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That Hidden Country: The Travels of Jacob Singleton, A Novel

James Earp

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THAT HIDDEN COUNTRY
THE TRAVELS OF JACOB SINGLETON
A NOVEL

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Jefferson believed, or wanted to believe, that mammoths foraged the grasslands of the continental American interior. This was not an uncommon belief among the learned in Jefferson's time and place, so it is not altogether remarkable that Jefferson did charge Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, when they led the Corps of Discovery to the Oregon coast, with keeping an eye out for signs of the living mammoth. This novel attempts an aesthetically viable narrative synthesis of American myths in several layers, the top layer being, in the words of cultural critic Cintra Wilson, a "ripping yarn" in the traditions of Alexander Dumas, James Fenimore Cooper, Jules Verne, Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and more recently, George Macdonald Fraser and Larry McMurtry. Other literary influences include the fictions of C. S. Lewis and John Gardner.

Beginning with a fictive treatment of the Lewis & Clark expedition, the narrative frame transitions to a reversal of Burroughs' Tarzan stories, in which a young African American becomes the Tarzan figure, adventuring in a remote ice age wilderness in post-colonial North America. Within this admittedly outlandish scenario, I'm exploring a dramatic reduction of the war for independence, along with the themes of exploration, subjugation, courage, corruption, and the overlap between racism and speciesism.

Though the novel initially presents a "Disneyesque" take on its settings and characters (particularly of Thos. Jefferson), these darken as they progress, leading readers to consider the American stories they are willing or unwilling to accept, against those upon which they insist.

DEDICATION

To Jess Scroggs, de facto big brother;
my first, best teacher.

PROLOGUE

Virginia, 1792

His earliest memories were of the big house atop the little mountain — red brick and white trim, the silver dome that in the right sunlight shone gold — and the wonder that swept over faces across the Rivannah when they learned where he lived, the admiration with which they exclaimed what a privilege it must be to be enslaved there.

More particularly, he might recall the day Miss Maria (Polly to her familiars) took him to see hummingbirds. Down the hillside shaggy with long-cropped grass below the great house, she led him in a traipsing zigzag on a well-practiced course through the North garden, precisely arranged, neatly furrowed plots of fruit and vegetable greens; blueberry, huckleberry, gooseberry, chokeberry; tomatoes, celery, carrots, peppers and onions, then over more sparse grass blanketing dark earth. She — coltish, pale pink in a spray of freckles, crisply dressed even for roughhousing, with the particular assurance of rank and substance not shared by the boy, black as a saddle, and roughly clothed — cried out as she ran.

“Hurry, Jacob!”

He, small for his age, was losing ground to the girl despite his best effort, and his determination, now widely recognized as formidable, was nonetheless unequal to the

pace set by the girl, now disappearing into the shaded canopy of a peach grove.

“Jacob, hurry up!”

“Comin’!”

Their course through the thick-blossomed trees slowed, and Jacob drew alongside the girl. As they approached a small clearing in the grove (legacy of a late frost year before last) he heard a familiar thrum. Even before he first caught sight out the corner of his eye — the blurred flash of iridescent green streaked with creamy tan and stark magenta — the soft whir was pierced by the territorial chirp of a hummingbird. The air more and more quickly cleft to and fro, above and below by flashes of bright green and red and that quick, sturdy whir, a whirlwind of the birds darted unerringly from one blossom to another. The boy stopped, skeptical. She had brought him running like a fool down the hill, all the way from the stables, for this?

Polly stepped toward a thick-blossomed bough, and motioned the boy to stillness. “Now watch,” she whispered.

The boy cocked his head. “I seen hummin’birds before.”

“Hush.”

Polly slowly extended an index finger and held it motionless beneath a cluster of white petals. She stood breathless for a moment, her eyes widening as a hummer careened in a sideways arc to just above her hand, hovered,

to perch audaciously on her finger. Polly's eyes fixed on the bird, she whispered to the boy.

``Jacob! Jacob, can you see?''

No reply. The girl, entranced by the brazen sociability of the bird at its unassailable ease, now and then turning a quizzical eye to its host, at length grew impatient for a suitable sign of wonder from the boy.

``Jacob?''

No response; no sounds beyond the blurred wings, and a gentle rustle of leaves.

``Jacob! Are you there? Did you ever see the like —
``

The bird would not stay on her finger all day. She had begun to suspect Jacob might have wandered off, until she glanced in his direction.

He was still there, and when she saw, all preoccupation with her own marvel ceased. She absently let drop her hand, her bird shooting back to its commerce with the peach blossoms.

In the time that Polly had received her visitor, Jacob had welcomed more than a dozen of its fellows. They were now perched the length of his outstretched arms like clothespins on a line, while others hovered and jostled and bickered for a place. The boy stood motionless as the commotion around him grew by another smidgeon: the bird which had just taken its leave of Polly now joined two others in a squabble for a

place atop Jacob's head. As the first two bickered, the new arrival blithely took the disputed spot.

The girl stared, gob smacked. ``Jacob...?''

The two displaced birds streaked into the sky, one in aggrieved pursuit of the other, above the grove, up and up over the sprouted gardens, over the comings and goings among the neat, rudimentary hovels of Mulberry Row; above the red brick, white trim, and silver dome of the great house, over the fields, hills and winding waters of the Valley.

The girl whispered as the boy stood, grinning as wide as the wide green Rivanna, eyes afire with joy.

``Jacob!''

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CHAPTER ONE

Virginia, 1796

Sunlight flashed off the scythes as they whispered through the wheat. The women followed the men close behind, just outside the sweep of the blades, gathering the crop while a few children followed, picking up the loose strands left behind by the women.

The aching ordeal proceeded with a diligence borne of the wish to be done with it, rendering the presence of the three white bosses mostly unnecessary. So they stood apart, loafing, relieving the monotony with idle conversation. The Scythes rose and fell; the women stooped, gathered, rose, stepped forward, and stooped again, making their slow progress across field bordered by orchards, woods, and on one side a road. As the clockwork mechanism of flesh and bone and glistening sweat inched forward, they sang —

William Rino sold Henry Silvers;
Hilo! Hilo!
Sold him to the Georgy trader;
Hilo! Hilo!
His wife, she cry, de chillun bawl;
Hilo! Hilo!
Sold him to de Georgy Trader;
Hilo! Hilo!

It was Marcus who first caught sight of the strange procession making its way up the road from the West.

Sold him to de Georgy Trader;

Hilo! Hi—

The apparition stopped the song in Marcus' throat. Silence rippled out from him as he rested his scythe and the others followed suit, until the field was quiet and the slaves looked down the road.

Two bosses strode into the furrows to bark their well-worn motivations, when from the northwest corner a cry from their third halted them as well. The boss pointed his comrades down the road as the reason work had halted ambled into view.

Blacks and whites looked on as two rows of Indian horsemen — warriors, and by the look of them two or three chiefs as well — approached.

The Indians drew alongside the field at an unhurried pace, though one older chief turned an impassive gaze across the field, and several young braves inclined well-greased and feathered scalp locks toward the workers. Here and there red stares met black; less frequently, glimpses at white.

Davy, a boy just two years in the field, with his hands clasped around a gathering of stray wheatstalks, asked Simon, the lead cutter, "Where they goin'?"

Simon took off his hat and dragged a soaking sleeve across his forehead. "Here, I spec'." He lifted his scythe, easily threw a wide, even swathe, yellow stalks up-ended, then falling, and started into a song unique to this region sang:

Oh, Monticello, Monticello...

The others joined in and the chorus swept across the field as work resumed.

That's where Master Jefferson be;

That's where one day he'll make us free...

The Indian horses continued a slow pace, following the road as it curved into the wood before it arose in a spiral to the house.

"Look-a here what I found!" cried Isaac above the bustle of the kitchen. Standing next to a larder shelf near the door where he idled between trips to the cistern, he peered into the recess between canisters of corn meal and wheat flour, sacks of beans and baskets of squash, reached a hand into the dimness, and drew out a grey mouse, its legs fluttering helplessly as the slave held it gently but firmly by the tail between a calloused thumb and a welted forefinger. He let go the bucket he'd been holding and worked his free hand around to come at the terrified varmint from the safest angle and closed his thick fingers around the silken grey fragility, its head peeking out Isaac's fist. He offered a look to anyone who might pause.

Sukey was in no mood. Accustomed to the preparation of meals for large gatherings of the best gentlemen and their wives, guests of Master Jefferson, the best of them all, was in the middle of the task of her life. Not only was she to

spread a table for the cream of Albemarle County, three score or more, but there was a complement of Delaware Indians — Chief Sahopre, two of his fellow chefs, several counselors, and a complement of braves. She hadn't intended to cook anything the Indians were reputed to want — Why would they want something they had all the time out in the woods was what she'd like to know — but had finally been persuaded to roast a side of venison, in addition to the ham, ducks and turkeys preferred by the gathering at large. But there were still the pies to bake and vegetables to rinse, cut, and when necessary, stew; and now she had field hands chasing mice through her kitchen.

“Get that mouse out of here,” she bellowed.

“Take it and give it to Barnaby, and see if maybe it remind him what his job is. That'd make one of you that knew.”

Isaac took it under advisement, peering into the rodent's petrified black eyes. Barnaby was at least sixteen years old, the rheumatic and mostly deaf senior cat of only five at present, the others carried off by hawks or owls or dispatched by raccoons. He was well enough kept that the only thing he had hunted for as long as anyone could remember was a pool of sunlight or a warm hearth. Isaac wasn't about to give Barnaby the mouse, even if the old cat had been in any way capable of enjoying it. He walked out of the dependency and placed the mouse amid the primrose, where it sat for a moment, absorbing the shock of freedom

regained, before it came to its senses and scurried into the shade. There was plenty of things for that mouse to be afraid of; no need for it to bother about Barnaby. It was most likely headed for a reckoning with Sukey in any event, now that the weather was growing cooler. Isaac had no illusions about the prudence of mice or really, much of anyone else.

“Isaac!” Sukey yelled from the kitchen. Get back in here and get fetchin’ water!”

Isaac looked down into the flowerbed to let the colors wash over his eyes and the food smells flowing from the kitchen undulate through his nose. There was no hurry, and anyway fetchin’ water was supposed to be Jacob’s job, which Jacob would have been doing if he hadn’t been in hot water his own self.

Jacob was in some difficulty, not an unusual circumstance. Sukey, Ursula, George, even occasionally old Henry, Monticello’s stable-master and the closest to a father the boy had, were forever nattering about how spoilt he was, even as they competed with one another to find ever more outlandish ways to spoil him. Then he would begin to feel entitled, and would forget or ignore outright some task he’d been given, some small labor that would fill the day once the horses, Jacob’s only real responsibility, were squared away. That boys his age spent long days in the fields or the nailery did not concern him.

Today, though, he had brought Sukey to a proper boil. He had been posted in the kitchen, expected to be ready to move between the kitchen and the other dependencies, the house and the cistern to bring Sukey and Madison whatever they needed — duty he had drawn as part of the bargain that would allow him to attend the guests with trays of sweetmeats or pitchers of wine when the Indians had arrived, greetings and gifts had been exchanged and the banquet served. Jacob, like most of the inhabitants of the little mountain, had never seen a real Indian. Unlike most of the others, however, Jacob, on learning just over a week ago that the Indians were coming had leapt to the conclusion that his life's purpose would be fulfilled when, and only when, he had seen one up close. He had asked anyone he could waylay — George, Ursula, Henry, Miss Polly, Miss Martha, Sukey, James, Sally, Jupiter — to tell him whatever they knew or might be able to find out about the Indians, and whatever he learned was then shared with any and anyone the boy could regale, save whoever had given him the tidbit in the first place.

Now that the day had come, he'd found that his ability to stand still, never pronounced, was beyond him. After half an hour of standing at the door of the kitchen in the selfsame spot later occupied by Isaac, Jacob was overcome with a firm conviction that the Indians were near, though it was well known across the length and breadth of the

plantation that they weren't due until late afternoon. The longer he stood at the kitchen doorway doing nothing, the more certain his feeling became, until he could swear that now and again, he heard chanting voices, or possibly a war-whoop drifting up the hillside from the road. He had slipped out into the October afternoon straight down the slope from the flower room to a quiet road, empty save for the emissaries from the statehouse in Richmond, or some neighbor or another. After some minutes of staring at the empty road, he resolved to go back to the kitchen in the hope that he hadn't been missed. But in his course back up the hill, he remembered a clearing on a rock ledge that offered a high perspective on the road. He cut left, kicking through ankle-deep dogwood leaves, taking care not to let the hillside undo him, when near his destination, a flat granite overlook, he heard Goliah call his name. He considered and quickly dismissed the prospect of hiding, not to re-emerge until after the company had arrived and nobody could take him to task before they'd all had a chance to simmer down, but that wouldn't do: Sukey had grown tenacious with her grudges; had lately even complained to Ursly, who you didn't want made at you.

``Over here,`` he called. ``I'm right here, Goliah.``

``Here he is!`` Goliah shouted. Isaac, from somewhere further up the slope, answered as Jacob made his sullen way to Goliah.

Climbing the hill back towards the house, Goliah informed Jacob that Sukey was now in a fine state, and pressed him on who had to pay for it when Sukey was in a state, though he well knew the answer.

“Everybody,” Jacob muttered.

“You got as fine a situation as any nigger in Viginny, Jake,” Goliah scolded. “But if you don’t straighten up, you may wind up in a situation not nobody would trade you for.”

Such were the events that led Jacob to his present predicament, seated in a stiff, hard, straight back chair in the book room, with strict orders to keep his little black backside firmly affixed there, and not let his feet so much as touch the floor. On the face of it, it would have seemed that Jacob’s disciplinarians had played right into his hands, for if there was any place Jacob would prefer to be if he couldn’t be in the stables or the woods, it was the study, and in fact it was only by happy accident that this was where the boy now found himself. Upon being delivered to Sukey’s outrage (“I don’t need him no more, Isaac fetch me all the water I need, hifalutin little shit think he don’t have to answer to nothin anybody say, don’t have to do a lick o’ work he don’t want to do, I can do without him just fine; I don’t care where you take him, just don’t leave him under my foot with all the work they is to do.”) the boy had come dangerously close being sent to the nailery, there

to pound heads or points on one infernal little length of rod after another as the cutting machine, clattering and creaking and banging, spit them plinking into the bin as the forge roared and the sharp bitter stench of hot metal stabbed his nostrils. Everybody who set foot in the nailery hated it, except for Master Jefferson, who, counting up the factory's issue in the early weeks after firing it up, said he'd rather be remembered as a nail maker than anything else he'd ever done. The attitude of the boys who worked there was that such talk from the author of the *Declaration of Independence* was mighty tall indeed, but if that was how Master really felt about it, Master was welcome to it. For themselves they'd as soon pick cotton or hang tobacco.

It was the nailery's hellish heat that saved him, wearing his new servant's clothes in anticipation of his duty at the banquet and soiree, and it was deemed unsuitable for him to serve the guests all dripping. Despite his transgression, no one, not even Sukey, had the heart to deny Jacob his time with the Indians. It was the way he looked at you when he got something in his head he wanted to know about, that gave you to know he wasn't putting it on. He'd been wearing that look since the first disclosure of the Indians' imminent visit, and for more than two weeks now the boy's anticipation, bordering on the ecstatic, had begun to rub off on everyone else.

Thus, it was decided he would sit in the book room, the room least trafficked during these affairs, until George

could give him a talking-to that would, at least in the early going, take a bit of the shine off this auspicious day. This decision had come from George, and not without trepidation. Of all the fruits of Monticello, the books, at least for the Negroes, were the most forbidden. This was due not to Master Jefferson's decree, but the law of the land: Learning to read was highly illegal for blacks, though no one had satisfactorily explained why to Jacob. Nor had it been adequately related to Miss Polly who, for a couple of years a little more than a couple of years ago had undertaken to teach Jacob letters and some words. This she had done not owing to any foolborn mission to spread learning, but simply because Jacob presented a more responsive pupil than one of her dolls. The letters were tough, getting them arranged so they signified correct and all, and the whole enterprise was at first not entirely to Jacob's liking. But the books the girl carried to the woods for his lessons contained pictures, and those pictures often filled the boy with mysterious longings he had never experienced under any other circumstance.

Eventually Polly had taken fright. There had been some trouble, most recently in Maryland, and book-smart blacks were rumored to have been involved. The lessons abruptly ended. Jacob's taste for the pictures in the books had stuck however, and he found himself stealing into the book room when he could find an opening, careful not to leave any trace of his intrusions, always handling the books with

utmost care, gingerly turning pages, replacing them exactly within the faint outlines the sun had marked on the shelves around the bottoms of the spines. He didn't allow himself to touch anything else in the study, not even the colorful and ingenious orry that reproduced, in clockwork, the courses of the Earth, Moon and planets around the Sun. He contented himself with the books, though in these books, unlike Miss Polly's, pictures were scarce. Pictures there occasionally were however, and on a mild afternoon summer before last he had happened upon the one picture in the one book that profoundly curtailed his forays into other books. He couldn't see the book just now; Ursly had set the chair in the middle of the room, facing the door, and a different shelf of books. Over the shelf, up the pale blue wall to the cornice just beneath the place where the wall began to curve into the ceiling, the white visage of the Frenchman gazed across to the opposite corner at old Ben Franklin.

He turned in his chair and peered over his shoulder to fix the book. No good; it was directly behind him. He could not even ascertain that the book was still there without raising his backside off the seat, and he dared not risk being caught in another instance of disobedience. If George or Ursuly walked in and he was so much as up on his knees looking through the spokes of the chair, he might well forfeit the banquet. He'd best mind his peas and —

Just on the other side of the wall, unfamiliar voices, two of them, coming from the lawn just off the south porch.

Presently he recognized one of them: Master Lewis from Locust Hill, a neighboring plantation an hour's ride away. He was showing another young man around the property, as always, proud as if he owned the place. He certainly had a stake in it. Master Lewis' father had died in the 'dependence war, and Master Jefferson had taken the boy up from early childhood. Master Lewis was the easier to hear. He was a corporal in the army, had lately fought in the Whiskey Rebellion, and had already grown himself a powerful set of pipes, suddenly measurably more loud and clear as he bounded up onto the porch, boots clumping.

"Ask me which way the wind is blowin'!" Lewis called to his companion. Jacob could make out only a muffled response, to which Lewis replied that it was light, but there, and out of the northeast. "Wet your finger," he called. Another muffled comment, this time with a questioning tone. "Come on up here," Lewis commanded. Jacob knew what he was about now; showing off Master Jefferson's weathervane. Master had run a series of rods through the height of the house from the porch, so that a needle in the porch ceiling relayed the direction of the wind from the weathervane atop the house.

The young man with Master Lewis indicated appropriate impress. "Well," he said, "I'll be."

Jacob thought again of the book, and its spellbinding picture. Where was George, or Ursly, or whoever was going to give him his talking-to? They needed to be done with it,

because he would have to be seeing to his duties before too much longer. Maybe he should check on the book, to make sure it was all right. He leaned low to one side of the chair till his line of sight cleared the back of the chair, and turned his head toward the bookshelf. He caught only the barest glimpse of the book before his precarious balance threatened to tip the chair over, and he recovered his assigned position. The book had seemed not to be properly lined up with the rest, but he had only seen it for an instant. He listened for approaching footsteps, outside the book room in the Great Hall, where Master's Indian collection (pots, pipes, flutes and skins, horns and headdresses and knives and necklaces) was displayed. The house was silent, but outside, the grounds were getting busy. A group of fiddlers was playing at the far end of the North Lawn, Master Jefferson among them; they were playing some of the fancy music he had brought back from France. Deedle-deedle-deedle. The France music was peculiar. They'd saw on those fiddles from now 'til Christmas and never hit on a tune. Most of the white folks were here by now, waiting for the Indians.

He'd better check that book. He craned his head toward the door for any sign of danger, then slid forward on the chair until the toe of his right shoe touched the floor. He lowered his left foot until it had taken his weight from the right. He incontrovertibly off the seat. This was perilous. He would certify the book was where it was supposed to be

and return to his place. Jacob shifted his weight slowly to his left foot. Not a hint of a creak issued from the floor. A scant four long, silent steps and he was to the shelf. The book was exactly where he'd put it the last time he had it out, exactly in line with the other books. It didn't need to be adjusted at all. Which meant, come to think of it, that no harm could come of looking at just one or two pictures, though he knew that, since time was short, only one of those ineluctably begged his attention, ratcheting away in his head like a mockingbird on a fence, drawing trespassers from the nest.

He slid the book off the shelf. It was a big, old book, more massive than Jacob could confidently maneuver to the preferred page while standing, and he dared not carry the book back to the chair. He lowered his haunches onto the hardwood floor and opened it on his crossed legs. The volume fell naturally open to the place it had been opened frequently these several months, and Jacob, gazing down, unprepared as always for the sight before him, prompted, as always, a small gasp.

Towering on the page with all the power at the unknown artist's command was the massive, furious, unconquerable aspect of an Elephant, rampant. It was an Elephant. Polly, who first showed the book to Jacob, had told him, had shown him the letters. Bigger than five horses, she had said. She had seen one in France, and heard it; it trumpeted she had told him. He stared into the book on his lap. Everywhere he

looked on the creature revealed a different splendor: The ears like sheets, the curving, grasping, impossible nose, the shovel lip, legs like cottonwood trunks. He touched the page lightly with an index finger and traced the contours of the marauding tusks, then the "s" curve of the jubilant nose. He could not feel the floor beneath his bottom, or his legs beneath the book. He could not feel the weightlessness his reveries into the book invariably conjured. He remained wholly unaware of his corporeal dissolution, nothing but a pair of intangible, disembodied eyes whose sole purpose was to drink in the trumpeting splendor before them.

A dewy bead of drool formed on the boy's lower lip, slowly began to roll forward until he remembered himself and with a breath, drew it back. Elephant. Somewhere there were Elephants by the hundreds, crushing forests. And not just any somewhere. In Africa, from where the Negroes, like himself, had come.

"Lord God, boy, what are you about?" He had not even heard George open the door. Ursly was close behind, a nor'easter in a starched white apron, all lightning and roaring wind and disapproval. "Jacob Singleton, are you touchin' his books?"

Jacob stared indignant at the wall by Ursly's knees. "No!" He slapped the book shut and pushed it back onto the shelf. Jacob's brass notwithstanding, the boy knew he was not merely sunk, he was doubly sunk. They was mad as a cut snake, both of them. He wouldn't see the Indians; he would

spend the banquet in the nailery, which would be fired up just for him. He had likely seen the last of the stables too, come to that. They had found or would find someone who could bring horses along as well as or better than he. He would work the nailery until he begged to be allowed to cut wheat or pull up vegetables, and would be refused. He would never set foot in the book room again. It was only right; no one was permitted in the book room. The calamity his defiance had wrought was echoing through his skull yet while he had failed to note that the music on the North Lawn had ominously ceased. This change in the atmosphere had not slipped by Ursly however, who summoned him from the floor with a snap of her fingers,

And now here was Master Jefferson, doubtless about to tell him that he was to be sold for a very reasonable price to the buyer who could pack him off from Monticello the soonest. A buyer like the Sedgefields, a month with whom would cause Jacob to look fondly back on his time in the nailery, when he'd had it made.

How he could run away, where he could run away to, how he would likely be killed, lose a hand or a foot, all these matters were being sorted through while George withdrew into the hall with Master. A brief conversation ensued, after which Master returned to the study alone, dismissing Ursula with some assurance that, though it might have left her appetite for justice unsatisfied, held some slight promise of peace in the household.

Master Jefferson rested his fiddle and bow against the wall, noticed a book lying atop the shelf beneath the Frenchman, picked it up, opened it, and shuffled through a few pages until the question that seeing the book had raised was answered. Jacob, for his part, was fighting tears, though the worst of the contest seemed to have passed.

When he was satisfied that the stress of the farrago with Ursula and George had abated, Jefferson spoke.

``Jacob.''

``Yes, sir.''

``How is Odin?''

``He's still limpin' a touch, but he's a lot better. Don't nobody ride him for another week or so, he'll be his old self.''

``Good. Come up off the floor, Jacob.

Jacob rose up.

``And the new bay?''

``I expect you can ride him tomorrow. Miss Martha too, if she's careful. Miss Maria better wait a bit more. He's a mite spirited for her yet.''

``That's fine.''

``The bay gonna be right fine, sir.''

``Splendid. Now then, Jacob.''

``Yes, sir.''

``George tells me you came unbidden into the study and took a book off the shelf.''

``That's not entirely right, sir; I was bidden come here; but I wasn't bidden to take a book off the shelf. But I did anyway.''

``I see.''

``I didn't take it out the room, sir.''

``That wouldn't do.''

``No sir.''

``Which book was it?''

Jacob pointed.

``Shaw's Travels.''

``Is that what it is, sir?''

``Can you read, Jacob?''

``No, sir,`` Jacob lied. ``I just look at the pictures.''

``I see.`` The master weighed the book in his hand, opened it. ``And Africa interests you.`` Jefferson contemplated the book, which had once again fallen open to the illustration of Jacob's elephant.

The boy took in as much of the picture as he could from his vantage point. ``Have you ever seen a elephant, sir?

Jefferson nodded. ``Yes, I have. In France. Impressive animals.''

Jacob gazed at the illustration. ``I wish I could see a elephant.''

``Yes. Well, you may, some day.''

``They only got 'em in Africa, don't they, sir?''

“Well, that’s not entirely the case. There are elephants in many parts of Asia, where they are often used as beasts of burden. Those are smaller than the African variety though, and more sociable.”

“America don’t have no elephants.”

The master looked at the boy over his reading glasses. “Not so far as we know. But that’s not to say…”

In two steps Jefferson’s heron legs carried him to a cabinet upon which rested an odd sort of bone. He lifted the object and held it for Jacob to see. “Do you know what this is?”

Jacob looked from the Master to the bone, and shook his head.

“It’s a tooth. From an elephant; an elephant of the African realm of Congo. This is the sort of tooth we know as a grinder. See?”

The bone hardly looked like a tooth at all. The object was roughly oval looking down on it, about the size and shape of a clothing iron, though the sides ran straight up and down, and the top, generally flat, was furrowed like a washboard or plowed ground. Jefferson ran his finger lightly over the ridged surface of the tooth. “Feel how heavy it is?” he handed Jacob the tooth — “D’ye have it? Don’t drop it, now,” He hesitated a moment to satisfy himself of the boy’s hold on the tooth, then opened the cabinet to bring forth a second object identical in most respects to that in Jacob’s hands. It was indeed another tooth, but a

deep, dark brown instead of the buttery white of the first, and a half to a third again as large. The brown tooth was of such bulk that Jefferson only with difficulty held it steady in his weak right hand — the wrist injured in France while, some said, capering for a lady - but he gingerly handed it off to his left, while with the other he pulled Jacob's hands, and the tooth they held, toward him, then cupped it under Jacob's burden to keep it steady. Holding the large brown grinder by its bottom, so the ridged top faced downward, he lowered it over Jacob's white grinder and simulated the action the tooth would undergo had its original owner been alive and grazing.

“You see, with another pressing down from the upper jaw, why, they're naturally, perfectly shaped for grinding leaves and roots, rough shoots and the like. Stuff you or I, even our oxen here, could never manage. Sukey couldn't cook it long enough.”

Jefferson paused, contemplative, admiring the sublime efficiency of nature's engineering. “The thing is, this tooth,” he upended the brown grinder, hefting it, “is from a kind of elephant that roamed the wilds of Kentucky, once, a long time ago...”

“Kentucky, Sir? Our Kentuck? In America, Sir?”

“Our American Kentuck. None other.”

Jacob stared at the grinder in his hands, then up at Jefferson's titan brown twin, then again at the prize he held. The last ten minutes had seared him in the fires of

more revelation than he could properly reason. He would have to think on all this.

The Monticello guests had arrived in their entirety, save the Delaware. Wormely, came bounding up the east slope past the stables to cry out that the Indians were on the spiral road. Lewis Harvie, Jefferson's secretary, had been arguing horseflesh with Gunny Marsden of Shadwell, a self-induced distraction to ease his agitation that Jefferson was once again out of pocket. His primary responsibility was to keep the great man on schedule, one that Jefferson had rigorously tested from the first hour that he had hired Lewis on. For no good reason, Harvie checked his watch, paced once or twice across the walk between the kitchen dependency and the north porch, then entered the house, through the great hall to the closed door of the study.

Inside, the Governor and his charge were bent over an Italian writing table whose satin finish at present faced onslaught by an array of petrified critters and their parts.

"Now this here is a claw. From a Lion. A perfectly enormous lion that lived in Tennessee, thousands of — "

Harvie's rapping had achieved the sufficient level of desperation to draw the natural philosopher and his newly minted protégé from their analyses. Jefferson opened the door, and Harvie looked up from his watch.

"Sir, the Delaware are near the top of the road."

``Thank you, Lewis. I'll be out directly.''

``Shall I walk with you, Sir?'' Harvie briefly considered putting his foot in the door, and thought better of it.

``That will be fine, Lewis. Tarry a moment.''

``I'll just wait, then — ``Lewis spoke to the door, now once more shut.

``Well, Jacob,`` said Jefferson as he gathered specimens, replacing them in their respective cabinets two by two. ``Shall we welcome our guests?''

``Yes, sir.''

``All right then. Now stand straight. These Indians are a proud lot.''

``Sir?''

``Yes?''

``Does this mean I don't have to go to the nailery?''

``Oh...Well...Not today; though George will have something to say about it. But for now, we must attend to our guests, mustn't we?''

Suddenly it seemed as through the study, previously dim, was ablaze with sunlight. ``Yes, sir!''

``And then, when today has passed, we'll resolve do our best to keep Sukey and Ursula content. As far as possible.''

From the other side of the door, Harvie implored, ``Sir?''

Jacob tucked his shirt into his breeches, as the master tugged at his lapels. ``Oh, and Jacob...''

``Yes, sir?''

``We should have an understanding about the books.''

``Yes, sir.''

``You know that nations are never wiser than their people, and in this one, even many of the very unwise have a voice.

``Yes, sir.''

``And one of the residual signs of our democratic foolishness is that Negroes are forbidden by law to read.''

``Yes, sir.''

``So you must know that if it be told abroad that you were accustomed to frequent the book room, we might both of us well be hanged.''

``Yes, sir.''

``So from this time on, come into the book room only at my invitation; and I promise you that invitations will come. All right?

``Yes, sir.''

``Please, Sir?'' Harvie whimpered, with that edge of practiced assertiveness common to durable courtiers.

``And we'll keep this to ourselves. All right?''

``Yes, sir.''

``On your honor.''

``My honor, Sir.''

``Good. Now let's go and learn something.''

Harvie, craning to look out the North entry toward the summit of the road, snapped back as the Master opened the

study door. "Good Man, Lewis," said Jefferson as they emerged from the Great Hall into the shining mid-October afternoon. Miss Polly joined her father as Jacob peeled away to assume his duty at George's side. Jefferson, his daughters and Harvie ambled across the lawn, acknowledging greetings, offering their own, in no particular hurry, till at length they came to the Governor's designated place of welcome just as the horses of Chief Sahopre and his men took the summit.

CHAPTER TWO

“Brothers and friends of the Lenni Lenape; I receive with great satisfaction the visit you have been so kind as to make us at this place, and I thank the Great Spirit who has conducted you to us in health and safety. It is a long journey that you have taken, and I consider it as a proof that your affections for us are sincere and strong.”

“I hope that the young men, who have come to make acquaintance with us, will go hand in hand with us through life, in the cultivation of mutual peace, friendship and good offices.”

The Indians stood silent, with little more idea than their horses what the Governor was saying, even with the interpreter figured in. Jefferson waited a moment for his words—or their Lenape equivalents - to register, and after a bit the Lenape accepted Jefferson's greeting with measured, affable skepticism. It was not as though the gathering was getting off on the wrong foot; but nobody on either side was expecting any miracles.

“The wise and good on both sides desire this, and we must take care that the foolish and wicked among us shall not prevent it.”

Throughout the gathering, the young men, Virginian, Washingtonian and Delaware alike, listened, some with expressions easily be taken for skepticism. Of the whites, some had actually fought Indians, perhaps even Delaware;

others were the sons and daughters or brothers and sisters of men who had fought them. Among the Delaware was scarcely a man whose hunting had not been curtailed by whites, whose family had not lost at least one member, probably more, to the agricultural onslaught that moved as inexorably ahead of the rising sun.

The Indians then said in their own tongue something of roughly equal length and sentiment, and it was the whites' turn to stand immobile in polite befuddlement. There followed two or three more exchanges of like gobbledegook until, just as the crowd was growing restive, the procession of dishes began their march from the kitchen to the oak shaded banquet tables.

Up until now Jacob had found the Indians something of a disappointment. A few hours earlier he had been all but beside himself, blind and deaf to everything within eyesight or earshot, save the prospect of seeing a real Indian. Now, in the thick of them, hearing the strange manner of their talk on all sides, some devil at the back of his skull kept chattering, asking over and over what all the fuss was about. They didn't look particularly fierce; there was no war paint, no tomahawks (he was later assured by none other than Mr. Jefferson that the axes were there), no spears except for an ornate lance whose sole purpose appeared to be ceremonial; no headdresses or war bonnets (those, George informed him, would be found further west). Just greasy scalplocks atop shaven heads; bone breastplates on some of

the older men; plain leggings and breechcloths. It probably didn't help that weren't very many of them, either, not compared to Mr. Jefferson's compatriots. There were many more whites on the South Lawn than Indians, by a ratio of at least ten to one, and yet so imposing were the Lenape (they didn't call themselves Delaware, and it would not be meet to refer to them as such in their presence, according to Miss Polly in the days before the gathering), that hovering about them the ladies and gentlemen of Virginia faded like ghosts.

They were the best ghosts, you had to give them that; persons of property (as all who slept in Mulberry Row well knew) gentlemen and ladies of consequence, a good many of them people who had, or would have, a hand in running not only Virginia but the entirety of, as old Henry insistently pronounced it, "the New-nited States." The Tuftons were there, as well as the Thorntons; the Carrs of Carrsbrook, family of Dabney Carr, the fondest friend of Master Jefferson's youth, dead these 20 years and buried beneath a beech tree on the Northern slope of the little mountain; The two Jameses, Madison and Monroe and their wives; Missus Martha and her husband John Randolph; Miss Maria, still just a bride, and her husband John Eppes; Master Lewis and his mother from Locust Hill. All in all, the better part of 200 of Virginia's finest, their wives, sons, daughters, and guests, along with Sundry eminences from Washington town — Benjamin Rush, one of the most distinguished medical men in the country (Jefferson's own physician), and Dr. Wistar, the

renowned natural philosopher — had come to take the measure of, and have their measure taken by, the Delaware.

It was as impressive an assemblage as Mr. Jefferson could muster, and not without purpose; for the relationship with the Indians was in some need of mending. More a loose federation of tribes than a strict nation of the type that whites had come to recognize, the Lenape had in 1778 signed the first treaty between any tribe and the United States. The ink had scarcely dried on the Treaty of Fort Pitt when the terms of it were adjudged wanting by the United States — a determination enthusiastically seconded by the Lenape — and which in due course gave rise to yet another lively round of bloodshed. Much the same result derived from the Treaties of Fort McIntosh (1785) and lately, Greenville (1795). The patience of the Lenni Lenape had been sorely tested, and it was a matter of personal significance to Master Jefferson that "good offices" be restored. His admiration for Indians, particularly these, was genuine; but he could see the tide that was coming and they could not. It was therefore apparent to him as it was to few others that the alternatives to cooperation of the native and newcomer races were too terrible to contemplate.

Thus did he offer an effusive welcome in that high reedy voice (he was a notoriously poor speaker and knew it, but from time to time, and only when all other available conduits were likely to be worse, he was left to deliver his own words). The Lenape, well aware of Jefferson's stature

among his fellows, were for the most part pleased to accept it. A tolerable portion of their pleasure derived from contemplation of the grub.

The feast which awaited them, the result of Sukey's best efforts under the able supervision of Madison (himself schooled at in some of the pre-eminent kitchens of Paris) and beneath which the wooden tables creaked ever more plaintively as more and more dishes were brought forth, filled the entire yard with an ensemble of aromas that had seldom if ever been smelt this far west of France. There was Beef a la Mode, braised Prime Rib, Bouilli, Mutton Casserole, turkey, duck, ham and Pork Medallions with demi-glaze, fresh greens, roasted potatoes, pumpkin, cherry, apple and rhubarb pie, and cobblers of blueberry and peach, all of which steamed and mingled. The ice cream had not been brought out yet, but it would be in due course, a delicacy held in reserve by the Master, since almost no one outside the rarefied environs of Monticello had yet tasted it, brought back by Jefferson from France, and which would prove as novel to most of the whites as to the Indians. This too was part of Jefferson's design. He was determined to cultivate among the Indians a taste for the flavors of Western civilization. He reasoned that acquaintance with civilization and cuisine among all its accouterments might add to his argument for a more rooted, agrarian style of living. Well, even Jacob could see where that was going. Men accustomed to living a certain way for centuries don't

generally trade out of their habits for a catalogue of recipes. But you had to give him credit for trying; when Thomas Jefferson of Monticello put on a soiree, he pulled out all the stops.

While it wasn't about to bargain the Lenape out of their wild ways, the appearance of the food was having a salutary effect on the speeches. These, never known for brevity even in the best circumstances, were taking twice as long as usual, owing to the necessity of translation every few words; but Jacob began to sense a quickening of the pace a few minutes after the yams and bacon-seasoned collard greens had been set out. After the Master had driven home the incomparable satisfactions of a life spent planting and harvesting, Sahopre, for his part, avowed the joys of roaming through uncultivated woods, teaching his sons to hunt, stealing the horses and scalps of his enemies, raiding their villages, taking their women and selling them to allied tribes for a fair price.

Common ground illusorily established, George and Ursula seated the guests according to Master's plan, and the party fell to the repast like seagulls at a fish kill.

Through it all, Jacob stood at one of the tables arrayed on the South Lawn near the copper beech just outside the garden room with a pitcher of water, filling glasses as they came his way, or those he saw with low levels near his station. It would have been difficult to say which dishes

were most admired, so totally were they all obliterated by meal's end.

The ice cream proved as notable as had been hoped. Served with a dollop of chocolate sauce, it brought forth exclamations of delight from the white ladies of the Rivanna Valley and coaxed a whoop alarmingly like a war cry from a Delaware brave; another, having shoved an enormous spoonful down his gullet found himself writhing on the grass with the heel of his hand pressed into his eye socket, to the delight of his fellows. A little more than an hour after the banquet had begun, and as portions were served to the servants and field workers in their turn, not a scrap worthy of squirreling away for later remained.

Gifts were then exchanged; a handsome pipe was lit, and after Sahopre and Jefferson had each a puff, and Harvie and Red Elk, Sahopre's second, likewise indulged, presented to Jefferson as a token of enduring peace. This gift was further certified with a magnificent buffalo skin which Jefferson declared the handsomest gift he had yet received. Jefferson then presented a beautifully engraved wooden box, made at the Monticello joinery and filled with wampum, to each brave; and to Sahopre a tricorne hat, a uniform coat of the Continental Army, and a medal on which the likeness of George Washington was cast. Sahopre seemed genuinely pleased with the medal and the coat, but he was enchanted with the hat so that he could not be persuaded to take it off, insisting that the members of his company find ever more

convincing and vivid terms and signs to describe the ways in which it became him. At length George fetched a hand mirror which the chief took at once and held in front of his face, grinning like a bobcat and staring at himself beneath the hat. Before he would put it down, he was made a gift of the mirror, too.

When the tables were removed and the musicians had struck up their fiddles, the sunlight was dwindling and the air growing crisp. Jefferson had obligingly arranged for fire pits to be placed here and there across the lawn, much to the dismay of Augustus, the groundskeeper. Jacob had traded a pitcher of water for one with punch, lightly flavored with rum but not likely to foster unruliness. It had been allowed that this was a measure taken to vouchsafe the comportment of the redskins, famously prone to excessive jollity when approximate to distilled spirits; the master himself had voiced greater concern for the behavior of his Albemarle and Washington charges. Whatever the evening's ingredients, a proper balance appeared to have been struck; guests in pairs or small groups conversed with the aid of interpreters when they were available, and struggled cheerfully for some sort of rapport when they were not.

At the end of the dependencies opposite Mulberry Row, Master Lewis, Harvie, and two or three of their friends could be heard throwing hatchets by torchlight at a post against an equal compliment of braves, but he couldn't tell who was winning, and he had other concerns, among them

refilling the pitcher. he was on his way back to the kitchen when over Milly Fanshaw's shoulder he glimpsed an apparition that stopped him in his tracks, yet had remained unnoticed by the young woman from Shadwell as indeed the whole of the congregation. Miss Fanshaw, with her mother and her uncle, stood in the light of the northernmost fire pit, listening intently as an interpreter rendered into English a tale being spun by a Delaware that Jacob took to be the oldest member of Sahopre's company. He hadn't gotten enough of the story to make out the gist of it, but it had quite captivated the Fanshaws. He soon found himself captivated too, but not by anything the old man was saying. For as long as he could remember, he, like most children of any age, occasionally saw the shape of one thing in another thing. In Jacob's case it was most often horses, in wood burls, clouds, occasionally a rock or the shadow of a tree. Sometimes, however, it was a dog, once in a while a possum, or a frog, all of which were critters he liked. But in the months since he'd opened the book, the treasured book in the book room, he had never seen the shape of an elephant, the contours of which he knew by now as well as any set of contours in his experience. On a slender thong of leather hanging from the Indian's neck was a shell carving that bore a distinct resemblance to the apparition in Jefferson's book. For a moment, he was so arrested that he could only wonder when this red Indian might have traveled to Africa, and he wanted urgently to ask him if he had perhaps seen an

elephant. So transfixed was he that his tired arms slackened as he peered at the amulet, spilling the last of the punch onto the ground. Miss Fanshaw and her people didn't see, but the old Delaware did, and looked hard at Jacob with a question in his eyes.

Jacob walked to the house and in the great hall found Master, conducting Sahopre on a tour of the house, and soliciting recommendations for the proper and optimal display of the buffalo skin. They had paused before the cannonball clock when Jacob approached, his pitcher dangling. The Master looked over from the 80-pound counterweights.

"Jacob!" Master exclaimed, "Have you met Chief Sahopre?"

"Please to meet you, sir," said Jacob.

Sahopre's hand briefly engulfed the boy's.

"*He; Weli Kishku,*" said Sahopre.

"Excuse me sir," Jacob said, now almost beside himself.

"Yes?" said Master.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I believe the gentleman who came with Chief Soper wearin' a elephant."

"*Ya Qua Whe,*" said Red Wolf, Sahopre's medicine man, when Jefferson and Sahopre, along with the Madisons, had allowed Jacob to bring him to the great hall from the fire pit outside, where he presented the amulet, which Jefferson

agreed appeared to depict an elephant, though one with characteristics at variance from the one in the book over which Jacob had for several hours lingered. There was the trunk, and the ears, though these were smaller, even when the simplicity of the carving was contrasted with the elaborately wrought illustration. The tusks were much longer, curled almost in a circle, and the shoulder was much higher than the hip, down to which the back precipitously sloped. Too, whereas the beast in Master's book presented a tough, hairless hide, the creature of Red Wolf's amulet conveyed the impression that it was covered with long, thick hair.

"*Yah Qua Whe,*" Red Wolf repeated, to which the Algonquin interpreter added "Mammoth."

"Mammoth?" Jefferson cried.

The Medicine Man took the amulet from around his neck and held it out for Jefferson's inspection, then, lowering onto his haunches, offered to let Jacob hold it. As the light of the fire brushed over his face, he locked his eyes to Jacob's and told his story, as confidentially, it seemed, as though we were the only two people on the mountain. Master listened with no less interest than Jacob, though none would deny that it was Jacob whom Red Wolf had determined to enthrall. The medicine man gave his account in the Algonquian language of the Lenape, while the interpreter repeated in English. Jacob was unaware of the interpreter's voice though his sense was coming across. He could hear only

the voice of Red Wolf, a voice soft and dry as ancient dust, that now and suggested a faint rattle of old bones.

“Our fathers heard this story from their fathers, and they from the fathers before them, even back to the first father: The *yah qua whe* were the greatest of all the animals. The Great Spirit gave them the strongest back of any creature, so they could carry heavy loads for men and the other animals, and lessen their burden.” Jacob, rapt, missed saw Madison’s glance at George, listening in the kitchen doorway with studied impassivity.

“But in time, the *yah qua whe* decided they didn’t want to carry loads for the others, so they came to the big lick in Ohio, and made war on all the other animals; the bear, and the deer, the elk, the buffalo, and all the rest...”

“When the Great Spirit saw how the *yah qua whe* was destroying all the other animals, it made him angry. He picked up his quiver full of lightning bolts, and he came down to a mountain by the lick and sat, and there he threw his lightning bolts into the *yah qua whe* herd until they were all slaughtered, except the big bull. The bull faced the lightning with his forehead, and shook the bolts off as they struck him, and set the land on fire. When he got tired of fighting, he turned away and ran, past the Ohio, past the Wabash and the Illinois, and finally North beyond the big ice.” Transfixed by the gaze of Red Wolf’s black eyes in the firelight, the yellow teeth past which his song of chaos had rumbled, Jacob saw forests aflame, torrents of fire and

smoke pouring into the sky; a calamity of fangs and claws, horns and tusks, and heard, above the thunder of a thousand oak-broad, fur-clad feet, the sky rent with the bellows of unimaginable beasts; and raging against them all, defiant before the almighty himself, the great American elephant, Mammoth.

All these things Jacob saw and heard as though borne back to the day and place of the great battle by an engine no more complex than the old man's voice and vision. All but the hair on the elephants. He was still having difficulty featuring that. The rest of it, though, he experienced with an immediacy that half persuaded him that he might at any moment be trampled. The sights and sounds the old man had conjured were still tumbling over Jacob's senses after he realized that Red Wolf had fallen silent.

He looked from the carving to Red Wolf's cracked face. "What happened to the bull?"

"He's up there still." Red Wolf replied, as casually as if he were recommending a fishing hole.

Jefferson's gaze remained fixed on the amulet, glowing softly in the light from the quieting embers of the fire pit. "You don't say."

Red Wolf answered Master, but his eyes remained fixed on Jacob. "Yes; though they say he's mighty lonesome." With that, the craggy wizard drew his hands out from the amulet along the leather strand and slipped the loop over the boy's head. Awestruck, He lifted the amulet from his

chest and turned it and held it where He could see it, the better to drink in the image of the *Yah Qua Whe*.

“No one has seen the *Ya Qua Whe* for many lives; but if you go to his house and wear this, maybe he’ll want to have a look at you.”

With both thumbs and forefingers, Jacob held the pendant as though it might fly away. He looked from the carving to Master, who answered with a nod that told him he would be allowed to keep it.

The book room glowed warm against the crisp autumn night. Four figures visible from the atrium. Harvie, Dr. Wistar, Master Lewis, Master Jefferson. Jacob listened hard at the door.

“I do not share your esteem, sir,” Lewis allowed, but that Grey Hawk can surely throw an axe.” Further mumbling that Jacob couldn’t make out, but at length he was sure he heard “*Ya Qua Whe*,” and soon after, “Elephant.” Jacob pressed his ear against the door, praying that it not creak.

Something something “say that.” “They have to lie to breathe. They’ll tell you anything you want to hear if there’s a carrot of tobacco at the end of it.” Jefferson’s reedy voice was audible but indecipherable, lifting on a question.

“Well, for one thing, I’ve heard Yakky-wakky put on a half dozen big animals. It might be an elk; might be a bear

or some kind of elephant, it might be a hippopotamus. You want me to find some hippopotamus, too, Thomas?"

"I wouldn't want you to go out of your way. I might ask that you keep an eye out."

"Happy to. Finding that watercourse, that would be the thing."

"Let's see how it goes in the city. When the time comes, you can have yourself a walk in the country. But you are right; it's the watercourse that will make us rich."

"You're already rich, Mr. Jefferson."

Back in the cabin, under his blanket, the rustle of corn husks in his mattress gave way to the pounding of his heart. He wanted to light a candle so that he could look at his amulet, but it might wake up Henry. He ran his thumb over the engraving. He would be able to see it again in the morning.

It was thinking about Master Lewis' walk that made it seem that the morning would never come. Master Jefferson wasn't a man who saw how anything went. He made most everything go however he wanted. He was going to send Master Lewis west, and that was that. Eventually his calculation and angling subsided to dreams of stampeding herds of American elephants under a fire red sky.

CHAPTER FIVE

He was moping, he'd admit it. He saw to the chores with deadly purpose, working faster than he'd ever worked when he was trying to prove himself to Henry, so he could get all his work out of the way, the better to maximize his time to mope. Then he'd go to his rock and set, very absently and pointedly notifying all Monticello how inconsolable he was. He had just oiled and hung the harness on a day typical for this period and was preparing to retire, morose and stumbling, to his rock, when James appeared at the North stable door with word that George had sent for him.

"You got a Chris'mas wagon, Jake," George chirped when Jacob found him in the larder, pulling hams off their hooks. "Lightwood; Avenel; Kittiewan, Carter's Grove; Locust Hill." He paused to watch my face fall, as he knew it would, then added, "and Highland."

"Don't know how I'm gonna get all them in before dark."

"If you can't manage it, we'll let you go to Highland tomorrow, 'n' you can hit Evelynton and Rosewell."

"Make more sense to get Locust Hill with Evelynton."

And give Jacob a chance to come down over night with something nobody on the gift list would want to catch. The last place he wanted to go was Locust Hill, where he would no doubt be regaled by Lucy Lewis with Captain Lewis'

adventures among the Indians and, probably by now, elephants and lions and the like.

“Best git Locust Hill today, Jake.”

“Oh, you know what? Jenny and Spanker need to get shod. I plumb forgot. Miz Martha told me—”

“Get after it Jacob. This foolishness gone on long enough. You was getting way more than you had coming, and maybe you forgot just a little bit who you are. But high time you figured out the world don’t work out like you want it to most of the time, and more than that, for the likes of you and me. Cause if you don’t, this little bit of misery you got presently gonna feel like you King Solomon compared to what’s coming down the line. Now hitch up that wagon, and maybe you just better go to Locust Hill first.”

He didn’t go to Locust Hill first, saved it for last in fact, though it was a flat certainty that he would have to go there before he came back home, made all the more unpleasant by the rain that began as he was midway down the spiral road; not a downpour that would render the road un-navigable for a day or two forcing, him to turn back— nothing so fortunate as that; just a light, cold drizzle designed for the supreme discomfort of anyone cursed enough to venture out into it. So it was that Jacob’s privileged status at Monticello saw him driving a mule-wagon full of food and gifts fit only for white folks to the one place he

could go that would cast him more deeply into despair than he was now.

Christmas wagons usually returned as nearly full as they departed; thus, much to the dismay of the Mules, was Jacob's, groaning and creaking under the largess of Master Jefferson's neighbors as he emerged from the Avenel Drive, turning onto the main road to Locust Hill. A few minutes later it started to rain, and though his cargo was covered and safe from harm, the ruts the road, once filled with water, would make for a miserable end to the day.

"Jacob, come in out of the rain," cried Miz Lewis. "Let me get you something warm to drink." A sweet lady as plantation mistresses went, Lucy Lewis had been a widow for near to thirty years, and was devoted to her son. She invited Jacob in, offered for him to come in the front door even; but he didn't want to, for fear he would ask about Captain Lewis. It was all Jacob could do not to think about where the Captain must be, what he must be seeing, the wonders around and before him, with no untoward reminders. The only thing worse than no idea of his whereabouts would be good information. This was not likely forthcoming; there would be no word from the Captains until spring, when a member of the party would be sent back to St Louis from winter quarters to report, but still...

"I expect I best be getting back," He said, matter-of-fact as he could muster. Miz Lucy's tea was known all

over Albemarle for its restorative qualities, and would have mitigated the cart ride through the drizzle. Lucy Lewis had a powerful reputation for teas and potions, could could mix most any kind of remedy for a catalog of ailments. Nothing would cure Jacob, though. He was determined. He lifted the last of the gifts out of the wagon, a small cask of apricot chips, and handed it to William, one of Miz Lucy's house servants. "Come on in, Jacob," said Miz Lucy, standing at the door. Have a cup of gooseberry tea and a cranberry tart. You're liable to be glad you had it before you get home."

In the kitchen, he gazed at the steam reaching up out of the cup and struggled to find something to say, while Miz Lucy went on about how mild a winter we were having, all in all. Presently, He lost the struggle.

"Any word from Cap'n Lewis, Ma'am?"

Her face brightened, though not without the faintest shadow of concern. "Why yes, I had a letter just last week. All the way from St. Louis."

"St. Louis? He weren't no further than St. Louis? "Mus' be slow goin'. I would of figured he'd be a ways more up the river by now."

"There doesn't seem to be any going at all, for the present. It appears that Mr. Jefferson bought himself a sizable piece of land that wasn't Mr. Bonaparte's to sell."

"I'm afraid I don't understand, Ma'am."

"Well, I'll tell you what Captain Lewis relates, and then if you understand it, you can explain it to me." She

took the letter from a stack of recent post and held a pair of nose glasses in front of her eyes. ``But...'' glancing through the script, she continued ``when Meriwether and Captain Clark got to St. Louis, they met up with the Spanish Lieutenant Governor there, and he informed them that Spain had owned the Louisiana territory first, then Spain turned around and sold it to France, but there was never a legal transfer. Spain doesn't want Meriwether poking around in Spanish territory, evidently. So France has to take formal ownership before they hand it over to the United States. The French officials won't arrive in St. Louis until spring, and then Spain will transfer Louisiana to France, and France will transfer it to the United States. And then and only then can Meriwether go on off and find the northwest passage. Isn't that silly?

The Corps would be in St. Louis until spring! It was damn silly. Providentially silly. If he were to do now what he had been so afraid to do in early summer, he could reach St. Louis before the company left for the Pacific. He could shadow the company, stay on their heels until they were too far in to send him back once he revealed himself; what's more, there was some chance, maybe a good one, they would find a use for him. He downed the tea and, his spirits as buoyant as they had been leaden an hour prior, bade Miz Lucy a very merry Christmas, hoping she would convey his best wishes to the captain, when next she wrote him.

“I’m sure I’ll get one more letter to him before he leaves St. Louis,” she answered, “and I supposed I’m glad of the delay. It will give him and Captain Clark a chance to give that keelboat a good going-over. I can’t rest lightly when I consider it. Do you know, the fellow who built it is a drunkard? I wonder that it’s safe.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

NOTE: Having barged onto the Corps of Discovery, Jacob as secured his place in the expedition, off the record. He proves to be a capable and resourceful member of the enterprise, and becomes well integrated through the spring of 1804 through the Mandan winter, then up the river until the 10th of July, when Sergeant Shannon, during a hunting and scouting foray, goes missing. When the company comes to the three forks of the Marias river, there is considerable debate about which fork is the true river. Jacob is sent back down the riverbank to look for Shannon, and told that when the correct route is determined, they will tie a white flag on a prominent spot. Jacob backtracks, with side trips in search of Shannon, for two days and a night, then, giving up, begins the return to the forks. During his absence, Lewis and Clark have discovered the correct channel, which is far from obvious. They tie a flag to a tree, but between the time the corps proceeds up the river and Jacob reaches the forks, a beaver has cut down the tree bearing the flag, and placed the sapling trunk, with flag waving in its dam at the mouth of one of the false channels. When Jacob arrives, after a brief survey in search of the flag he thought would be more prominent, he finds it, and proceeds up the channel now falsely indicated. Within hours, he finds himself clinging to a sheer cliff facee in a thunderstorm, high above a flash flood in the canyon below. When he falls, the waters carry him through a labyrinthine canyon until, free

of the torrent, he staggers into a recess in the rock and collapses onto the stone floor in a black sleep.

He awoke in darkness so complete that for a time he didn't know whether his eyes were open or shut. At first, he believed he was still on the log, still being carried along the cataract by the flood. As he grew more fully awake however, he realized that it was his head that was spinning, and the roar he heard was coming from inside his own ears. The brow above his right eye was growling, and a bruise on his left cheek protested when he blinked. Though it seemed that every bone and vein and hair of his being hurt, his immediate concern was whether he had been struck blind. If that was it, he was finished. He blinked several times, then squeezed his eyelids shut, sending a new spike of pain through his cheek, before opening them as wide as he could, to a throbbing complaint from his temple. Still, he saw nothing but the orange flashes that seemed to manifest at every twinge of his two score different pains. he thought he might sink back into sleep, perhaps — if he was lucky — not to awaken at all, when he became aware of the rough, cold, irregular stone upon which his cheek rested. He lifted his face to relieve this minor agony, and bumped his skull a good one on a like protrusion just above him. He reached up and felt for a space where he could raise himself from the damp, un pitying floor, and rolled real slow—because every shift and twitch and flinch whistled up some shrieking pain—into a slightly larger cavity in the rock. Was

anything broken? No, that much he could tell at least, nothing large anyway; but one knee, the right, was stiff as a rusty hinge, and the attempt to straighten it made him yelp. The yelp sounded again off in the black, and another couple of times after that, each time a little softer, until there was again only silence. He came to rest on his back, his knee growling, two basalt knuckles on the ground digging into his shoulder and spine. He stretched a hand above his face, and felt the air. There was nothing up there, nothing he could hit as far as he could feel, so he pushed his shoulder off the ground and felt again for any jutting rock he might have missed, then gradually, taking a survey of his aches and their quadrants, assumed a sitting position. The new posture informed him that he was seated in a puddle, and that the back of his breeches were soaked anew. Was he dead already? Had he been consigned to hell? Wasn't hell supposed to be all full of fire? Maybe not. Maybe it was supposed to be merely a total misery. He remembered, as he was and remained wont to do at times of blackest despair, the sins he'd committed — the numerous frogs; the big spider he punished with burning for frightening him; the reticent cat at Monticello who had refused for a length of time his efforts to befriend it, and when at last it had let him come near, how he had seized it and swung it by its tail simply because he had wanted to know how it felt to swing a cat, letting it go into the branches of a high dogwood. He saw the cat only once more after that, running from him and

displaying what Jacob feared was a limp. As he had many times since he had come to regret that particular stupidity, he yearned for a chance to make amends to the cat. Molly, the field girl who had taken a liking to him and let him know it, and whose affections he answered by informing her that she wasn't pretty enough to be his sweetheart (though in truth she was pretty and then some not very much later). If there was fire, at least then he could see where he was, and he wouldn't be so miserably cold — a condition of which the new wet on the seat of his breeches reminded him that besides everything else, he was cold. he wrapped his arms around his knees in an attempt to fold himself toward some degree of warmth, and then he just bawled for a while, sopping down whatever else on him wasn't already drenched. He prayed to wake up, to feel Gass kicking him awake, to see the big, ruddy face of Captain Clark in lamplight, reaching down a massive hand to lift him out of the pit into which he'd fallen, or Captain Lewis, shaking his head in mock disgust at some chore he had fumbled or this new fix he'd gotten himself into; or back at Mulberry Row, with Henry sawing logs just before daybreak. Henry was dead, he remembered. Might he see him? Not likely. Henry was for sure in Glory Land.

His tears exhausted, feeling their warm tracks down his face, he concluded that he was not dead, but unhappily, not asleep either. He rocked onto his feet, and with a hand waving over his head, attempted to stand. His legs straight,

his hands found the rock ceiling, itself as hard and cruel as the ground. he turned around, took a step, and hit rock. He lifted his foot up, and found the rock's edge, then with one hand on the nearest stone and the other over his head, stepped slowly up. His way was blocked again, but he felt with his foot until he could move forward the equivalent of a step, or take a step up. He repeated this operation, making whatever progress was possible through the black void. At least he was moving. Other than that, his trek was harrowing. He knew about caves. There were plenty of caves in Virginia, and story after story of some boy or girl who had in-advisedly gone into one or another, never to be seen again. People got lost even in caves they thought they knew. You could be walking along a cave with a torch, and if you weren't careful, step into a hole that had no bottom. These morbid thoughts accompanied his every tentative step, his hands groping and his feet feeling forwards, for what seemed like hours. Besides the prospect of the floor giving way beneath him was also that of coming at last to the end of the path, to a solid wall that left him with no choice but to go back the way he'd come. That would be a good way to starve to death. He tried not to allow himself to consider the things that might share the cave with him — worse than the grizzly, who knew? — might find him appetizing.

Almost the instant he detected the movement of his hand reaching for its next hold, he realized that he was at last seeing something: a faint bloom of light some distance

further up the cave. Now he could glean enough of his situation to trace his movement through it, so that he was shortly moving more from sight than touch. Once or twice his course took him out of the light altogether, the most frightening prospect yet, but he kept on, and it gradually reappeared. At length he came to a dim chamber strewn with boulders in a fall that swept up to a rock face — on which he could see without a doubt — a barely but definitely perceptible shaft of direct sunlight.

His knee growled as he clambered up the fall, but for a time he forgot the scratches, gashes and knots on his arms and belly and head. The boulders made for a treacherous course, but they didn't shift under his hands or feet, and only once — when he took a hold above him startling some alarmingly large and white insect, with many more than a becoming complement of legs which scrambled across his hand as he lifted himself to his foot's next purchase — was he in danger of falling.

Hunger, thirst, pain and fear were all banished as he made his way up the ever-steeper course, until now he was directly beneath the sunlit stone face itself. Looking up, the fall continued to a small opening through which blue sky gloriously shone. As he climbed the last several yards toward the opening, he could hear the long, high sigh of mountain wind, and now fresh air shot with pine drifted down from the window, fragrant with promise. Wouldn't it be something if his adventure had taken him the same direction

as Captain Lewis, possibly overtaken him? How they'd laugh. Shannon would have already rejoined the Corps, naturally. But they would no doubt be so glad to see him that even Dunbar might leave off his hectoring. Who knew? It was a possibility. Perhaps he would find some Indians who might be willing to convey him to the Corps. That was another possibility. It might happen. They'd give him an extra large portion of Charbonneau's gut pudding, so glad would they be see him.

The opening, not much bigger than one of the circular windows in the dome at Monticello, now shone bright and blue against the blackness. He pulled himself past the final slope of jumbled rock, and stepped through the opening, onto a slope of light grey talus. The concentration of sunlight after so long in darkness revived his blindness, this time by an excess of light, but as he shaded his eye, the features of the landscape below came into view.

He was on a mountainside, not far above timberline, and beneath him stretched what appeared to be an immeasurable expanse of sweeping, forested valley. At the horizon, a jagged range of snow-covered peaks stretched North and South. Further up, in the shadows, there were still large patches of snow, though these were melting, their waters joining to form a stream that he could hear somewhere off to his right, and further below, see. The stream sparkled and wound down into the vast bowl through which coursed at least two rivers, merging some miles off, if the courses they ran

held true to their appearance, to form a considerable lake. he could see at least two smaller lakes as well; also a patchwork of open, grass-filled areas — meadows or marshes, he couldn't quite tell which — and, as his eyes became more accustomed to the light and space, a peculiar feature: Jagged towers of rust-colored rock in clustered groups, thrust from the valley floor in bizarre, irregular shapes; most of them flat, some high and broad, like the remnant walls of some immense ruined building. They rose straight from the ground, half a mile broad, some of them; others like the steep-arched fronts of white folks' churches he had seen in Richmond once, traveling with Henry to look at horses (or gravestones, come to think of it, of giants), and one or two he had passed on his way to St. Louis.

The sun had reached its apex probably near two hours before, and was well along in its progress toward the horizon, with the best part of afternoon daylight left, no more. He would have to reach the valley floor and find some kind of shelter before nightfall; he would freeze on the mountainside overnight, and the prospect of waiting through the night until sun-up in the cave from which he had just emerged held no appeal at all.

So, despite the dull stiff agony in his knee and the stabbing pain in his shoulder and elbow, he started down the crumbled granite skree, past stands of brush that reminded him of juniper, and the tall bleached stumps of a type of wood he didn't know. He had been walking only a few minutes

in long, shambling steps, letting gravity do the work, and was beginning to feel his knee limber up (it would be bad again in the morning if not worse, but he still took comfort in the cessation of that particular ache), when, under the crunch of his feet on the loose, sliding rock, he heard some noise other than the wind and his own lumbering. he stopped to listen, just long enough for the knee to begin to stiffen again, and hearing nothing, continued down. After some several more steps, he heard it again, this time stopping in silence before the sound died away. Elk? The sound was closer to the call of elk than anything else he could feature, though he knew it was not that, either. It was a lower sound, and bigger. he looked across to the range opposite then scanned the meadows and stands of forest, searching for any sign of movement. The call rose from the valley again, the first time he heard it entire, but there was still no hint of its source. This time it sounded as much like a bull as an elk, yet not quite any kind of bovine, either. If the sun had been behind me, he might have been able to see more. But it was before him now, and bathing the landscape with an opacity that would only obscure his vision more as the day wore on. When he had at last reached timberline, the sliding rock underfoot gave way to more solid ground, but the brush, stands of great blocks and boulders of stone, and sheer rock faces, some of which disguised a three or four-hundred foot drop, made a fast straight walk down impossible. Now he was forced to follow a

more gradual course of switchbacks, until he had to use brush limbs and handholds on well anchored rock to lower himself past barriers or cliffs that promised either retreat or broken bones or death.

This seemed to take longer than the progress of the sun indicated, but he took little comfort from this; the afternoon would linger, true enough, then there would be a fast, friendly twilight, then all at once it would be dark and cold, and besides everything else, he was hungry. As soon as he realized it, he noticed a weakness in his legs that issued direct from his stomach. He wasn't finding much to eat growing out of the ground, and though he heard the calls of pheasant and saw a few crows (one or two of which would have done if he could manage a fire, and maybe even if he couldn't), he had no way of bringing one to ground timely. His gunpowder was gone to black mud, and he wasn't accomplished enough with his knife to throw it sufficient to hit anything from any distance (Dunbar could have managed it, and maybe Moses B.). His plan thus was to make his way to the first decent stream and rig a fish trap.

As the afternoon wore on, it grew warmer with the gentling of the slope and the progress of his descent, and he began to feel, despite his dire circumstances, something very close to cheerful. The sun was friendly, and he was if not mostly dry at least merely damp; his knee was moving pretty good; the day was calm, and the soaring crags and ridges below him and off in the thin haze, with their

resolute stillness, had a calming effect. The entire landscape breathed a kind of serene energy.

When the slope commenced to level out as he approached the foot of the mountain, he came to a singular arrangement of rock; a maze of rough, crumbly stone that sat in haphazard layers like flapjacks stacked on a plate, or maybe bee hives, on a soft ground of bright, very fine grass. When he walked in among the pink walls, instead of feeling trapped or cornered, he felt as though he was in a kind of shelter, just what he would have asked for instead of the awful cave where he had just spent the last — how many might it have been? — some few days. This was even before he spied the familiar looking patches of broad-leafed green strewn here and there at the base of the rocks, and dotted with little beads of bright red; strawberries. They were small, but very sweet and very powerful, and after he had dispatched a couple of dozen, he was tolerably confident of the odds in favor his survival for another day or two, at least.

Not far from his lair in the flapjack rocks, he found a stream where the slope had become gradual, winding through grass and bright stone crushed to pebbles, sparse stands of birch and young pine. The tumbling waterway soon leveled out, and from the bank, crowded with reeds taller than he, spread a meadow thick with grass that in places grew to his waist.

The opportunity to consider a host of new fears — were there hostile Indians in the near, how large and fierce a wolf pack might prowl the woods beyond the meadow — presented itself, but the sun had reached its apogee, and however dire his situation at present, it would only be worse after nightfall. He had what looked like pretty good shelter, but some kind of meal had to be secured. At sunrise he could set about plotting a way to rejoin the Corps. Shannon had done it numerous times, and his prospects, however gloomy, did not appear to be significantly worse.

He wove a few sapling branches from the aspen stand on the slope behind into a fish trap, and placed it at a likely spot in the stream, then began to gather firewood and carry it back to the flapjack labyrinth. he made his camp some few turns into the rock corridors. he did not care to obscure his own vantage point of any danger that might emerge from the woods or plains beyond; neither did he want to present a clear picture of his own situation to any onlookers. He settled on a recess among the columns that felt hidden, but still gave him the choice of flight into the tall grass of the meadow or further into the labyrinth, depending on the direction from which whatever danger came. Enough wood for the night gathered, he returned to the trap to find two nice trout swimming lazily, idiotically against the current, inside the basket. Dinner was on. He ran a length of his narrowest cord through their mouths and out their gills, then left them in the water with their restraint staked to

the stream bed. He would have them on the fire within minutes of being taken from the water, and even some salt, or at the very least some otherwise useless gunpowder, for a mite of seasoning. The flint was good, a blessing, but his mastery of it, never impressive, proved slow and aggravating. Shadows had given way to flat twilight when the fire had gotten going long enough to leave for the trek to the stream. On the way, he heard a loud splash forward which made him stop then slowed him down. When he reached his catch, it was gone. The stake had been uprooted and the cord cut. A quarter of an hour later the fish trap had caught nothing but the biggest polliwog Jacob had ever seen; the size and shape of a small pumpkin, with sprouts of stubby legs at the base of the tail.

The recoil from the anticipation of the trout to the endurance of the tadpole lowered his spirits (cut in strips after rinsing away the black blood and grey guts, it tasted like rubbery mud but slid right down his gullet, and he did manage to keep it); but the meal at least enabled him to forget he was starving. So long as he kept to the fire, he didn't shiver, and he slept soundly between awakenings to feed it. Once, he did get a chill when, in the dead of night and rising from a deep sleep, he dreamed someone was watching him — he told himself it was a dream — needle glints peering from the head and shoulders of a black shadow, manlike but not a man, against a starry blue-black

sky. Rolling awake in the waning fire, enveloped in blackness, Jacob was seized with a terror so thick he dared not open his eyes, but insistently sank back into a fearful, trembling slumber.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

With the brilliance of the high mountain morning, when dazzling sunshine out of a loud blue sky emblazoned every boulder, every blade of grass, the white petals of the wildflowers, the fear was gone as though it had never visited, and it was with a sense more of purpose than of desperation that Jacob re-set the trout trap and began his reconnaissance. Last night's dinner would make this morning's breakfast all the more delectable, and as for tonight's dinner, well...

What had gotten him thinking about dinner were the bird tracks he'd seen at spot by the stream bank where his fish had been tied. It was a damn big bird, five or six times bigger than a turkey judging by the track, and if he could bag it it would give him food for several days; longer if he could find some salt. If this was the bird that took his fish, justice was in the offing. The track was hard to follow and presently disappeared, but the lay of the land inclined Jacob to a meadow of tall yellow grass, often taller than Jacob, that had animal routes tramped through it. Reasoning that the animal was as likely to be a turkey as anything, Jacob entered one of these alleys, and grateful for both the cover and the ease of passage, made his way toward an outcropping of immense boulders further into the meadow, from which vantage the bird (or something) might be easier to locate.

It wouldn't be waterfowl, wrong foot; too bad. Goose and duck were both good. But so were pheasant and quail, particularly quail, and if the quail here were as the tadpoles, one would feed him for three or four days; a flock for a month. He would be set. True, the bird he'd seen had been on individual, and quail seldom travelled without companionship. Maybe the mate was with the chicks. He was near enough to the rock to begin the search for the best angle to assault it when an odd, wet warble and an expansive rustling coming from somewhere within the glade drew him to a spot revealed to be an enormous nest. The nest was occupied by two of the ugliest chicks Jacob had ever seen, ungainly as all chicks were, but furiously pecking and gobbling at what, as soon as Jacob got a look at it, was the carcass of a sibling. Like most all of them, the skin was a translucent blackish purple, fading biliously to grey here, or there a sickly cream. And well, well — Jacob also recognized an abbreviated length of the cord he had used to tether his fish to the stream bank last night. Both chicks were of a size greater than a full-grown hen, and as revolting as they were, they would cook up tenderly. The slightly smaller of the two paused in its eating to rasp out a gurgling hiss at Jacob, which he answered with a swipe of his knife, relieving the chick of its leering head and leaving the stubby, hairless wings and globby legs to twitch and shudder. Jacob grabbed the spurting neck with one hand, then secured with the other a lower grip on the legs, slung

the youngster over his back and stood to trundle it back to his camp to butcher, smother in wild onion, and dine on happily until even the faintest memory of previous night's tadpole fricassee had been driven from his head. He was considering as he walked what other possibilities there might be for seasoning this most promising pullet when something hit him square on the back exactly on his cargo to knock him sprawling. Spitting out a mouthful of dust and dried grass chaff, he grabbed the musket and rolled to his back. Hunched over in the grass, nuzzling with a beak the size of a plow its slaughtered offspring, was the bird Jacob had supposed would be an overgrown quail or, at worst, turkey. Its head was that of an eagle, the size of a horse, with a crest of iridescent blue sweeping up off the back of the skull. The beak was cruel like all raptor beaks, and hooked, with a point as sharp as a steel dagger. Jacob recalled something like this creature from Jefferson's Africa book — ostrich, whose name had taken Jacob several viewings to sound out — but only because the body and legs of this beast resembled that one. The fearsome head atop much long thicker the neck, not naked like the ostrich, but covered with white feathers sprinkled in black, was entirely new. The bird moved its murdered chick this way and that as though trying to coax it back to life while Jacob unslung his gun. Despairing its chick, the bird craned its murderous head toward Jacob, squawked rage and insult, and ran at him before he could aim. It was coming to deliver another kick,

but he held out the gun like a staff to block the kick, which caught the musket and felt as though it would break it. The musket deflected the kick, but he lost his hold on it and saw it sail into the grass out of sight. The bird was coming back at him, and he had lost his gun. Running in a crouch toward where he had seen the musket thrown, his twin concerns were finding the gun while remaining out of the bird's sight, which could only be done if he were in the grass, far enough to be seen, and too still to be detected. He heard no sound. The bird was still, waiting for Jacob to move. He saw the gun then, just a flash of metal out of reach. He held his breath, counted to five, and dove for the gun as the bird shrieked and was again on him. The only thing that had stopped the first kick from breaking his neck was the chick, and Jacob knew he wouldn't survive another one, probably not even with the protection afforded by the chick.

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The water dog was not as powerful as he had feared, but it was even more slippery. Wrapping his arms under its forelegs was more difficult than getting his legs around the hind legs, but at last he managed to work his fingers into the wide, slick, over stunted teeth that wouldn't tear his skin until he withdrew, and shove his hand down its gullet, groping desperately for the bawling infant it had swallowed moments earlier.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

With the rescue of Pomp, all serious obstacles to Jacob's acceptance among the hairy people abruptly collapsed. Though most remained hesitant to approach him much more closely than the length of a formidably long and fiercely muscled arm, the unanimous glint of fear and hostility in the eyes that had so terrified Jacob immediately upon his capture and presentation to the tribe/clan had begun to soften, so that after Absalom, whose fascination with his captive had become evident even during their first flight through the tree-tops, the young (what would you call them? Pups? Cubs? Whelps? He settled soon enough on "kids"), most notably Pomp, abandoned any attempt to hide their fascination, the females and the elders quickly followed suit. The males, especially the older kids and youngest adults, still showed a certain grudging wariness, but by degrees they, along with the rest of the group, conveyed in varying increments curiosity and it even a kind of yearning, as though, as much as they desired to know the nature of the new thing in their midst, they wanted also and perhaps more to be known by him. Jacob had left Monticello with, he thought, a good understanding of how wild animals traversed their lives; constant, reliable swings between fear, hunger and apprehension, with brief periods of rest or contentment, as after a meal had been secured, or when offspring were, as far as the animal

could know, sated and safe. Among these creatures (again, how should he think of them? How would Mr. Jefferson identify them?) Jacob found himself reluctant to arrive at the opinion which had presented itself to him almost immediately. From his first impression that they were larger counterparts to the monkeys he had seen once or twice, brought to the little mountain by visitors with a thought that Mr. Jefferson would be intrigued — which he was of course; but his present companions, he soon realized, though it was perhaps an unwelcome realization, were much more like people than monkeys, whatever their furry covering and likeness in the face). One impression that Jacob found difficulty in recognizing and then fixing upon was what he sensed as an encompassing communal sorrow, oddly inconceivable in creatures this low, and yet somehow strangely familiar, yet unlike that which he had noted from time to time in the individual animals of his experience. The sense that he was in some way acquainted with this impression was confounding, until he realized what he was irresistibly reminded of: not quite the same sense, but one that nonetheless prompted this comparison in his mind: Though he was in fact unaware that he had ever known it at all until it emerged as the more pronounced but similar impression of these "people," it came to him that what he now felt was very much like something that frequently came over him at Mulberry Row. Here, however, the sense was of something more dire. Jacob had come by degrees to a clearer

recognition of the discontent at the Row for some time before he'd left for Washington, and was more sharply sensible of it on his return after Henry's death. This feeling here among the forest folk was similar but not the same, and was lost completely when the normal state's dull contentment gave way to palpable alarm, as happened some days after Jacob was admitted to the clan's domain.

The tribe was in repose, the adults sleeping or foraging in the shade, the young at play in the shallows under the watchful eyes of their mothers (except Molly and Leticia, two adult females whose aspect showed signs of grief, the sources of which Jacob had as yet no inkling). Absalom, not far from Jacob, was dozing against a cottonwood trunk, snoring himself to with a start now and again to cast a wary eye at the youngsters in the water. Jacob was about to have a swim himself when the air was cut from within the woods by a cry that Jacob instinctively heard as a danger alarm. All heads turned toward the forest beyond the opposite shore, where presently down from the branches clambered Hiram, Like Absalom a wanderer, howling and chattering.

On the ground, he walked in those absurdly long strides to the first few individuals in his path and commenced huffing, gibbering and gesticulating with considerable animation. The females who had held back, watching the splashing kids, called the children in from the water to hear what Nimrod had to say. Absalom, fully awake at Hiram's

cries, looked impassively toward the growing congregation around the scout, then ambled toward them without urgency. Hiram issued a flurry of vocalizations still beyond deciphering, punctuated by short chirps or barks or growls from the others. The confab abruptly adjourned and the tribe in its entirety took to the trees, leaving not a soul on the ground. Alongside Jacob again, Absalom signaled for him to follow. Jacob stood his ground, and when Absalom turned, growling, Jacob with one upraised palm pointed toward the spot in which Hiram had announced whatever it was, raised his eyebrows to their limit, set his jaw determined-like, and demanded the meaning of Hiram's appearance. Absalom grunted, and ignoring Jacob's insistence for clarification made for his cottonwood. When Jacob stopped, defying Absalom's commands to follow, and the big critter's usual display of bluster failed to cow him into submission, Absalom glowered and muttered something that Jacob heard as "Shogh." To the extent that his own muzzle would allow, Jacob sounded the word back at Absalom and thrust his hands downward, palms up, in a gesture of simultaneous inquiry and command: "Shogh! Shogh!" Palms upraised, he pointed to the forest from where Hiram had just appeared. "Shogh? Shogh?"

Absalom was the picture of frustration. "Shogh!" he growled again, glancing into the woods, louder, and motioned to Jacob to ascend the tree. Still Jacob held fast, until Absalom moved toward him, and made clear his intent to carry Jacob into the tree if it came to that. Jacob danced aside,

dodging Absalom's advance, and shimmied up the trunk to purchase on the lowest branch. Absalom, perturbed still, casually swung himself up to the branch alongside Jacob. He eased himself down into a napping position, peering defiantly at Jacob, who reflected that they two were now repeating their first meeting a fortnight ago (was it? He was beginning to mistrust his efforts to keep a log).

The conversation, as rudimentary as it was, was a discernable improvement. Jacob glared at the giant now avoiding his eyes and making a resolute show of somnolence. When the animal had closed his eyes and a mild purr fluttered out his nostrils, Jacob insistently slapped Absalom's bent leg at the calf. A purple eyelid pulled open and one black eye fixed on Jacob with feigned passivity.

"Shogh!" Jacob cried.

Absalom pulled a thumbed foot up to face Jacob, assuring him that with the next move would send him flying off the branch. Jacob flinched, then answered with a kick of his own that caught Absalom's foot at the ankle. The creature readied a bellow, but Jacob hollered sooner, "Shogh!" — with a combination of hand gestures and facial expressions demanding illumination.

A snarl, a muffled shriek sliding into a sputtering skein of bestial invective, and the creature, exhibiting a fair approximation of paternal surrender, leaned forward. "Shogh!" he snapped. His right hand thrust forward and four waggling fingers suggested a four-legged animal's walk

over the hairy turf of his left forearm. Two trips, then his hands flew to either side of his head and extended digits. Again his arms swung out in twin circles to signal immensity. "Shogh!"

Close enough. It walked on four legs, and it was sizable. It might be the mammoth, and maybe not, but it would be worth a look, and if he ever again saw Monticello he would have something to report to Mr. Jefferson. It might be the thunder horses, but he had already seen the Avahok move among them without fear, no reason for all the commotion on Nimrod's part and the clan had another word (if words they were) for the horse anyway. He grabbed his musket and rolled off the limb with one hand ahold of a broken stump, dropping softly to the ground before Absalom could reach for him. A furious roar billowed through him as Jacob made his way around the lake to the place where Nimrod had appeared. Just a few days ago the sound would have sent him cowering for the nearest shelter, and it still gave him pause, but it didn't hold the chard it had at first. The awful noise gave way to a wave of guttural discourse, like a swarm of hornets through the leaves above where the tribe at large had taken refuge.

Away from the lake, the rustle above ceased, followed by the soft, thud of Absalom's feet. A plaintive bark, which Jacob ignored, gave way to desultory muttering.

Half an hour into the walk, Jacob became aware that the gnawing dread that had lodged in the back of his mind and

the pit of his stomach as far back as his failure to find Shannon was gone. The still perfection of the day, the silence in the wood broken here and there by birdsong, the sunlight sifting down through the canopy, the dappled forest floor, the spicy fragrance reminiscent of cinnamon that very slightly sweetened the air to a bracing delight, had lifted his spirits to a height unvisited since the Mandan city, listening to Sakaweja's stories in firelight.

Absalom had stopped grumbling and adjusted his stride to keep more or less alongside Jacob in an amble Jacob took as almost jocular, his frightened grimace replaced by the calm vigilance with which he normally prowled for berries. The deep quiet and alternating stretches of cool shade and warm sunlight along his progress beneath the intertwined branches, on ground more level and friendly than any three yards since he'd left Monticello, filled him a degree of calm that once he recognized it, alarmed him. Rightly so, as it turned out; no sooner had a splinter of disquiet made itself felt than Jacob caught the barest acrid trace of a dead fire, and saw immediately that he had emerged from the embracing serenity of the woods to a scarred and empty burn. The remnants of not less than a hundred trees reached pitifully skyward like bent, tarnished fork tines, black as rotten teeth.

Realizing that Absalom was no longer at his side, Jacob turned to see the hairy, hang-dog ogre, once more angry and afraid, muttering in low, plaintive tones for Jacob to

rejoin him outside the burn. Nearing Absalom, Jacob waved at the desolation. "Lightnin'?" he asked. Absalom tilted his head, eyes fixed on Jacob. "Lightnin'," Jacob repeated, "Lightnin'! He reached to the sky, then, his hand slicing the air downward he rasped out as well as he could an approximation of a lightnin' bolt ("Kit-i-kiCHOO!") and with a twiddling of his fingers pantomimed, or so he supposed, fire spreading from the lightning strike.

Absalom looked into the burn before turning back to Jacob. "Lightnin'" Jacob cried, and again shot his hand into toward the sky, "KRSSSHh!" He swung his open hand in presentation of the charred expanse before them. Absalom executed what for him was a nod, Then a waving, two fingered gesture of denial, gazing apprehensively across the charred waste, "Soont."

This was Jacob's first hearing of the word (He was coming to acceptance that some Avahok utterances were inarguably words), but it would prove shortly, grimly, to be far from the last. So, was soont like shogh? "shogh?" "Soont?" he implored Absalom, who resumed the trek.

Another half hour brought them to the perimeter of the burn, where the fire seemed to have given out. The forest had ceased a mile or so back, relieved by a tolerably vast meadow, notable, Jacob realized too slowly, for the unusual quiet spread in every direction. Aside from sparse bird song, Jacob neither saw nor heard any sign of life in a neighborhood that invited prodigious grazing. Peering now

across the grass, now back toward the woods, Absalom, whimpered fretfully, nostrils flaring. He smelled something. Jacob, whose sense of smell had grown keen the last year, he caught no scent — but now he fancied he did hear something, and decided it was coming from the direction where he spied a grove of young birch not large, but affording some cover.

He lit through the meadow toward it while Absalom held back. Jacob snarled his best approximation of snarls he had heard from Absalom, and beckoned for the creature to follow. Absalom replied with a bellicose chuff more forceful and authentic by two or three orders of magnitude, and beckoned the same for Jacob, and stood helpless and furious as Jacob waved cheerfully and continued turning for the birch copse. Absalom howled, and at once the air was thick with the blinding Avahok odor.

Jacob turned to the great lug, wondering again how even the smallest of these critters could foul so large and open an area with the unimaginable stink now all too familiar to him — as prodigious a mystery as their ability to summon it at will. He had been hoping to catch a whiff of whatever it was that Absalom smelled, a hope now asphyxiated; but presently he heard certain a commotion from the birch grove. Absalom was rooted to his spot, and Jacob considered another upbraiding when Absalom looked past him and up, toward the heights of the birch trees. Jacob glanced back to see for himself, a healthy tree of about 30 feet near the edge of the grove trembled, then was still, then shook violently,

spasmodically before it crashed to the ground. Jacob hissed to Absalom, "Shogh?" Absalom answered with a fresh burst of odor, which Jacob took as yes. There was a shot in the musket, but whatever the Shogh was, if it was anything in mass like the Thunder Horse, he would be as well off without it. He had resumed his approach to the birches when an ugly grunt issued from birches, near the new fallen tree.

The grunt was a sound he realized he had heard before, but strange enough to obscure a clear recollection. More grunts, in a cluster, then a sort of wail, almost plaintive, and Jacob knew where he'd heard it; the hog pens back home. This put in him mind of the wild pigs he'd seen along the Missouri, enough to persuade him they weren't to be trifled with. And anyway, he'd never seen a pig, wild or penned, tearing up trees.

Cautiously, he edged toward the birch stand, Absalom's imploring mutter fading behind him. Now he could hear more plainly the recognizable beat of hooves; strange, uneven thumps and now that the Avahok fear-stench had dissipated, there was another scent, this also a throwback to Monticello; a smell — the same and yet not — that he associated with hogs.

Nearly to the birch stand now, the sounds grew more frenzied, and a cloud of dust rolled out of the trees. Jacob's eyes followed the dust cloud toward what appeared to be its source, and began to see more pronounced movement as he crept nearer, when there it was; a bucking, rearing

greyish brown mass, furiously ripping saplings and brush from the ground, taking them in a mouth comprised of a frightful assortment of teeth augmented by far too many tusks and shaking them, tender green leaves flying. The animal turned his fury from the greenery to the earth itself, mindlessly gouging straight into the ground, turning up tufts of grass and sending them flying, peppering the white trunks with dark clods.

Now that Jacob saw it, he had no idea what to do. It was a boar, but at least the size of a bison, maybe bigger. Even in its frenetic motion a good estimate would be seven feet tall at the shoulder, ten or eleven from snout to haunch. It dropped a mouthful of wrecked saplings, black lips dripping with slobber, and moved to another tree, larger than the saplings but smaller than he had just seen fall. The boar turned its head clockwise to a ninety-degree angle and took the trunk in its frothing mouth. It worked the bark for a time, then wedging it between the four largest tusks and the bridge of its snout, snapped the tree in two, rearing on its hind legs, pawing the air with its forelegs, dropping them to the ground for a senseless kick of the hind legs.

As soon had he registered that the animal's behavior was nonsensical, Jacob understood the Shogh's peculiarity: It was rabid, and since the Avahok doubtless knew what that meant, of course they were afraid, and naturally they would exercise caution if it was in the vicinity. Immediately upon

grasping the dire condition of the shogh Jacob became sensible of his own, and struggling for breath, wished that he had not left Absalom's side so blithley. He stole a glance away from the rampaging pig to Absalom — or where Absalom had been, and where he was now no longer. Jacob considered this for only a moment before he realized, in the sudden silence of the boar's fit interrupted, that he had been seen. The boar turned its tight-muscled enormity toward Jacob and, red-eyed, wrathful, huffing like the bellows in the nailery, ivory-bristled snout dripping with foam, glared at him, its tiny eyes narrowing to evil crimson slits. It would likely be dead within a week, three at the most, but for now it presented as great a danger as any in meadow, mountain or wood. The great lungs drew in and expelled a cavernous breath, broad and long, a sound bigger than the grizzly he and Bratton had encountered on the Milk. It stood, tail switching, ruby eyes fixed on Jacob above a snagged riot of tusks, quivering snout, foaming muzzle. If it took him, it would open him up wider than Richmond on the 4th of July.

A bellowing grunt from somewhere above swept the across grove; Jacob and the boar turned to the sound as Absalom, hanging by one hand from the broken limb of a lodge pole at the edge of the meadow, punctuated his cry with two short yelps and let fly with an enormous pine cone that shattered harmlessly on the boar's flank. It distracted the monster

long enough for Jacob to bolt, but only just. Jacob ran for the shortest distance to the wood with the hope that his friend would meet him and pull him to a safe height as he had in the business with the bird; a hope that faded quickly when Jacob saw that the lowest branches on these trees were still beyond the reach of his rescuer, even as the hammering thud of the shogh's awful trotters rolled nearer. There was nowhere to go; the trees were too straight and thick for Jacob to ascend beyond the boar's reach, and Absalom, filling the woods with his ungodly reek, didn't dare leave too far the safe branches high overhead. The boar was so close Jacob imagined with a certainty that he felt its hot breath on his neck as he reached the nearest fir trunk and ducked behind it. The boar shot past and its hind legs skidded from beneath it as it slowed like a steam engine, struggled to master its inertia and reverse its charge, again churning up a billowing cloud of brown dust.

Jacob could only place the lodge pole between himself and the boar, the tree too wide for Jacob to shinny up fast enough to save himself, and too narrow to hide him from his pursuer, so that as soon as the boar had regained his footing, he charged again, straight for the tree behind which Jacob cowered. Why had he not loaded the musket? There was a half-dozen good reasons, yet now when it might save his life (scant chance of that, his gun against the boar's hide and skull, but still) he couldn't get at it, though it was slung over his shoulder.

The hog squealed in a fearsomely low and ugly register, stamped the ground, and ran toward Jacob who, with no other real options, stood at the pine tree to determine whether the boar would skirt the tree to chase him down, or whether it would slam into the tree outright. Jacob judged the likelihood that the boar could break the trunk in less than three charges to be at about 75%, but when the brute came to the tree it veered away, scrambling to a halt, then standing head down, as if in some mad contemplation.

Again, Jacob stepped behind the trunk as the boar charged, and this time hit the bark with the full force of its monstrous head. The tree held firm, but the boar, more enraged than ever, withdrew, cocked its head toward Jacob, and again ran at him, pivoting on massive forelegs to ram its shoulder against the trunk. There was a deep crack. The trunk remained upright, but Jacob, jumping away from the concussion, lost his footing and fell to the ground. The tree was loosened, and the hog now poised for another charge.

There was a larger tree 30 yards away, and when the boar charged Jacob's tree again, this time with ruinous effect — a tearing, mortal shudder, nearly knocking it over — Jacob ran to the next closest that might withhold the boar, his panic steering him deeper into the forest, safer heights still out of reach, and still with no sign of enough undergrowth to slow the boar down. Absalom, following in the canopy, screamed at the thing, a shattering array of awful

noises, but the pig was undeterred. With growing hopelessness, Jacob searched the woods for any favorable sign of obstruction, cover, or escape, as the boar directed his rage to the last tree shielding Jacob, ripping moist white gouges into the trunk, caught fleeting sight of Jacob moving behind another, and rushed the new heading with a squealing bellow of renewed fury.

Jacob's present tree was smaller than the last the boar had knocked over, but here Jacob noticed that the ground began to slope, and he soon glimpsed the suggestion of a ravine dividing the forest floor northeast to southwest, deepening and widening to a chasm across which, if Jacob could somehow maneuver himself and the hog to opposite sides, would end the chase.

Working his way from tree to tree, when possible making his course between them in an effort to slow the pig, Jacob moved to another rampart while his pursuer vented its rage on the one last deserted. Luck; A lone cottonwood, very old and very thick, defiant in the expanse between the thinning pine forest and the jagged, deepening ravine. Jacob bounded for the cottonwood, hopeful that he might be able to scamper up it, but there was no hold. The shogh now charged to the cottonwood, on a heading to ram it, then thinking better of that. Despairing of how much further he could depend on his exhausted legs to carry him, Jacob nevertheless managed to keep the fat cottonwood trunk between himself and the hog. The hog, for his part, kept his meagre attentions on Jacob.

The boar prowled the circumference of the cottonwood issuing a succession of screaming grunts which failed to scare Jacob into another break for better refuge. The bellowing gave way as the animal at length came to a much hoped-for arrangement, and none too soon; he was beginning to give out.

The terror that had spurred Jacob to maintain a lifesaving lead on the boar was giving way to fatigue. The ravine on which he had pinned his hopes for living out the day looked to deliver on its promise; now twenty feet across, plunging 70 or 80 feet deep. Further along the rim, a substantial fir overtaken by the rain-widened ravine had fallen across it, exposing a large ball of tangled roots, and inviting Jacob at last to cross.

The ground to the tree was clear from where he stood, and the boar tore and bit at the trunk where he presently shielded himself. He would have to hit the trunk spanning the ravine at a run, and if he lost his footing would very likely break an arm or a leg in the fall, but there was nothing for it. The hog was mad, but not crazy enough to suppose that Jacob could easily escape him. His red-eyed gaze remained fixed on Jacob, but now he lunged away from Jacob's shield tree and paced in an irregular circle to keep Jacob pinned down.

Absalom's howlings and yammerings had ceased to have any effect on the boar, yet now the air was again rent. Jacob burst from his tree faster than he had ever run before

to the log across the ravine, the boar screaming its indignation as it bounded after him, until Jacob leapt onto the log, and scampered to a place on the trunk at the safest immediate remove. Here the tree had retained most of its foliage when was blown over, a bit of a challenge to cross. He was blocked some seven or eight yards onto the trunk; maybe it would take a hatchet to clear a path, and none was at hand. Some of the thin branches had dried to brittleness, and Jacob feared a break at a crucial hold as he negotiated the log (a studded thicket of insults to his feet), letting him plunge, flailing, to the tumbled boulders below.

The boar had stopped at the ravine's edge, pawing the ground, stamping, rending the trunk of the fallen tree, entwining the dried roots with its tusks, mounting a concerted effort to lose the tree's purchase on solid ground, screaming in mindless frustration at Jacob. "All right...all right!" Jacob grimaced, brandishing his knife. "You want to bite me in two? You want to tear me to pieces for the hell of it? Come right ahead!"

As if considering, the boar turned still and quiet, eyes burning, but whatever conclusion the diseased swine brain might have come to was quickly ambushed by the panicked appearance of Absalom, taking advantage of the distraction provided by Jacob to burst from the woods in a shambling sprint to the log. He bounded from the ravine's edge to the middle of the log, howled triumphantly at the boar, then swung himself around Jacob to take the far end of

the log and the ravine's facing edge. Jacob lurched forward to follow and looked back at the boar, still frozen to the spot, peering down the tree, grunting low. It ignored Absalom to remained fixed on Jacob, shaking its bristled head in a wet, rippling snort. Another bellicose shriek from Absalom, and the mad swine stepped around the tangle of exposed root and placed a massive trotter on the log. Glaring at Jacob, it stepped the right foreleg and left hind leg on the bridge, and when sure of its footing it planted the last hoof there, then reached tentatively to feel out its next step. When no mishap ensued, another step. The log creaked, and Jacob had a moment's hope, soon forlorn, that the log wouldn't bear the hog.

Another step...and another; and now the beast began to move, haltingly but surely along the bridge over the chasm. The woods on the other side were younger growth; saplings mostly, not a trunk with a diameter greater than six inches, with a dozen or so yards between them, here and there a small outcropping of rock that offered no protection at all. There would be no place to hide if he found himself sharing this side with the hog. Absalom might have a chance of escaping the monster; Jacob, not a prayer. He tapped out a measure of powder, risking a little extra, into the musket barrel, rammed two pebbles with one of his last sheets of wadding, and cocked the hammer. If the pebble didn't blow apart, it might be harder than lead, and another shot was not likely. The advance of the boar had lessened Absalom's

confidence, and he was now plotting a new course away into the now thinner, less sheltering woods.

The boar moved slowly, but he moved; one hoof, one step, at a time. Jacob, weighing his rifle, marveled at the balance of the animal, a sick one at that. Healthy, it would have been unstoppable. But for its illness, or the likelihood that it would tear Jacob to pieces when it reached his side of the ravine, Jacob imagined that the boar would feed him for a winter; but never having heard of anyone who thought eating meat from a rabid animal was safe, he put the notion out of his mind.

Not without some apprehension that the charge he had loaded would blow the musket apart, Jacob aimed as the boar took another precarious step toward him, placed his sight directly into a red eye, and fired. The shot missed the eye, but hit the quivering black snout spot in the nostril. The great tusked head jerked skyward, eyes squeezed shut, jaw agape in a soundless bawl as a glistening cord of dark blood leapt from the nostril. The bleeding thicket of tusks lowered and inclined toward Jacob. The fury gone from the eyes, it took one halting step forward, but with the next lost its footing. The Boar's struggle to regain purchase finally overmatched the log, which issued a large crack before the boar, with a futile grunt slipped off the log and fell to a sickening crack on the jumbled stone below.

Jacob peered down and against the hope that he would not, saw the Shogh plainly, on his back, legs more or less

in the air as it struggled to right itself — a struggle made cruelly ludicrous by a broken leg that flopped uselessly against the grey bulk as it writhed; long, low, weary grunts attempting to rise to squeals, trailing off till it found a reserve of breath and cut loose a skull busting bellow. Unless it was in shock, its agonies would be unimaginable, and if it was in shock, that would likely wear off before it died.

Which could take a while. However long release might take in coming, it would be too long — a day, maybe two, the wiry swine would hurt and thirst; in the boar's state, a few minutes would be too long. Were he as battered as his adversary, Jacob would have begged for a merciful shot to the brain, or a knife across his neck.

Well, bother. There was nothing for it. However little might be left of him, no matter how bone tired he was, or the shouting from every joint that he just stop for a bit, the imminence of nightfall, and the walk back to the clan, he would now have to find a way down to the bottom and put the monster out of its misery. And no matter how difficult the way down might be, it had to be done fast. If he did not want the great hog rooting through his dreams, he had now to finish the patrol on which he'd foolishly embarked. and forced Absalom to accompany him. A heel scooted out from under him on his second step, and righting himself scanned abyss edge for any possible downward egress.

He was more than an hour getting there, longer than the flight from the hog. He had supposed that sooner rather than later he would find enough hand holds on exposed roots to allow him a serviceable ladder. The actuality proved otherwise, and the ill-thought attempt to pretend otherwise resulted in a slide of several yards, torn hands, a banged knee, and the pleasure of a climb back up to the edge. Absalom was still absent, most likely on his way back to the clan — understandable, though the wooly man would have been considerable help finding a way to the boar. Eventually Jacob reached a small tributary cut in the ravine at a diagonal, and offering a comparatively gentle progress to the bottom. He reckoned something less than an hour to take him to the boar, but it was a reckoning without the cataracts and deadfalls that littered the ravine floor, when they had not been assembled into tortuous barriers. It was at the bottom of one of these, that Jacob, taking care not to turn an ankle or lodge a shin between two unsteady, rolling trunks, stepped down onto solid ground to find Absalom, a sullen hulk beneath the wall. Jacob trudged by, scarcely glancing to the side, a weak salute the only sign of the welcome he felt.

Welcome, too, would have been the sight of the boar, still and dead, but no. It was indeed motionless, but as soon as he could see it breathing, and the odd switching of the tail, he could hear the slow, soft groans of its attempts to soothe itself. The immensity of it took his

breath away. How could anything so huge move so fast? If he'd had a full appreciation of the mass of it while it pursued him, he might have simply given up. Through its agony, as awareness dawned of the two figures approaching, it roared again to enraged, helpless life, shaking the ravine walls.

He brought forth the handful of usable pebbles he had picked up along the way, along with a tiny sheet of his dwindling store of wadding. Digging for the powder flask as he unslung the musket, he tossed the pebbles back into the satchel and retrieved one of his four remaining cast lead balls. This much the beast that had so nearly done him in merited; a proper lead ball, faster and surer than a stone pebble. The noise abated after a time, and Jacob walked slowly to the knobbed, bristling head. He took careful aim, waiting for the tightly closed eye to open. At last the eye did roll open, crimson still, rage oddly gone, the hog's huge breath pounding in short huffs, and the crack of the gun echoed off the sides of gulch. A violent shudder, a last withered groan, and the boar lay finally still.

He awoke to a chill night with no idea where he was or how he got there, Absalom's hairy-backed hand pawing at his face, and smoke in his nose. A few steps from the boar he had sat, leaning against the ravine wall for not very long until he had fallen asleep. After waiting for him to awaken, then taking measures to awaken him, Absalom had carried

Jacob up to the chasm's edge (cradling him like a baby, if the furry pantomime was to be believed), a favor which Absalom's tone and manner intimated had been granted none too happily. At the top, Absalom had let Jacob sleep until now. Now he was concerned with the smoke, and he wanted to get moving. Jacob was glad to oblige; all this day needed was a nighttime flight from a wildfire. No, thanks. That the prospect of rejoining the odiferous clan cheered him to the extent it did surprised Jacob somewhat;

The leader was taller than the others, and the face Jacob could glean when caught by the firelight presented an aspect that made Tortohongar look like Master Madison.

NARRATIVE OUTLINE

BOOK I: VIRGINIA

Chapt. 1: Readyng for the Indian delegation. Jacob astray. Apprehended in the book room. Wonderment at elephants. Jefferson & Jacob; the Mammoth. Indian delegation arrives.

Chapt. 2: Formalities. Exchange of gifts. Jacob sees an amulet. Red Elk regales; gifts Jacob with the ya qua whe. Jacob and Henry.

Chapt. 3: Jacob in the Monticello stables. The election of 1801. Jacob brought to Washington, paired with M. Lewis. Plans for expedition laid. Henry taken ill. Jacob receives bad news. Henry dies

Chapt. 4: Jacob bereft. A year passes. Jupiter gives Jacob a talking-to. Jacob charged with the Christmas wagon. A conversation with Miz Lewis (Capt. Lewis detained in St. Louis until the spring).

Chapt. 5: With the help of Maisy, James and Madison, Jacob escapes Monticello.

Chapt. 6: Riding Samson, Jacob makes his way to St. Louis. Encounters with slave catchers. Help from a free black family.

BOOK II: THE RIVER

Chapt. 1: St. Louis. Jacob presents to Captains Lewis & Clark. Lewis makes a pretense of enrolling Jacob in the Corps. Departure; Jacob is sent back to Virginia with a courier. The journey begins; Jacob escapes the courier in short order, sets out in pursuit of the Corps.

Chapt. 2: Day trips to outer settlements. Cheering crowds. The air gun. The space between habitations becomes more vast. Jacob presents, is turned away.

Chapt. 3: Jacob overtakes the Corps, and begins to offer information from upriver. The information is initially disregarded at considerable inconvenience (Sand bars, low branches, bears).

Chapt. 4: Jacob again presents himself to L & C, is again rejected. Upon once again beginning to follow the Corps., someone fires a warning shot. The death of Sergeant Floyd.

Chapt. 5: At his campfire, Jacob is surprised by Drouillard, who brings him to Lewis. Lewis and Clark allow him into the corps on an unofficial and anonymous basis, owing to the space left by Floyd. This does not sit well with Patrick Gass and others; and presents a deceptive opportunity in the guise of Moses B. Reed and his cohort.

Chapt. 6: Reed and Newman take Jacob "under their wings." Gass, still hostile, begins to soften with the

consistent proofs of Jacob's usefulness.

Distribution of gifts to Indians; tobacco carrots, medals, articles of clothing.

- Chapt. 7: Reed and Newman acquaint Jacob with pranks of escalating cruelty. Reed has a good laugh when Jacob tells of the mammoth. The Sioux, Black Buffalo, and Partisan (Tortohongar).
- Chapt. 8: Into the summer and up the Missouri. Rattlesnakes, prairie dogs, grizzly bears, antelope, and a perpetual storm of birds. Reed sews malcontent, then deserts. Droulliard sent after him. A fossil leviathan in the river bank wall. Arrival at the Mandans.
- Chapt. 9: Droulliard returns to Camp Mandan with Reed in tow, after capturing him while enjoying the hospitality of the Sioux. Reed flogged; Newman busted for insubordination, expelled. Charbonneau, Sakagawea.
- Chapt. 10: Mandan winter. Sakagawea gives birth. Buffalo ritual. Jacob listens to Sacagawea's stories of the northern territories; the old man of the woods, ya qua whe, thunder horse, devil bird.
- Chapt. 11: Spring, 1805; Reed and Newman sent back to St. Louis. Charbonneau and Sakagawea join the Corps of Discovery. They disembark the Mandan city.
- Chapt. 12: Heat and drought. Landscapes of unprecedented majesty. The rattlesnake cliffs, the cactus sea.

Corporal Shannon disappears on the latest of his periodic side trips. Arrival at the three forks. Lewis sends Jacob out to find and bring back Shannon. Lewis determines the true channel, ties a flag to a tree for Jacob, and proceeds. The beaver.

Chapt. 13: Jacob's search for Shannon; again across the cactus sea; confronted with the rattlesnake cliffs, he turns back toward the corps. At the three forks, he looks in vain for the sign left for him by Lewis, the finds the flag haphazardly placed on a beaver dam some hundred yards up the wrong channel. Jacob proceeds as the weather grows heavy.

Chapt. 14: A weatherbeaten ordeal on a canyon face; Thunder and lightning. A plunge into a cataract.

BOOK III: JEFFERSON VALLEY

Chapt. 1: Jacob awakens in the darkness of a cavern. Beneath him, an underground river. Above him, at length, a bloom of light. Proceeding toward the light, he at length emerges from the mouth of the cave to a mountainside. In every direction Jagged, steep, snow-topped peaks. Down to timber line. Flapjack rocks, meadows, and a stream. Successful Fishing. Preparations for a trout dinner, outsized splashing is heard. Giant tadpoles. Firewood

collected, the day's catch stolen. After an unsuccessful 2nd attempt, a dinner of tadpole filet.

Chapt. 2: A cold, sleepless night. A mild morning of forage and exploration; wild strawberries; giant blackberries. The Thunder Horse. A nest of formidable dimensions. A fledgling devours its sibling. The victor vanquished; a chicken dinner interrupted. Flight from the devil bird. A helping hand.

Chapt. 3: Jacob in captivity. The old man of the woods. A journey through the tree-tops. "Absalom" brings Jacob to the Avahoks. Simon upbraids Absalom. Jacob sized up, cast out.

Chapt. 4: From the perimeter, the daily lives of the Avahok. A fondness for blackberries. Jacob obliges. A crack in the Avahoks' xenophobic resolve. A return to Flapjack rocks; Jacobs belongings, including his musket and pistol, reclaimed. A shard of tusk. A dispute with another Avahok clan.

Chapt. 5: The lake. A salamander takes baby Jimbo. Jacob pulls the infant Avahok from the amphibian's innards. Jimbo the twice-born; a grateful mama. Absalom brings a gift.

Chapt. 6: A closer acquaintance with the tribe; Absalom shows Jacob the lay of the Avahok domain. Foraging for gunpowder. Shown the tusk shard, Absalom tells

Jacob of the habitation of the mammoth. Jacob strikes out for the escarpment. Absalom stops him.

Chapt. 7: The rabid boar. Jacob, Absalom, Ezekiel on the hunt. A desolation; a clan of Avahoks wiped out. The boar encountered. Flight from the boar. The boar defeated; the musket destroyed. Another tribe in distress. A Soont raid; The Soonts reconnoitered; the extent of their iniquity revealed.

Chapt. 8: Jacob schooled in the relationship between the Avahok and the Soonts (Eloi/Morlocks). Jacob, Absalom, Avahok young recaptured from the Soonts. Jacob's stock among the Avahok rises; other clans take notice. A Soont raid interrupted. Jacob dons laurels.

Chapt. 9: Jacob declares Avahok independence. The training of an Avahok brigade. The Soonts come to call. A parley. A shot is fired. Gnagra retreats.

Chapt. 10: Emboldened, Jacob provokes the Soonts with a small force attacking the Soonts with gunpowder arrows and insect bombs. At first, the Avahok are steeled to fight, but uncoordinated, disorganized and unready, the attack becomes a rout.

Chapt. 11: Jacob persuades Simon's clan to move to the fortified shelter of Liberty Rock. As Soont outrages grow more savage and frequent, other

clans petition for the safety of Liberty Rock. Through Absalom, Jacob forms an army of the clans.

Chapt. 12: The siege of Liberty Rock. Remaining clans are burnt out of their arboreal shelters, straggling to Liberty Rock. There Jacob and Absalom teach the clans to turn the tactics they have used on each other onto the Soonts.

Chapt. 13: The Avahok prepare to face down the Soonts, but Jacob, despairing at the cooperative deficiencies of the man-apes, reconsidered his involvement. Through the long night, he decides to stay and do what he can with his guns.

Chapt. 14: The Battle of Liberty Rock. Soonts routed. Jacob recounts the battle in verse after Homer's Illiad.

Chapt. 15: Jacob granted passage to the mammoth escarpment. Absalom agrees to show him the way. Only a few steps on the trek up the escarpment, a shot rings out. Absalom falls. Across the valley, Gnagra and Inghuss, bearing shiny new rifles, stand arrogant alongside Moses B. Reed and Tortohongar.

Chapt. 16: In the Soont village, Reed attempts to seduce Jacob with a plan to harvest the fur and ivory of the mammoth herd (run them off the edge of the escarpment). Jacob refuses. He escapes, and

with Ezekiel makes for the escarpment to disrupt
Reed's mammoth hunt

Chapt. 17: The escarpment. Jacob at last sees the living
mammoth, a bull, against the northern lights.
The hunting party arrives. A cow is wounded.
Reed, Tortohongar and the Soonts set a fire to
initiate a stampede. At the cliff's edge, a
howling choir of Avahok turn the stampede back
on Reed & c. Tortohongar killed, Gnagra killed,
most Soonts killed, Reed taken by the Soonts.

Chapt. 18: Ezekiel brings Jacob to the mammoth graveyard,
where the bull allows Ezekiel to give Jacob a
tusk.

Chapt. 19: Epilogue. At Monticello, Jacob, in the company of
a roughly-garbed figure of enormous proportions,
presents Jefferson with the tusk. Jefferson
pleads with Jacob to stay. Jacob refuses, and
with his companion takes his leave down the
spiral road.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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