1
Alone on the Hilltop

I was all alone on the hilltop. I sat there in the vision pit, a hole dug into the hill, my arms hugging my knees as I watched old man Chest, the medicine man who had brought me there, disappear far down in the valley. He was just a moving black dot among the pines, and soon he was gone altogether.

Now I was all by myself, left on the hilltop for four days and nights without food or water until he came back for me. You know, we Indians are not like some white folks—a man and a wife, two children, and one baby sitter who watches the TV set while the parents are out visiting somewhere.

Indian children are never alone. They are always surrounded by grandparents, uncles, cousins, relatives of all kinds, who fondle the kids, sing to them, tell them stories. If the parents go someplace, the kids go along.

But here I was, crouched in my vision pit, left alone by myself for the first time in my life. I was sixteen then, still had my boy's name and, let me tell you, I was scared. I was shivering and not only from the cold. The nearest human being was many miles away, and four days and nights is a long, long time. Of course, when it was all over, I would no longer be a boy, but a man. I would have had my vision. I would be given a man's name.

Sioux men are not afraid to endure hunger, thirst and loneliness, and I was only ninety-six hours away from being a man. The thought was comforting. Comforting, too, was the warmth of the star blanket which old man Chest had wrapped around me to cover my nakedness. My grandmother had made it

especially for this, my first *hanblechia,* my first vision-seeking. It was a beautifully designed quilt, white with a large morning star made of many pieces of brightly colored cloth. That star was so big it covered most of the blanket. If Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, would give me the vision and the power, I would become a medicine man and perform many ceremonies wrapped in that quilt. I am an old man now and many times a grandfather, but I still have that star blanket my grandmother made for me. I treasure it; some day I shall be buried in it.

The medicine man had also left a peace pipe with me, together with a bag of *kinnickinnick*—our kind of tobacco made of red willow bark. This pipe was even more of a friend to me than my star blanket. To us the pipe is like an open Bible. White people need a church house, a preacher and a pipe organ to get into a praying mood. There are so many things to distract you: who else is in the church, whether the other people notice that you have come, the pictures on the wall, the sermon, how much money you should give and did you bring it with you. We think you can't have a vision that way.

For us Indians there is just the pipe, the earth we sit on and the open sky. The spirit is everywhere. Sometimes it shows itself through an animal, a bird or some trees and hills. Sometimes it speaks from the Badlands, a stone, or even from the water. That smoke from the peace pipe, it goes straight up to the spirit world. But this is a two-way thing. Power flows down to us through that smoke, through the pipe stem. You feel that power as you hold your pipe; it moves from the pipe right into your body. It makes your hair stand up. That pipe is not just a thing; it is alive. Smoking this pipe would make me feel good and help me to get rid of my fears.

As I ran my fingers along its bowl of smooth red pipestone, red like the blood of my people, I no longer felt scared. That pipe had belonged to my father and

to his father before him. It would someday pass to my son and, through him, to my grandchildren. As long as we had the pipe there would be a Sioux nation. As I fingered the pipe, touched it, felt its smoothness that came from long use, I sensed that my forefathers who had once smoked this pipe were with me on the hill, right in the vision pit. I was no longer alone.

Besides the pipe the medicine man had also given me a gourd. In it were forty small squares of flesh which my grandmother had cut from her arm with a razor blade. I had seen her do it. Blood had been streaming down from her shoulder to her elbow as she carefully put down each piece of skin on a handkerchief, anxious not to lose a single one. It would have made those anthropologists mad. Imagine, performing such an ancient ceremony with a razor blade instead of a flint knife! To me it did not matter. Someone dear to me had undergone pain, given me something of herself, part of her body, to help me pray and make me stronghearted. How could I be afraid with so many people—living and dead—helping me?

One thing still worried me. I wanted to become a medicine man, a *yuwipi,* a healer carrying on the ancient ways of the Sioux nation. But you cannot learn to be a medicine man like a white man going to medical school. An old holy man can teach you about herbs and the right ways to perform a ceremony where everything must be in its proper place, where every move, every word has its own, special meaning. These things you can learn—like spelling, like training a horse. But by themselves these things mean nothing. Without the vision and the power this learning will do no good. It would not make me a medicine man.

What if I failed, if I had no vision? Or if I dreamed of the Thunder Beings, or lightning struck the hill? That would make me at once into a *heyoka,* a contrarywise, an upside-down man, a clown. "You'll know it, if you get the power," my Uncle Chest had told me. "If you are not given it, you won't lie about it,

you won't pretend. That would kill you, or kill somebody close to you, somebody you love."

Night was coming on. I was still lightheaded and dizzy from my first sweat bath in which I had purified myself before going up the hill. I had never been in a sweat lodge before. I had sat in the little beehive-shaped hut made of bent willow branches and covered with blankets to keep the heat in. Old Chest and three other medicine men had been in the lodge with me. I had my back against the wall, edging as far away as I could from the red-hot stones glowing in the center. As Chest poured water over the rocks, hissing white steam enveloped me and filled my lungs. I thought the heat would kill me, burn the eyelids off my face! But right in the middle of all this swirling steam I heard Chest singing. So it couldn't be all that bad. I did not cry out "All my relatives!"—which would have made him open the flap of the sweat lodge to let in some cool air—and I was proud of this. I heard him praying for me: "Oh, holy rocks, we receive your white breath, the steam. It is the breath of life. Let this young boy inhale it. Make him strong."

The sweat bath had prepared me for my vision-seeking. Even now, an hour later, my skin still tingled. But it seemed to have made my brains empty. Maybe that was good, plenty of room for new insights.

Darkness had fallen upon the hill. I knew that *hanhepiwi* had risen, the night sun, which is what we call the moon. Huddled in my narrow cave, I did not see it. Blackness was wrapped around me like a velvet cloth. It seemed to cut me off from the outside world, even from my own body. It made me listen to the voices within me. I thought of my forefathers who had crouched on this hill before me, because the medicine men in my family had chosen this spot for a place of meditation and vision-seeking ever since the day they had crossed the Missouri to hunt for buffalo in the White River country some two hundred years ago. I thought that I could sense their presence right through

the earth I was leaning against. I could feel them entering my body, feel them stirring in my mind and heart.

Sounds came to me through the darkness: the cries of the wind, the whisper of the trees, the voices of nature, animal sounds, the hooting of an owl. Suddenly I felt an overwhelming presence. Down there with me in my cramped hole was a big bird. The pit was only as wide as myself, and I was a skinny boy, but that huge bird was flying around me as if he had the whole sky to himself. I could hear his cries, sometimes near and sometimes far, far away. I felt feathers or a wing touching my back and head. This feeling was so overwhelming that it was just too much for me. I trembled and my bones turned to ice. I grasped the rattle with the forty pieces of my grandmother's flesh. It also had many little stones in it, tiny fossils picked up from an ant heap. Ants collect them. Nobody knows why. These little stones are supposed to have a power in them. I shook the rattle and it made a soothing sound, like rain falling on rock. It was talking to me, but it did not calm my fears. I took the sacred pipe in my other hand and began to sing and pray: "Tunkashila, grandfather spirit, help me." But this did not help. I don't know what got into me, but I was no longer myself. I started to cry. Crying, even my voice was different. I sounded like an older man, I couldn't even recognize this strange voice. I used long-ago words in my prayer, words no longer used nowadays. I tried to wipe away my tears, but they wouldn't stop. In the end I just pulled that quilt over me, rolled myself up in it. Still I felt the bird wings touching me.

Slowly I perceived that a voice was trying to tell me something. It was a bird cry, but I tell you, I began to understand some of it. That happens sometimes. I know a lady who had a butterfly sitting on her shoulder. That butterfly told her things. This made her become a great medicine woman.

I heard a human voice too, strange and high-pitched, a voice which could not come from an ordinary, living being. All at once I was way up there with the birds. The hill with the vision pit was way above everything. I could look down even on the stars, and the moon was close to my left side. It seemed as though the earth and the stars were moving below me. A voice said, "You are sacrificing yourself here to be a medicine man. In time you will be one. You will teach other medicine men. We are the fowl people, the winged ones, the eagles and the owls. We are a nation and you shall be our brother. You will never kill or harm any one of us. You are going to understand us whenever you come to seek a vision here on this hill. You will learn about herbs and roots, and you will heal people. You will ask them for nothing in return. A man's life is short. Make yours a worthy one."

I felt that these voices were good, and slowly my fear left me. I had lost all sense of time. I did not know whether it was day or night. I was asleep, yet wide awake. Then I saw a shape before me. It rose from the darkness and the swirling fog which penetrated my earth hole. I saw that this was my great-grandfather, Tahca Ushte, Lame Deer, old man chief of the Minneconjou. I could see the blood dripping from my great-grandfather's chest where a white soldier had shot him. I understood that my great-grandfather wished me to take his name. This made me glad beyond words.

We Sioux believe that there is something within us that controls us, something like a second person almost. We call it *nagi,* what other people might call soul, spirit or essence. One can't see it, feel it or taste it, but that time on the hill—and only that once—I knew it was there inside of me. Then I felt the power surge through me like a flood. I cannot describe it, but it filled all of me. Now I knew for sure that I would become a *wicasa wakan,* a medicine man. Again I wept, this time with happiness.

I didn't know how long I had been up there on that hill—one minute or a lifetime. I felt a hand on my shoulder gently shaking me. It was old man Chest, who had come for me. He told me that I had been in the vision pit four days and four nights and that it was time to come down. He would give me something to eat and water to drink and then I was to tell him everything that had happened to me during my *hanblechia.* He would interpret my visions for me. He told me that the vision pit had changed me in a way that I would not be able to understand at that time. He told me also that I was no longer a boy, that I was a man now. I was Lame Deer.

talked till late into the night, winding up by joining him in his favorite song:

If I had the balls of a bison,
And the prick of a bull buffalo
I'd stand on top of Crazy Horse Mountain,
And piss on the bastards below.

Driving back to our campsite John and I agreed that we still did not like Korczak's project, but that we liked Korczak, the man.

6
The Circle and the Square

What do you see here, my friend? Just an ordinary old cooking pot, black with soot and full of dents.

It is standing on the fire on top of that old wood stove, and the water bubbles and moves the lid as the white steam rises to the ceiling. Inside the pot is boiling water, chunks of meat with bone and fat, plenty of potatoes.

It doesn't seem to have a message, that old pot, and I guess you don't give it a thought. Except the soup smells good and reminds you that you are hungry. Maybe you are worried that this is dog stew. Well, don't worry. It's just beef—no fat puppy for a special ceremony. It's just an ordinary, everyday meal.

But I'm an Indian. I think about ordinary, common things like this pot. The bubbling water comes from the rain cloud. It represents the sky. The fire comes from the sun which warms us all—men, animals, trees. The meat stands for the four-legged creatures, our animal brothers, who gave of themselves so that we should live. The steam is living breath. It was water; now it goes up to the sky, becomes a cloud again. These things are sacred. Looking at that pot full of good soup, I am thinking how, in this simple manner, Wakan Tanka takes care of me. We Sioux spend a lot of time thinking about everyday things, which in our mind are mixed up with the spiritual. We see in the world around us many symbols that teach us the meaning of life. We have a saying that the white man sees so little, he must see with only one eye. We see a lot that you no longer notice. You could notice if you wanted to, but you are usually too busy. We

LAME DEER

Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. To you symbols are just words, spoken or written in a book. To us they are part of nature, part of ourselves—the earth, the sun, the wind and the rain, stones, trees, animals, even little insects like ants and grasshoppers. We try to understand them not with the head but with the heart, and we need no more than a hint to give us the meaning.

What to you seems commonplace to us appears wondrous through symbolism. This is funny, because we don't even have a word for symbolism, yet we are all wrapped up in it. You have the word, but that is all.

Look at this belt. My grandmother made it. You say it is beautiful and this makes me glad, because I want to give it to you. But it is more than just beautiful; it tells a story. All you see is a geometric pattern of beads—lines, triangles and diamond shapes—but these are a tale of my grandfather's deeds.

This diamond shape represents a feather given to a warrior to wear after doing a brave thing like counting coup.

These rectangles with one line missing represent horses' tracks. They stand for the ponies captured from the enemy.

This shape means a horse killed in battle and its rider rescued by my grandfather.

These two triangles are arrows shot at the enemy.

The Circle and the Square

This belt tells of a battle. A woman could make a different kind of belt, expressing her love of nature.

These lines are the trail she walked.

These are leaves she brushed against.

This is a pretty butterfly resting on her shoulder.

These up-and-down steps are a distant mountain.

These are clouds.

And these three shapes are the whirlwind.

This belt tells us about a young woman taking a walk, running into a storm, getting wet hurrying home, where she gets down to making this belt. Of course a girl could make a belt for her lover with all kinds of secret heart-to-heart things put in it. He would understand.

Such abstract designs are always women's work. Men draw figures of humans and animals realistically, the way they see them, but there's a lot of meaning hidden within a man's picture, too. Take this landscape. A friend of mine painted it. All you see are two round hills beneath a sky, the prairie, a dark valley with some bushes, a cleft, a spring. Well, this is no landscape at all. This is a woman's body. The hills are her breasts, the soft, grassy plain is her belly and that valley with the spring—well, that's her *winyan shan,*

her female part. My friend didn't paint this to make you smirk. I suppose he saw his woman's body as a beautiful landscape. He couldn't leave out that valley with its cleft. That's a central part of her womanhood; it's her essence, it's holy. It stands for love and child-bearing. I think this is a beautiful picture.

Symbolism helped us to "write" without an alphabet. By way of symbols we can even describe abstract thoughts precisely so that all may understand them.

Two hands like this, open, reaching for each other, is our sign for peace.

A man holding a peace pipe means prayer.

This is a medicine man. His eyes are closed; he is having a vision, an insight. The wavy lines coming down on his head is the spirit power descending to him.

A man surrounded by dots like this means he is afraid; things are closing in on him.

You know, it always makes me laugh when I hear young white kids speak of some people as "squares" or "straights"—old people, hardened in their ways, in their minds, in their hearts. They don't even have to be old. You can be an "old square" at eighteen. Anyway, calling these people "squares"—an Indian could have thought it up. To our way of thinking the Indians' symbol is the circle, the hoop. Nature wants things to be round. The bodies of human beings and

animals have no corners. With us the circle stands for the togetherness of people who sit with one another around the campfire, relatives and friends united in peace while the pipe passes from hand to hand. The camp in which every tipi had its place was also a ring. The tipi was a ring in which people sat in a circle and all the families in the village were in turn circles within a larger circle, part of the larger hoop which was the seven campfires of the Sioux, representing one nation. The nation was only a part of the universe, in itself circular and made of the earth, which is round, of the sun, which is round, of the stars, which are round. The moon, the horizon, the rainbow—circles within circles within circles, with no beginning and no end.

To us this is beautiful and fitting, symbol and reality at the same time, expressing the harmony of life and nature. Our circle is timeless, flowing; it is new life emerging from death—life winning out over death.

The white man's symbol is the square. Square is his house, his office buildings with walls that separate people from one another. Square is the door which keeps strangers out, the dollar bill, the jail. Square are the white man's gadgets—boxes, boxes, boxes and more boxes—TV sets, radios, washing machines, computers, cars. These all have corners and sharp edges—points in time, white man's time, with appointments, time clocks and rush hours—that's what the corners mean to me. You become a prisoner inside all these boxes.

More and more young white people want to stop being "straight" and "square" and try to become round, join our circle. That is good.

From birth to death we Indians are enfolded in symbols as in a blanket. An infant's cradle board is covered with designs to ensure a happy, healthy life for the child. The moccasins of the dead have their soles beaded in a certain way to ease the journey to the hereafter. For the same reason most of us have tattoos

on our wrists—not like the tattoos of your sailors—daggers, hearts and nude girls—but just a name, a few letters or designs. The Owl Woman who guards the road to the spirit lodges looks at these tattoos and lets us pass. They are like a passport. Many Indians believe that if you don't have these signs on your body, that Ghost Woman won't let you through but will throw you over a cliff. In that case you have to roam the earth endlessly as a *wanagi*—a ghost. All you can do then is frighten people and whistle. Maybe its not so bad being a *wanagi.* It could even be fun. I don't know. But, as you see, I have my arms tattooed.

Every day in my life I see symbols in the shape of certain roots or branches. I read messages in the stones. I pay special attention to them, because I am a Yuwipi man and that is my work. But I am not the only one. Many Indians do this.

Inyan—the rocks—are holy. Every man needs a stone to help him. There are two kinds of pebbles that make good medicine. One is white like ice. The other is like ordinary stone, but it makes you pick it up and recognize it by its special shape. You ask stones for aid to find things which are lost or missing. Stones can give warning of an enemy, of approaching misfortune. The winds are symbolized by a raven and a small black stone the size of an egg.

Inyan-sha—the red pipestone—is maybe the most sacred of all, its red color representing the very life blood of our people.

In the old days we used to have many boulders which we painted and covered with feathers, or sage, praying to them, using them like an altar. Sometimes a dog was sacrificed to such a boulder. North from here, in Montana near the town of Busby, is an enormous stone called Medicine Deer Rock. It is as tall as a building and you can climb on top of it. It is covered all around with the images of men and animals, or with abstract designs such as whorls, spirals and zigzag lines. Some are painted on, some are scratched

into the rock. There are layers upon layers of these images overlapping each other, because generations after generations of Indians have left their pictures on that stone.

Just before the battle of the Little Big Horn the Sioux and Cheyennes held their sun dance at Medicine Deer Rock, and Sitting Bull sacrificed a hundred pieces of his flesh from each arm and had a vision: "Many white soldiers falling backward into camp," which foretold Custer's defeat.

Whenever I'm up in Montana and get a chance I go to pray at that rock. It stands smack in the middle of some cattle rancher's land. He's a nice enough man, that rancher. He opens the gate for us and waves us on through his fence. I guess he wonders what a truckload of crazy Indians is up to busting in on him like that.

A stone fits right into our world of symbols. It is round and endless. Its power is endless too. All round things are kin to each other, like *wagmuha*—the gourd, the holy rattle—which has 405 little stones inside it, pebbles collected from anthills.

Nothing is so small and unimportant but it has a spirit given to it by Waken Tanka. Tunkan is what you might call a stone god, but he is also part of the Great Spirit. The gods are separate beings, but they are all united in Waken Tanka. It is hard to understand—something like the Holy Trinity. You can't explain it except by going back to the "circles within circles" idea, the spirit splitting itself up into stones, trees, tiny insects even, making them all *wakan* by his ever-presence. And in turn all these myriad of things which makes up the universe flowing back to their source, united in the one Grandfather Spirit.

Tunkan—the stone god—is the oldest spirit, we think, because he is the hardest. He stands for creation, you know, like the male part. Hard, upright, piercing—like the lance and arrowheads fashioned from it in the old days.

Inyan Wasicun Waken—the Holy White Stone Man—that's what we call Moses. He appeals to us. He goes up all alone to the top of his mountain like an Indian, to have his vision, be all alone with his God, who talks to him through fire, bushes and rocks. Moses, coming back from the hill carrying stone tablets with things scratched on them—he would have made a good Indian medicine man.

Tunkan, the stone spirit; Wakinyan, the thunder spirit; Takuskanska, the moving spirit; Unktehi, the water spirit—they are all *wakan:* mysterious, wonderful, incomprehensible, holy. They are all part of the Great Mystery. These are our four great supernaturals, which brings us to yet another form of symbolism—the magic of numbers which we share with many other peoples.

Four is the number that is most *wakan,* most sacred. Four stands for Tatuye Topa—the four quarters of the earth. One of its chief symbols is Umane, which looks like this:

It represents the unused earth force. By this I mean that the Great Spirit pours a great, unimaginable amount of force into all things—pebbles, ants, leaves, whirlwinds—whatever you will. Still there is so much force left over that's not used up, that is in his gift to bestow, that has to be used wisely and in moderation if we are given some of it.

This force is symbolized by the Umane. In the old days men used to have an Umane altar made of raised earth in their tipis on certain special occasions. It was so *wakan* you couldn't touch it or even hold your hand over it.

Even today we still set up altars—mounds of earth

decorated with tobacco ties and flags—for our Yuwipi ceremonies.

Four, the sacred number, also stands for the four winds, whose symbol is the cross.

The Great Mystery Medicine Bag contained four times four things. Unktehi, the water spirit, created the earth and the human beings in it. Everything has its beginning in the water. Unktehi gave us this Bag of Mysteries. In it the down of the swan stood for all the fowls, a tuft of buffalo hair symbolized the four-legged animals, grass stood for all the herbs, bark and roots for the trees. The bundle contained four kinds of skins from the birds, four kinds of fur from the animals, four kinds of plants, four kinds of rocks and stones.

Four things make the universe: earth, air, water, fire.

We Sioux speak of the four virtues a man should possess: bravery, generosity, endurance, wisdom. For a woman these are bravery, generosity, truthfulness and the bearing of children.

We Sioux do everything by fours: We take four puffs when we smoke the peace pipe. Those of us who believe in the Native American Church take four times four spoons of peyote during a night of prayer. We pour water four times over the hot rocks in the sweat lodge. For four nights we seek a vision during a *hanblechia.* Men abstain for four days and nights from the company of women before an important ceremony. The women in their turn stay away from the men's camp for four days when they are *isnati*—menstruating—or after giving birth. At least they used to.

Seven is a holy number too, representing the seven campfire circles of the Sioux Nation, the seven sacred rites, the seven bands of the Teton Sioux, but four is more *wakan.* We set up four colored flags for all our ceremonies, which reminds me of the symbolism and the power of the colors.

Black represents the west; red, the north; yellow, the east; white, the south. Black is night, darkness, mystery, the sun that has gone down. Red is the earth, the pipestone, the blood of the people. Yellow is the sun as it rises in the east to light the world. White is the snow. White is the glare of the sun in its zenith.

Red, white, black, yellow—these are the true colors. They give us the four directions; you might also say a trail toward our prayers. One reason we are so fascinated with these colors is that they stand for the unity of man—for the black race, the scarlet race, the yellow race, the white race as our brothers and sisters.

Words, too, are symbols and convey great powers, especially names. Not Charles, Dick and George. There's not much power in those. But Red Cloud, Black Elk, Whirlwind, Two Moons, Lame Deer—these names have a relationship to the Great Spirit. Each Indian name has a story behind it, a vision, a quest for dreams. We receive great gifts from the source of a name; it links us to nature, to the animal nations. It gives power. You can lean on a name, get strength from it. It is a special name for you and you alone—not a Dick, George, Charles kind of thing.

Each Indian name tells a story that remains hidden to outsiders unless it is explained to them. Take our famous chief Man-Afraid-of-His-Horse. It sounds funny in English. Man-Afraid once led the warriors in battle against the enemy who fled before him. The medicine men wanted to honor him and so they bestowed this name on him, which really means: He is so brave, so feared, that his enemies run away when merely seeing his horse, even if he is not on it. That is a powerful name. He had to live up to it.

Besides the names by which we were known, we Sioux also used to have a secret, second name, which was never spoken aloud. This was our good-luck, long-life name. Sometimes the grandfather or a medicine man gave a child this secret name, but it was best to go to a *winkte* for it.

Winktes were men who dressed like women, looked like women and acted like women. They did so by their own choice or in obedience to a dream. They were not like other men, but the Great Spirit made them *winktes* and we accepted them as such. They were supposed to have the gift of prophecy, and the secret name a *winkte* gave to a child was believed to be especially powerful and effective. In former days a father gave to a *winkte* a fine horse in return for such a name.

To a white man symbols are just that: pleasant things to speculate about, to toy with in your mind. To us they are much, much more. Life to us is a symbol to be lived. Here you see me spread some red earth on the floor. I flatten it with my palm and smoothen it with an eagle feather. Now I make a circle in it with my finger, a circle that has no end. The figure of a man is part of this circle. It is me. It is also a spirit. Out of its head come four horns. They stand for the four winds. They are forked at the end, split into a good and a bad part. This bad part of the fork could be used to kill somebody. If you look again at that circle without end you can see that it also forms a half moon. With my thumb I make twenty-four marks around the circle. This represents the twenty-four new medicine men who I was told I would have to ordain. Eighteen I have ordained already. A wise old woman once told me that I would die after I had ordained the

last one. So you can see that I am in no hurry to do this. Study my earth picture well. It is a spiritual design a man has to think about.

The twenty-four marks also represent the four directions of the universe, four dots each for the north, the east, the west, the south, the sky above and the earth below. I point my peace pipe toward all these directions. Now we are one with the universe, with all the living things, a link in the circle which has no end. It means we were here long before the first white man came, we are here now, we will still be here at the end of time—Indian Time. We will live! Now let us smoke. *He-hetchetu.*

7
Talking to the Owls and Butterflies

Let's sit down here, all of us, on the open prairie, where we can't see a highway or a fence. Let's have no blankets to sit on, but feel the ground with our bodies, the earth, the yielding shrubs. Let's have the grass for a mattress, experiencing its sharpness and its softness. Let us become like stones, plants, and trees. Let us be animals, think and feel like animals.

Listen to the air. You can hear it, feel it, smell it, taste it. *Woniya waken*—the holy air—which renews all by its breath. *Woniya, woniya waken*—spirit, life, breath, renewal—it means all that. *Woniya*—we sit together, don't touch, but something is there; we feel it between us, as a presence. A good way to start thinking about nature, talk about it. Rather talk to it, talk to the rivers, to the lakes, to the winds as to our relatives.

You have made it hard for us to experience nature in the good way by being part of it. Even here we are conscious that somewhere out in those hills there are missile silos and radar stations. White men always pick the few unspoiled, beautiful, awesome spots for the sites of these abominations. You have raped and violated these lands, always saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme," and never giving anything back. You have taken 200,000 acres of our Pine Ridge reservation and made them into a bombing range. This land is so beautiful and strange that now some of you want to make it into a national park. The only use you have made of this land since you took it from us was to blow it up. You have not only despoiled the earth, the

rocks, the minerals, all of which you call "dead" but which are very much alive; you have even changed the animals, which are part of us, part of the Great Spirit, changed them in a horrible way, so no one can recognize them. There is power in a buffalo—spiritual, magic power—but there is no power in an Angus, in a Hereford.

There is power in an antelope, but not in a goat or in a sheep, which holds still while you butcher it, which will eat your newspaper if you let it. There was great power in a wolf, even in a coyote. You have made him into a freak—a toy poodle, a Pekingese, a lap dog. You can't do much with a cat, which is like an Indian, unchangeable. So you fix it, alter it, declaw it, even cut its vocal cords so you can experiment on it in a laboratory without being disturbed by its cries.

A partridge, a grouse, a quail, a pheasant, you have made them into chickens, creatures that can't fly, that wear a kind of sunglasses so that they won't peck each other's eyes out, "birds" with a "pecking order." There are some farms where they breed chickens for breast meat. Those birds are kept in low cages, forced to be hunched over all the time, which makes the breast muscles very big. Soothing sounds, Muzak, are piped into these chicken hutches. One loud noise and the chickens go haywire, killing themselves by flying against the mesh of their cages. Having to spend all their lives stooped over makes an unnatural, crazy, no-good bird. It also makes unnatural, no-good human beings.

That's where you fooled yourselves. You have not only altered, declawed and malformed your winged and four-legged cousins; you have done it to yourselves. You have changed men into chairmen of boards, into office workers, into time-clock punchers. You have changed women into housewives, truly fearful creatures. I was once invited into the home of such a one.

"Watch the ashes, don't smoke, you stain the curtains. Watch the goldfish bowl, don't breathe on the parakeet, don't lean your head against the wallpaper; your hair may be greasy. Don't spill liquor on that table: it has a delicate finish. You should have wiped your boots; the floor was just varnished. Don't, don't, don't . . ." That is crazy. We weren't made to endure this. You live in prisons which you have built for yourselves, calling them "homes," offices, factories. We have a new joke on the reservation: "What is cultural deprivation?" Answer: "Being an upper-middle-class white kid living in a split-level suburban home with a color TV."

Sometimes I think that even our pitiful tar-paper shacks are better than your luxury homes. Walking a hundred feet to the outhouse on a clear wintry night, through mud or snow, that's one small link with nature. Or in the summer, in the back country, leaving the door of the privy open, taking your time, listening to the humming of the insects, the sun warming your bones through the thin planks of wood; you don't even have that pleasure anymore.

Americans want to have everything sanitized. No smells! Not even the good, natural man and woman smell. Take away the smell from under the armpits, from your skin. Rub it out, and then spray or dab some nonhuman odor on yourself, stuff you can spend a lot of money on, ten dollars an ounce, so you know this has to smell good. "B.O.," bad breath, "Intimate Female Odor Spray"—I see it all on TV. Soon you'll breed people without body openings.

I think white people are so afraid of the world they created that they don't want to see, feel, smell or hear it. The feeling of rain and snow on your face, being numbed by an icy wind and thawing out before a smoking fire, coming out of a hot sweat bath and plunging into a cold stream, these things make you feel alive, but you don't want them anymore. Living in

boxes which shut out the heat of the summer and the chill of winter, living inside a body that no longer has a scent, hearing the noise from the hi-fi instead of listening to the sounds of nature, watching some actor on TV having a make-believe experience when you no longer experience anything for yourself, eating food without taste—that's your way. It's no good.

The food you eat, you treat it like your bodies, take out all the nature part, the taste, the smell, the roughness, then put the artificial color, the artificial flavor in. Raw liver, raw kidney—that's what we old-fashioned full-bloods like to get our teeth into. In the old days we used to eat the guts of the buffalo, making a contest of it, two fellows getting hold of a long piece of intestines from opposite ends, starting chewing toward the middle, seeing who can get there first; that's eating. Those buffalo guts, full of half-fermented, half-digested grass and herbs, you didn't need any pills and vitamins when you swallowed those. Use the bitterness of gall for flavoring, not refined salt or sugar. *Wasna*—meat, kidney fat and berries all pounded together—a lump of that sweet *wasna* kept a man going for a whole day. That was food, that had the power. Not the stuff you give us today: powdered milk, dehydrated eggs, pasteurized butter, chickens that are all drumsticks or all breast; there's no bird left there.

You don't want the bird. You don't have the courage to kill honestly—cut off the chicken's head, pluck it and gut it—no, you don't want this anymore. So it all comes in a neat plastic bag, all cut up, ready to eat, with no taste and no guilt. Your mink and seal coats, you don't want to know about the blood and pain which went into making them. Your idea of war—sit in an airplane, way above the clouds, press a button, drop the bombs, and never look below the clouds—that's the odorless, guiltless, sanitized way.

When we killed a buffalo, we knew what we were

doing. We apologized to his spirit, tried to make him understand why we did it, honoring with a prayer the bones of those who gave their flesh to keep us alive, praying for their return, praying for the life of our brothers, the buffalo nation, as well as for our own people. You wouldn't understand this and that's why we had the Washita Massacre, the Sand Creek Massacre, the dead women and babies at Wounded Knee. That's why we have Song My and My Lai now.

To us life, all life, is sacred. The state of South Dakota has pest-control officers. They go up in a plane and shoot coyotes from the air. They keep track of their kills, put them all down in their little books. The stockmen and sheepowners pay them. Coyotes eat mostly rodents, field mice and such. Only once in a while will they go after a stray lamb. They are our natural garbage men cleaning up the rotten and stinking things. They make good pets if you give them a chance. But their living could lose some man a few cents, and so the coyotes are killed from the air. They were here before the sheep, but they are in the way; you can't make a profit out of them. More and more animals are dying out. The animals which the Great Spirit put here, they must go. The man-made animals are allowed to stay—at least until they are shipped out to be butchered. That terrible arrogance of the white man, making himself something more than God, more than nature, saying, "I will let this animal live, because it makes money"; saying, "This animal must go, it brings no income, the space it occupies can be used in a better way. The only good coyote is a dead coyote." They are treating coyotes almost as badly as they used to treat Indians.

You are spreading death, buying and selling death. With all your deodorants, you smell of it, but you are afraid of its reality; you don't want to face up to it. You have sanitized death, put it under the rug, robbed it of its honor. But we Indians think a lot about death.

I do. Today would be a perfect day to die—not too hot, not too cool. A day to leave something of yourself behind, to let it linger. A day for a lucky man to come to the end of his trail. A happy man with many friends. Other days are not so good. They are for selfish, lonesome men, having a hard time leaving this earth. But for whites every day would be considered a bad one, I guess.

Eighty years ago our people danced the Ghost Dance, singing and dancing until they dropped from exhaustion, swooning, fainting, seeing visions. They danced in this way to bring back their dead, to bring back the buffalo. A prophet had told them that through the power of the Ghost Dance the earth would roll up like a carpet, with all the white man's works—the fences and the mining towns with their whorehouses, the factories and the farms with their stinking, unnatural animals, the railroads and the telegraph poles, the whole works. And underneath this rolled-up white man's world we would find again the flowering prairie, unspoiled, with its herds of buffalo and antelope, its clouds of birds, belonging to everyone, enjoyed by all.

I guess it was not time for this to happen, but it is coming back, I feel it warming my bones. Not the old Ghost Dance, not the rolling-up—but a new-old spirit, not only among Indians but among whites and blacks, too, especially among young people. It is like raindrops making a tiny brook, many brooks making a stream, many streams making one big river bursting all dams. Us making this book, talking like this—these are some of the raindrops.

Listen, I saw this in my mind not long ago: In my vision the electric light will stop sometime. It is used too much for TV and going to the moon. The day is coming when nature will stop the electricity. Police without flashlights, beer getting hot in the refrigerators, planes dropping from the sky, even the President

can't call up somebody on the phone. A young man will come, or men, who'll know how to shut off all electricity. It will be painful, like giving birth. Rapings in the dark, winos breaking into the liquor stores, a lot of destruction. People are being too smart, too clever; the machine stops and they are helpless, because they have forgotten how to make do without the machine. There is a Light Man coming, bringing a new light. It will happen before this century is over. The man who has the power will do good things, too—stop all atomic power, stop wars, just by shutting the white electro-power off. I hope to see this, but then I'm also afraid. What will be will be.

I think we are moving in a circle, or maybe a spiral, going a little higher every time, but still returning to the same point. We are moving closer to nature again. I feel it, your two boys here feel it. It won't be bad, doing without many things you are now used to, things taken out of the earth and wasted foolishly. You can't replace them and they won't last forever. Then you'll have to live more according to the Indian way. People won't like that, but their children will. The machine will stop, I hope, before they make electric corncobs for poor Indians' privies.

We'll come out of our boxes and rediscover the weather. In the old days you took your weather as it came, following the cranes, moving south with the herds. Here, in South Dakota, they say, "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes." It can be 100 degrees in the shade one afternoon and suddenly there comes a storm with hailstones as big as golf balls, the prairie is all white and your teeth chatter. That's good—a reminder that you are just a small particle of nature, not so powerful as you think.

You people try to escape the weather, fly to Miami where it's summer all the time, miss the rains, miss the snow. That's pitiful. Up to 1925 we had some old men who had a sort of a club where they could get

together. Somehow they could tell what the weather would be. They needed no forecaster with all those gimmicks, satellites and what have you. They just had their wisdom, something which told them what nature was up to.

Some medicine men have the power to influence the weather. One does not use it lightly, only when it is absolutely necessary. When we hold our sun dance, we always try to have perfect weather. When we had a wedding ceremony in Winner, last spring, you saw me draw a design in the earth, the figure of a turtle. I picked this up from the old people. When I was a little boy I had a party where we played games. It was drizzling and I was mad. We wanted to play and the weather wouldn't let us. My grandma said, "Why don't you make the picture of a turtle?" Before we were through making it, the rain stopped. I could dry the country up, or make a special upside-down turtle and flood everything. You have to know the right prayer with it, the right words. I won't tell what they are. That's too dangerous. You don't fool around with it. I see that white man's look on your face. You don't believe this. Ask my friend Pete Catches here, a brother medicine man.

PETE CATCHES: "John is right. That sun dance he was referring to, when we chopped down the sun-dance pole, we had to catch the tree. It is not supposed to touch the ground. We stood in line and I was close to the trunk of the tree, and when it fell it hit me right above the knee. I went through the sun dance with that suffering in me. And I really liked it. My sun dance was as near close to authentic as I could make it. I pierced my flesh in the morning and broke loose around three o'clock in the afternoon, the longest piercing since we revived this sacred dance. And after I broke loose, there was a big thundercloud forming in the west. A lot of people wanted to get away, to go

home before the storm broke. And it was nearing, coming on fast. So, during the course of the dance, they handed me my pipe, the pipe that I always use. I call it my chief pipe. So I took that and asked the Great Spirit to part that thunder, part it in half, so we can finish our ceremony. Before all the people that great storm parted, right before their eyes. The one part went to the north, wrought havoc in the White River country, clear on in, tore off the roofs, destroyed gardens and acted like that. The part of the storm which went south, toward Pine Ridge, covered everything with hail, but on the dance ground the sun kept shining. So, to me, that sun dance in 1964 was the best one I ever did.

"And the power of the turtle design, what John told you about it, we know this to be true. The heart of Keha, the turtle, is about the strongest thing there is. I keeps on beating and beating for two days after you kill the turtle. There is so much strength and endurance in it. To eat such a heart makes you tough. It imparts its power to whoever has eaten of it. My sister ate that turtle heart. They had to cut it in half for her to make it possible to swallow it. This made her into a strong woman, stout-hearted like a warrior. She had a growth on her breast. The doctors said it was cancer. She lit five cigarettes. She told the children to puff on them, to keep those cigarettes glowing. Then she took the lighted cigarettes, one after the other, and burned this evil thing out of her. On and on she went, deep into her breast, and her face remained calm all the while; not one muscle twitched. She is cured now. A turtle heart will do this for you.

But all animals have power, because the Great Spirit dwells in all of them, even a tiny ant, a butterfly, a tree, a flower, a rock. The modern, white man's way keeps that power from us, dilutes it. To come to nature, feel its power, let it help you, one needs time and patience for that. Time to think, to figure it all

out. You have so little time for contemplation; it's always rush, rush, rush with you. It lessens a person's life, all that grind, that hurrying and scurrying about. Our old people say that the Indians of long ago didn't have heart trouble. They didn't have that cancer. The illnesses they had they knew how to cure. But between 1890 and 1920 most of the medicines, the animal bundles, the pipes, the ancient, secret things which we had treasured for centuries, were lost and destroyed by the B.I.A., by the Government police. They went about tearing down sweat lodges, went into our homes, broke the pipes, tore up the medicine bags, threw them into the fire, burned them up, completely wiped out the wisdom of generations. But the Indian, you take away everything from him, he still has his mouth to pray, to sing the ancient songs. He can still do his *yuwipi* ceremony in a darkened room, beat his small drum, make the power come back, make the wisdom return. He did, but not all of it. The elk medicines are gone. The bear medicine, too. We had a medicine man here, up the creek, who died about fifteen years ago. He was the last bear medicine man that I knew about. And he was good, too. He was really good.

But it is coming again, the bear power. We make bear sounds, talk bear language when we are in a fighting mood. "Harrnh"—and you are as good as gone. A bear claw, properly treated, you pierce a man for the sun dance with it, he won't feel the pain. Let me tell you about the power of the bear, natural animal power when it comes up against one of those artificial, non-animals.

When I was a boy, a long time ago, I was traveling with my father. We were on our way back to Standing Rock. It happened on the road. My dad stopped for a poker game at a saloon. In the next room a young bear was sitting on the counter, hardly more than a cub. He

was chained down, really pitiful. They teased him, made him stand up on two legs.

The card players paid it no mind. They had big stacks of silver dollars before each player. I was sitting under the table. I liked those big, round, shiny silver pieces. I reached up and helped myself to some. Nobody noticed, or maybe they didn't mind. A big white man in a shaggy black coat and a derby walked into the place and sat down at the counter. With him he had a huge bulldog, really huge.

"You have a nice pet here," said the big man, chomping on a big cigar, to the bartender. "But you'd better watch him. If my dog gets loose, your bear will be all chewed up."

"That bulldog is good for nothing. He can't lick my pet!"

"I bet you fifty bucks he can. I give you odds—five to one—my bulldog will tear up this pet. Let's have a big fight!"

They put all this money up, the gamblers tripping over each other to get into the action. They took the bulldog and the bear outside. There was a big brown tent there where they used to hold revival meetings. There were four or five big cowboy hats full of betting money for the dog and for the bear. The news of the fight spread like wildfire, with more and more people coming all the time.

My dad had sold some cattle and had money on him. He told me, "Son, I'm going to bet a hundred dollars on that little pet bear." The big white man with the derby was so sure of his huge brute that he put up fistfuls of money against my dad—those big old twenty-dollar bills, gold and silver coins. They drew a circle inside the tent. Nobody was supposed to step in there. Those who had bet money could sit up front. They knelt or sat down so that the others could see what was going on. There were no bleachers. They put up some blankets, like a fence, to keep the two

animals in the circle. The dog owner and the saloon keeper sat inside the circle together with the man who held the bank. I never again saw such a big heap of money all in one place. They were all puffing on their big cheroots, filling the tent with smoke. At last the big man with the dog said, "Five minutes more, after that no more bets!"

That caused a big commotion. Everybody tried to get into the act then. People got so heated up arguing about who was going to win, they started fist fights all over the place, the money rolling on the ground. Those were the old gambling days!

"Quit fussing and bet!" said the big man. Then he pulled out his watch. "Time's up. No more." He turned to his dog and pulled his ears a little. "Okay, get that bear, kill the little bastard. Tear him apart!"

That poor thing of a bear was sitting up like a baby, as if the whole show was no concern of his. "One round, that's all," said the bartender, "one round to the finish." Still a few ranchers and cowhands came running, money in their hands. They were out of luck, or maybe lucky, depending on what they had in mind, because the dog owner pulled a gun and fired it as a starter.

The poor little bear was still sitting up there when they sicked the dog on him. Boy, that bear came on slow. Under the old gas lamps his eyes looked blue. The dog was growling, snarling, his nose more wrinkled than my face is now. The bear just moved a foot closer and sat down again. He looked at that growling thing, all full of white teeth. The little bear just rubbed his paw on the earth, put some dirt on his head. That bulldog, maybe he was smarter than his owner. Maybe he knew something. He snarled, growled, made a big racket, but kept his distance. The big man in the derby got annoyed. "Come on, get on with it," he said and kicked the dog in the backside. The dog gathered himself up for the charge and finally here he comes.

The bear just reached out with his paw, the claws shooting out like so many knives, and made one swipe at the dog, just one swipe, and that old bulldog is out and cold, throat ripped out, dead and gone. And the little bear made the killing sound, "harrrnh," like a Sioux Indian.

My dad won over 700 dollars on that little bear. Most of the whites had bet on the bulldog; all the Indians had put their money on that puny bear. They knew he had the power.

It is the same with the buffalo. They have the power and the wisdom. We Sioux have a close relationship to the buffalo. He is our brother. We have many legends of buffalo changing themselves into men. And the Indians are built like buffalo, too—big shoulders, narrow hips. According to our belief, the Buffalo Woman who brought us the peace pipe, which is at the center of our religion, was a beautiful maiden, and after she had taught our tribes how to worship with the pipe, she changed herself into a white buffalo calf. So the buffalo is very sacred to us. You can't understand about nature, about the feeling we have toward it, unless you understand how close we were to the buffalo. That animal was almost like a part of ourselves, part of our souls.

The buffalo gave us everything we needed. Without it we were nothing. Our tipis were made of his skin. His hide was our bed, our blanket, our winter coat. It was our drum, throbbing through the night, alive, holy. Out of his skin we made our water bags. His flesh strengthened us, became flesh of our flesh. Not the smallest part of it was wasted. His stomach, a red-hot stone dropped into it, became our soup kettle. His horns were our spoons, the bones our knives, our women's awls and needles. Out of his sinews we made our bowstrings and thread. His ribs were fashioned into sleds for our children, his hoofs became rattles. His mightly skull, with the pipe leaning against it, was

our sacred altar. The name of the greatest of all Sioux was Tatanka Iyotake—Sitting Bull. When you killed off the buffalo, you also killed the Indian—the real, natural, "wild" Indian.

The buffalo has wisdom, but man-bred cattle—that's just a factory-made thing. They have no sense. Those Mexican fighting bulls get fooled by the cape every time. They are brave, yes, but not very smart. Imagine those bullfighters taking on a buffalo. They'd all get killed. The man-bred bull, he keeps looking at the cape. But a buffalo wouldn't be horn-swoggled by a red piece of cloth. He'd be looking for the man behind the cape, and his horns would find him. Buffalo are smart. They also have a sense of humor. Remember when we were together last in the Black Hills? When it suddenly snowed after a very hot day? Those six big black bulls we saw near Blue Bell, just like six large pick-up trucks. They were so happy over that snow. Gamboling, racing around, playing like kittens. And afterward we came across the tame cattle, hunched over, miserable, pitiful. "Moo, moo, moo—I'm cold." The real, natural animals don't mind the cold; they are happy with the kind of fur coat and galoshes the Great Spirit gave them. White hunters used to call the buffalo stupid because they were easy to shoot, weren't afraid of a gun. But the buffalo was not designed to cope with modern weapons. He was designed to deal with an Indian's arrows.

I told you about the little bear and the bulldog. Let me tell you about the buffalo and the bull. Word got around that some ranchers were staging a fight between a buffalo and a bull at the Philips ranch. We Sioux are all natural gamblers. We used to have many betting games long before the white man came. Betting was something you didn't have to teach us. We could have taught you. My dad knew how to judge things. This happened in 1919 or 1920. We had one of those funny old Fords. It took three dollars to get from

Fort Pierre to the Philips ranch. On three bucks you could go, maybe, a hundred miles. I was about sixteen years old. Dad was still taking care of me. Well, we got to that ranch. The corral was loaded, black with people. They had two roosters fighting each other first, to warm up the crowd, get the money moving. My dad wouldn't bet on a chicken. Two poor chickens, scratching and pecking at each other, who could get excited about such a thing?

At last they drove the buffalo into the trap. The bull was already waiting in a chute. It was owned by a man from Wyoming. It had a short name, but I don't remember it. You hear me, the buffalo is a "he" always, unless we are talking about a cow. But a man-bred bull, that's an "it." It was big all right, a real Bull Durham bull, the meanest bull in the country. Its balls dangled so low it almost tripped over them. They opened the chute. Boy, I've seen lots of bulls in my days, but wow—those horns! They were huge, light with black tips.

The old buffler was blowing dirt this way and that, pawing the ground, looking at the crowd. Some men were sitting on top of the corral, some ladies too, I noticed. They had long skirts in those days, but I saw some nice legs. That was some crowd! They were hollering like at Billy Graham's. All that commotion stirred up the buffalo, made him excited.

My dad picked up many two-to-one and three-to-one bets. He bet the buffalo to win, but this I don't have to tell you. I thought there would be a hundred-miles-an hour collision. The bull was about ready to charge. Its tail was sticking up in the air. I was scared it might break through the corral. My dad said, "Stay behind that big post just in case. Something could go wrong." My dad talked only when it was necessary. For a moment I was afraid that the buffalo would chicken out, because he ignored the bull. They had only about twenty yards to make their charge. The

whole corral was maybe a little over a hundred feet across. At last here they came. They missed each other, horns straight up, like two passing trains coming from opposite directions. There was a big, disappointed "oh" from the crowd. But then we saw that the buffalo had ripped the side of the bull open as if with a razor blade. The ribs of the bull were cut. Two cowboys were yelling, "That bull is dead!" It still kicked a few times, but it was deader than hell. Those tame animals don't have the power.

A *hoka*—a badger—now there's a real animal. One day my uncle was on his gray horse, the one he uses to round up his other ponies with. He was riding bareback, just with a rope, a hitch around the gray's nozzle. Then he saw the badger. Once a badger is in his hole, not three or four men can drag him out. My uncle roped that *hoka,* but he couldn't pull it out. The badger was going into his hole; the rope was going in, too. Pretty soon there was the horse coming on. My uncle tried to unhitch it around the nose, but the horse's head was already too close to the hole. My uncle had to shoot the rope in two. Once a badger dips in, there isn't much you can do about it.

With the body of a dead badger, you can foretell how long you are going to live. There's a gift of prophecy in it. I knew a man called Night Chaser. He cut a dead badger open and let the blood stand there. You are supposed to see a vision in it. It's like a red looking glass, like seeing yourself in a mirror. Only you see yourself in that badger's blood as you will look when you are about to die. Three or four men were looking inside that *hoka.* I was there, too. We were all young. The first man to look said, "Boy, I'm an old man, wrinkled and white-haired, stooped, no teeth left." He was happy about it. He knew he'd live to be an old granddaddy. The second one was not so happy. "I think I'm about through," he said. "I'm looking as you see me now. I die before one of my hairs gets

gray!" Then it was my turn, but I didn't see anything, just the dark blood. But the two others were right. The one who had seen himself as an old man is still around. The other one died long ago, only a few months after he had looked inside that badger, just as he said, before his hair turned gray.

We use a badger's bone pizzle, his penis, for sewing, or as an awl. You polish it, make it shiny. It lasts forever. This is a good tool, so valuable that you get a good horse in exchange for it.

There are some animals, a kind of gopher, very fast, with a black line down their faces. They got a lot of power; they can hypnotize you, even kill you. The power is in their eyes. They live with the prairie dogs. They are real subway users, traveling underground. They are so fast, your eyes can hardly follow them. Your eye is still here, he's already over there. They tell a funny story about a man who wanted to get one of these creatures. He was told to be fast. Shoot it and then run like hell, grab it before it disappears into its hole. The man made up his mind to be real quick about it. He shot and ran like the dickens. Something hit him in the seat of his pants—his own bullet! The earth from a gopher hole is also very powerful. It can protect you in war, make you bulletproof. I use it for curing certain illnesses.

An animal doesn't have to be big to be powerful. There's an ant power. Some ants have no eyes, but they can feel their way. They go out and bring back those rocks, called *yuwipi,* to put on their anthills. Tiny rocks, the size of seed beads, shiny, agate-like, little stones as clear as snow. Sometimes instead of these they bring tiny fossils. It takes two ants to get one of those rocks. One might be stepped upon and die. The ants take no chances.

We medicine men go out to look for anthills and get these tiny rocks. They are sacred. We put 405 of them into our gourds and rattles which we use in our

ceremonies. They represent the 405 trees which grow in our land. *Taśuśka śaśa*—the red ants—we mash them up and put them in our medicine. If somebody gets shot we give this to him to drink. This ant medicine makes the wound heal faster. As to what you people call fossils, these too are used by us. Deep in the Badlands we find the bones of *unktegila,* the giant, the water monster, which lived long before human beings appeared. On a hill there lies the backbone of one of them, right along the spine of that mound. I have been up there, riding the ridge like a horse; that's the only way you can move on it. It's spooky, like riding the monster. At night there are spirit lights flitting about on that hill. I find things here which I use in my doctoring.

Iktomé—the spider—has a power, too, but it is evil. His body is short, and everything is in one place, in the center, with its legs spread out. It's sitting in its web, waiting for a fly. Iktomé is really a man. He's a foolish guy, a smart-ass; he wants to trick everybody, wants to tantalize people, make them miserable. But he is easy to outwit.

You have to listen to all these creatures, listen with your mind. They have secrets to tell. Even a kind of cricket, called *ptewoyake,* a wingless hopper, is used to tell us where to find buffalo. It has nothing to tell us now.

Butterflies talk to the women. A spirit will get into a beautiful butterfly, fly over to a young squaw, sit on her shoulder. The spirit will talk through that butterfly to the young squaw and tell her to become a medicine woman. We still have a couple of these ladies. I helped one, taught her what she must know, and she is doing a good job on the reservation. She is honest, so honest that the very poor, the down-and-out winos, really believe in her. She doesn't take any money from them, just does her best for the sake of helping them.

I have a nephew, Joe Thunderhawk, who is a healer.

He has the coyote power. On his drum is painted the picture of a coyote, showing Joe's vision. This coyote power has been in the Thunderhawk family for a long time. Many years ago Joe's grandfather traveled in the wintertime. The snows were deep and darkness surprised him in a canyon. He had to hole up in there, trying to keep from freezing to death. In the middle of the night something came up to him, settling down by his legs. He saw that it was a coyote. They gave each other warmth, keeping each other alive, until the next morning. When that man got up to travel again, the coyote followed him.

After that, Joe's grandfather would hear the coyote bark at night, near his home. It would bark in two ways—one bark sounding like a dog, the other like a little boy. One barking meant that something good was about to happen, the other foreshadowed misfortune. Joe's grandfather became a medicine man and a prophet. The coyote told him of things to come. When the old man died, his knowledge died with him. He had not been able to pass it on.

One day Joe Thunderhawk passed through that same canyon where his grandfather and the coyote had warmed each other long ago. My nephew was in a wagon. Suddenly he had a feeling that someone was following him. He looked back and there was a coyote, right behind him. It was kind of lame and very thin. It started to bark in two ways—like a dog and like a child.

That night Joe Thunderhawk dreamed about this coyote and understood that he was meant to be a medicine man, that he would carry on his grandfather's work. He is working now in the Indian way, with his own medicines, curing sick people who would have to undergo surgery otherwise. Thus the coyote power has returned to the Thunderhawk family.

As for myself, the birds have something to tell me. The eagle, the owl. In an eagle there is all the wisdom

of the world; that's why we have an eagle feather at the top of the pole during a *yuwipi* ceremony. If you are planning to kill an eagle, the minute you think of that he knows it, knows what you are planning. The black-tailed deer has this wisdom, too. That's why its tail is tied farther down at the *yuwipi* pole. This deer, if you shoot at him, you won't hit him. He just stands right there and the bullet comes right back and hits you. It is like somebody saying bad things about you and they come back at him.

In one of my great visions I was talking to the birds, the winged creatures. I was saddened by the death of my mother. She had held my hand and said just one word: "pitiful." I don't think she grieved for herself; she was sorry for me, a poor Indian she would leave in a white man's world. I cried up on that vision hill, cried for help, stretched out my hands toward the sky and then put the blanket over myself—that's all I had, the blanket and the pipe, and a little tobacco for an offering. I didn't know what to expect. I wanted to touch the power, feel it. I had the thought to give myself up, even if it would kill me. So I just gave myself to the winds, to nature, not giving a damn about what could happen to me.

All of a sudden I hear a big bird crying, and then quickly he hit me on the back, touched me with his spread wings. I heard the cry of an eagle, loud above the voices of many other birds. It seemed to say, "We have been waiting for you. We knew you would come. Now you are here. Your trail leads from here. Let our voices guide you. We are your friends, the feathered people, the two-legged, the four-legged, we are your friends, the creatures, little tiny ones, eight legs, twelve legs—all those who crawl on the earth. All the little creatures which fly, all those under water. The powers of each one of us we will share with you and you will have a ghost with you always—another self."

That's me, I thought, no other thing than myself,

different, but me all the same, unseen, yet very real. I was frightened. I didn't understand it then. It took me a lifetime to find out.

And again I heard the voice amid the bird sounds, the clicking of beaks, the squeaking and chirping. "You have love for all that has been placed on this earth, not like the love of a mother for her son, or of a son for his mother, but a bigger love which encompasses the whole earth. You are just a human being, afraid, weeping under that blanket, but there is a great space within you to be filled with that love. All of nature can fit in there." I was shivering, pulling the blanket tighter around myself, but the voices repeated themselves over and over again, calling me "Brother, brother, brother." So this is how it is with me. Sometimes I feel like the first being in one of our Indian legends. This was a giant made of earth, water, the moon and the winds. He had timber instead of hair, a whole forest of trees. He had a huge lake in his stomach and a waterfall in his crotch. I feel like this giant. All of nature is in me, and a bit of myself is in all of nature.

PETE CATCHES: "I too feel this way. I live in an age which has passed. I live like fifty years ago, a hundred years ago. I like it that way. I want to live as humbly, as close to the earth as I can. Close to the plants, the weeds, the flowers that I use the medicine. The Great Spirit has seen to it that man can survive in this way, can live as he is meant to live. So I and my wife are dwelling in a little cabin—no electricity, no tap water, no plumbing, no road. This is what we want. This simple log cabin knows peace. That's how we want to be for the rest of our lives. I want to exist apart from the modern world, get out, way out, in the sticks, and live much closer to nature, even, than I am doing now. I don't even want to be called a medicine man, just a healing man, because this is what I am made for. I

don't ask for anything. A white doctor has a fee, a priest has a fee. I have no fee. A man goes away from me healed. That is my reward. Sometimes I do not have the power—it makes me sad. When I have the power, then I am happy. Some men think of money, how to get it. That never comes into my mind. We live off nature, my wife and I; we hardly need anything. We will somehow live. The Great Spirit made the flowers, the streams, the pines, the cedars—takes care of them. He lets a breeze go through there, makes them breathe it, waters them, makes them grow. Even the one that is down in the crags, in the rocks. He tends to that, too. He takes care of me, waters me, feeds me, makes me live with the plants and animals as one of them. This is how I wish to remain, an Indian, all the days of my life. This does not mean that I want to shut myself off. Somehow many people find their way to my cabin. I like this. I want to be in communication, reach out to people everywhere, impart a little of our Indian way, the spirit's way, to them.

"At the same time, I want to withdraw further and further away from everything, to live like the ancient ones. On the highway you sometimes see a full-blood Indian thumbing a ride. I never do that. When I walk the road, I expect to walk the whole way. That is deep down in me, a kind of pride. Someday I'll still move my cabin farther into the hills, maybe do without a cabin altogether, become part of the woods. There the spirit still has something for us to discover—an herb, a sprig, a flower—a very small flower, maybe, and you can spend a long time in its contemplation, thinking about it. Not a rose—yellow, white, artificial, big. I hear they are breeding black roses. That's not natural. These things are against nature. They make us weak. I abhor them.

"So as I get older, I burrow more and more into the hills. The Great Spirit made them for us, for me. I want to blend with them, shrink into them, and finally

disappear in them. As my brother Lame Deer has said, all of nature is in us, all of us is in nature. That is as it should be. Tell me, what are you going to call the chapter of your book in which you put the things we have talked about today? I know, you will call it 'Talking to the Owls and the Butterflies.'"

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