherwise, the home was well planned.

He chose a building site about half way up a five hundred foot hill in the western Ozarks overlooking the Tallaha Creek. There were duplicate surrounding porches at both levels with access doors from all bedrooms. The same as most plantation homes of the 1800s. Jay's father completed the house before he left to make certain his family had a home if something happened.

Since going into the Air Force immediately after college, Jay's family had never owned a home. Now they did! Jay's sister Melanie, married early and moved away with her husband. Jay Jr. dutifully stayed with his Mom after college. When he married Penny, it was understood they would move in with his mother. Jay's Mom lived downstairs and the upstairs became Penny's and Jay's domain. One upstairs bedroom was converted into an all purpose room to complete their apartment. It included a small sink, a microwave unit, a small under the counter refrigerator and countertops for utility. This home had all the assets his father dreamed of having for his family.

Jay's father had said many times in the past that the physical body and the body spirit were separate. The body spirit needed nourishment just as the body needed food. The view from the upper porch was added with this in mind. The view of the sights and sounds of nature and the falling waters of the creek were food for the spirit. On his final leave before departing for South East Asia, Jay's Dad sat in one of the many green painted rockers on the upper porch and drank in the serenity. He remarked that looking down at the Tallaha Creek coursing gently under the oak trees toward Lake Oolagah, caressed the mind and soul.

In the years of the Nixon administration, there was a cry for oil exploration to increase supply and the Cobbs were the beneficiaries of those efforts. Jay's Dad had

sold the mineral rights to the land in the 1960's. It wasn't until 1974 that oil exploration on their property took place. Since then the Cobb family had benefited from the thirty-barrel's a day oil production from each of four wells sunk on their three hundred and twenty acres. They were very comfortable for the future. The home they built was typical of oil field wealth throughout Oklahoma.

As Penny returned from the bathroom, both Penny and Jay collected themselves, donned their robes and went quietly downstairs to the kitchen trying not to awaken Jay's Mom. No words were spoken. Penny mentally preparing questions, and Jay preparing answers. The coffee maker, prepared the night before was switched on. Both sat opposite each other at the table, each waiting for the other to break the silence.

Penny seized the moment. "Is this about what went on in Washington?" She waited for an answer. Jay nodded his head. "Is this why you've been wearing that medal around your neck, since you came back?" Jay again nodded his head.

He thought the better of his silent response. "Well...Yes it is...in a way." His mind was churning. "It does have something to do with Washington,....and yes, it does have something to do with why I am wearing this medal." He pulled the necklace out of his night shirt. It was a pewter image of the Indian Thunderbird. He began to finger it thoughtfully. Oklahoman Indian soldiers of the Second World War wore the same symbol as their shoulder patch, a golden Thunderbird on a field of red. His Grandfather Matthew Jayhawk Cobb fought with the Forty-Fifth Infantry Division in the Italian campaign and wore the patch proudly. The Golden Thunderbird was a highly respected Indian symbol of tradition and heritage. Jay's Father, E.J. Cobb, always wore the Thunderbird around his neck for 'Good Luck', especially when the going got tough. When his father arrived in Thailand, he had two identical pewter Thunderbird medals custom made with their initials engraved on the back. He sent one home for his son.

Jay continued to finger the pewter image as he spoke and would occasionally rub it against his lower chin area fondly. He was deep in thought about his father. This small one inch size image symbolized their Indian heritage and reminded him of his father. It helped him to be closer.

“So tell me, what’s going on in your mind. I’ve known something was bugging you. Since returning from Washington your mind has been somewhere else. “So!” She made a long pause and smiled as she spoke. “Tell me what’s been taking you away from me. I want you back.”

Jay was reluctant to speak. He wanted to tell her everything; he just didn’t know. His thoughts went back to when he was seven years old when he and his father had all the good times he remembered the most. He knew bringing her into the picture was going to be difficult. They had been married for only four years and hadn’t talked much about his past. He wasn’t certain she would even begin to understand.

Jay’s family was true descendants of the Cherokee Indians. As he matured, he began to feel more of his heritage than he had shown in the past. Penny was from white Irish descendants and well accepted in the Country Club Society in Claremore. Jay had always tried to fit into her life rather than hers into his. He knew this was going to be difficult to explain. His anguish caused him to bury his face in his hands and then massage his head vigorously, looking for just the right starting point. He couldn’t find one because of his confusion. His thoughts ran deep into the past and of the trail of tears.

Jay had a print of the famous “Trail of Tears” painting by Robert Lindneux given to him by his Grandfather which was hanging in the hallway. Viewing the painting was always a religious experience to Jay. He could stand in front of the painting for long periods of time mentally losing himself to the past. His reverie would bring mental pictures of long lines of his forefathers walking the lengthy, lonely trail to Oklahoma. How disease, hunger and pure exhaustion caused many deaths. How the forced removal from their ancestral homeland was placed on them by an uncaring government. How the Indian became a non-person and was destined to become a vanishing breed. The “Trail of Tears” started this demise. He couldn’t quite put his finger on it but somewhere in the dark recesses of his mind, his family’s past was confusing the present. There was a haunting premonition lurking in his mind telling him he was reliving that trail of tears. Amidst his jumbled thoughts, this prophetic reflection seemed appropriate.

Jay well remembered trying to find an appropriate place to hang his painting. Penny and his Mom had, right from the start, chosen to find fault with the placement of the painting saying it didn't fit the décor. Jay had taken their comments to mean the painting was inappropriate and needed to be hung in a less conspicuous place. Placing it in the back of the hallway was all he could get to keep it displayed. This concession made him feel lesser a man than he wanted to be. It was a compromise. He frightfully knew the conversation could again lead to compromise. The path that tacitly said, 'let's not bring up the Indian heritage thing again'. Penny was a pretty, alabaster skinned society woman and deep down he always felt a little below her standing. He was reluctant to speak.

Jay's Great Grandfather Luke Jayhawk Cobb was their family's last full blood line as Cherokees. Luke Jayhawk's real name was Hunting Bear, and he married a Cherokee woman. Jay's grandfather married a white woman, as did his father and now he also. The Indian heritage was strong in his background. He had been raised listening to all the folklore passed on by his forefathers. Jay's father had religiously passed them to him. He felt the heritage deep in his body, mind and soul. Jay was certain his wife Penny, wouldn't understand what he was going to tell her. Telling her Indian stories in the middle of the night was certain to bring derision. He thought long and hard before speaking.

"We have been treated, I'm talking about the Cherokees in particular and the Indian in general, like second class citizens. We have too often been treated as if we didn't matter, as if we didn't exist. It didn't matter what we said, we were not taken seriously and always placated with words to make us shut up. That is exactly how Mom and I were treated in Washington. I got that same old feeling again. We went there believing we could help in doing something for all the families with a loved one lost in Vietnam. We were only placated.

"My father was shot down in North Vietnam in January of 1968. He was an F-105F pilot. His mission, as I understand it, was to kill surface to air missile sites in North Vietnam, to protect the strike aircraft which would follow. My father and William O. Sutton were in the same aircraft as a crew when they were shot down. My father was imprisoned in Hanoi in a place called The Zoo as a prisoner of war.

His backseater, William Sutton was also imprisoned in the same place. We were ultimately notified by the Air Force that my father had been captured and was a POW.” Jay watched Penny to see how she was taking the information. He could see dispassionate thoughts in her eyes.

She spoke, “I’ve heard this before, it isn’t new.” Her voice was calm and showed no emotions.

“I know, but please let me explain as best I can. I’m trying.” He stopped to gather more complete thoughts. He twisted a spoon between his fingers and watched with intensity as the spoon circled.

“I was seven years old when the Air Force called my mother to tell her about my Dad being shot down and taken as a prisoner of war. Five years later, when I was twelve, all the POWs were released by the North Vietnamese. All the wives and families were notified their husbands would be home soon. We weren’t notified! My father wasn’t on the roster of returnees. Mom was devastated! She immediately called the Air Force to find out why. They gave her no information other than he was still listed as a POW. To add to her worry, they erroneously listed him in a Defense Intelligence Agency document as missing in action. My mother tried to find out where Major Bill Sutton was. He came back but my Dad didn’t. The Air Force gave Mom his address. She found him in the Orlando area in Florida, called him, and they talked for about two hours. I was on the extension phone listening to the conversation. The discussion started to get too graphic, like how my father had been treated and even tortured. Mom told me to get off the phone. After the conversation was over, my mother explained to me and my sister what happened. Sutton told her that a Cuban interrogator by the name of *Fidel* had unmercifully beaten my father to death. He didn’t say he was dead. He just said that after three days of non-stop torture, they never heard of him again and assumed he was dead. When Mom told me that, I cried and couldn’t stop crying. It lasted for days. My stomach felt hollow. It felt just like being homesick. I felt terrible. I couldn’t get over such bad news. My Mom cried with me. Anytime she cried, I cried. Any time I cried, she cried also. Neither of us could get out from under this black cloud of despair. It was like being

homesick forever. All the crying and all the tears made me think of the trail of tears. Mom and I were reliving a modern day disaster like trail of tears.

“My Dad and I were real close. He taught me about the Indian ways and folklore attributed to Indian customs. Anytime my Mom would tell me, ‘you are the spittin image of your father’ I would feel proud. I wanted to be just like him. He and I would play catch baseball all the time. His favorite heros were Will Rogers and Jim Thorpe. My Dad was proud of his Indian heritage. He wore a medal just like the one I have on. He sent it to me from Thailand where he had it made. He told me he had one just like it and would wear it all the time until he came back home.” Jay’s voice broke. Emotions were encroaching into his speech. He chose to stop. He waited. Penny allowed his moment of passion to recede.

He started again, “Well, it wasn’t until 1979 that my father was declared as DIC (Died in Captivity). My Mom was never notified of this. Some of her POW/MIA acquaintances had seen a report listing Emanuel J. Cobb as DIC and called to offer her support and condolences. Needless to say my Mom was devastated. To receive information in that manner was less than she had expected from the Air Force. She immediately requested detailed information under the Freedom of Information Act. She FOIA’ed them to death trying to gain confirmation of his death. They obviously had none or surely they would have replied. Finally she received a CIA document listing my Dad as DIC. But there was nothing in the document that confirmed his death. No evidence what so ever. Most of that document was deleted by being blacked over or cut out. What they call redacted. Since then, she has lambasted all the military and the administration about their handling of the situation. Mom was always faithful to the Air Force. She knew there were risks and the possibility of harm coming to the pilots, that didn’t bother her. It was accepted as a risk. What she did mind was not only the fact that the war was unnecessary and a total disgrace, but that she was being handled like a dim-witted housewife. They treated her as an overwrought spouse, completely off her rocker and overzealous in her efforts. Appease her and she’ll go away. I can’t stop thinking that it was just like they treated our people in the 1800’s. Again our President sent our people off to a slaughter. And now the politicians continue this

charade. They were using us for their own gain. Mom got real mad. She was outraged. As I understood more, I became angry too.” Jay paused to catch his breath. His heart was pounding and he could feel the pressure at his temples. “Some of this, I know you have heard before,” Penny broke in before he continued.

“Hold your breath for a minute, I’ll get us some coffee.” She busied herself going through the typical motions of pouring two cups both with dainty saucers. She put two spoons full of sugar in Jay’s along with a bountiful amount of cream. Then served them with stealth like silence, trying not to break the mood. She wanted Jay to get it all out of his system, while secretly hoping it would then go away. As she sat down, she picked up her cup and held it in the palms of her hands to sniff the flavor. She waited for Jay to continue.

“In 1988, nine years later, my Mom was asked to go to Washington to testify before a Senate Select Committee and a House Congressional Committee about the POW/MIA problems. We went and nothing ever happened. We are still waiting for answers. We had been back for three weeks when Mom got a letter of thanks from our Senator and our Congressman, but no further word about my father and his fate. Three months ago we went through that same exercise all over again.

“Next year 1996, it will be twenty-eight years since my father was shot down and we still have nothing official. All we have is what Bill Sutton told my mother when he returned. He said my father most likely died at the hands of a Cuban interrogator.” Jay paused to take a sip of his coffee for the first time. He made his normal sucking sound as he sipped his coffee. Penny wanted to grin at the sound. She had always made derisive comments about his noisy coffee drinking. This time she didn’t.

“After the last meeting, Mom and I went up to the dais to talk to our Senator. While she was talking, I was looking over the shoulders of some of the staffers who were busy collecting all the papers on the dais. I saw something and asked to review one of the papers. I was handed two pages, pages 28 and 29 of a fifty-six page document. On the first page there was a cut-out, probably a name, followed by an identifier, WPP05061980, with an asterisk. Beside the asterisk at the bottom of the page was a name, Benitez Aguillar. The name was Benitez Aguillar or Aguillar

Benitez. I couldn't tell whether there was a coma between the two names or not, so I don't know which one is the right sir name.

“What grabbed my attention were two words penciled in the left margin, ‘Cuban / Miami’. Jay took a sip of coffee to maintain his cool before starting again. “On the next page was the name Mr. Guillermo, followed by the same identifier, WPP05061980, again an asterisk, and again at the bottom of this page by the asterisk was the name Benitez Aguillar. Beside the name were the same two words again penciled in ‘Cuban/Miami’. I asked to make a copy of those two pages. There was a bank of copiers in the foyer for our use. I have those two pages in my brief case. I surmised those two names were two of the three Cuban interrogators.” Jay reached for the pewter image of the Indian Thunderbird held by a silver chain around his neck. He rubbed it gently to his lips while his brain churned away at other thoughts. “I almost have to think, the man Benitez Aguillar is in Miami!”

Jay was beside himself. Blood was rushing to his head, his faced flushed red and he held his stirring spoon tightly in his fist. He was becoming very animated. “How can anyone torture somebody until they die, and why a Cuban? What in the hell were Cubans doing in Hanoi anyway? Why has our own government been so secretive about this whole POW/MIA problem? Why have they withheld information? Why do they still not come clean about that entire war? Why were we there anyway? I get so fed up with the way things are! The Cherokee custom passed down to me from my father says ‘we should live in peace and harmony with the things The Great Spirit has given us’. Am I wrong? Right now I want to kill somebody! I want to kill that Cuban son of a bitch! No one in politics is worth their weight in rat shit!” Jay shook his head in disgust. He pounded a clinched fist lightly on the table, but just enough to rattle the cups in their saucers. “And what really pisses me off, is that next year, 1996, is another Presidential election year. It is also an election year for many Senators and Congressmen. The only reason we were summoned to Washington was for those self serving Senators and Congressmen to get their faces on television. Those political ass holes only wanted to help themselves not us, not the families, just themselves and unknowingly we played right into their hands.” Jay was seething with animosity.

Penny dutifully waited for a break. She began to feel his pain and as she looked into his eyes, recognized his turmoil. Her eyes moistened. She reached out for his hand and felt an unseen quiver.

Attempting to lighten the conversation, she said, “When your mother talked to this Mr. Sutton, did you hear him say that the Cuban killed your father?”

“No, I was off the phone by her directions, she told me that later.”

“Well, then I think what you should do first, is to call Mr. Sutton and ask him all these questions about your father’s death. And don’t be too quick to draw some conclusions. This thing will eat you up inside if you let it.” She paused to show more concern by rubbing his hand in hers. “That kind of hatred, if kept bottled up, will destroy who you truly are. The real you will disappear. I love the real you. The kind, loving, happy man I married. I don’t want that to change. I want you happy again.”

Jay seemed to calm slightly. “My father had a true Indian spirit and if he were here would invoke the ‘crying blood’ philosophy of the Cherokee. He would be hell bent to straighten out the wrong that has been laid at my mother’s feet. I feel compelled to act on his behalf. I would like to get my mother closure and it will not come from our own government, so I have to find out what happened and set it right. There has to be evidence somewhere giving the true story about my father. He could have been killed in captivity. If they were to show me a document that proves he is dead. Then send us his remains. Nothing the government says can be believed. I even question myself about what is right and what is wrong. I’ve got to straighten this out in my own mind. I’ve got to find out what truly happened.

“I thought about starting with Bill Sutton too. Tomorrow I’ll try to locate and telephone him; maybe set up an appointment. Then I’ll fly to wherever he is and talk to him face to face. He can be believed. He may even have the answers I’m looking for.”

Penny was unable to speak. Not because she was dumbfounded or astonished, but because she didn’t know how to respond. She was uncertain if this was just a lark or was for real. Did Jay truly intend to do what he said, take this search all the way to Cuba or was he just blowing off steam. She placed the coffee

cup up to her mouth and let the heat warm her breath. Being lost in thought was new to her. Normally she was outspoken about anything and everything but now silence seemed wise. The quietness permeated the room, a mystic spell that demanded no action. After minutes of unbroken silence Jay looked at her as if questioning what she might be thinking.

Jay spoke, "My father and I were very close." As he spoke a smile formed and a radiance appeared to lighten his face. "Dad used to call me his sidekick, and when we were horsing around he called me 'Little Beaver'. I liked that. He and I didn't have that much time together but the times I remember were all good times. Did you ever wonder why we never remember the bad times?" Jay closed his eyes to better remember the past, a grin molding his face. Jay raised his right hand and formed a fist. Then he stuck out his little finger, then the thumb making a huge 'Y' including his arm. Jay then slapped his chest with the 'Y' symbol. "My father used to do that to me when he wanted us to do something together. He explained, the little finger was me, the thumb was him and the arm was us together. When he touched his chest, that meant 'strength together'." Jay felt a warmth course through his body. He smiled. "I don't know whether that was an Indian symbol or not. But I always took it to be so.

"My Dad was 35 years old when he was shot down, the same age I am now." Jay continued to reminisce. "He was a big man about 6' 2". He had thick and coarse jet-black hair, much like mine but he had no body hair. The only hair he had was on his face and head. His eyebrows were full and black. When he stood up, his back was straight as a board. His shoulders stood squarely and straight out from his body. His skin didn't look dark. He looked like he had a good tan. But his nose was unmistakably Indian. There was a slight bump at the bridge of his nose hinting of a hawk-like bill and wide at the nostrils." Penny could tell that Jay was envisioning his father just as he remembered him and loving the remembrance. "You would have liked my Dad. He had a very strong character; he was more headstrong than I am. He always gave in to my Mom if there was anything she wanted. To everyone else he stood tall in his convictions and you couldn't change his mind. Mom called it

country stubbornness and would typically say that he had a burr under his blanket when he tried to straighten something out.

“I think of my Mom and Dad as a true couple. They met while in college at Oklahoma State. Dad went there to study Geology and she was going to be a teacher. Mom tells it like it was love at first sight. They were both inseparable from the time they met. After college, Dad went to pilot training as a commissioned 2nd Lieutenant out of the ROTC program and he did well. Mom was proud of him. She called him E. J. but when she got mad, she called him Emanuel, knowing that would irritate him.” Jay stopped to contemplate the past. Penny let him recall and enjoy the moment.

Jay’s thoughts continued. “In Indian lore, there is a tale about prairie dogs. The tale is a metaphor about marriage. Prairie dogs have only one mate. When they mate it is for a life time. As they get older they care for each other. One will forage for food when the other is lame. When one dies, the other falls into depression weeping for the other. It too dies within a week or two. My Mom has been robbed of the opportunity to live out her partnership. The destiny we all face is old age. We want and need a partner to make that journey easier, to provide love, friendship, and care for each other. When I seriously think about that, I know I married you for life. Strangely, I look forward to growing old with you. Like the prairie dog, you are my chosen mate for life. When the end comes I know I’ll be there for you and that you’ll be there for me. My Mom has had that opportunity taken away; taken away by others who don’t care about life and about growing old.” Jay twisted the soft cloth belt of his robe subconsciously in deep thought.

“Did I ever tell you how the name Jayhawk came about?” Penny shook her head.

“My great, great Grandfather’s real name was Yelling Bear. This was at a time before the civil war. The Jayhawkers from Kansas came here to buy horses, strong, plains mustangs. These horses could go forever. Jim Montgomery, a leader of the Jayhawkers had a sidekick named Cobb. My great, great Grandfather called him Jayhawker Cobb. Then later when they tried to take a census of all the Indians, they needed a Christian name; my great, great Grandfather gave the census taker

the name of Jayhawk Cobb as his name. Since then our family name has been Cobb and the name Jayhawk was also handed down. I tried to go back and look at the census, but Oklahoma didn't become a state until 1907. The Indians were not required, nor recognized, as being a part of census taking until 1890. The name Jayhawk Cobb had to be handed down from our forefathers. I could only go back as far as the 1920 census and that was the first time I saw our family name in writing as an official person. It seems the Indians were considered as non-persons. One thing I read told me they had trouble deciding who was an Indian. How much Indian blood made an Indian? I thought that was strange. Something else I thought strange, was that the U.S. Government gave more consideration to the blacks than they did to the Indians. They call us native Americans but they have never truly recognized us unless we married into whites. Only then were we recognized as real persons. My Dad told me often that I was a real American. I liked that!"

For the first time Jay was getting into areas he and Penny had never discussed. She was quietly listening to everything he had to say and absorbing it all. Usually in the past, when Jay wanted to talk about his heritage she would change the subject. He was so aware of it that he seldom mentioned the word Indian around her. Now he was freely talking about his heritage and she was listening intently. Her attitude made him feel more comfortable. Pride began to show as he talked about the past.

Both heard the shuffling of slippers in the hallway and knew they had awakened Jay's Mom. They looked toward the doorway waiting for her to appear. Jay's Mom walked through the door still adjusting her robe. She too had been awake all night and easily heard the two talking in the kitchen. Her hair was uncombed, her eyes were encircled by puffy pouches admitting sleepless tossing and her feet moved as if weighted by lead. Jay's Mom, a typical farm woman, sturdy, strong, and healthy, wiped her mouth with the back of her hand in a most unladylike gesture. Her 66 years of age could not have been guessed by anyone. Her nearly six foot tall frame was well tanned from her outside chores.

Marcie spoke softly and offered a faint smile, "What's going on?" Moving toward the cabinets she took out her favorite cup to pour her own wake-up elixir.

The first sip was critical and couldn't happen soon enough. It was the potion that brought her to life each morning. Not getting a response, she spoke again. "Why are you two sitting here at 2:30 in the morning?" Raising her eyebrows and tilting her head toward the two was her signal for them to answer.

Jay was the first to speak. "We're just discussing things." He looked at Penny as if announcing we are not going to tell her the truth.

His Mom showed a faked grin of annoyance. "Come on now, I'm your mother. What's going on?" Her instincts were always on target. "Tell me now." She settled into a chair beside Penny and leaned over to touch shoulders with her in a gesture of togetherness. She brought warmth into the large institutional style kitchen.

Penny spoke. "Jay has this thing about your trip three months ago to Washington. He believes you two are getting the run around, and wants to do something about it."

"Can't say I disagree with that. What does he want to do about it?"

"He wants to go to Cuba to find his father's killer." Penny was ridiculing Jay.

Jay, slightly perplexed spoke out. "Now let's not get this thing blown out of proportion." Jay tried to keep his mother away from the real conversation.

Penny wouldn't let go. She knew she had Jay trapped and was ready to let his Mom stop this ridiculous scheme. "He told me he was going to Cuba!" She looked at Jay. "Is that not what you said?"

Jay was reluctant to speak. He nodded in the affirmative.

His Mom wrinkled her brow in questioning his nod. "What in the name of heaven has gotten into you boy?" Both waited for a response from Jay.

Jay was on the spot. He felt trapped. He felt some repugnance toward Penny for her treasonous acclaim. He thoughtfully formed his return volley.

"Mom," Jay paused before continuing to search for thoughts. "How did you feel when they notified us that Dad was a POW?" Jay continued without waiting for an answer. "How did you feel when Dad wasn't on the list of returnees? And how did you feel when we were told he had Died In Captivity? And when you spoke to Bill Sutton, how did you feel when he told you that Dad had been beaten and tortured to his death? And how did you feel when they provided us with no evidence

of his death?” Jay stopped short knowing he was bringing back the death monster that had plagued him and his Mom for twenty-eight years. “Do we really know he is dead?” Jay was getting his dander up again. He looked at his Mom for a response.

“Jay!” His mother addressed him sternly and directly. “You and your sister are comfortable because of your father. He planned everything before he left. Those royalties from the oil have made us what we are. Thanks to your father. He knew going to South East Asia was going to be risky. He made every arrangement he could to see that we were taken care of if he didn’t come back. When we were notified of his shoot down, I was devastated. I knew I had lost my best friend and the best husband in the world. I mourned his loss. Then months later we were notified that he was a POW. I rejoiced and thanked God daily for his deliverance.

“During that period of only five months, I had been at both ends of the emotional spectrum. When he didn’t come back with the other prisoners, I dropped back into that black hole. But then we were again told that he was MIA. The ax was to fall once again when we talked with Bill Sutton. I believed what he told me. I didn’t want to believe it, but I did. Then years later, we were told by some friends, that E. J. had been listed as Died-In-Captivity. When we checked, we found out that it was official.” She paused to let her mind rest a moment. “I’m afraid going to Washington was a mistake. It started that up and down roller coaster ride all over. We shouldn’t have gone.” She looked straight at Jay, making distinct eye contact.

“When we talked about those Cubans, Mr. Guillermo or Benitez Aguillar, as possibly being the *Fidel* character that caused your Dad’s death I had hatred running through every vein in my body. I had hatred for the U.S. Government, for all politicians. I was on the verge of mental collapse. I had truly had enough. Going into a hole and hiding deep in darkness seemed enticing. But the one thing that pulled me through was you and your sister. Your Dad and I both talked often about the future and what we both wanted. Do you know what he wanted more than anything else in this whole wide world? He wanted grandchildren. He wanted the Cobb name and his heritage to be remembered. We both wanted grandchildren. Now Melanie is married and you and Penny are married. It is time for me to have grandchildren.

“That has kept me going since we left Washington. Forget the politicians. They are in a different world, their own misguided world. Let’s get on with our lives. Your Dad told me many times, we should live at peace and harmony with the things The Great Spirit in the Sky has given us. I believe in that too. Let’s, as a family, have peace.” She looked down, staring through the table into infinity. She knew she had given some balance to the conversation. She looked at Penny. “So when am I going to have some grandkids?” She grinned as she spoke.

Jay was quiet. His mother’s input had placed him out of step. He wanted to retreat and fight the battle at a better time and place. His stubbornness overcame his timorous attitude. He was compelled to speak, but wanted to soothe his mother’s mind.

He spoke quietly. “Mom, when Dad was here on leave before he went to Thailand, he took me aside and told me that I had to be strong, that I had to be a man and take care of you. I have tried to do just that. I want nothing more than for us to be a quiet, peaceful family. In our conversation Dad spoke of the Cherokee ideology, or way of life. He told me this story. He said just like you said to live in peace and harmony but there was an exception when warring was necessary to the Indian. And that was when family blood was spilled. That was the *Crying Blood*. When that happened, it was then O.K. to fight back. I feel that *Crying Blood* has been spilled and I need to fight back. I need to avenge his death. It is my duty to do this. I need to find his killer and seek revenge.”

“Whoa!” His mother blurted out in horror. “Whoa! Rein yourself in cowboy! You can’t do that! You can’t do anything but accept life as it is. Don’t be stupid!” His mom wrinkled her brow and her light green eyes became flushed with red veins. The arteries at her neck line bulged under the adrenalin forced pressure.

“Do you know how crazy that sounds. You can’t take someone else’s life. An eye for an eye ain’t going to enter this picture!” His mom let that thought sink in before continuing. “It’s utter nonsense to take an outmoded custom from the past and apply it into the present. That *Crying Blood* thing is no longer valid. You get off that horse right now!” His Mom was very adamant. She intended for this matter to stop right at this very moment. She grabbed for his hand and Penny’s at the same

time. Holding them both in hers, she talked with strength in her voice. "Promise me, promise me right now this is the end of it." She held their hands tightly waiting for an answer. "Promise me!"

Penny readily nodded her approval displaying a tension relieving smile on her face. Marcie also grabbed Jay's hand as if to affirm the commitment. Jay was not ready to commit. Uncertainty engulfed his mind. He began to squirm in his chair as his hand reached for his Thunderbird necklace. He pushed his chair back away from the table. His head moved slowly from side to side, only hinting disapproval of censure. Penny stared at him with darts of fire in her eyes. He finally nodded, knowing it would comfort his Mom.

Jay's Mom, with an aura of matriarchal control and charm, spoke. "O.K. then...when can I expect some grandkids." All three smiled.

Hours passed, Jay found himself back in bed with the same dilemma invading his sleep. He stared at the ceiling as he made plans to continue. He had to know exactly how and why his father had died. He found nothing wrong with contacting Bill Sutton. And if necessary, he could find nothing wrong with going to Mr. Sutton and having a talk with him face to face. He rationalized each and every thought with positive results. The certainty of uncovering further information had completely driven his thoughts away from the half-hearted promise he made to his mother.

Jay had his own firm, Geological Surveyors Inc. It was a small but financially sound company. He and another geologist were partners in the company. With a receptionist, a draftsman, a physical land surveying crew and numerous ground penetrating electronic sonar devices, his company was complete and enjoyed success based on huge contracts with four major oil companies. He tried to think of anything and everything that might interfere with his plan. Nothing he could think of would stop him. It would be easy to take a few days off to find and meet with Bill Sutton.

His thoughts turned to the imperatives if Bill Sutton again confirmed his Dad's treatment and death at the hands of those Cubans. How would he find these men? Would he need to speak some Spanish? What were the passport and visa requirements? Maybe the U.S. Government didn't allow travel into Cuba. The more

he thought about it, the more it seemed impossible. He began to realize how little he knew. In his mind, the challenge would be a secondary driving force. Staring at the ceiling gave him no answers just questions. Maybe his Mom and Penny were right. He might be crazy to think this was possible. Then his mind turned to the ultimate challenge, was he capable of killing anyone? This thought made him face himself. He again rationalized, no one knows this about themselves until faced with the moment of truth. He lay perfectly still in bed trying not to convey his mental struggles to Penny.

His next burst of thought was how to keep this away from Penny and his Mom. His closeness to both his Mom and Penny placed him in the vulnerable position of exposure if he wasn't extremely discrete. This was a worry he willingly accepted. His office was thirty miles away in Claremore. But Penny and his Mom often went to Claremore for shopping and for leisure time away from home. Escaping from the office would be easy, but relying on his receptionist for a cover up was tantamount to announcing it himself.

He looked across Penny out the window to view the first light of day. It was mid October and days were getting shorter; early morning light came later. A gentle breeze could be seen rustling in the trees in the hills behind the garage. Leaves were just beginning to turn in the cool autumn temperatures. Jay's thoughts momentarily turned away from his surreptitious foray and to the present. Autumn and spring were his most enjoyable times of the year. His family liked horseback riding, especially his Mom. This too was a legacy left by his father.

Away from the house in a small boxed pasture, a red clap board barn housed four quarter horses for each family member. Melanie still boarded her horse even though she seldom came to ride. His Mom was a leader when it came to horseback riding. Being sixty-six years old didn't slow her down. She owned a prize winning sorrel quarter horse which she loved. She was always first to suggest a ride. Especially in the spring when nature was fresh and there was an innate desire to be outdoors. Getting out into the fresh air after winter was exultingly welcomed. After a hot humid summer, the cool breeze announcing winter was equally received. The first touch of autumn held the same wonderful intrigue. Both seasons foretold new

beginnings. Jay's thoughts brought similar emotions. This could be a new beginning. If he could find his father's murderer, a new beginning could close the past.



In An F-105 fighter pilot over North Vietnam is shot down, captured, and placed in a Hanoi prison known as 'The Zoo'. The pilot's torturous interrogation by an overzealous Cuban Military Officer, dubbed 'Fidel', leads to his death. The pilot's son steeped in family heritage as a native American views his father's death as "Crying Blood".

Folklore demands crying blood be redeemed by the eldest son.

Crying Blood

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