

" Then if you will not come as a man, you will come as a slave. "

Little Dog heard the movement of cloth~~x~~ as Sangre reached into his shirt for something. He heard the revolver click. He felt the pain of a gun barrel pushed into his groin.

" You must ride with us two days south, to the edge of the reservation, then you may come back, but you will walk back in disgrace instead of riding as a warrior. "

" Sangre's son stood in silence. He was shocked by his ~~father's~~ father's actions but he made no move to stop him. THE boy heard an owl hooting far off beyond the brush corral

The mules were waiting for them, tied to a tree just beyond the brush corral. They were hidden in darkness, but they were nervous animals, snorting, stomping their hooves against the hard earth, in fact even smelling of apprehension of which this breaking of their life routine had raised in the mule minds. Three of them went to the corral, Little Dog, Billy and Billy's mother. Sangre had turned back into the house and it was Billy who held the gun, though he knew that he would not have fired it at Little Dog if his friend decide to run. And Little Dog knew this. And Billy knew that his friend knew this and yet Little dog did not run but mounted the mule quietly while Billy had half turned toward his mother, the gun in his hand pointed at the mules belly or even at the ground.

" Why did he go back, " Billy said,

" I do not know, " said the squaw, "but I think that he ~~is~~ going back to see Crow. "

" He will kill him. "

" No, not Sangre, not my husband. "He will go into Crow's room quietly, respectfully. He has always respected Crow. He will ask Crow to speak on what he is doing. He will ask for a blessing to ease his mind and ~~he will~~ then he will perhaps even ask the great Crow to pray to those powers which only warriors know for the ~~trip~~ trial of this journey to prove him and then he will take Crow's buckskins and leave. "

" You are crying, " said Billy, who had never seen his cry, not even when the small pox killed his two sisters. He had though that the same apathy which the reservation had made a part of him ~~also~~ also was a part of her. He reached into the darkness and touched her arm. She was trembling.

" Why, " said Billy.

She pulled her arm back. " I am a woman. I do have that right don't I? "

Billy listened to her cry. It wasn't loud but he could hear it and he listened to it until he heard his father running toward the corral. Suddenly the mules became restless, yanking at their ropes, ears down. Little Dog kicked at them from where he was on top of his mule. He had ~~his~~ in his hand the ear of his own animal, and he was twisting it to keep the mule in control. It did little good.

" Here, " said the squaw as she handed a heavy buckskin bag to her son. " he comes. "

" What is it? " he said.

" It is dry meat and pemican, there was no corn. The beans are on the animal. The bag had a strap and he put it over his shoulder. He was sliding it into a comfortable ~~xxx~~ position, for it was heavy, when his mother reached out of the darkness and pulled him to her. He tried feebly to pull away, but she held on to ~~him~~, at first saying nothing, just holding him tightly, not crying any more. Billy could hear ^{her} climbing over the ~~xxx~~ corral gate; he could hear it even over the sound of the mules which were wilder than ever. Little dog jumped off his mule and began searching in the darkness for a stick. Billy tried to pull away, this time using his strength. Still she held on. ~~Her~~ strength was ~~xxxx~~ amazing, strangely frightening.

" Let me go, " he said, " Sangre is coming. " then she said.

" You are a boy, just a boy. You don't have to be a man yet. "

" I will go with him, now let go of me. "

" Her grip relaxed, though she still held on to ~~his~~ sleeves. He permitted this and he ceased to struggle with his mother. ^{His voice} ~~her~~ voice ~~changed~~ was changed now, no tears, only resignation.

" Then be careful, my son, she said. Perhaps it is your time to be a man. Do nothing that would bring shame upon you or your father and Billy (her grip tightened slightly) please help your father to do right, please help him. Be a man and help your father. "

Though they could not see it, Sangre had a bundle under his arm, a fairly large bundle which he tied upon the back of his mule. He said nothing to the woman, for ~~he~~ was busy trying to control his animal. Little dog had already mounted his mule and only Billy remained on the ground.

" Where will you go. Our leaving is a disgrace to you. "

" It is no disgrace. I would not go with you anyway. "

" What will you do? " said Billy.

" Mount your animal, " said Sangre.

The boy quietly mounted his mule and quieted the animal down. His eyes were ~~used~~ to the dark and he could see his mother now. He leaned down to his mother.

" Where. " he said.

" I will send word to my brother. He will take me in as a servant to his wives. They will mistreat me but I will have somewhere to go. I ~~am~~ deserve it. I have nothing now. "

There was no searching for sympathy in her voice. She was about to say something else when Sangre reached over, ~~grabbed~~^{took} the gun from Billy. He put the gun in his belt, grabbed the harness ~~to~~ Billy's mule and turned the animal around and led it away, with Little Dog leading. The boy never said another word to his mother. He looked back but ~~she~~ she was lost in the darkness.

" Take this, " Sangre said. He hand the reins to his son. We will go two miles to the creek bed. ~~there~~ There we shall turn south for Texas. A day and we will be in Kiowa land. The Kiowa have good horses, and they are fatter than we and no longer claim us as brothers. One day and we will have horses, two days and we shall free. "

She watched them silhouetted ~~and~~ against the clear ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ sky which was only slightly brighter than the horizon of the land upon which they rode. There was no moon. She looked in there direction long after they could no longer be seen. She watched them until the last sound of the nervous mules could no longer be heard, then she turned and walked slowly back to the house, where she sat until morning in Crow's room, holding the old man's hand, and singing.

They could see the dawn coming, slowly at first, imperceptible at first so that the trees lining the river bed were no longer hovered over them ~~xxx~~ⁱⁿ great, solid masses but were trees, individual trees, trees with leaves, trees without leaves with twisting branches rising up into the sky. They had passed two Kiowa camps that morning in the several miles that they had covered. Both camps were familiar to the three riders, and they passed by them without incident, as far as they knew, undetected. Not even the dogs ~~battered~~ them. But there was another camp ahead, one which they were not familiar with, perhaps because it was so small that they probably had passed it without paying much attention to it and might have passed it again this morning without incident had they not startled a few women out gathering fire wood. The riders did not know which tribe inhabited the village though they were sure that these Indians were Kiowa, for they were still on Kiowa land. Most ~~xxx~~ of the women dropped the firewood and ran, but two of them already heavily loaded with wood remained perhaps not so much out of bravery as it was a disinclination to drop their hard gathered loads. Besides if the strangers meant mischief, they could have easily done it, for the women could not have made it back to the shelter of their camp before the horseman could have been upon them. Their screams certainly would not have wakened their sleeping men. Sangre ~~did~~ not feel disposed to talk to the women. He knew that if others followed him to recover the stolen mules that the women would certainly tell what they had seen in the creek bed. But the women were suspicious now, and would tell their husbands what they had seen and if those suspicions could not be allayed the men would hear about it. And to get ~~xxxxxxx~~ an extra amount of rations at the government office the men would certainly tell. In fact no matter how innocent the whole encounter might at first seem those men, now sleeping in ignorance would lie, blow the story up, in hopes that the government man would reward them anyway whether there was any truth to the story or not. Sangre had asked wounded Elk not ~~xxxxx~~ to refuse the mules, that he would take them anyway. After many hours of talking, ~~xxx~~ He thought that he had convinced wounded Elk of the nobility of his mission. But he was not sure. Wounded Elk had not consented openly even though he did not ~~xxxxxx~~ stop Sangre from taking the mules. No, Sangre could take no chances.

"Woman, you carry too much," he said in Kiowa.

She answered in Kiowa. "I carry what I can for a woman, which is more than my sleeping husband can carry."

"What is the name of this camp, woman."

"It takes the name of the creek. Why do you wish to know?" "I w

"Woman, you carry too much," he said in Kiowa.
She answered in Commanche. "I carry what I can for a woman, which is more than my sleeping husband can carry."

"Then you are commanche?" He said.

"Yes, most of us are. There are some Kiowa here in our camp, a few ~~Exxy~~ Apache, all of us without land."

"This is Kiowa land, you know."

"I know nothing. I follow where my husband takes us. If we are on Kiowa land then you must tell my husband, for it is his mistake not mine. He sold our land and he has taken us his wives with others who have sold their land and we have come here to camp in teepees now. I was raised in a wooden house I know nothing about canvas teepees. I talk too much. Who are you anyway, the police?"

"~~Exxx~~ Yes, Sangre said."

"The police!." The woman turned to her silent companion. They have come to take us off the land." ~~Exxxxx~~ Both of the women became excited, so that what had been a clearly spoken Commanche tongue turned into gibberish, incoherent to Sangre who thought he knew the Commanche language well. Suddenly the younger one dropped her bundle of sticks and started running for the camp. Sangre wanted to follow to stop her but the other women were already in the camp with the news. Stopping her would be stupid.

"Woman, we have not come to make you leave. This is land held in tradition by Kiowas, but it is common land. Your husband is right, you may live here. Many others who have lost their land live here now. . . ."

"Let me finish and I will tell you. We have come after thieves who have stolen cattle and horses from a few miles up north and were driving them south toward Texas. Have you seen these men?"

"No, I have not, but you must ask my husband. He would know who passes through here. He would know that."

"That is not necessary. We know they are ~~xxxxxx~~ going to Texas, and we know that they will go on the same trail that the government wagons come. It is the fastest route and there are now government wagons on the road at this time."

"It is true," She said. But you should talk to my husband, the girl is bringing him now."

Make the
women ask
the younger
one to get
her husband.
Sangre
Police would
know where
the woman
is alone.

At noon they stopped to rest in a small stand of Bo d' arc trees. Billy, without being told, built a small fire. They had only dried beef to eat so that a fire was really unnecessary and uncomfortable because of the noon heat, but he knew that Sangre would have wanted it. He was right. His father did not object, infact pulled out his ubiquitous pipe, stuffed it with tobacco and lit it with the flaming end of a dried sunflower stalk which Billy had just thrown into the fire. He looked calm now with the pipe in his mouth, squatted on his haunches, looking out throught the trees to the hilly country over which they had just come. There was none of the violence in his face now. The whiskey had done its work and ~~left~~ left instead of scars or red eyes or throbbing head, a smile, even a look of understanding which was completely foreign to Billy. Why Billy knew right then that Little Dog could hav gotten up, could have even mounted one of the mules and turned back North if he wanted to and Sangre would have done nothing. It was as if the canker had been removed leaving ~~only~~ instead of a festered wound — peace. The boy pulled the parflech from the back of his mule, opened it and offered one of the slivers of dried meat to his father first. The man did not look at it but waved it away, not moving his eyes from the mountains.

" I have been here once before, " he siad, calmly and with the same peace in voice that was in his face. " Crow, my great Grandfather, a great warrior, brought me here when I was a boy. It was a reservation here then. The soldiers were everywhere watching us. In the last years there was no moving from the reservation without great reprisals to our people, by the government soldiers. They had all the food and without that food our people would starve. It was the year of the great small pox which killed many, many Kiowa, many other indians. There was not one family who was not morning a loved one dead from that terrible sickness. I was too young to mourn. I was seven or eight years old and both of my parents and my father's other wives died of the plague and my sisters died and my brothers too, and there was only three of us. Our family was maybe the hardest hit. Crow, my great ~~great~~ grandfather, did not get sick. he came to our teepee and defied the sickness to ~~enter~~ enter his body instead of entering the bodies of my father and his wives and children. But it was no good. The sickness was afraid of him. He came a stayed in our lodge with us to frighten the sickness away but it was no good. All died and I was sick but did not die. And he took me from the lodge and put me in his lodge and he went and buried the bodies of my father and mother and all. They were buried without preparations for the next life but he knew the soldiers would come and bury them in big pits so he wentout and buried them in hidden places to come back to later when the disease and the soldiers with their shovels had left. The next day he carried me North to Ft. Sill to the only doctor there and he threatened to kill the doctor if he did not look at me, but the doctor would not see us because we were infected with the sickness and so were some of the soldiers and he only had time for the soldiers. Crow was certain that I would die. He put me sick upon his horse and together we rode two nights and two days until we came to the red river. I have seen it many times since but it was never like that first time when Crow lifted me from his horse and held me up because I was too weak to walk. And he made me look when I was too sick to look, to even know what the other side meant to my Great Grandfather or to our people.

" Look, " he said. " It is Tejjanna your home. I want you to see Tejjanna before you die. I want you to look accross the river and see your country. "

He did not take me there. He kn ew that it did not make that much difference and he had made a promise too. He had told the white men that he never would cross into that country to raid if they returned our captive people alive form Ft. Griffin.

" It is not necessary. We know where they are going and we shall be on the government road after them. Tell your husband that we are traveling in secret, because the thieves do not think they are being followed. If they were to find out that us police were after them, they would not take the government road and we ~~would~~ will not catch them. Even if more police ~~xxxxxx~~ even soldiers come you must not tell them that we have come ahead of them. We are the secret police and we must depend on our secrecy to be effect effective, so we can protect your ~~stark~~ horses and mules. ~~xxxx~~ Only a few men in Anadarko know who we are. Now you know. It is a great responsibility. You must not tell your husband who we are. You must make him keep in silence. We must go now and I know that you will be able to do your duty. Make some excuse to the others in camp and we will be proud of you. "

" I will do what I am told, officer. "

The three men rode off into the darkness, whipping the mules as hard as they could to get speed out of the animals. Behind her the woman heard the sound of feet running toward her over the dry earth. It was the younger woman and. The man was bare-footed and naked to the waist. He held his pants up with his hand.

" What did they want? " he said. The woman saw that there was a disgusting look of panic in his eyes.

" I don't believe them, " she said, " I don't believe a word of it. "

" Do you think they believed you, " said Little dog to Sangre.

" No. " he said. " I know those commanche women, too businesslike. She wouldn't believe me if I was telling her the truth. "

" It is getting light now, " said Billy, " What shall we do father? "

" We have to keep moving for seven, maybe ten miles. I know a place ten miles from here, by the creek and there is water there all times of the year. We shall rest for a while, then go on. It will take two days to get to the river. "

" But we should hide in the day time. Travel at night. You stole these animals ~~and~~ they will come after us and ~~they will~~ catch us before we get to the red River. "

" They will not catch us. The land to the south is big. Not many indians, not many white man. We will lose ourselves easily in the big land and we will be in Texas in two days, where there are good horses, fat on summer grass, horses that will want to run. We shall get them in Texas. "