

*Two Worlds  
One Heart*

**By  
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## **We Do Not Work Alone**

Writing a story in itself, is not difficult for me; however, finding the story in all the jumble of ideas and thoughts and possibilities can be endlessly frustrating without some sort of focus to help bring order to my imagination. Doing things, making things happen, creating situations that raise possibilities--these are the sources of such a focus that permit the creative "what if" energies to come full born into my mind.

My wife creates such opportunities for me to focus my mind by her incessant exploration of our world, both physical and spiritual. You see, every bit of this story has come out of one journey or another she has chosen for our vacations, or from one of the many areas of Spirit she has so thoroughly explored.

This work is, of course, dedicated to my wife, Lisa.

# 1

## The Eyes of the Forest

Jajeff chose a likely place to hunt that was not too far from his village, so that he would not have long to walk in the dark. It was near where a mountain stream narrowed to a cascade of white, frothy water, tossing mist into the air to wet the small plants and moss that grew on nearly every surface of the bank. He liked it there, because from this vantage point, he could see a small clearing covered with lush grass and wildflowers of every color and shape imaginable, just the sort of mountain meadow deer liked to feed in after their morning drink of water. Even better, tall grass and willows along the stream bed afforded a place for him to hide while he watched the clearing, the rushing water masked sounds he made whenever he moved, and the mist washed his scent from the air. It was a perfect place to be invisible while he waited for his prey.

Jajeff had arrived at his hiding place while it was still dark, hoping his prey would come to the clearing after him and be caught unaware by the trap he had prepared for it. Perhaps he had arrived too early, though, because soon after settling into his hiding place, he fell asleep and might have slept well into the morning had the sound of a snapping twig not brought him to his senses. The sound startled him, and he woke with a rush of confusion, almost forgetting where he was or what he had been doing. Ashamed, he looked around, more to assure that no one from his village had seen him sleeping on the hunt, than to see if his prey had entered the clearing.

"How long have I been asleep," he wondered, noting with embarrassment that the first rays of the morning sun were already shining on the meadow grass.

Jajeff remembered the sound of the breaking twig and moved so that he could see the meadow better, making as little noise as possible as he did. The blur of sleep slipped from his mind as he recognized the tan back of a deer feeding on the lush grass, nearly within reach of his arrow. Nearly overcome with excitement, he held his breath and tried to lift his bow to the ready without disturbing the deer.

"Come closer," he thought to himself, fearful that his movement might have alerted the deer. "Let me see your head."

Undisturbed, the deer stepped closer to Jajeff, as it casually reached for another clump of grass, its head still hidden by the tall blades.

"Closer . . . come closer," he urged the deer, growing impatient with its casual grazing.

Jajeff placed an arrow against the leather cord of the bow and tested it with a small pull, accidentally knocking it against a willow as he did. Alerted by the sound, the deer swung its head high and looked around, showing Jajeff two small antlers neatly parted in a fork at their tips. The deer snorted and sniffed at the air, urgently looking first toward the stream and then toward the trees beyond the clearing.

"Now," Jajeff commanded his body to act, as he stood to face his prey. His legs were stiff from the cold, though, and he was forced to take a clumsy step to keep from falling, making a great deal of noise as he did. Regaining his balance, Jajeff quickly drew back his bow and sighted the arrow's stone tip on the deer's chest, holding his breath as he did, and praying to Father Spirit for a true and swift kill. The deer abruptly swung its head to face the noise and snorted in surprise at seeing Jajeff, its muscles tensing for escape. It was too late, though, because Jajeff was already releasing his arrow, a victorious song forming in his mind, a song of thanks to Father Spirit. Then, at the moment he would become a man, his vision clouded,

and the world seemed to spin in his head, as the meadow suddenly changed and he felt himself standing where the deer stood and seeing the meadow as the deer might have seen it.

"Huh?" Jajeff exclaimed, so startled he jerked his bow as he released the arrow, missing the frightened deer by many paces.

The deer needed no further warning of Jajeff's intentions, and with a loud bleat, bounded away in the opposite direction, its white tail disappearing into a nearby thicket. Jajeff could only stand and stare after it, bewildered by the image frozen in his mind, the image of himself releasing an arrow at himself.

Stunned, Jajeff walked to where the deer had stood, trailing his bow on the ground behind him, no longer concerned about proving himself a man. In the middle of the clearing, he turned to look back at the willows just as the deer had done. He saw the same view he remembered, and knew there could be no doubt that he had seen himself from the eyes of the deer.

"Was this a dream?" he wondered, not sure what to think or what he should do. He turned about to scan the circle of trees bordering the meadow and tried to imagine what sort of magical trick Mother Lily might have played on him, when she blessed his arrows. He knew she enjoyed teasing the men about their "manly work," but he could not imagine her tricking him on this, his most important hunt.

Thoughts of Mother Lily helped Jajeff focus his mind enough to realize that he was behaving like a child who did not understand the ways of the forest, rather than a boy ready to become a man.

"This is not good," he told himself, and stumbled to the stream where he splashed cold water on his face. The water helped clear the fog from his mind, but it could not remove the memory of seeing himself, nor the sense of being afraid for his life, that he knew must have come from the deer's senses. He could not shake the urgency he felt when he tried to decide if he should run or remain motionless, hoping he had not been seen by the creature near the willow. He would forever remember the rush of panic that gripped his chest when his own arrow struck the ground near his feet.

Splashing more water onto his face, he shivered, remembering his sudden urge to be with others of his kind as he, the deer, turned and ran into the forest, crying out a warning to the others as he did.

Nothing in his life had prepared Jajeff for such an experience, and he knew with certainty that the frightening vision would be his forever. In despair, he shouted loudly to the wind, crying for himself and asking Father Spirit to tell him he was not crazy. Then he listened to the wind for an answer, and when there was none, he slowly returned to his village like a man defeated by his enemy.

Jajeff found the village quiet and peaceful when he returned, as it usually was on a warm afternoon. The elders were accustomed to finding quiet places for their afternoon nap with the children, and the women chose the afternoon to sit in circles in one of the lodges, to talk and prepare roots and seeds for the winter, or to sew rough cloth and leather into garments for the people to wear. The men were the only ones to be seen moving about the village, as they fulfilled their duties repairing lodges or fashioning tools from bone and antlers and skins. Jajeff saw Broken Tree laying deer hide over a rock to dry, and Chief Shield Hand directing a work party in repairs to his lodge, activity that was normal and safe, reassuring him that his experience in the meadow had not changed the world and giving him hope that it may have been only a dream.

Relieved to know his village had not changed, Jajeff pushed the memory of seeing himself through the deer's eyes out of his thoughts and thanked Father Spirit for looking after him on his hunt. He decided that he would return to the forest at dawn to try again for his first kill, and retreated to the bachelor lodge and his sleeping area to rest. Of course, he could not completely forget the experience, even if it was only a dream, and so he resolved to learn from it, but to do so in privacy. It was bad enough that the men would ridicule him if he admitted he had missed such a perfect opportunity to become a man, but telling them why he missed the deer would surely condemn him to their torment for days.

Jajeff did not sleep well that night. Twice, he left his sleeping pad to walk among the lodges and by the stream, where he could see the stars and smell the sweet scent of the grass that grew near the water. He stayed at the stream the second time, sitting on a rock that was surrounded by the moving water. There he could admire the milky white blanket of stars above him while he searched the memory of his dreams for an explanation of why his rest was so bothered. Something was disturbing his sleep, making him restless, but he could not hold the sense of it long enough to tell what it was and why it would not let him sleep.

The starlit darkness was cold and mysterious and full of sounds that he began to identify by visualizing what made them, naturally remembering how these things looked in the daylight. While he did this, he recalled how an old storyteller had warned him not to deny the night its darkness.

"Darkness is jealous of the light and will be angry if you do not accept it as it is." The old woman had told him. "At night, you must see the world as Darkness would have you see it, made black and silver with starlight and moonlight and shadows deep as a cave. Accept the night in this way and you will come to know how spirits dance while we sleep."

Out of respect, and perhaps from a little fear, Jajeff closed his eyes to keep the starlight away and concentrated on the sounds, thanking Darkness for the solitude of the night and for making a place for the Dream Maker. Then he called on the Dream Maker to help him remember what had disturbed his sleep, hoping he had shown proper respect for the night, so that he would be welcome there.

At first, only a night hawk came to swoop low over his head, but it was not there to answer his request and quickly flew away. Jajeff waited, feeling the first hint of morning dew on his back. A fish rolled in the water near him, and far upstream, an owl called for its mate, filling the night with its honey pure hoot and causing Jajeff to focus his attention on the owl's hidden presence.

Jajeff held his breath and listened, because Mother Lily had taught him to respect Brother Owl above all the creatures of the night, for its wisdom and kind understanding. Again, he heard the mournful hoot echo in the nearby trees, quickly followed by the sound of its great wings beating to life as it launched itself from a tree limb. Moments later, the mournful sound came from a different direction, poking at Jajeff's mind like an insistent finger, making little sparks of light dance in his eyes as it did.

Jajeff squeezed his eyelids closed even tighter, willing the sparkling light away, but it persisted, almost hurting him with brightness where there should be only black. He cried in his mind, dreading what was happening to him, knowing the owl would soon call again to make the light even brighter.

It did, and for a moment, Jajeff could see his village brightly illuminated in the starlight, glowing milky white in a forest of silvery pine needles and oak leaves, their shiny surfaces flashing starlight back to his eyes in the breeze. There was nothing of the village and the stream that was not brightly lit, nothing that he could not clearly discern from his vantage point above the trees. Jajeff's heart raced as his full attention turned to a flicker of motion

near a lodge and he launched himself into the air, banking to better judge the vulnerability of a mouse as it hurried to safety under a bush. He blinked, and once again felt the cool hardness of the rock he sat on, his eyes still tightly shut, his legs held to his chest with arms that ached from the effort.

Jajeff cried silent prayers to Father Spirit until dawn, feeling very blind and vulnerable to the whimsical will of the night and to the strange sickness invading his thoughts. He did not understand what was happening to him, what affliction might be overtaking him to cause such strange visions. It frightened him, yet seeing the night from the eyes of Brother Owl also filled him with a sense of power and authority over the night, and despite his fear, he wished that he could see that way again.

Jajeff remained by the stream, as shafts of sunlight moved from the trees to cross the meadow near the stream, finally reaching him to warm his stiff back. For all of his efforts, searching his mind and asking Father Spirit for advice, he was still confused by his experience with the deer and the owl, and was making no progress in understanding what it could mean. Such a question could not be held within, nor asked of the other bachelors who shared the lodge with him; this he knew with certainty. There was only one in the village who might help him understand, or at least help him make peace with his dilemma.

"Surely Mother Lily can help me," he thought with a tired sigh, and happy to be doing something decisive, he went looking for her as soon as the morning sun was a respectful height above the trees, and after he had gathered a gift to entice her interest.

Mother Lily was the Spirit Elder most often sought by the young people for her advice and kindly support in tribal matters. She was a grand old woman, both in her heart and in her physical stature, being the heaviest person Jajeff had ever known. He knew he could expect to find her resting like an old lizard in the morning's first sunlit place, and so went looking for her upstream, where the trees gave way to the river bottom at a place only steps from her lodge.

He found Mother Lily by following her voice to a place where the sun warmed a large flat rock. She was sitting with her legs stretched out in front of her so that the sun could also warm her feet. She cradled a gourd of warm tea in her hands and sang to the morning with a cheerful voice, loudly praising Father Sun and the spirit of good mornings so that there could be no mistaking her respect and gratitude when they gave her a really good morning. Privately, she had once told Jajeff that she also sang, so that others of the tribe would be reminded to pay their respect to Father Spirit, and so that the youngsters would learn the ways of their people from her actions.

"Who is this I hear coming to my rock, so early in the morning?" Mother Lily playfully asked while Jajeff was still beyond seeing, around a bend of the stream.

"Who else would brave bothering you while you are still singing?" Jajeff answered as he came into view. "I wish to ask your counsel on a matter that is very perplexing to me." He held a skin of freshly gathered Purple Flower root. "I bring you a gift for your medicines."

"Well, in that case, Young Jajeff, please sit by me and tell me of your confusion." She patted the rock by her side and patiently waited for him to take his place.

Jajeff accepted her invitation and offered her the bundle of roots. She accepted them and broke one open to taste its gray wood.

"Hum . . . very good root. Have you been saving these from the tribe?"

"I travel farther than most and know of many places where such flowers grow. I could show you if you would care to accompany me sometime." He knew she would not because of her great bulk, and gave her a respectful smile when she waved off his offer.

"What is troubling you on such a fine morning, Young Jajeff?"

Jajeff told her of his hunt and of how he had seen himself at the moment he was to kill the deer, and how the owl had let him see the village from its vantage point high in the trees. He told her of his fear of what might be happening to him and of his deep regret when he had disengaged from the owl, saying that he had never seen so clearly on a moonless night. Mother Lily listened intently to every word without interrupting, but when he had finished his story, she showed a new respect for him in her voice.

"This has never happened to you before?"

"No, never."

"Have you not been told of the Eyes of the Forest?" She asked, searching his eyes for any recognition of the name.

"Yes, Mother Lily, but that is just for children to dream of. There is no such thing."

"Ho! And who has told you this?" Mother Lily jabbed Jajeff good-naturedly in his side with her elbow and laughed loudly, jiggling all over like a skin of goat's milk.

"Well . . ." Jajeff began lamely.

"Never mind, Young Jajeff. Come, walk with me back to my lodge where I will tell you of your new gift."

Jajeff helped Mother Lily to her feet and quickly gathered her things for her, a happy smile erasing his fear. He was becoming excited to think that what had happened to him might not be a problem, but could instead, be a gift.

"You have the look about you of a man who has just caught the biggest fish. This will not be what you hope, unless you can master its ways, so quit grinning like an eager child and pay attention to me."

"Yes, Mother Lily," Jajeff agreed, trying to hide his excitement.

On the way up the bank from the stream bed, Mother Lily's thoughts were focused on where she put her feet on the trail, leaving Jajeff no choice but to follow her in respectful silence. Her slow progress pulled at the limits of his patience, giving him ample opportunity to speculate on what she might tell him when they were in her lodge. Mercifully, the place of honor her lodge held near the stream made the trip short, and soon they were within the small shelter Jajeff himself had helped build the previous fall. He quickly took his familiar place by the fire pit and waited with feigned serenity while Mother Lily put away her things and prepared fresh Meadow Flower tea. By the time she was seated in her place in front of the glowing embers and both of them had sipped from the tea, Jajeff was actually becoming calm, his mind focused on hearing her words.

Mother Lily leaned back in her seat with a great sigh and searched her mind for the words she would use to explain Jajeff's new gift. When she was satisfied that she had his attention, she cleared her throat and proceeded to speak.

"Many times in our past, there have been those among us who have been able to know what our brothers of the forest see. They did this by asking our brothers for permission to look through their eyes so that they could better understand the forest. There have been none in our village with this gift for many generations, so we know little of its ways. We do know that it has something to do with the gifts of feeling and far-seeing, such as I have, and the gift of knowing enjoyed by our good chief, Shield Hand."

Mother Lily looked past Jajeff, toward a shield hanging in a place of honor near the entryway. It was made of slender strips of willow woven together with strands of hair Mother Lily had taken from her own head, and from her mother's, in honor of their lives together.

"I was told by my mother that having the Eyes of the Forest would let me see through the eyes of the creatures who live there, as long as they agreed and I showed proper respect. A person so gifted could know what the animals tasted and smelled, even what they thought. In

this way, the watcher could go where the creatures of the forest went, by seeing with their eyes and experiencing as they experienced.

She focused her attention on Jajeff for a moment before continuing.

"It appears, Young Jajeff, that for those moments you have described to me, you were seeing through the eyes of the deer and of the owl. It appears that you have been gifted with The Eyes of the Forest."

Jajeff thought about what Mother Lily said, holding his breath while he did, not wanting to let her see his excitement. It was no use though, because she had known him all of his fifteen years and knew every detail of his personality.

She poked at the air between them with her cup of tea.

"I can hear your mind racing like an elk running in a thicket. What are you thinking?"

That was it, Jajeff could hold his excitement no longer and his manly look crumpled into a youngster's grin of delight.

"You think I will be able to fly with the owl again?"

"Yes, and run with the fish if you like, that is the nature of the gift. You must practice though. As with any gift, it cannot be truly yours until you have mastered its many ways."

"Why me, Mother Lily? Why has Father Spirit chosen me for this gift?"

Mother Lily shook her head and studied her tea while she considered Jajeff's question.

"I can only speculate because this is something between you and Father Spirit. Knowing you as I do, however, I know how difficult it has been for you to relate to others your age. You have always been more sensitive and caring for the animals we have in our village, as if you feel more comfortable with them than with the rough games the young men play.

"Once, when you were very young, you cried when the men returned from the hunt with a bear draped on a drag sling with its belly opened to the air, its once mighty presence reduced to a lifeless carcass of hide and meat. The women were admonished by Chief Shield Hand for not properly teaching you to respect our need to hunt so that we can live. You were taught to respect the hunters ways after that, but I always suspected that you never truly accepted our need to kill.

"Because of this, I have always known you would find it difficult to join the men, when it came time for you to be the hunter. Perhaps this is Father Spirit's method of helping you find another way of contributing to the village."

"I remember too," Jajeff said, remembering the bear and the awful feeling he had when he came out of the bachelor lodge to unexpectedly encounter the bear, as it was being drawn through the village by two goats.

Something important flitted through his mind just as he remembered the bear. Not a thought, but a feeling that carried with it, a sense of foreboding for the future and a certainty that he was out of place amongst his own people. His leather shirt suddenly felt heavy and the meal of goat and sweet-root he enjoyed the night before, turned in his stomach, reminding him how he felt as a child when one of the woman forced him to eat part of the bear.

"This could be a curse as well as a gift, Mother Lily."

Perplexed, Mother Lily looked at Jajeff, examining the somber expression on his face and noting how he held his knees close to his chest, as if protecting himself from some unseen threat.

"What do you mean? How could the Eyes of the Forest be a curse?"

"Until now, I had forgotten the bear and how I felt when I was forced to eat its meat. Old Summer Wind had to yell at me three times before I did. Since then, I have learned to respect the ways of the Northern Hawk People because they are my people and so, their ways must be

my ways, but now this gift has come into my life to renew my respect for our brothers of the forest."

"Of course, it is also part of our way of life to respect the people of the forest," Mother Lily reminded him, closely watching him, looking for hints of what he was thinking.

"Yes, but don't you see? Will I eat the same creatures that share their sight with me?"

Mother Lily did not answer, choosing instead to remain silent as Jajeff rummaged through his mind, searching for an answer. After some time of silence, he looked at Mother Lily with a serious frown on his young face.

"Mother Lily, what do you really see with your gift of knowing? Is this truly a gift?"

"It is up to you to make it a gift," she responded without hesitation, having anticipated his question. "If you believe it is a curse, then you may as well go into the woods to die, thus saving yourself and the people a lifetime of agony." She smiled, amused by her attempt at humor. "But, if you chose to find it a gift, then you must find a way to make it work for you, to help you become a fine Spirit Elder for the people."

Jajeff's serious frown transformed to a mischievous smile, as he stood and stretched.

"Yes, you are right, Mother Lily, it is up to me."

He put his hand on her shoulder and squeezed it gently.

"Since it is up to me, I will make it a gift so that I can remain to pester you."

With that, Jajeff left Mother Lily's lodge to begin finding ways to use his gift.



## What Has Been Told

Even though it came upon him unexpectedly, Jajeff soon discovered that his gift was not to be called on any time he wished, and for the next few days, he tried every way he could imagine to recall the Eyes of the Forest, but despite everything he did, his new gift would not return. Mother Lily assured him that in time, he would be able to command his new gift, but as more time passed without his success, the more he came to believe it was only in his imagination.

"Could it have been a dream?" He asked her, thinking that he might have dreamed waking up to see the deer.

"Nonsense," she answered with a laugh. "It is what you first believed it to be. Do not make it something else, or Father Spirit will become disgusted with you and find someone else to receive the gift."

She thought for a moment and then smiled mischievously.

"On second thought, perhaps it was a dream. I would like to be able to see with the Eyes of the Forest. Perhaps Father Spirit will give your gift to me."

"Mother Lily!" Jajeff said with a grin despite his frustration. "It is not that I do not want the gift, it is just that I do not know how to make it work."

"Well, I cannot help you. Go away," Mother Lily said, showing growing impatient with her favorite student's slow pace. "Go to the forest and do not come back until you can see as you wish."

Jajeff could not tell if Mother Lily was feigning her impatience with him and decided it would be prudent to, at least, put on a good show by spending a few days in the forest. Dutifully, he gathered dried corn bread and goat meat, and a skin of water, and climbed nearby One Horn, determined not to return until he had mastered his new gift.

One Horn was a rocky crag that projected from the flank of Beaver Mountain, to tower far above the valley that sheltered and fed Jajeff's people. It was a place of solitude and wondrous beauty he had come to cherish for communion with Father Spirit, and because of its isolation, he went there often to practice the lessons of inner knowing Mother Lily and the other Spirit Elders had insisted he learn.

Jajeff reached his airy perch just as the dawn brought new light to the morning sky, chasing away the deep shadows that covered the valley floor and squeezing moisture out of the air to sparkle in the sunlight. From there, he could see a hawk circling high above the valley, where the sun had already warmed the air enough to lift and push against the bird's mighty wings. After setting his food and water in a safe place amongst the rocks, he quickly made himself comfortable on a rock shelf where he could watch the hawk glide across the sky, its golden wings glinting in the sun with each turn.

As if to balance the wondrous view, a cold breeze whipped around the crag and pulled at Jajeff's long hair, occasionally making it slap against his cheek, stinging him and sometimes obscuring his view. Jajeff hugged his cloak to himself to keep the breeze from finding its way to his skin, glad that the sun's warm light reached him, making him feel warm and drowsy, despite the wind. He felt welcome in that place and close to Father Spirit.

Whenever the hawk circled in his direction, Jajeff fancied that it looked directly at him, as if inviting him to look through its eyes. Try as he did, he was unable to see himself through the hawk's eyes.

"Brother Hawk, why don't you let me see with your eyes as did Brother Deer and Brother Owl?" Jajeff shouted into the wind, imagining that he could hear the hawk's lonely screech in reply.

But the hawk ignored him, being more intent on navigating the air that lifted it toward a lone thunderhead floating above the village, far below. Jajeff knew that the hawk belonged to the sky and had little time for people, even though his people honored the hawk as their totem. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that it was reasonable to ask the hawk for help, if only because it was his totem.

Eventually tiring of watching the hawk and mesmerized by the warm sun, Jajeff began fantasizing about being able to see through the eyes of all sorts of creatures. After a while, he closed his eyes to better enjoy his visions and to feel the sun on his eyelids, the wind whispering soothing sounds in his ears.

Suddenly, he saw in his mind, a giant of a man sitting on a rocky crag, much like the rock he was on. Jajeff nearly fell from his perch, he was so surprised, and he jerked to attention, pressing himself firmly against the gray rock for safety. Blinking his eyes to clear his vision, he looked around for the stranger, fearing the giant might see him first and push him from the rocks.

To his relief, there was only himself and the rocks, and once he recognized that he was alone, a cold chill raced across his scalp and tumbled down his back, as he realized that his gift had returned.

"But how?" he wondered to himself, looking around for an explanation.

Then, he saw a squirrel sitting on the rock near him, and just beyond where he had first thought to look. It crouched low, as if frightened by Jajeff's sudden motion, and Jajeff realized that the little animal was as frightened by the giant as he was, and instinctively, he sought to show the squirrel a kindness to apologize for scaring it so.

"Why, little furry one. Am I the giant? Did you let me see through your eyes?"

The squirrel chattered at him with a shrill voice, as if it were talking back to him, Jajeff's strange behavior apparently having made it curious.

"It has to be true," Jajeff thought with renewed excitement. "I must have seen myself through the squirrel's eyes and become afraid when I sensed the squirrel's fear.

"What a thrill to see the world from the eyes of another creature," Jajeff mused, beginning to realize how important such a gift could be.

"I can even feel your fear," he told the squirrel as he tried to think soothing thoughts toward it.

Once again, Jajeff felt the warmth of the squirrel's mind and knew that he was in contact with it, even though he did not look out of its eyes. The contact was not the same as touching, nor like completely being the squirrel, but rather, like putting the squirrel's head over his: still Jajeff, but feeling the world through the squirrel's senses.

"What a strange and wonderful sensation," Jajeff thought, probing and testing the squirrel's world with his mind.

As Jajeff explored, an idea slowly formed in his mind like the dawn that was forming over the valley. It was a vision of helping his people. This he knew, but he could not otherwise put words to the idea, nor tell what it might look like fully formed. Somewhere beyond the limits caused by his youth and inexperience, the realization began to form that his gift could be used to bring his people and the animals of the forest closer together so that one would not have to kill the other to survive.

"How could this be?" he wondered, frustrated that he knew so little about his gift, knowing that he must first master it before he could help his people.

"Can you tell me how you let me see with your eyes, Brother Squirrel?" he asked the squirrel.

The squirrel chattered a meaningful reply to him and scurried into the rocks, leaving Jajeff alone to solve his puzzle.

He reviewed what he had been doing before he saw himself through the squirrel's eyes and remembered that he had been nearly asleep at the time. This reminded him of a lesson Mother Lily had worked very hard to give him.

"The moment before sleep finds you, can be magical for you, if you will only let it lead you to new discoveries," Mother Lily had once told him while she was teaching him to listen to Father Spirit. "If you can learn to recognize that moment before sleep and use it to listen to and feel your world, you will see that the world has a voice and wise words to tell."

"Why should I go to sleep to listen?" he asked, still a child whose mind was empty and hungry to be filled. "That does not make sense. Why can't I just close my eyes and listen?"

"You will do this one day, when you are the master of your mind, but until that time, you must learn to catch your mind by surprise, when it is empty of thoughts or busy with some simple task."

"If I do catch my mind relaxed before I sleep, what am I supposed to listen for?"

"Do you want to be a great warrior, and a leader of your people?" Mother Lily asked, skillfully guiding his thoughts.

"Yes." Jajeff remembered answering, doubtful that he would have time to lead anyone, because he was going to need to spend all of his time remembering the silly thing Mother Lily was teaching him.

"You cannot be a warrior without being one with the forest, and you cannot be one with the forest if you cannot hear when it speaks to you. Even the warrior knows that he must walk in Brother Elk's path before he can earn Brother Elk's respect, and that is done by becoming the elk," Mother Lily answered, forever patient with her young charge.

There were times when Jajeff was older, that she admitted to wanting to eat well, and hunters who could not properly focus on the hunt could bring only berries and herbs to her fire. That was one reason she insisted that her young students learn the ways of the forest.

As Mother Lily had suggested when she taught him to listen to Father Spirit, there was more to it than just catching his mind asleep. The time he saw himself through the eyes of the deer, he had been fully focused on aiming his arrow at the deer. Whatever actually triggered his gift, it worked when his mind was nearly asleep or when it was busy with a task that demanded his mind's concentration, freeing his deeper thoughts to come to the surface.

"That has got to be what happens," Jajeff thought, his growing wonder for everything around him threatening to overwhelm his senses.

Delighted with himself, Jajeff stood and held his arms wide to embrace the world, and sang loudly to Father Spirit for the fine gift he had given him, then he thanked Brother Hawk for its patience and Brother Squirrel for helping him understand his gift. Satisfied that he had properly demonstrated his thanks to Father Spirit, he made his way down from his special place and quickly returned to his village, singing loudly as he did.

That night in the darkness of his lodge, Jajeff tried again to see through the eyes of a forest creature. This time, he prepared himself by thanking Father Spirit before opening his mind to receive an animal's vision. He repeated a little chant Mother Lily taught him to sing when he had first been learning to relax his mind, and imagined himself lying on a warm sleeping pad in a place where there was no light nor wind to disturb him. At first, nothing happened, and he became concerned that he may have forgotten all that Mother Lily had taught him about relaxing his mind.

"Father Spirit, what do I do now?" he asked the darkness with his mind, frustrated that he could not think of what to do next.

"What animal can I find in the darkness to help me? Should I be close to the animal, or can I be far away, out of sight and out of hearing?" he asked, still hoping for an answer in the darkness.

Then it occurred to him to choose Chief Shield Hand's dog, Snaggletooth, because it always guarded its master's lodge at night, and Jajeff felt sure he could form a true picture of the dog in his mind. Even though it was late at night, Jajeff knew that old Snaggletooth would be wide awake, watching the clearing near the entrance to the chief's lodge. He imagined it lying on the ground, chin resting on both paws, growling at the slightest sound.

At first, he saw nothing nor did he feel any sense of contact, but he continued singing his chant, quietly, so he would not disturb the others in his lodge. He willed himself to relax even further, remembering how his mind felt when it was idle, when it became an empty place hidden in the center of his head. He let his attention go there as if going into a deep cave.

Then Jajeff's world changed and he blinked, letting his attention move to the trail leading from the stream and then toward the still glowing fire pit in front of the council lodge, only a few bounds away in the center of the village. A twig snapped somewhere in the darkness, and the night swung dizzily, as Jajeff tried to follow the sensation of being with Snaggletooth, as the old dog suddenly got to his feet and stealthily moved into the trees to investigate the noise. Jajeff's mind became hopelessly confused by the strange new sensations he sensed with the dog's nose and ears, but he thrilled at the dog's clever understanding of the sounds of the night, and only barley resisted the urge to yell at Snaggletooth and insist that the dog run into the darkness to experience everything there was to experience as a dog.

Despite his exhilaration at the sharpness of details he was able to perceive in the night, this powerful pull of animal instincts frightened Jajeff, and he forced himself to withdraw from contact before becoming lost in the dog's senses. However, after he did, the sudden darkness and quiet of his own sleeping area was a shock to him and for a long moment, he was disoriented, unsure where he was or of which sensations were his. His inner ear seemed to flutter in the same way he had noticed when he flew with the owl, and for a moment, he thought he might be sick, but by remaining on his sleeping pad, he allowed himself time to slowly become accustomed to being himself again.

Once he regained his senses, he sat up and loudly sang about his excitement to Father Spirit, waking the other young men who shared the lodge with him. With shouts of mock anger, they jumped on him and cuffed him about the head until he surrendered and promised to sleep more quietly.

As he promised, Jajeff remained quiet the rest of the night, but did not sleep, he was so excited at his success. At first light, he went to where Snaggletooth was still lying in front of Chief Shield Hand's lodge, and assured himself that he had really seen the world as Snaggletooth saw it. Later in the morning, when he was sure Mother Lily would be properly awake, he went to her and told her of his success.

"Really, Mother Lily, I could hear and feel, just as if I was lying in front of Chief Shield Hand's lodge." he said, grinning happily. "It was as real as seeing through my own eyes."

They were in front of Mother Lily's lodge, sitting on the reed mat Sharp Stone had made for her, sipping grass water tea and eating hard bread. As usual, Mother Lily would not listen to Jajeff until she had given him tea, thus forcing him to become calm and prepare his thoughts. Only, this time, he had not become calm and was nearly incoherent with excitement as he told her his news.

Mother Lily said nothing when he had finished, choosing instead to scoop more tea for him before commenting. Jajeff nearly exploded, waiting for his teacher to give him her approval.

"Well, it is about time you brought me good news about your gift. I worried that you might never learn to find control." She put a big hand on his shoulder and playfully pushed at him, her eyes shiny with pride for her student's success. "Tell me, did you smell what Snaggletooth smelled as well?"

Jajeff grinned with satisfaction at her approval and concentrated on her question, remembering his experience with the dog as he did.

"Yes, I could smell as he did and share his memory of the things that made those smells. I could even feel the ground under my belly and know the sense that everything was safe. It was a wonderful experience, except my head had trouble telling what was Snaggletooth and what was me."

He tried to drink some tea, but his hands shook with his excitement, and when he spilled some on his chest, both he and Mother Lily laughed so loud that others in the village looked at them. Noticing this, Mother Lily grinned and put a hand to her mouth in mock dismay.

"I have never seen you so excited, Young Jajeff."

"Yes, I know. Forgive me, but this is all so new."

"Forgive you for being excited about knowing your life in about to change? Of course, but I will not forgive you if you do not tell me everything about your gift. For instance, did old Snaggletooth know you were with him?"

Jajeff thought again, remembering the raw sense of power he felt in the dog's confidence. "He may have. It is hard to tell, because he was so intent on guarding Shield Hand. I knew he was alert, because he felt alert, and I could feel his instincts, like sparks of light from the fire pit burning my mind, but I could not tell if Snaggletooth had thoughts like we do.

"What a wonderful gift Father Spirit has given you." Mother Lily leaned toward Jajeff and hugged him until he felt she would crush his arms. Finally turning him loose, she leaned back and looked wistfully at the tree-tops, her thoughts focused on her youth.

"Ah, I remember the days when I learned to use my gift. It was so exciting." She closed her eyes, remembering the first time she realized she could sense the feelings of others, how frightened it had made her and how self-conscious she felt when her gifts were introduced to her people.

"Have you shared knowledge of your gift with anyone else?"

"No . . . no one." Thoughts whispered in Jajeff's mind, telling him there was a reason he had the gift and reminding him of his responsibility to his people. He noted the thoughts, as he had before, but otherwise tried to ignore them, not yet confident that he knew the gift's full meaning.

"Now that you are learning to call your gift at will, you must come to understand why Father Spirit has chosen you for this gift and how you must use it." She looked at him from the corner of her eye, waiting for his reaction.

Jajeff's excitement dissipated as he considered Mother Lily's words. He thought about her and how her gifts of feeling and far-seeing had made her an important elder in the tribe, her sensitivity to the feelings of others making her the natural person to help guide the youngsters toward adult responsibilities.

"This is going to change my life forever, isn't it Mother Lily?" Jajeff's voice was subdued.

She patted him on the shoulder, showing more sensitivity than before. Her voice soft as she replied.

"Yes, my young friend, you know it will. We will introduce you to the people as a gifted warrior, and they will ask you to use your gift for the good of all the Hawk People in ways you can not dream of today."

Thoughts of his destiny returned to Jajeff, slipping through his mind like phantoms in the night. As before, they were thoughts of good deeds and happier people in his village that filled him with a sense of hope and confidence in the goodness of his gift. He could not fully understand them, nor tell why he liked what they seemed to imply for him, but he instinctively understood that his gift came to him for a reason, and felt certain that he would find a way to help his people with it, but the understanding of how or when this would be, continued to evade his grasp.

"I know Mother Lily." Jajeff said, a serious look overtaking his smile. "There is a vision Father Spirit has given me, but I do not understand it yet."

Jajeff got to his feet and paced in front of Mother Lily as she grabbed for her cup to keep him from spilling it.

"It is important to me to use my gift for the good of our people, but I am afraid that I might disappoint them. What if I cannot see whenever I am asked? Will Chief Shield Hand be angry with me?" He stopped in front of Mother Lily, stress showing in his young eyes as he waited for her reassurance.

"He probably will be angry if you let him down, but he will also understand if he knows you have tried your best. Chief Shield Hand can be a bully if he thinks someone can give more than they have given to the people. After all, the survival of our people is largely on his shoulders, and he must be demanding of people to assure that survival. He will accept your mistakes as long as you are honestly trying to help, . . . even if he is angry with you."

"Do you really think it is time for me to tell the people?" He wanted to tell them, but his gift was so new to him that he could not visualize himself using it to help the people in any way.

"Such a decision is yours alone to make, but remember, once the people are told, they cannot be untold. Your relationship with them will be changed forever." She watched him carefully, proudly noting the battle raging in his mind as he struggled to do the right thing for his people and himself.

"Mother Lily, this is all so new to me. I want to think more about how my gift can help our people before we tell them. After all, a gift without a purpose is of little interest."

"Very well, Jajeff, but do not wait too long. If you continue to walk around the village with that silly grin, people will begin to wonder if you have not gotten into the chief's special smoke."

Jajeff left Mother Lily's lodge in a cloud of confusion, feeling the weight of his new responsibility, where before, he had been lifted high by the excitement of his gift. He spent the rest of the morning wandering amongst the lodges of the village, watching his people in their daily activities, as if seeing them in a new light. Most of the old women were gathered by the stream where the morning sun could reach them, and where they could keep an eye on their children playing nearby. They were preparing the cotton cloth the tribe traded skins for, from the Frenchman who came to the village each spring. Each woman had a part to cut or stitch together, as the garments came into being. Jajeff had always been fascinated to see how the young girls hovered around the older women, helping where they could and learning the things they would be expected to know before they came of age.

The youngest children played near the trees and along the stream bank, watched over by a few of the older girls and one old man who rested in the shade of an even older tree. It was the old man's responsibility to stay with two infants who lay on a skin that was stretched out on the ground beside him. It was also his responsibility to watch for danger to the others in

the clearing. There were other men, who stood guard as part of their daily chores, and who would first recognize the intrusion of an animal or a stranger, but it was his responsibility to assure that the women were not surprised. Jajeff's people lived in peace, but as they lived with nature, they also lived by nature's rules, and more than one hungry bear had visited his village, not to mention Brother Rattle Snake, who has difficulty distinguishing a child from a rabbit.

Jajeff stopped to greet two men who were replacing fresh bark on the side of one of the lodges. One had helped him learn to skin animals, and the other had taught him to make arrows. As with others of his people, they were always happy to guide and mentor the younger ones, as the opportunity came to them. It was as if everyone in the village were mothers and fathers to every child, especially to him, since his mother and father had both died during his third winter. An avalanche had come down from the mountains, crushing much of the village, including his house. It was only by chance that he had been saved when poles, supporting his side of the lodge, had held against the snow, giving him a pocket of safety until the people were able to free him. Many others, including his parents who slept on the mountain side of the lodge, had not been so lucky.

Of course, the chief had the village moved after that, but the small meadow, where his parents and others had died that night, remained an important place in the people's memory.

Remembering these things and seeing the effort each person gave to the tribe so that all could survive, Jajeff felt overwhelmed with the goodness and spirit of cooperation, and his heart ached with desire to be a part of the community, to contribute to the success of his people in some way.

"But how?" he wondered, as he stopped to help one of the men lift a pole for a new lodge. "How can I use my gift for the good of the others?"

There was no answer in his mind, only the nagging feeling that there was something he could not see, something that he missed, and once again, vague thoughts of helping his people slipped through his mind. Still frustrated by his failure to find an answer, but certain that he had no choice but to try to find a way to help his people, he returned to Mother Lily's lodge to announce his decision.

"So, Jajeff, have you decided what to do with your gift so soon?"

Mother Lily was pulling a bundle of dried meat into a high limb of the tree that stood nearest her lodge, to make it safe from most of the hungry animals. Jajeff hurried to help her and deftly secured the leather cord to a lower limb of the tree.

"I want to tell the people that I have been gifted by Father Spirit with the Eyes of the Forest. I still do not know why I have been so gifted or how this gift will help the people, but I am confident that time will show me the answer."

"Very wise, my friend." Mother Lily agreed, as she put her arm around his waist and walked with him to the front of her lodge. "We will go to Shield Hand's lodge and tell him."

"Now?" Jajeff asked, alarmed by the suddenness of her decision.

"If not now, when?" Mother Lily asked, feigning surprised at his reaction.

She poked at his ribs and made him giggle.

"You must tell him now before you decide to hid like a rabbit."

"Okay, okay, so let's do it now." Jajeff agreed, trying to avoid her attacking finger.

They found the chief in the council lodge with two of the elders, discussing ways to store food for the winter. The winters were long and difficult for the people, and storing enough food for everyone to survive was the most important tasks the chief had to oversee. Even with the best of planning, Jajeff knew that the winter could last longer than usual and his people could starve. It had happened before, and he knew it would happen again."

Mother Lily and Jajeff waited near the entrance of the great lodge, respectful of the chief and elder's important conversation, Jajeff nervously noting the arrival of four more of the elders.

"Let's come back later, there are too many people to hear my story." Jajeff whispered to Mother Lily, beginning to have second thoughts about telling the chief of his gift.

"Hush!" Mother Lily hissed at him, otherwise ignoring his distress.

Shield Hand overheard Jajeff's words and looked toward them. Then, after another comment to the elders, he walked over to join Jajeff and Mother Lily by the entryway.

"What brings Mother Lily to the council lodge?" Shield Hand asked, winking at Jajeff as he did, his deep voice rising up from his barrow chest as if he had swallowed thunder to be his voice. "You usually make me send warriors to your lodge before you will come to give me your counsel."

"That is only because your questions are so boring, my old friend." Mother Lily bowed her head slightly, acknowledging Shield Hand's status as her chief. I have brought Jajeff to tell you of something new for you to be proud of."

"Jajeff? What do you have for me?" Shield Hand asked, his question seeming to urge Jajeff to speak.

Jajeff hesitated long enough for Mother Lily to become concerned, and she push against him with her shoulder in a not to subtle gesture.

"Chief Two Hands," Jajeff blurted out, his voice nearly squeaking. "Father Spirit has given me the Eyes of the Forest." He cleared his throat nervously, trying to find the words to explain himself.

"I have heard of the Eyes of the Forest, but what do you mean it to be?" Shield Hand asked, looking closely at Jajeff's eyes. "Do you see with the eyes of an animal?"

"Yes, with the eyes of many different animals. I have even communed with Snaggletooth." Jajeff explained.

"Communed? What do you mean, 'communed'?"

Jajeff felt sudden embarrassment for possibly misusing a sacred word, realizing that his people usually reserved the term to describe how they talked with Father Spirit. He had naturally used it to describe how he communicated with the animals because it seemed to fit so well. He actually felt as if he was at one with the animals, just as he felt at one with Father Spirit.

"I . . . I feel . . . it is as if I am one with the animal, when I am seeing with its eyes," Jajeff answered, relieved that his voice did not crack.

"He communes with the animals just like you commune with Father Spirit to find the best path for our people to travel." Mother Lily interjected, a little impatient with Shield Hand, knowing that he knew what Jajeff meant in the first place.

"So, what good is this communion?" Shield Hand asked with a snort.

The elders had overheard and were gathering around the fire pit to better hear the conversation. They murmured their agreement with the chief's response and talked amongst themselves in hushed, excited tones as they further assessed Jajeff's news.

Jajeff stiffened at Shield Hand's words and tried to think of a good answer. He and Mother Lily were both taken aback by Chief Shield Hand's reaction to their news, but it was Mother Lily who came to her senses first.

"What do you mean, 'what good'?" Mother Lily demanded.

"What good is it to see with the eyes of an animal? Will it make the animals come to you so that you can slay them for your dinner?" He moved a little, so that he could also see the elders, his attitude turning from friendly father figure to that of the impatient chief.

Sensing they were losing Shield Hand's attention, Mother Lily quickly turned to Jajeff with a questioning look. Jajeff saw this and struggled to gather his thoughts for a response.

"No Chief Shield Hand, I could not ask an animal to come to me just so that I could kill it," Jajeff answered, his voice so strong and decisive, he surprised himself.

Everyone in the lodge became silent, as if they were holding their breath, waiting for Shield Hand's reaction to Jajeff's rejection of their way of life.

Jajeff cursed himself for not anticipating the possibility that his chief would want to use his gift for hunting. He knew how much his people depended on the meat they took from the woods, and he knew they killed their brothers of the forest only after asking permission from Father Spirit. Still, after communing with a few animals, to Jajeff this seemed to be a very high price to pay for life, and he was beginning to feel uncomfortable with it, despite the fact that he was raised to join his people in the kill.

Shield Hand looked down at his callused hands, his attitude, it seemed to Jajeff, once again transforming from that of a chief, to that of the father figure--a father just discovering that he had failed to teach his son a vital lesson.

Jajeff's heart stood still as Shield Hand sighed and then tried a different tact.

"Will your gift tell you when the people should move their village or when the stream might flood?" Shield Hand asked Jajeff, impatience showing in his deep voice.

Again Mother Lily looked at Jajeff, now with a worried look on her face.

"Well?" she asked in a tense voice.

"I do not know, Chief Shield Hand," Jajeff answered nervously. Mother Lily put a hand on Jajeff's shoulder to encourage him to continue.

"I have just learned that I have this gift and have only seen from the eyes of a few animals."

"I understand Young Jajeff, but can you tell me what you have seen?" Shield Hand asked, clearly a little disappointed in what Jajeff had told him thus far.

"I have seen Snaggletooth guarding the entrance to your lodge, just two nights ago. He made me dizzy when he moved to investigate a sound, but I heard what he heard and could see in the dim light as he did. I also saw myself from the eyes of a squirrel and from the eyes of a deer."

"Ha! We should know you as squirrel eyes." Shield Hand looked around the circle of elders for their reaction to his humor.

Jajeff imagined that their reaction was clearly in favor of returning to their plans, rather than spending time with a boy who mocked them. To him, they were six weathered old men huddled together, nodding their heads at their chief's words, and thinking wise thoughts about the fate of the tribe. He marveled that they did not show amazement at his news, noting instead, that they seemed to be enjoying Shield Hand's rough handling of him and his gift.

Shield Hand turned back to Jajeff, and putting his big hand on his shoulder, looked closely at his eyes to be sure Jajeff understood his words.

"When you have found a use for this gift that you are willing to share with your people, return here, and I will listen to you. Otherwise, do not bother grown men with your childish fear of the hunt." With that, Shield Hand turned back to his conversation with the elders, clearly dismissing Jajeff from his presence.

Jajeff's heart felt frozen in his chest, and for a desperate moment, he could not breath, he was so stung by Shield Hand's words. Seeing no alternative, he pushed away his sense of justice for the creatures of the forest and prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice.

"I will help you in the hunt," he said in the strongest voice he could manage.

"Huh?" Shield Hand stopped and cocked his head toward Jajeff with an exaggerated motion, indicating that he could not hear him very well.

"I will demonstrate the value of my gift by telling you where animals hide, so that our warriors will know where to hunt." Jajeff's legs felt weak and he wanted to run to his sleeping pad and cry until he slept.

He could think of no other way to prove the value of his gift to his people, then by helping them survive the winter, and the best way to do so, was by helping them store an ample supply of meat. However, by using his gift in this way, he realized that he could never commune with the animals as a friend again.

Shield Hand grinned enthusiastically, excited about the prospects of a special hunt.

"Very well, we will go on a hunt, and you will help us find the biggest elk in the forest. It is not yet time for the rut, and the males are still by themselves."

Shield Hand winked at Mother Lily, who was nervously watching Jajeff for signs of distress. Then, he put an arm around Jajeff and led him out of the lodge, excitedly talking about the hunt as he did.

"You will use your gift to help us find a big elk for my winter coat," Shield Hand said, and looking back at the elders, he saw that they approved.

"That is what you will do in the morning," he continued with his booming voice. "If you can help us in this way, then your gift is truly a gift from Father Spirit."

Shield Hand turned to Mother Lily and grinned broadly.

"Perhaps you have brought me an interesting gift. We will see."

With that, Shield Hand returned to the lodge and his conversation with the elders.

Jajeff was nearly in shock, and as soon as they were away from the council lodge, he turned to face Mother Lily, panic growing in his mind that he might fail to find an elk for Shield Hand.

"What will I do? I cannot just call on an elk to wait for me in the forest, as Shield Hand thinks. I don't even know where to begin. He will never think of me as a man if I fail." Jajeff's voice trailed to a whisper, his shoulders beginning to bend under his imagined burden.

"Oh yes he will. You know Old Shield Hand, Jajeff. He only sounds sarcastic because he thinks it makes him seem like a strong chief. He thinks much of you and will give you every chance to help in any way you can." Mother Lily tried to reassure Jajeff with her words and a warm arm around his shoulders.

"But what of your feelings for the elk? I am curious why you have agreed to lead an elk to its death."

Jajeff winced at Mother Lily's choice of words.

"I am of the Hawk People. How can I turn away from the needs of my people? They need meat for the winter, and since I can help them find that meat, how could I do otherwise?" Jajeff said, bravely determined to do the right thing.

Mother Lily recognized his words as those told to him many time by the women of the tribe, as they prepared him to become a man.

"You do not have to do this thing if you do not want to, you know Young Jajeff," she said, deliberately reminding him that he was, indeed, still young and was still permitted the crazy, unpredictability of youth.

Jajeff stopped and turned so that he could look directly at her.

"I have no choice, Mother Lily. Just as you have said, there is no untelling what has been told. Besides, you heard Shield Hand's anger with me. He would never forgive me if I refuse to use my gift to help the people find food." Jajeff's voice was flat, his jaws clinched tight with his determination to go through with what he had agreed to do.

Mother Lily knew she could not really disagree with Jajeff's logic, and said nothing, as they took separate paths to their respective lodges.

The next morning, before the sun rose above the trees, Jajeff sat on the ground with his back against a log, his head resting on his hands and knees. He tried to clear his mind of the sense of doubt he felt from the others around him, while he searched for the elk he had chosen. Six warriors moved impatiently about the clearing, while Chief Shield Hand sat on a log and watched Jajeff, occasionally clearing his throat or sniffing loudly to remind Jajeff that he was waiting.

"Surely it had not moved very far since yesterday evening," Jajeff thought to himself from within a jumble of images and changing scenes, as he made contact with one animal after another, in search of the elk he had found the night before.

"When will we move on? This boy is wasting our time," complained one of the worriers, reaching the limit of his patience.

"Hush! Let the Watcher work," Chief Shield Hand demanded and continued to patiently watch Jajeff's face for signs of success.

The warm glow of pride at hearing his chief call him "The Watcher " calmed Jajeff's mind, and in only moments more, he had his quarry, a magnificent creature watching a nearby clearing from the safety of a thicket of trees and brush. He recognized the clearing and knew that his little hunting party was only a short walk from where his vision told him the elk was hiding. He had a satisfied grin on his face, as he stood and spoke to the chief.

"He is hiding on the northern end of the clearing that is just this side of the lightning burn. You should know the place. It is where we find the meadow sweet roots, and where the river otters play."

Relieved that Jajeff's search was over, Shield Hand stood and waved at his men to gather.

"We know the meadow. Tell us better, where Brother Elk is hiding." Trades For Fire demanded with a commanding voice, as he brought an arrow to his bow.

"He is in a thicket of lodge poles. He watches the meadow from the highest point so come to him from behind and flush him into the open." Despite his desire not to betray the elk he had just communed with, Jajeff found himself caught-up in the excitement of the hunt as the men scrambled to gather their weapons.

The men made no sound, as they turned in unison, moving as liquid into the trees. After the others were out of sight, Jajeff and Shield hand quietly followed the stream to the lower edge of the meadow and waited behind willows, where they could clearly see the meadow and the hunt fulfilled. Chief Shield Hand gathered his bow and arrows to ready himself, in case the elk should come their way. His meaningful look at Jajeff's still unstrung bow reminded Jajeff that he was expected to participate as well.

"Will you not prepare your arrow? We may be lucky and kill the elk before those great hunters can reach it. Wouldn't that be a story for the campfire? The greatest elk in the forest brought down by an old man and a boy."

He winked at Jajeff, a happy grin on his face. "Come, make your arrow ready."

Jajeff shrugged and did as he was instructed, praying that he would not be called on to demonstrate his skill with the arrow in front of his chief.

Time passed, too much time by Jajeff's reckoning, and he began finding doubt in his mind, a growing concern that he would fail this first test of his gift. Finally, he saw a warrior walk from the trees on the far side of the meadow, walking casually, making no attempt to hide. Seeing the man, Jajeff became convinced that they had given up looking for the elk. Panic growing in his mind, he strained to see the elk where he knew it to be, but he could not.

"What if it has moved again?" he wondered to himself, knowing that the warriors would be angry with him if they did not find it.

Jajeff closed his eyes and reached out to the elk, reestablishing the now familiar contact, familiar like hearing the voice of an old friend. It was almost as if the elk recognized his

presence, because as soon as he made contact, the elk turned its head to look exactly where Jajeff was hiding near the bank of the stream. Then it snorted and sniffed at the air, sensing motion where there should be none, but the elk found no scent in the air, other than the perfume of the tree needles and the musty smell of the ground around the small thicket. A bird remained near its flank, digging in a pocket of moldy leaves, looking for insects, undisturbed by anything it may have heard. Jajeff felt within the great animal that all was well and knew its feeling of unease came only from the shortening days and the knowledge of females not many bounds past the stream.

A bevy of quail flew up from trees behind the elk, and Jajeff felt the great animal's ears swivel around to seek out the reason for their sudden flight. Jajeff realized that it was now more than the sense of the season that pulled at the elk's attention, as it lurched to its feet, making Jajeff reach for a branch to steady himself. Then Jajeff felt a moment of confusion, as the elk quickly swung its head to look behind itself. Yes, there was noise from behind that should not be there. The bird gave up its digging and flew away, making warning chirps as it did.

Jajeff felt his host brace its great muscles, and suddenly, the elk was running from the thicket toward the other side of the clearing. Jajeff tried to pull free, but the elk somehow held him, forcing him to share its fear and to search his mind with it, for a way to escape. The elk ran, but it was too late, as a warrior rushed from the edge of the clearing and forced it to turn toward the stream where Jajeff and Shield hand were hiding.

"Turn further!" Jajeff shouted into his mind. "Move back into the thicket where there might be safety."

An arrow came from out of the thicket to strike the ground at their feet, and they turned once again, panic in their heart, knowing that these two-legged creatures would not let them go. They rushed toward the stream, the elk and Jajeff's awareness, the elk bleating in distress, knowing there was to be no escape, as a shaft struck their flank, turning their legs into useless things, no longer able to support them.

As shock overtook the elk, Jajeff found enough of his senses to stand, and he run into the meadow screaming, his eyes tightly closed so that Shield Hand could not understand how Jajeff could know where he was going. Only a few steps into the meadow, Jajeff screamed once again and fell to the ground, just as the elk bleated forlornly and fell on its side, unable to move as one of the warriors ran to it, a knife held over his head, a shout of thanks to Father Spirit on his lips.

The warrior struck once with his knife, ending the hunt with a mercifully final stroke. As the elk retreated from consciousness, thoughts of the forest drifted into Jajeff's mind, as his attention fled from the meadow and away from the sharp pain he felt in his neck, as the warrior stood and once again shouted his thanks.

For a moment, Jajeff knew the sensation of happily bounding with other elks in a lush meadow filled with succulent mountain grass, and still laying on the ground, he mindlessly nibbled on the blades of grass that were pushed against his face, remembering the serenity he knew with the elk before the hunt began. Then, he lost consciousness.

When Shield Hand saw that the elk had been killed, he left his hiding place and ran into the meadow and knelt down where Jajeff lay unconscious near the fallen elk. Two of the worriers came from their kill to join Shield Hand and to see what was wrong. They had heard Jajeff cry out and had seen him run toward the elk, as if an angry spirit was chasing him, dodging and ducking, crying in pain before he fell to the ground.

"Jajeff has proven himself a warrior today," Bear Tooth said with pride, as he poked a toe at Jajeff's side. "What is wrong with him now? Is this more of his dreaming?"

"I do not know," Shield Hand answered, a concerned look on his face. "He ran into the clearing as if he intended to help with the kill, but his yells were cries of pain when he fell to the ground. This worries me that he may have still been with the animal when you killed it. Perhaps you have also killed the Watcher."

The men looked at Jajeff's still body with new respect, that he was so much a part of the world that he could share in the death of Brother Elk. They made a drag sling for the elk and Jajeff, and returned to the village as quickly as they could, their sense of urgency growing with every step, wondering if they may have killed their new hero. Though they did not stop to rest, it was twilight before they reached the village and delivered Jajeff to Mother Lily's lodge. When she heard the men outside her lodge, she came to the opening and began complimenting them on their fine elk, but then she saw Jajeff's limp body lying beside it and rushed to his side, nearly knocking Shield Hand from his feet.

"What have you men done to him? Is he dead?" Mother Lily cradled Jajeff's limp head in her lap and rocked back and forth in distress.

"No, Mother Lily, you can see that he is only sleeping. He just won't wake up. That is all," Shield Hand said lamely.

"Shield Hand said he died with the elk," Bear Tooth offered in a worried voice. "Their spirit was still one when we killed it. He is a great Watcher with much respect for Brother Elk."

"Oh!" Mother Lily exclaimed in disgust and directed the men to move Jajeff into her lodge.

Mother Lily called Flower Hand, the Spirit Master, to her lodge, and the two of them worked all night to bring Jajeff's Spirit back to them. Near midnight, he began screaming and thrashing about, as if dodging things thrown at him. Each time he moved, he cried out like a wounded animal, whimpering and crying, then going limp, only to begin dodging again. But, eventually the herbs did their magic, and Flower Hand was able to ask Spirit to enter her hands, as she directed Spirit's energy into Jajeff's wounded heart.

Jajeff showed no sign of recognizing the two women's feverish efforts to revive him, instead he dreamed of the warm sun on his back and the breeze whipping the hair in his ears, making it difficult to distinguish other sounds in the meadow. He had just reached for another tuft of grass when he heard a sound that was distinct from the others, compelling him to resist the grass and look around to determine its cause. At first, he saw nothing down by the stream where the sound seemed to come from, so he turned his head to look behind him, to be sure no predator was attempting to catch him from behind.

"There! Another sound from near the stream," he told himself and turned his head to look again, at the stream. He was amazed to see that a two-legged stood were there had only been willows before. He tensed to run, but before he could, a strange sensation came into his head, making him dizzy and uncertain if he was standing or lying in the grass. For the briefest of moments, he felt that he was two, rather than just himself, with two thoughts and two different intentions. It was then that the two-legged hurled a stick at him. Frightened, he shook off the strange sensations inside his head, and turned to run into the forest, crying loudly for his friends to stay hidden there.

"Stay hidden? Why?" Flower Hand asked, holding Jajeff's hands in hers and pulling them as if requesting him to sit-up. "Why should I stay hidden?"

Jajeff responded by making a sound strangely reminiscent of a panicked deer.

"Jajeff!" Mother Lily shouted, rubbing more crushed mint leaf on his upper lip. "Jajeff, you must come back to us now."

Jajeff ran through the woods in a panic, at first not being able to find his friends, and then noticing that the trees were fading away. Finally, forgetting why he was running, he awoke, and looked around with sleepy eyes, trying to understand where he was.

Flower Hand smiled when she saw Jajeff's eyes open and focus on her, the frightened animal look fading to be replaced with the softer look of recognition.

"You have returned, Jajeff," Flower Hand said, and without hesitation, she stood and walked from the lodge, hoping to carry the tormented spirit that had captured Jajeff, away from him and into the night where it belonged. She would not return to Mother Lily's lodge until Jajeff was well enough to leave.

Jajeff watched Flower Hand leave and then turned his attention to Mother Lily, as she sat down on the pad beside him.

"What strange things have you been dreaming of, my young friend?" Mother Lily asked, pushing Jajeff's hair from his eyes.

"I can only remember running and being chased and killed." He closed his eyes and bit his lip, trying not to cry.

"Why did you stay with the elk, Jajeff? Surely you knew what was to happen." Mother Lily was a kind woman, but she had little patience for suicidal boys. "You knew there could be no other outcome."

"Yes, I knew, but I did not think it would happen so quickly." Tears seeped from the corners of his eyes and his lip quivered as he attempted to gain control of himself. "When it began, I could not pull free. It was as if the elk was holding on to me for help.

"Oh, Mother Lily. I killed it! It trusted me, and I killed it! I feel so awful. Its spirit will follow me for the rest of my life."

"Yes, it probably will, but you must remember that we must kill to eat, always. That is the way of our world. Even the French say they kill to eat in his world across the great waters. It is the way Father Spirit has made the world."

"No! I cannot accept that. I will never kill or eat our brothers of the forest again. I cannot, if I am to commune with them. I cannot."

Jajeff began crying and curled into a tight ball on the sleeping pad, his head pushed into a corner of the room. There was little Mother Lily could do but let him sleep, until he was well. Thankful that he was alive, she quietly left his side to report his health to her chief.

## Two Worlds

Living up to his promise not to eat meat proved much more difficult than Jajeff had dreamed possible. His people grew corn and a few other seed plants, and gathered roots and nuts from the forest, but it was difficult to accumulate and store enough to last for all of the people through the winter. Because of this, he could not eat more of the plants than was his share. Should the winter be very long, he would be forced to eat meat or starve.

Being a people who lived in close association with their brothers of the forest, and who depended on the forest to provide nearly everything they needed, naturally, the Hawk People's principle food was meat, either taken from the forest or from the goats they had learned to raise and keep in pens near the village. Since meat was such an important part of their lives, they had little sympathy for Jajeff's desire not to eat meat, no matter what his reason might be. Jajeff's only real ally was Mother Lily, who often warned that the people, especially the children, needed to eat plants to keep their bodies strong.

"Spirit Elders from other tribes tell their people to eat plants as well as meat, or they will become sickly, just as they will eating only plants," Mother Lily often told the elders. "It is our friends the plants, who balance the meat and help us be alert to life."

The elders always listened to her and tried to find ways for the people to follow her advice, by growing more food and increasing the harvest of roots from the forest, but it was much easier to hunt for meat, or to slaughter one of the goats, and inevitably, working to have plants in their diet was low on their priorities.

Jajeff knew from conversations with warriors who had traded with other tribes, that the corn and other plants his people grew, produced small amounts of food compared to that grown in the lowlands and the desert. Knowing this, it made sense to him that his people could improve their supply of plant food for the winter by growing plants from seeds used by those other tribes, so he went to Shield Hand to ask him to direct a trading party to find these stronger plants.

"If we went to the desert where you say they have this big corn, how will I know that I have found the right plants?" Shield Hand asked doubtfully.

"I will go with you and help you find the right plants. I have studied this very carefully."

"Look at you! You are a young man in a skinny boy's body. How do you expect to keep up with my warriors?" Shield Hand demanded of Jajeff, now teasing him as if he were a woman asking to join in warriors work.

"I will not have to carry so much, because I will eat plants from the land as we go, and in this way, I will be able to keep up with you." Jajeff did not argue about his health with Shield Hand, because he knew his chief was right. "I can also help you by looking through the eyes of birds to find the best path. You will save much time this way."

He could see that Shield Hand was beginning to soften in his resistance, so he pressed his argument.

"You have heard Mother Lily. We should all eat more plants, and corn is the best one of all. You struggle every fall to store food for the winter, and corn stores longer than even the acorns. It is our corn that we should be trying to improve," Jajeff said and held his breath, waiting for Shield Hand's final word.

"You will use your gift to find the path?" Shield Hand asked, a tentative frown on his sun-wrinkled face.

"Yes."

"You won't faint on me again?" Shield Hand asked, closely watching Jajeff.

This time, Jajeff knew Shield Hand was only teasing and refused to answer.

"I will talk with the elders on this subject and tell you tomorrow," Shield Hand said with a grin, knowing that Jajeff would be in suspense all night.

Shield Hand found enough agreement amongst the elders to justify the long journey into the desert to find the corn seed Jajeff thought they should have. He also agreed to let Jajeff join the party, as long as he promised to return without them should he become too weak to keep up.

"This journey is not just for you, Young Jajeff," Shield Hand told him several days later on the morning they were to depart. "This will also keep Mother Lily from yelling at me this winter when the roots and the seeds have been eaten, and she believes I have not done everything I could for the people. Then you will stand beside me, and tell Mother Lily that it is not my fault."

The trading party included five warriors, the chief and Jajeff, who was not yet considered a warrior because he had not proven himself in the hunt. Jajeff noted with some dismay that one of the other men was younger than him, posing a constant reminder that he was still a failure in the eyes of his people.

The party was forced to travel slowly, because of the goats they brought with them to carry their supplies and the furs and tools they would use to trade for corn and other goods. Traveling in this way also made it necessary for them to find the easiest paths through thickets and around mountains. Jajeff was able to help them in this with his gift. As they traveled, he frequently stepped away from the other men, and found a comfortable place to sit and close his eyes, so that he could better sense one of the nearby birds. It usually took him only a moment to find one of the ever-present crows, who seemed to always escort intruders through their territory.

The crows knew when he contacted them and cawed loudly, warning others that there was something different about these intruders. The crows also complained to Jajeff, letting him know how intelligent they were, and how it was they who would determine if he was to see through their eyes. They usually relented and let him stay with them for a few trees, but some would close their eyes and refuse to fly until he left them, making Jajeff feel bad for having intruded. In time, he learned to sense which crow would welcome him and help him see the trail, and in this way, learned to quickly look ahead and assure that his party was on the best path.

Each morning, while on the trail, Jajeff woke before the others and sought out one of the higher flying birds, such as a hawk or a buzzard, and with their permission, looked farther ahead to see if there were obstacles that might force them to back-track. In this way, he was able to make the journey much easier for the party, than it might have been otherwise, and Shield Hand recognized this, pointing out the fact to the other men and thanking Jajeff many times for finding such an easy way. After a time, Shield Hand admitted to Jajeff that he believed Jajeff's gift could have more value to his people than Shield Hand had thought, but he did not speak of this to the others, because he did not want to admit that he may have been wrong.

The party passed several of the customary meeting places. These were trading grounds where people from various tribes often waited for others to arrive, so that they could barter for items not generally available in their land. These were well marked neutral campgrounds that were widely known as places where people could come together in peace for barter and sharing of wisdom. When they passed such a gathering place in the tall sagebrush near an inviting stream, the warriors complained and said they were tired of herding goats in the hot sun.

"Nonsense," Shield Hand said with a laugh. "This is only our eighth day on the trail. When I was your age, I walked twenty days before even thinking of stopping to trade. Why do you complain now?"

The warriors suspected he was exaggerating but they knew from his words that he was set on going the distance. Jajeff listened to this and felt a new respect for his chief. Yes, Shield Hand was hard to talk with at times, and he took more than a little pleasure in making people squirm when they did talk to him, but he was also fair when it came to keeping his word. Jajeff noticed this and accepted him as a good model for his own behavior.

It was the afternoon of their tenth day on the trail, when Jajeff's party came to a small red rock canyon, that cut through the desert as if the ground had cracked open from the dryness. Jajeff pointed south indicating a clearly marked trail.

"I have seen a trading place in the canyon near where it opens into a large valley. There are at least four families there in a camp." Jajeff knew from what he had seen with the help of a buzzard, that the party was waiting for visitors to arrive to trade with them and share stories over the evening smoke.

"This is the place we should stop to trade," Jajeff concluded with a resolute nod of his head.

Toknee carefully stepped up to the edge of the sheer cliff, and peered into the canyon. "At last, but how do we get down there, Bird-boy?"

Jajeff ignored the insult and turned to Shield Hand.

"This trail will take us to an easy slope that leads to the canyon floor near the trading place."

"That would bring us to an occupied camp in the dark, so let us make camp here and join the trade in the morning."

The men were eager to enjoy the company of new people, but they did as Shield Hand requested and arrived at the canyon floor trading place, noon the next day.

"I am Running Horse, elder of the Desert People." The old man who obviously lead the other group, announced in a dignified voice. "Welcome to River Without Water, a place we can share in peace."

"I am Shield Hand, chief of the Northern Hawk People," Shield Hand returned, carefully watching the Desert People for any sign of hostility. Seeing only the mix of men, women and children he would expect to see in families on a trading mission, he relaxed and waved his hand toward Jajeff and the warriors. "These are my people who have come to carry the things I would trade for. They are armed only as warriors of peace."

Running Horse looked the men over, noting their unstrung bows and arrows still tightly bound in their quivers, looking long at Jajeff, who held no weapon. Satisfied that he understood Shield Hand's intention, he waved an arm toward his people. "These are my friends and their families, who would trade for things they do not have." He pointed at a bundle of furs held on the back of a goat. "For instance furs to warm their winter clothes."

The old men stepped toward one another and grasped hands in a manly gesture of camaraderie and trust. With that, both groups moved closer together, and in moments, the Hawk People were surrounded by curious Desert People, everyone talking and excitedly comparing their differences.

The next morning, Jajeff went to the Running Horse's fire, and ask one of the women there if they knew of new foods he could substitute for meat, especially corn that produced many ears on a stalk. To his delight, they told him that they depended more on plants for food than on meat, and knew a great deal about growing and preparing corn.

"Our corn is the finest in the desert," Sage Woman, the chief's wife old him, proudly holding corn seed in her hand for him to admire. "More than this would come from one ear."

Jajeff examined the corn, marveling at the size of the seeds and at their fine golden color.

"How many ears do you grow on a stalk?" he asked her, accepting the handful of corn to feel and smell.

"Usually only two, but each one is large, and they are ready to eat earlier than some I have seen."

"I will talk with my chief. May I show him these?"

"Yes, and let him taste of the bread we make from the corn," she offered with a kindly smile, handing him two pieces of yellow bread, she had cooked earlier that morning.

Jajeff found Shield Hand still in his camp, and showed the corn to him.

"This is what we have come for. Here, taste how rich it is when baked." Jajeff's hand almost shook, he was so excited to have found what he only hoped he would find on their journey.

Shield Hand tasted the bread and looked at the golden corn, showing great interest as he did.

"I agree Young Jajeff, these are more than twice as big as our corn seeds, and the bread that comes from them is sweeter than I have known." He put a hand on Jajeff's shoulder and squeezed it in a warm gesture. "You have shown me much about you on this journey, that I did not expect. Perhaps I will have to decide that there are other ways to be a warrior without killing an elk." With that, Shield Hand turned and went to Running Horse to share his pipe and talk of furs and corn.

"Will you walk with me and tell me about your people?" Jajeff heard a girl ask from behind him with a lilting voice as sweet as any honey he had known. He spun around to see who was talking, and found Running Horse's daughter standing at the edge of his camp, a lovely smile on her lips and a large piece of bread held toward him as a gift. She was barely his age, Jajeff judged from her slim appearance, and he felt sure from her open approach to him, that she was not spoken for by one of the men in her tribe.

Even though he was sixteen, Jajeff had little contact with the young girls of his tribe, and so, did not really know how to behave. He took the offered bread without speaking, thankful for something to concentrate on, other than the girl's devastatingly beautiful face.

The girl watched him for a moment while he tasted the bread, and when he did not speak, she laughed and took him by an arm, leading him out of the camp toward where the canyon narrowed.

"I know you can talk, because I just heard you tell your chief you wanted our corn." she said, and laughed again, as they walked to where the canyon walls converged so close that the sky became only a narrow slit of daylight and the dry, sandy floor was flat and undisturbed.

To Jajeff, her voice was like water bubbling over rocks in a mountain stream, and her closeness to him made his heart thunder in his chest.

They walked slowly, not really trying to be anywhere, just getting used to being near each other. The girl was more patient than most, and let Jajeff find his tongue in his own time, and without demanding that he return her conversation, she talked of her people and her aspirations in life--Jajeff still nibbling on his bread, immensely enjoying her presence and trying to find his voice.

After a time, they turned and sat on a rock near one wall of the canyon and waited for the faint breeze to return, as it did from time to time, to cool their face and make the canyon whisper its secrets to them.

"What is your name?" Jajeff finally asked with a steady voice, held firm with all his will.

"Oh, you do talk," she said and pulled at his arm to make him sit closer to her. "I am Smiling Woman, daughter of Running Horse, and you are Jajeff."

"Thank you for the bread. It was very good." Jajeff could think of nothing else to say.

"Was? Is it already eaten?" she asked, playfully looking all around Jajeff to find the bread.

Jajeff could take no more and laughed loudly as he warded her off. "You are not Smiling Woman, you are Happy Woman!" he teased, and curled into a ball to protect himself.

"Yes, and I will turn you into a helplessly laughing child if you do not tell me a story about your people." Smiling Woman poked a well aimed finger at an exposed rib and made Jajeff howl even louder.

"Okay, okay. I will tell you a story, but first you must tell me why you want a story about my people? Why not about the forest or the animals that live there?" He gasped for air as she relented and sat back on the rock, her unfocused eyes looking into the invisible world of her imagination.

"Okay, the animals. I just want to know about things and people beyond the desert. I hear it is so wonderfully green there.

"Yes, it is wonderfully green," he agreed, realizing how isolated a young woman might feel living in the desert, especially one who had not yet been promised to a man.

Jajeff talked for a long time, describing his village and how his people lived. Smiling Woman listened mostly in silence, but occasionally interrupted him with a question or a comment comparing her people's ways with his.

After Jajeff ran out of words, and they had been sitting in silence for some time, Smiling Woman leaned against Jajeff to get his attention.

"You are so young to walk with your chief, yet you are not his son," she said, her voice showing Jajeff that she was complimenting him. "Why did he listen to you when you asked for the corn?"

"I am a Watcher and have earned the right to talk with the elders, but I am here because I wish to learn how you grow your food, so that I can help my people increase the number of seeds we can store for the winter."

This interested Smiling Woman, and she moved around until she could comfortably look into his eyes. "Why is this so important to you? Storing food sounds like something the elders should worry about, not a young warrior like you."

"It is because I am a Watcher, that I will not eat the creatures of the forest to live."

"A Watcher?" she asked, encouraging him to explain.

"Yes, I see through the eyes of the forest animals. I have seen your camp from the eyes of a buzzard who flew above you yesterday."

"You did? Really?" Smiling Woman stood and did a little dance mimicking a buzzard's flight, delighting Jajeff with her innocence. Soon, he found himself dancing with her, their singing voices echoing from the red rocks of the narrow canyon walls around them.

In time, they sat together on the edge of a cliff, with their feet dangling many paces above the camp that nestled on the canyon floor below them. Smiling Woman held to Jajeff's arm in mock fear of the height, and demanded that he tell her more of his gift.

Jajeff's face reddened, remembering the many times Mother Lily had cautioned him not to boast about his gift, warning him against making it something that would show him to be greater than others around him.

"It is not a very big thing," he answered hesitantly, trying to hold his attention on the yellow and red streaked rock wall on the far side of the canyon, while he searched his mind for words that would convince her of his humility. "You could probably do it yourself, if you wished. You just have to learn to focus on your inner senses."

Smiling Woman giggled and nuzzled his neck with her nose.

"You look funny when you are embarrassed, Watcher. Your forehead becomes red, and you get a little mark between your eyebrows." She nuzzled him there, between his eyebrows with her nose, biting him playfully on his nose.

"I have heard of Watchers and know that you will become a Spirit Elder for your people. That is, if you really are a Watcher. Show me."

Song Flower playfully sat straight with her hands in her lap and her eyes looking alertly across the canyon, waiting for Jajeff to regain his composure and impress her with his gift.

The wind blew Song Flower's hair from the back of her neck in long, black streamers, reminding Jajeff of raven feathers, when the great bird soars on uplifting air. She was so beautiful to him. His heart felt happy to be beside her, and for the moment, he would do anything to please her.

He could only see a hawk floating in air that moved up the wall on the far side of the canyon. Other than that, there were no animals he could use to demonstrate his gift, so he closed his eyes and put his attention on the bird, asking for permission to join it, while he praised its fine flying ability. When he felt the wind pushing past his face, he opened his eyes and reveled in the thrill of hanging motionless above the canyon, many times higher in the air than an arrow could fly.

"There, in the sky above the canyon." Jajeff pointed at the hawk, while being careful not to lose contact with it in his mind.

"Brother Hawk sees us but is very busy trying to find something to eat in the bushes below him.

"Oh? How do I know you are not making this up?"

"I will tell you when he is about to strike, and you will know that it is true. I will even tell you what he will catch."

They sat together for many moments, expectantly watching the great bird move about in search of prey.

"Now! It will dive at a rabbit just beyond your camp. There. You can see the rabbit," Jajeff suddenly said, pointing to the floor of the canyon.

As promised, the hawk folded its wings into short stubs and nosed down toward the ground. Jajeff closed his eyes and followed the bird in his mind, enjoying the breathtaking view of the earth rushing toward him, sensing the subtle twitch of tail muscles as the hawk moved to pull up, the feel of blood rushing to his face as the bird spread its wings to break its fall and the urgent anticipation of the kill as it flexed its talons in the rushing air. Jajeff disengaged before the fatal strike, not wishing to be a part of one of nature's more startling moments, and finished watching the event from his own perspective which was for once, much more enjoyable, since he had a delightful young woman at his side.

"You were right, Jajeff. You were right. The hawk took the very rabbit you pointed to. You really do have a wonderful gift," Smiling Woman squealed with delight, and flung her arms around Jajeff's neck, hugging him until he came to his senses and hugged her back.

After a time, Jajeff noticed with some surprise, that the sun was nearly hidden by the nearby mountains, and that it would soon be dark.

"We should return. Our people will wonder where we have gone too," he said, speaking into Smiling Woman's sweet smelling hair.

"No, not yet. It is boring in my father's camp," she responded, her voice low and dreamy.

"But they will worry, and we should be escorted after dark." An odd sense of concern was forming in Jajeff's mind, causing him to wonder why he had not thought to respect what Smiling Woman's parents might think of Jajeff and Smiling Woman being alone together.

"I do not care what they think. We can do anything we want." Smiling Woman's voice became stronger, more instant.

Jajeff quickly reviewed what he knew about Smiling Woman, trying to determine how well he knew her, and what his people's customs would expect him to do in such a circumstance. It was one thing for two young people to be together in the sun, exploring the canyon and sharing stories about their people, but it was quite a different thing to be alone at night, away from those who cared for their future.

"Come, we must return to our camps," Jajeff said to Smiling Woman, pulling her close to his side for a moment before getting to his feet.

"If you insist, Jajeff, but I would much rather be here watching the sunset with you, than helping my mother prepare food for the evening meal." Smiling Woman protested, accepting Jajeff's offered hand as she stood and stepped away from the edge of the cliff.

They walked back to the camp without speaking, as if to do so would somehow cause their wonderful feeling of friendship to change, and because Jajeff was deep in thought about Smiling Woman's reluctance to return to camp.

Smiling Woman was the first woman Jajeff had known to be so kind and enjoyable to be around, and he remained close to her side every opportunity he had. The night before it was time for the formal exchange of traded goods, and the final sharing between the chiefs, Jajeff sat with Smiling Woman by her father's fire, thinking of nothing but his deep contentment to be with her.

"You will return to the forest tomorrow," Running Horse stated, more than asked. He sat on the other side of the fire from Smiling Woman and Jajeff, watching his daughter and Jajeff with keen interest.

"Huh? Oh, yes. Chief Shield Hand wishes to return soon, so that we can avoid the early snows in the mountains.

"Can you not find the way around the snow with your gift?" he asked, probing Jajeff's ability.

"I can see where it has fallen, but the snow comes despite my wishes," Jajeff replied, becoming aware that Running Horse's words were leading to something.

"It may be a long journey, and there could be some risk," Running Horse added, not asking a question.

Jajeff remained quiet and looked questioningly at Smiling Woman, who grinned back at him and wrinkled her nose, reminding him of the way she nuzzled his neck.

"Tell him about Stepfast father, I have not had the heart to tell Jajeff myself," Smiling Woman asked her father, without taking her eyes from Jajeff's face.

Curious, Jajeff looked at Running Horse, not sure he was going to like what he would hear. He had not thought of asking Smiling Woman to return with him to his village, had not thought beyond the moment, really, but hearing Smiling Woman speak the name of another man caused him to think, and to realize that he loved being with her, but did not want to be with her forever.

"Stepfast is a fine warrior of the Desert People, who has asked for Smiling Woman. This journey to trade for furs has also been a time away from Stepfast for Smiling Woman, so that she can think and know her will, before I agree." Running Horse spoke in low tones, as if not wanting to disturb someone with his voice.

Jajeff listened to Running Horse's words, and then looked at Smiling Woman, who was now looking at him with a worried look on her face. He thought hard for a proper reply, knowing that it was his responsibility to speak next, and that he must not insult Smiling Woman, nor her parents, with his words. His problem, though, was in knowing how he was expected to react.

Smiling Woman had taken him into her heart, as if she had known him forever, and he knew the warmth of her presence had grown important to him, but each time he thought of

asking for her, he remembered her reluctance to return to the camp that first evening, and that her words had filled him with concern for her sense of responsibility.

"Why?" he wondered to himself, searching his heart. "Why do I not ask for her myself?"

The answer was there, in his feeling for Smiling Woman, where he felt his sense of manliness cry for fulfillment from a woman too wild to be trusted with his heart. Yes, he loved her, but it was more the love for a free spirit, than a love for a woman whom he would ask to bear his children.

Smiling Woman and her family were expectantly watching him, waiting for his reaction. He responded by looking first at Smiling Woman, and then at her father and mother, noting the way their serious expressions seemed to contradict the way he felt. He tried, but could not help himself, and a broad grin formed on his face as he struggled to stifle a laugh. He knew there was no use feigning feelings when he did not know which way to feign, and so, he surrendered to the humor he found in the silliness of his predicament.

The serious expressions around him turned to perplexity, and Smiling Woman reached over and held Jajeff's hand, looking closely into his eyes.

"Are you all right?" she asked, concerned that he was losing control.

"Yes, I am all right, Smiling Woman," and to her parents, "Forgive me. I am behaving like a laughing fool.

"Running Horse, I would ask for Smiling Woman if I had anything to give her, but I am not even a warrior in my own village. I will not kill, and without killing, I cannot prove myself a man in my people's eyes. So you can see, I would make a very poor mate for your daughter."

Then why do you laugh," Running Horse asked, a new tension in his voice.

"Because you were so concerned for my feelings, and because I too, was concerned not to hurt your feelings with my response to your news about Stepfast," Jajeff answered, quickly coming to his senses in response to the tension in Running Horse's voice.

Smiling Woman playfully pounced on Jajeff, as was their habit over the past few days, when one became frustrated with the other. She poked at him with well aimed fingers, trying to hit his ribs while he defended himself. He tried not to laugh, but it was no use, and he howled with laughter.

"Jajeff, you are the most infuriating warrior I have known," she said, poking at him again.

"Say the truth," she demanded. "Say you love me." She poked him repeatedly as he giggled and gasped for breath. "Say it!"

"Okay, okay. I love you," he managed to blurt out. "But, I have not thought beyond these days with you, they have been so wonderful."

Smiling Woman slowly released him and sat back on her blanket, a serious look on her face, once again.

"I will not leave the bachelor lodge until I have mastered my gift and have found a way to earn the respect of my people," he finished solemnly.

"Are you really promised to Stepfast?" he added as an afterthought.

"Yes, I will return to my village and become his woman. This I will ask of my father," she added, looking at Running Horse.

Running Horse smiled warmly at his daughter, obviously relieved at her decision.

Jajeff abruptly stood and put his hand out to Smiling Woman.

"Walk with me," he asked, almost demanding.

Jajeff nodded his head slightly toward Running Horse and his woman. "Thank you for sharing your fire with me."

Both nodded in return.

"Then tell me, why have you misled me," he demanded once they were alone in the darkness at the edge of camp.

"Because I wanted to know if I could love someone other than Stepfast, and because I am happy being with you. Your honesty and your sense of humor is so refreshing to me." A small tear glistened at the corner of her eyes, made to sparkle by the dancing light from the distant fires.

"I think I did fall in love with you . . . a little, but it is Stepfast whom I love for life," she finished, sniffing loudly to emphasize her distress.

Jajeff tried to look into her eyes, but they had become only dark shadows in the night, her head, now silhouetted by the fire light. He could hear her breathing and felt the warmth of her body, and for a moment, decided that he should ask for her, so that he could be with her forever.

Impatient with Jajeff's silence, Smiling Woman pulled at his hand.

"Come, you will leave in the morning, so let us go up the canyon where we can be alone."

Her words swept the last of Jajeff's confusion from his mind, and he found new resolve, as he resisted her pull.

"This has been the most wonderful time for me, and I am glad you have decided to be my friend," he told her in a strong voice, and took her into his arms and held her firmly against him for a long time before releasing her.

"I must return to Shield Hand's fire," he said abruptly, and taking Smiling Woman's arm, hurried her to a place near her fire, where he released her hand and quickly retreated to his sleeping pad, determined not to let anyone see the tears welling up in his eyes.

He did not sleep very much that night, thinking instead, of the wonderful time he experienced with Smiling Woman, and wondering if he was making a mistake by not asking for her. He had not thought much about the sort of woman he did want, but after his experience with Smiling Woman, he knew that living in the bachelor lodge would be even more lonely than before.

The next morning came just as Jajeff thought he might be able to sleep. It was cooler than expected, and everyone seemed slow to rise and move about, giving Jajeff plenty of cover for his drowsiness. He stayed near Shield Hand's fire until the two chiefs decided it was time for the sharing, and when it was time, took his place in the circle beside Shield Hand, to listen to Running Horse talk of corn and water, and of seasons for planting.

"The corn knows when to come into the world, but it does not know how to bring the water, if there is none in the soil." The old chief lifted a handful of corn seeds and let them fall from his hand in a stream of gold and white.

"Father Spirit gave the corn to our people to grow and to protect, as a test of our compassion. We survive this test by listening to the corn and watching how it moves in the wind and under the sun. Always listen to the corn to know when to water it and when to take the harvest. But remember . . ." The old chief put his forefinger to his temple and winked knowingly at Jajeff.

"Always remember to ask the Corn Spirit permission before you take the corn, or else the Spirit will leave, and the corn will give no energy as food for the people. You will only have yellow powder, without life-giving substance."

This was at the time of formal exchange, when the chiefs officially gave the gifts each group would carry home with them from their trading excursions. Even though everyone knew exactly what was being traded, it was customary for everyone to show proper respect for the gifts, as if it was the first time they had seen them. Politely, Jajeff and Shield Hand nodded their heads and made appropriate sounds of approval, while Running Horse made claim to the benefits each of his gifts would give the Hawk People. Soon it would be Two

Hand's turn to boast, and their good attention now assured the good attention of the Desert People later.

Jajeff was interested in everything being said, but after the chief had moved away from corn, to talk of furs and herbs, Jajeff could not help but turn his attention to Smiling Woman, who was sitting beside her mother and just behind her father. She was watching him and making suggestive movements of her eyes to tease him even though she knew he could not openly respond. He grinned at her and rolled his eyes, but otherwise, made no sign he noticed. Naturally, this goaded her into trying even harder to make him respond, and so, they entertained each other as talk of fine gifts and valued trades droned on, receding into the background of Jajeff's attention as he savored the memory he would always carry of the days he shared with Smiling Woman of the Desert People.

Once Shield Hand finished presenting the furs and dried pieces of the finest cuts of elk heart, the time of sharing was concluded and everyone crowded around to grasp hands and bid one another a safe journey back to their village. Jajeff stood at the edge of the melee and waited for Shield Hand to lead the way out of the canyon.

Smiling Woman came up to him, and stood before him without speaking.

"What?" Jajeff demanded in a playfully sarcastic voice.

"What, what?" she responded in turn.

Jajeff looked into her eyes for a long time before saying more. Finally, he smiled and took her hands in his. "I will always remember you, Smiling Woman."

"And I, you, Jajeff. I am sorry for having let you love me." She turned and hurried over to stand beside her mother, looking at him only from the corner of her eyes, the glisten of tears visible in the morning sun.

Finally, Shield Hand yelled for his warriors to join him, and went abruptly to the side of the camp nearest the mouth of the canyon, Jajeff close by his side. They waited there, as the warriors scrambled to secure the goats, so that they could lead them away.

"So Young Jajeff, are you ready to return north, or must we prepare a joining first?" Shield Hand winked at the other braves, and they all laughed good heatedly about Jajeff's obvious infatuation with Smiling Woman.

"No, I will always have a place for her in my heart but not in my lodge. I am ready to return," he answered, trying to hide the feeling of despair he felt gathering in his chest.

"I don't understand. She would make a fine addition to our tribe and it is clear you two are one in heart."

Jajeff hung his head to show his regret but stood fast to his answer. Evidently, Shield Hand was unaware that another man had already asked for Smiling Woman, and Jajeff was not sure it would be wise to tell him otherwise, lest Shield Hand think of him as a fool for loving a woman who was not available to be loved.

"She is a wonderful woman and would give me fine children, but she has been asked for by another," Jajeff admitted, already regretting his honesty, as he waited for Shield Hand to begin teasing him.

"Ho! You are looking for someone like Mother Lily, rather than a skinny little girl from the desert. You cannot fool me." Shield Hand laughed and cheerfully slapped Jajeff on the back, while pointing at the trail, indicating that Jajeff should lead the way.

As he stepped forward to take the lead, Jajeff paused to glance at Shield Hand, meeting his eyes as he did. The old chief grinned at Jajeff, letting him know that he knew the other men had not heard Jajeff's explanation, and so, had chosen to let his experience with Smiling Woman be his alone to know. In that moment, the old warrior, who had lived long enough to become the chief of his people, and the young Watcher, who would one day find the spiritual maturity to become a Spirit Elder, found a trust for one another that would last the rest of their

lives. Jajeff nearly stumbled, he was so surprised, but he quickly regained his composure and took his place at the head of the trail.

Just before they turned the first bend in the trail, Shield Hand stopped and turned to wave at the Desert People, who were still watching their departure. Jajeff waved too and felt a moment of sadness, when he saw Smiling Woman wave, and afterwards, he remained quiet for the remainder of the morning, as his small party slowly moved out of the canyon of yellow and red rocks, and through a forest of peculiarly short trees that marked the edge of the desert.

"Ho, Jajeff, find us a better way through those mountains than you did on the way here. I nearly froze my feet off in that pass you took us through," Broken Claw called to Jajeff from behind, where he led his pack goats.

Jajeff looked back and grinned at him and then set his mind to the task of scouting the trail. This was the way he had come to serve his people, by using the Eyes of the Forest to see the trail, to find the best path and to be sure there were no surprises along the way. His favorite eyes were those of the crows, who persistently followed their progress, flying from tree to tree along their route, calling to others to warn them of the presence of people in the woods. Unlike the ravens of the desert, the crows were always there, always vigilant, and usually friendly to his gentle probing. He was with the crows so often that he sometimes thought of himself as the Crow Man, except that taking such a name would be an insult among the Hawk People, so he kept his friendship with the crows a private joke between him and the forest.

They followed animal trails, mostly. Trails that took them along foothills and near watering holes, and occasionally to streams they sometimes were forced to swim, each warrior escorting a nervous goat as he crossed. On the third day, they entered a great valley, and at Jajeff's direction, turned to the west so that they could skirt an inland sea, that he understood from a friendly buzzard, to be filled with water that was useless for drinking. Once past the inland sea, they found a canyon with a river that flowed north and west, taking them into a vast plain of rolling hills, covered everywhere with black rocks and yellow grass. Their journey across the plain was boring for everyone, and all of the men were very happy, when the river they followed joined with another, and turned west into the mountains and toward the ocean. This was where Jajeff's gift was of the greatest use to the small party, because rather than following the slow moving river, they climbed the last, black-rock littered hill above the river, and walked into the deep forest, less than seven days from their village.

The men's mood began to improve, as they climbed past the first trees and smelled the refreshing scent of pines and cedars, that drifted to them in the cool breeze from the mountains that lay ahead of them. Soon, they were picking their way through the tall forest where the trees stood as giants forming a canopy so dense, the sun seldom reached the moss covered ground. Jajeff liked it there, because he felt somehow closer to Father Spirit, and Mother Earth, as if his people had discovered the place Spirit rested when it was not busy making the world. The other men seemed to share his sense of awe, because none spoke more than necessary until nightfall, when they made camp. Each of the evenings they were in the deep forest, they found an open meadow or a stream where they could see the stars, a place as far from the giant trees as possible, so that their presence would not disturb Father Spirit's rest.

One morning, Jajeff woke before the others and climbed to the top of a small rock outcropping on the slope near their camp. He was restless and felt the need to spend a few moments within himself, before beginning the long day in the company of the others. They were good men, but their rough ways and sometimes harsh jokes wore on him, and he knew a moment of quiet would help him to be more patient with them during the day.

The place he found in the rocks, afforded him a rare view over the tree tops to the valley that stretched ahead of them. He could see the sun as it peaked above the mountains to his right, making the mighty peak two days to his left shine gold with the new day. Not satisfied with the view from his vantage point, he closed his eyes to find a friendly hawk or eagle to join for a better look at the rising sun.

"Ho!" he exclaimed to the morning air, as he joined with an old buzzard, circling high over the most fantastic canyon he had ever seen. He had heard of such a canyon from other tribes and knew that the place he was seeing was far south of him, even further in the desert than they had just traveled. It was Smiling Woman, he remembered with an ache in his chest, who had said her home was many days travel north of a great canyon. Surely, this was the canyon she had described. Jajeff was truly impressed, but he was equally surprised that he had joined with a bird flying over the canyon, when he had expected to find one flying over the valley before him.

Suddenly Jajeff's heart stood still, and he lost contact with the buzzard, he was so shocked by what he had seen through the big bird's eyes. He scrambled to his feet and blinked his eyes in amazement, looking around himself, as if looking for an attacking predator.

What, in the name of Father Spirit did he see on the canyon's rim, he wondered, trying to recapture the image in his memory. Never in his life, had he seen such a creature, nor was he sure he wish to again. It had moved so fast through the trees.

Jajeff returned to his rock and worked very hard to calm his mind. It took many moments for him to regain his self-control, but when he did, he reached out once again and found the buzzard still soaring above the canyon. The big bird had swung further out over the canyon toward the distant side, blocking Jajeff's view of the nearby rim, and forcing him to patiently wait for it to finish its loop and once again face the rim.

"There it is," Jajeff thought to himself, as the buzzard turned its attention back to the silver thing that was rushing along the edge of the rim faster than a deer could run. He insisted that the buzzard follow the thing so that he could get a better look, and reluctantly, it obliged, swooping down toward it so that Jajeff could see more detail.

The beast was not silver at all, but was the brightest blue he had ever seen, with shiny surfaces that reflected the morning light, like pools of water glistening in the sun. The beast moved much faster than the bird, having a smooth black trail to run on, and Jajeff noted with shock that it had no legs to run with, only round things that looked like ends of logs. Soon, it had followed the black trail into the stubby trees and out of his sight, and the buzzard swung defiantly out over the canyon again, letting Jajeff know that it had no interest in the beast.

Jajeff retreated from the bird in shock and sat on his rock outcropping, staring at the valley before him, but seeing only the shiny thing streaking in and out of the small trees, dodging and turning as if frolicking along the rim of the canyon. Then, confused and a little frightened, he returned to the camp and the mundane chores of his world.

At first, he wanted to run to Shield Hand, and tell him about the shiny thing, but when he reached the camp and saw the men's sleepy eyes and slow movements, he decided that they were in no mood for stories of strange beasts and would probably laugh at him, saying he was mistaking his dreams for truth.

"So, how long have you been about?" Shield Hand wanted to know as Jajeff walked up to the small fire.

"Not long. I have found a high place and have been admiring the view. You should see what I have seen from there." Jajeff still struggled with the urge to tell the men, but found that he was beginning to doubt his memory. Perhaps he had fallen asleep for a moment, and had seen nothing, only a dream shadow that seemed like a shiny beast.

"On the other hand," he reminded himself, "how could I have imagined such a thing, even in my dreams."

Jajeff said nothing about it to the men, but he became very careful how he selected the host he used to watch the trail, making sure that he visited only animals he could see. He also became very nervous, and jumped at every sound he heard near the trail, wondering if the strange beast was hiding there, waiting to streak out from the trees to devour him and his friends.

He did not understand what he had seen, but the idea of a shiny blue creature running so fast through the forest, made his mind reel. He thanked Father Spirit that he did not live near that canyon, and wondered why Smiling Woman had not mentioned how it was to know that such a creature lived in her part of the world.

Eventually, Shield Hand noticed how jumpy he had become, and called to Jajeff to walk beside him for a while.

"What is making you so jumpy, Young Jajeff? You act as if you expect to see a bear run from behind every tree." Shield Hand watched Jajeff closely to measure his answer.

Jajeff still did not want to try explaining what he had seen, and searched his mind for an answer that would satisfy Shield Hand.

"I have not slept well these nights, and I guess the lack of sleep is making me hear things that are not there." He tried to look tired, hoping Shield Hand would accept his explanation.

"I'll bet you are remembering that skinny desert girl," Shield Hand said, putting his big arm around Jajeff's shoulder in a comforting hug.

"It will pass, you will see," he added wisely and asked no more questions for the rest of their journey.

It was near the last range of mountains before their village that Jajeff finally found the nerve to make contact with the buzzard to see if he could find the blue creature again. It was morning, and he sat away from the others, near a small pond that reflected a mighty volcano in its still water. A squirrel ran along a fallen tree near him and complained loudly at his presence, the sound of its voice echoing from saplings growing from the rubble of a recent flood on the other side of the pond. The chatter was joined by the strong beat of a woodpecker somewhere in the distant forest, and a frog seemed to answer from the shore only feet from where Jajeff sat. Before closing his eyes to find the buzzard, Jajeff let these sounds soak into his mind, to reassure him that all in the world was as it should be.

Brother Buzzard was a familiar feeling in his mind after his first experience with it, and contact came swiftly. Jajeff blinked and felt himself tasting the passing breeze, as he noticed with interest that the sun was suddenly higher on the horizon than it should have been. Below the dead limb he was sitting on, stretched the great canyon's rim, curving away from his vantage point in either direction, a silent river snaking along the canyon floor far below. Jajeff could see nothing from his new vantage point that suggested the presence of the blue creature, and try as he did, he could not coax the buzzard into moving to a new location.

"Jajeff, will you sit there all morning, or will you join us on the trail?"

Shield Hand stood waiting at the edge of their camp clearing. Frustrated, Jajeff thanked the buzzard for its patience and retreated from its presence so that he could join his chief for the day's journey.

Each morning, Jajeff tried to catch the buzzard in a place that would allow him to see the blue creature of the canyon rim, but as before, the buzzard was in a place that provided little or no view. He even tried finding other animals in the area that he could travel with, but he could never be sure that he was in the same place. His growing frustration was finally relieved on the last morning they would be on the trail, when he found the buzzard sitting on a limb just above the black trail.

Jajeff held his breath in anticipation. He also held a tight grip on his stomach, since his host was busy priming itself, and the constant motion of its head was raising havoc with Jajeff's sense of balance.

In the midst of the familiar sounds around its head, of wind pushing past bird feathers and the nearby pine needles, Jajeff noticed a new sound, such as he never heard before. It started as a slight change in the voice of the wind, but grew in loudness and became different from the wind, like the rushing sound of ice sliding on ice. The sound came nearer, yet the buzzard continued to prime itself, as if all was as it should be. Jajeff grew frantic that his stupid host would remain to become food for a predator, even while he was with it. He did not wish to die again but also did not want to miss finding out what had caused the new sound.

"Honk! Honk!" The approaching creature barked, as it came near the tree Jajeff's host was perched on.

That did it. The buzzard pulled its head out from under its wing and glanced down at the approaching creature with focused attention.

"Honk!" The creature barked again, as it rushed toward the tree.

The buzzard seemed to snort, as it unfolded its wings and launched itself into the morning air, over the canyon and away from danger. This time the creature was a very bright red, and there were people in it, people looking up at the buzzard, pointing and grinning as they happily sped past. The people, Jajeff noticed in amazement, were much too happy to have been eaten by the creature.

Jajeff coaxed the buzzard to follow the creature with every bit of his will, and to his relief, the buzzard responded by turning to follow along behind the creature that was speeding down the black trail. Now Jajeff noticed that there was yet another such creature on the trail, a white one with a slightly different shape. He was nearly in shock from what he had seen, yet what he saw next, forced him to withdraw from the buzzard, while holding firmly to his sense of oneness with Father Spirit.

Shaken to the very heart of his sense of order, Jajeff stood and rubbed his eyes, and then, stared at the land spread out before him many days journey in every direction. He let that wonderful sight fill his mind with the freshness of his world, giving himself more familiar things to remember until he felt strong enough to face what he had just seen with the buzzard. After a few moments to say a silent prayer to Father Spirit, Jajeff returned to the camp, but remained withdrawn from the other men, saying nothing of the creatures throughout the remaining distance to their village.

They reached the village late at night, when only the sentinels were awake to greet them and help them put the goats in their pens, and store seeds and other good in a place that would be safe until it was time for the Sharing. After this was finished, Shield Hands' small group of travelers, now fast friends because they had shared the long trail together, formed a circle and clasped hands, solemnly thanking one another for sharing a warrior's journey. Then each man retreated to his family and his sleeping pad. Jajeff found his familiar place in the bachelor lodge, and quickly made himself comfortable, happy to be in familiar surroundings. He tried very hard to sleep, but despite his great sense of satisfaction to be on his own sleeping pad, he could not sleep, and was still trying to make sense of what he had seen when the sun cast a shaft of light into his corner of the lodge.

Abandoning any hope to find sleep, Jajeff left the lodge and crossed the stream to the meadow where he collected tea herbs for Mother Lily. When the sun was full above the trees, he made his presence known outside Mother Lily's lodge and waited for her to appear. When she saw who it was banging on her wall, she came out and gave him a huge hug, pulling him close to her ample body until he thought for sure he would suffocate. He rescued himself by holding a skin filled with fresh Yellow Button flowers, up for her to see.

"You dear, this must be a very important visit for you to bring me so many fine flowers for my tea," she said, taking the skin and turning toward her lodge. "Come in my friend, and I will make us a fresh drink."

"Mother Lily, I have questions," Jajeff said to her back, as he followed her into the lodge, his voice subdued, as he allowed his suppressed tension and excitement to finally take control of his mood.

Mother Lily turned and looked at him, an eyebrow raised to question the tiredness she heard in his voice.

"You mean you have not come running to my lodge as soon as you returned, because you missed me? I am hurt, Young Jajeff." Mother Lily said with mock indignation.

Jajeff started to respond, but she put her hand up between them, stopping him from speaking.

"I will hear no questions, until you have told me everything there is to know about your journey. But first, sit down young man, so that I can make tea from your fine flowers." She quickly turned and disappeared behind a partition, giving him no chance to protest.

Mother Lily seldom put conditions on the time she gave him as counselor, so Jajeff accepted that she had good reason, and worked to control his excitement over what he had seen on the canyon's rim, and braced himself for a long discussion about his trip,

Mother Lily returned and poured hot water from the fire pot to make the tea, making him drink some before permitting the conversation to continue. Then she asked many questions about every detail he told her of the journey and the people he had met along the way. She especially wanted to know about Smiling Woman.

"So you decided not to take this desert girl as your woman. Do you intend to remain in the bachelor lodge all your life?" Mother Lily refilled Jajeff's cup while she listened to his answer.

"As I said, she has been asked for, Mother Lily," Jajeff reminded her, a pained expression on his face.

"Nonsense, that would not have stopped you if you really wanted her to be your mate. What is your real reason?" She sat back and crossed her arms, clearly intending the conversation to go no further until he answered her truthfully.

"Very well, I wanted her to be my woman, but I was glad she could not be."

Mother Lily frowned at him, indicating that he was making no sense.

"She is very lovable, but also very wild, and more interested in her comfort and entertainment, than in the comfort of people around her. I think for this reason, I was a little afraid of the power she might have over my judgment." He waited for Mother Lily to raise her eyebrow again, and was relieved when instead, she patted him on his shoulder in a reassuring gesture.

"I think I understand, my friend. You have learned to have good judgment from me, and you make me proud." She giggled and rocked back in her seat, delighted at the thought that he may have learned such valuable skills from her.

After a time of concentrated remembering and telling, Jajeff found that he was relaxed and could think more clearly than he had for days. He picked up his now empty tea cup and sniffed at it.

"Mother Lily, you have fed me one of your brews to calm my thinking, haven't you."

"Your eyes looked wild, as if you were being chased by angry Spirits. You were so tense when you first arrived, I felt it was best to distract you for a while, so that my tea could calm your nerves. Now, what is it that has caused angry spirits to chase you?"

Jajeff basked for a moment in the wondrous love Mother Lily was able to show him. Then he heard the sound of the creature echo in his mind and turned his attention to describing what he had seen.

"I was with a buzzard, high over a great canyon of the southern desert. First I saw a shiny, blue creature running fast along a black trail. The next time I saw it, I could see that the creature was hollow, with people inside, as if eaten by the creature, only the people were not eaten and seemed glad to be in the creature. Then I saw one of the creatures join others of its kind in a corral near a rock lodge that hung over the cliffs. There were people there also, dressed in bright clothes and carrying strange boxes, which they often looked through toward the canyon and each other. Many of the people were pale skinned like the French, but they were dressed in much finer clothing, of many very bright colors. All that I saw frightened me so much that I retreated from the buzzard, and I am not sure if it is safe to look again."

The words rushed from his mouth in a breathless torrent, and he could feel the tension returning to his body, despite Mother Lily's potent tea.

Mother Lily listened without comment or question, until he had finished. Even then, she remained quiet for a long time, sipping from her tea and staring out the entryway of her lodge at the stream beyond. Finally, she leaned forward in her chair and took his hands in hers.

"You never fail to entertain me, Young Jajeff. First you can see with the Eyes of the Forest and then you turn out to be a young, old wise man and now, you can see across the border between worlds. I have known of no one else so gifted."

"What is this gift, Mother Lily? What did I see?" Jajeff asked with growing excitement at her apparent understanding.

"I do not know what you have seen, but you can be sure it is not in your imagination. There are stories told around the council fire, when Spirit Elders gather to share smoke. No new ones for sure, but there are stories from the past about gifted ones who could see into a different world full of wondrous, often frightening things. From what you have described, you are seeing into this different world, Young Jajeff, and you can be sure your gift will bring new stories to the Sharing." She was quiet for a while longer before continuing.

Jajeff could only stare at Mother Lily in wonder, barely comprehending what she had said.

"Have you told Shield Hand of this?" she continued.

"No . . . no, I have told no one," he answered, still trying to catch up with Mother Lily's words.

Every time he brought her news of strange things and new gifts, it seemed to him, she already knew of them and was able to tell him more.

"Do you know everything there is to know, Mother Lily?" he said abruptly, startling himself with the petulant tone of his voice.

"No," she answered with a grin, "but I have lived longer than you and have had more opportunity to learn of these things. You will see, one day, a young man or woman will wonder if you do not know everything there is to know. This will happen to you, also."

Jajeff thought about her words for a moment, deciding that she was right and that given the time, he too could know as much as she did now. Then he noticed her grin and realized what she wanted him to do.

"You want me to tell Shield Hand at the Sharing tonight, don't you."

"It would be a grand tale that would delight the people and show them your new gift." She still grinned, but also held her breath, waiting to see how Jajeff would react.

He reacted by standing and nervously pacing in the tiny space of Mother Lily's living area.

"What?" she asked, wanting to know what was in his mind.

Jajeff stopped and answered her with new determination in his voice, glad to have decided on a course of action.

"Yes, I will tell the people tonight. I will do it after talk of our journey is finished, and everyone believes they have heard all there is to tell."

He stopped in front of Mother Lily and knelt so that his eyes were level with hers.

"I will dance and tell my story, just as I remember it, so that they will all see what I have seen and know that I have done a great thing," he finished, beginning to accept that he really had done a great thing, and that it was something worth sharing with his people.

"Good," Mother Lily agreed. "When Shield Hand understands how different this is from what others can do, he will be very proud to have such a gifted one among his people. Surely, he will name you a warrior then." She had a very satisfied smile on her face.

Jajeff, too, had a smile on his face, and he was about to thank Mother Lily for her help, when he remembered what had happened the last time he had tried to make Shield Hand proud of his gift.

"When I told Shield Hand about the Eyes of the Forest, he laughed at me and told me that it was nothing. Will he be the same about this? Why should he believe me, or think my gift has value to our people?" Despite his determination, his concern for Shield Hand's reaction did make him hesitate.

"He may not see the value, but because he has seen the value of your first gift, he will accept that there must be value in the second, he is wise like that," Mother Lily answered, nodding her head as she did. "He will see that you will give the people a new perspective of their world. By seeing into this new world, you will bring back many wonderful stories to entertain and educate them. You will bring much enjoyment to our lives, Young Jajeff. Surely he will see the good in this."

"Very well, Mother Lily, I will dance tonight at the sharing."

Jajeff patted her on her shoulder and left her lodge to prepare for his dance. He knew his people had little to distract their attention from the hard work of daily living, and anything that could brighten their lives, by entertaining them or educating them about other people and places, would provide a welcome diversion. The people expected to hear all about their chief's journey into the desert, during the special gathering that evening, but they did not expect to hear about a new, even stranger place or to discover that Jajeff had been given an even greater gift than before. He would surprise them by telling his story after all the expected story telling was finished for the evening, and he would do it in a way that would be fun for all to witness. He would do it, he realized, to earn the respect of his people, that he had lost by his unwillingness to hunt or to eat meat as they did.

"I will be a warrior after all," he thought to himself as he tied sticks together to form a small box.

"I will be known as The Watcher by my people, and they will respect me for the things I can see, that they cannot," he thought as he fashioned the buzzard feathers, he had borrowed from Old Three Fingers collection, into a tail and wings that could be held tight to his sleeves and his back with fish bone hooks.

"I will be known as the warrior who does not eat meat, and others will see that I am strong and quick in thought, and they will not kill my friends in the forest," he thought hopefully, remembering the elk that had died because of his desire to be accepted by his people.

After taking a moment to thank Father Spirit for trusting him with such important gifts, Jajeff gathered his costume under his shirt, so that no one would see that he would dance that night, and hurried to the council lodge, where the Sharing was to take place.

The Sharing began slowly as the people finished their chores for the day, first with the smell of smoke from the cook pits, as cooking venison mingled with the smoke to make the

air smell so good that even Jajeff's stomach rumbled with interest. There were other smells too, the women cooking breads made from some of the new corn brought to them by their chief, and yellow and red roots freshly uncovered for the occasion. With the smells came the children lingering near the fires, hoping for an early taste to satisfy their craving. The old men and women also gathered nearby, to offer their advice and taste the food. Warriors sat in front of the council lodge, sharing fire for their pipes and stories from their past, wanting to taste the food but too proud to join the others, until it was time.

Eventually, every person in the village was hovering near the clearing in front of the council lodge or around the cook pits and the sitting logs, waiting for Chief Shield Hand to come out with the elders to begin the Sharing, by taking the first piece of meat. Near the time the sun first touched the Great Wall, Chief Shield Hand's woman, Butterfly, ceremoniously put down the stick she used to stir the fire and made her way to the council lodge entrance to call Shield Hand for dinner.

Jajeff liked that moment of the Sharing best, because he enjoyed watching Butterfly move as in a dream, the people so quiet, anticipating the beginning of the Sharing, as one mind looking forward to the stories Shield Hand would tell and the taste of new food from a distant land.

Shield Hand stepped from the lodge on cue, a splendid image of a warrior in his ceremonial dress, a strong lance in one hand and his favorite pipe in the other. The people remained silent, as he raised his pipe in the air and sang thanks to Father Spirit and Mother Earth for bringing them to this moment in honor and good health. Then, he looked at the cook pits and sniffed at the air.

"Let's eat," he said loudly and went to his favorite sitting log to sit and be served.

In moments, it seemed to Jajeff, all one hundred and forty-three Hawk People were sitting around the clearing enjoying their food, while Shield Hand told of their journey into the desert.

Jajeff sat near Shield Hand, as was his right as a member of the trading party, patiently, with the confidence of a man who had seen the future and knew that all would be well in his life.

"Or, had he fooled himself into believing he was about to do the right thing," he wondered to himself, and smiled, knowing that he would endlessly struggle with the question until his moment of truth, and the time for his dance, was at hand.

Later that night, before the conversation changed from sharing new experiences to more mundane things, Jajeff slowly rose to his feet and walked with deliberate steps across the space held by the fire, where he could have the attention of the people. He stopped near the fire, and looked at everyone to see that they were watching, slowly turning until he faced Shield Hand. Then, he extended his hand so that Shield Hand could see the single buzzard's tail feather he held.

"Good Chief, I have more to tell of our journey."

Shield Hand was clearly surprised by Jajeff's ceremonial approach but quickly recovered his composure and looked at Mother Lily with suspicion. She smiled back at him, sweetly. He snorted and looked back to Jajeff, cautiously nodded his permission for him to continue. With that, Jajeff set aside the last of his doubts, and lifted his head toward the night sky, speaking loudly, he asked Father Spirit to listen and accept his story as the truth, and to accept it for the good of the Hawk People. Then he cried a triumphant sound, just to make himself feel good and to quicken the hearts of his audience.

He crouched down low and pivoted around in a single, fluid motion, as he stuck feathers under a strap on his back and held his arms out wide to mimic the soaring flight of the lonely buzzard, feathers flapping loosely from their hooks at his shoulders. The people were

delighted, as he swooped around the fire, his feet marking a cadence that they soon followed with drums and clapping hands.

"I have seen into a different place than ours, where there are people in strange clothing, who use even stranger tools." Jajeff told his story about the great canyon and the lone buzzard that soared high above a snaking river, far below. He moved among the people, mimicking the things he saw and the way he had reacted, falling to the ground in astonishment, running around the fire as if fleeing unseen things to show his fear, barking like the shiny creature did, when it had passed under him, and holding the box he had made to illustrate how the strangers had behaved. Then, when he had finished, he stood nearly exhausted in front of Shield Hand with lowered head, and said: "This I have seen with the eyes of the buzzard."

The people were quiet for a long breath, as they waited for their chief to respond. Shield Hand did nothing for a moment, as he looked at each of his elders, asking with his eyes, for their judgment before he gave his. Then he stood, and let his stern gaze relax as he put his hand on Jajeff's shoulder.

"You are truly a Spirit Warrior, and I am proud to know you as Jajeff, Spirit Warrior of the Northern Hawk People."

With that, Shield Hand turned Jajeff around and presented him to the people.

"Come, come and greet Jajeff, our new Spirit Warrior who now sits with the elders in council," he said, and stepped back to his seat.

The others stood and came to Jajeff in a flurry of happy faces and excited voices. They came to thank him and congratulate him for such a wonderful story, their smiles and happy voices testimony to the excitement he was able to convey to them. They all wanted to hold his hand and talk about the shiny things and the fair skinned people who lived in them. There was much to talk about, and they wanted to talk about all of it right away.

While Jajeff was being surrounded by well wishing people, he caught sight of Mother Lily and exchanged a knowing look with her.

"Thank you Mother Lily," he thought to her, "Thank you for having faith in me."

Then, with immense relief, he turned to his people and gladly accepted their complements, and for much of that night, he talked with them and shared his thoughts about the shiny creatures with them.

The following months brought Fall and early snows in the nearby mountains, and cold air to the Hawk People's valley. Soon, snow was on the ground there too, and the people shifted to their winter ways of life, to accommodate the short days and long nights. The winter months were always hard for the people, but they also brought time for them to spend in the company of others, to share stories and learn new crafts. When the warriors could not easily hunt and the women could not tend the plants they grew for food, or gather seeds from the forest, the people gathered in the warm places and made useful things the tribe used to trade for other useful things during tribal gatherings in the spring. It was also a time for Jajeff to explore the other world for long periods of time, without feeling that he was neglecting his duties.

Jajeff explored the buzzard's world out of a sense of duty, because he felt that there must be a reason he had been given the gift of seeing that place, and he suspected that the shiny creatures were part of that reason. He remained with the buzzard for many days, but since it seldom came close to the strange people or their lodges, he found that he could learn little more than he had that first day at the corral, where he had seen the people walking around the shiny creatures. Jajeff knew he needed to find a new host, and set out to discover how to do so.

At first, an animal in his world was just like an animal in the other world to Jajeff, and he could never tell if he was in the other world or his own, when he made new contact. This was a problem for him, so he repeatedly returned to the buzzard that flew over the canyon and a buzzard that flew over his valley in his world, seeking some clue of a difference between the two worlds. What he discovered was very strange to him and troubled him a great deal. There was a difference in vitality between the two birds. The one in his world was strong and always alert for new food, while the other seemed to rest much more and did not have the sharp edge of alertness it needed to compete with the other buzzards for the best food. He considered that the one on the other side was just old or sickly but ruled that idea out after visiting several other buzzards he knew to be flying over the same canyon. They were just not as alert as were the buzzards of his world.

In time, Jajeff found that he could reach into the darkness of his mind and recognize that difference in vitality, as a feeling that always accompanied the animals of the other side. He came to think of the other side as the Dim World, and the animals there as poorer and weaker creatures. Thus, he came to know when he had made contact with an animal in the other world.

After Jajeff had learned to consistently make contact in the Dim World, he spent nearly all his spare time finding new animals to commune with, so that he could explore their part of the world. From small birds and animals that lived near people's lodges, he learned that the shiny creatures he had first encountered were really things they used as beasts of burden, only they were not beasts at all, but were tools made of wondrous material that he had never seen in his world. Although the world did not seem as bright and inviting as did his, the people there did have many things he found interesting, and it seemed to him that they endured fewer hardships at the hand of nature than did his people.

Perhaps the most striking thing he noticed about the Dim World was the number of people who lived there. There were so many people that there was hardly any room left for the animals and the forest. Even more disturbing was that he could see they showed no sign of respect for Father Spirit or his children, as if they did not know of his existence. Instead, they sent out their tools to take from the land in great quantities with no sign of first asking, or later, of thanking Mother Earth for her gifts. This disturbed Jajeff and made him fearful for their safety from an angry Father Spirit.

One evening, when the snow was very deep, and the bachelor lodge seemed particularly lonely, Jajeff found himself bound up in a dark shadow of sadness for himself, because he did not have a woman to help him feel part of a family. Such a mood was not uncommon for him in the winter, when the nights were long and there was little warmth in the sun, but this time his feelings seemed especially strong, even bringing tears to his eyes. It was after a whole day and night of such feelings that his mind finally turned from the darkness and sought out the memory of Smiling Woman to make him feel better.

Jajeff's mood brightened as soon as he remembered her kind face and soft voice, and though he had always promised himself that he would not violate her privacy by seeking her out through the eyes of animals, he could not help himself and was soon searching for an animal near her to see her face once again. He searched in his mind, thinking of how she had made him happy, when he had been with her and how pretty she was when she had smiled at him.

In time, he felt the usual disorientation he experienced when making contact with an animal and blinked once, and again, as he sensed the kitten he was with, and measured its well-being. To his surprise, he was with a kitten in the Dim World, one of the small, Dim World cats he found so fascinating. Curious about how he could have made such a mistake, he remained with the playful thing, as it scampered across a soft setting pad inside one of the

wondrous Dim World lodges. It was chasing a bright red strand that was rapidly slipping away along the pad. The kitten paused briefly, to prepare an attack, and Jajeff giggled to himself, as he felt it launch itself after the escaping strand. Jajeff heard a person near the kitten also giggle, a melodious sound that reminded him of Quiggly's two-reed flute, and he urged the kitten to look up to see who the other person was. Obliging, the kitten did, and Jajeff found himself looking at the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. The kitten must have felt his surprise, because it squeaked and sat back on its haunches, still looking at the woman.

The woman said something in the softest and most melodic voice Jajeff could imagine and picked the kitten up to hold close to her soft face. She continued to make melodic sounds and rocked the kitten back and forth as if it were a baby. Jajeff was stunned by the experience and felt completely in agreement with the kitten's loud purring that rumbled in his mind. Even the woman's smell was delightful, being the first person he had ever known to smell like a wild rose in spring.

"If only I could see her face again," Jajeff thought as he held his breath, feeling an unfamiliar sense of urgency and need to look at her face again, but as Father Spirit would have it, it was not to be. Jajeff recognized that the kitten was about to go to sleep, and almost frantically immersed himself in the sensation of being in its mind, so that he could be sure to recognize it the next time he wanted to return.

As he expected, the warmth of the woman's cheek and the soothing tones of her voice quickly put the kitten to sleep, leaving Jajeff no choice but to retreat.

"The problem with kittens," he grimaced, and withdrew from the Dim World to explore the vision of the young woman still lingering in his memory, fascinated by how Father Spirit had answered his dark mood with such a wonderful discovery.

"Could this be an omen? Wouldn't it be wonderful if it were an omen," Jajeff mused, savoring every moment of the encounter over and over again in his mind.

The next day, Jajeff hurried through the repair of one of the bachelor lodge walls that had been damaged by strong winds, and having no other chores for the day, retreated to the privacy of his corner. Confident that he would not be disturbed, he relaxed on his sleeping pad and closed his eyes to quiet his mind, remembering to thank Father Spirit for his help, before turning to the memory of the kitten he had visited the night before. It took a while, but he eventually sensed a brightness in his mind that he knew was the kitten, and found it playing on the ground in front of the girl's lodge. He knew the girl was nearby but could not see her, so he urged the kitten to squeak, as it had done the night before. This was easy, because the kitten recognized such a sound would bring a hug. As expected, the squeak worked, and Jajeff soon found himself in the arms of the woman. This time, she cradled the kitten in her arms, so that she could tickle it under the chin, and in that position, the kitten was able to see her face and Jajeff was able to look at her for a long while, and examine her features, permanently marking them in his memory.

Something about the woman had captured his heart, making his mind feel full of confusing wonder, every time he remembered her face. Was it her strong chin or deep blue eyes? He had never seen blue eyes before, nor had he known a woman who had light brown hair. He especially liked how her hair curled so neatly around her forehead, framing it and drawing his eyes to hers. Then there was her voice, so strong yet sweet, and without understand a word she spoke, he loved her voice above all else.

The woman held the kitten up to her face and put her lips to its forehead, before setting it back on the ground. Once on the ground, the kitten promptly sat on its haunches and watched, as the woman turned and sat at a table placed in the middle of a rock platform. Jajeff was fascinated to watch her intently move sheets of material that were attached in a

large bundle. She moved them back and forth, so that she could clearly see each side of each sheet, obviously studying something about them. The sheets reminded him of a very white version of the record-keeping paper the French and the Chinese used, when they bartered with his people. They maintained important records on the paper and even taught Mother Lily to keep her own records. "For our history," she once told Jajeff, but he believed she was really using it to keep track of her herbs, as her memory grew old.

The thought that this woman might be keeping records impressed him, because it suggested that she was knowledgeable, perhaps even in training to be a Spirit Leader for her people. His curiosity in what she was doing grew, making him want to see what was on the paper, but he could think of no way to get the kitten on the table.

As if the kitten understood his desire, it emitted a series of loud meows, persistently demanding attention, until the woman relented and picked it up again. This time, she put the kitten on the table by her bundle of white paper and played with it absent-mindedly, while she stared at the bundle.

Jajeff was amazed. The woman was studying lines and characters that were neatly printed on the paper, as if they had been put there by a very small hand. By her concentration on the characters and the occasional marks she made at the edge of the paper, he realized she was using the bundle to study and learn something that was obviously very important to her.

At first, Jajeff was simply intrigued at the idea that she could be learning from records, instead of learning from an elder, but then she turned the paper over, revealing drawings of corn stalks and of seed. The drawings shocked him so much, the kitten reacted by crying loudly, startling the woman, who reassured it by scratching it behind an ear.

"Look again, Little One, look at the paper," he pleaded with the kitten, visualizing the paper, doing everything he could to get the kitten to let him see the drawings again.

Obediently, the kitten glanced back at the paper for a moment, but then it attempted to bit a hole in a corner of the paper, and the woman picked the kitten up, and set it down on the ground, speaking stern sounding words as she did.

Jajeff held tightly to his sleeping pad, trying very hard not to lose control of his stomach, as he rode with the kitten to the ground. He was not ready to leave the kitten, but despite his attempts to stay, he felt his awareness flash back to his dark corner of the bachelor lodge.

He thought about what he had seen for a long time, carefully reviewing his memory to recognize every hint of what the beautiful woman had been doing. It was his excitement at having seen the drawings of corn, that had caused him to lose his concentration, the excitement of realizing that a person from the Dim World was studying about the very plant he hoped would become a major part of his people's daily food.

"Surely," he thought, "she must be a very important member of her tribe to have drawings of corn on white paper."

A new feeling began to form deep within Jajeff's sense of Self, as the woman's face hovered before his mind's eye. She smiled at him, warmly, as if she knew it was him she was smiling at and not her kitten, and a chill crept over his scalp, causing him to grin like a child. She brushed her lips against his cheek, and his heart pounded wildly, making him feel light-headed and happy. She cuddled him against her chest, and tears came to his eyes, as he was reminded of his loneliness, and then he grinned again and wanted to shout his happiness to the world. Finally, he knew exactly the kind of woman he wanted to share his life with, and that knowledge made him feel strong and certain about his future.

He pulled his warmest cover over his shoulders and ran out of the lodge to let the cold air embrace him, and make him feel vibrant and alive with its sharp edge. He sang to the sky, to Father Spirit and Mother Earth, thanking them for the fine gift they had given him.

"I will make such a woman my mate," he sang, and ran back into the lodge and stood by the fire pit to get warm again.

Then, Jajeff danced and sang, he was so happy. Yet, even as certainty took firm hold of his mind, another thought forced its way into his awareness, and he realized that the only one he would likely ever know to have those qualities, was studying plants on the wrong side of the barrier between his world and the Dim World.



## The Crystal Master

Jajeff was ecstatic after discovering his new love. He even named her "Song Flower" to remember her soft voice and her sweet smell. After that first wonderful day, he spent much of his time trying to be with her through the kitten, and when she was away from the kitten or Jajeff could not find time to seek her out, he lived with the memories of her lovely face. He had many duties to perform for the people, such as looking after the older children's education and helping the men keep track of the movement of the occasional bear that would come dangerously near the village, but these things were not demanding, and he had much spare time to dream of his new love.

At first, Jajeff made a habit of remaining with the kitten, but it turned out that he had more time to spend with the kitten than did Song Flower. Jajeff discovered that she lived in her lodge with two other people, who were apparently her mother and father, but Jajeff could not be sure, because their behavior toward one another was so strange to him. They seemed close as a family should be, but they did not share as much time together as did families in his world, and Song Flower was away from the kitten for large parts of each day. In fact, it appeared that the kitten was completely alone in the lodge during those times. Jajeff thought he had their routine figured out, when all three members of the family changed their pattern of coming and going for two days, remaining around the lodge most of the time, and then they returned to the previous routine of being away most of the day.

Jajeff spent many days attempting to understand when he could expect to find Song Flower home, but despite his best efforts, more often than not, he found the kitten alone in the house. Frustrated that he could not learn more about his love through the eyes of the kitten, he sought out Mother Lily's advice, hoping she could help him find a way.

Until then, he had told no one of his love, out of fear that they would ridicule him for loving someone outside of his world, someone who was so obviously out of reach. He trusted Mother Lily, though, and decided that the risk of ridicule from her was worth the advice she might be able to give him.

Mother Lily was in her lodge when he found her, and she received him with her usual friendly hug and offer of her best tea.

"You bring me sweet water grass, where did you find this so early in the spring?" She accepted Jajeff's gift and carefully suspended it from a drying rack.

"The grass is already coming to life in the water where the snow has melted. I know you use it for your medicines." He admired his gift, glistening in the fire light where Mother Lily had hung it.

"Does this mean you have not come only to brighten my day?" Mother Lily asked, grinning at his obvious pattern of bringing her gifts when he needed help.

"Yes, once again I have come to you for your wit and wisdom, unlike those other men who only want your charming company," he answered, managing to keep a straight face as he did.

"And good cooking. Don't forget my cooking," she laughed.

"So, what is it that has brought you to Mother Lily on this bright morning, Young Jajeff? Have you discovered yet another world?" she asked, after she was comfortably seated by him in front of her fire pit.

"Another world would be just about all I could take right now. No, I have fallen in love, Mother Lily." He did not look at her as he spoke, fearing she would see in his eyes what he wanted to tell her, before he could properly prepare her for the strange truth.

"Oh, and do I know who it is that has managed to capture your attention so that you can say this?" She peered at him over her cup with new interest, closely watching his expressions.

"I have named her Song Flower, but you do not know her." Jajeff danced around her question, still unsure of how he could explain his predicament.

"You have named her? Does she not have her own name? What family is she from? Is this the girl you met in the desert?" Mother Lily was nearly bouncing out of her seat, with excitement at the prospects that Jajeff would finally chose a mate.

"No, and I do not know, and no," Jajeff responded laughing. "She is from the Dim World."

Jajeff had told Mother Lily how he had named the other world he visited through the eyes of animals, and she immediately understood what he was telling her. There was a heavy silence between them, while Mother Lily took a moment to consider the implications of being in love with someone in the other world.

"You have fallen in love with a woman from the other side? But how is this possible? Surely you know that your love cannot be returned." She moved her head in sad denial. "You will waste your love, if you give your heart to a person who can never be more than a shadowy thing, . . . a spirit to you."

"I understand this, but Song Flower has already taken my heart. She is so beautiful and so much like what I have always dreamed my woman would be. She is kind and smells so good. Everything about her reminds me of fresh growing things in the spring."

He searched his memory for the moment she had first captured his heart.

"And she is intelligent," he added with a decisive nod of his head, believing that her intelligence was the most important point of all.

"She is? How can you know? Has she said clever things to you? Sweet smell does not make her intelligent." Mother Lily had a bewildered look on her face, clearly thinking that her best efforts to raise Jajeff had gone for naught.

Jajeff recognized that Mother Lily was growing impatient with him, and began to regret seeking her advice.

"I should have known better than to expect anyone to understand my feelings," he thought ruefully, as he watched Mother Lily struggle to understand how her favorite student could be so foolish.

Knowing that there was no returning from the conversation, he shrugged his shoulders and pressed on, determined to make sense to his mentor.

"I have not come to ask you to help me escape my feelings for this woman. I have come to ask what you know about crossing over into her world." He spoke his words with his most commanding voice, hoping to make her focus on what he was saying.

Jajeff waited only a heartbeat for Mother Lily to soften her gaze on him and prepared to leave, when she did not.

"There is no use," he thought, a sense of loneliness pushing at the edge of his feelings, as he stood and turned away from her.

"Wait, Young Jajeff." She said, holding a hand out to him. "I can see that you are set in this thing, so I will try to help you."

Jajeff relaxed a little, trying to see in her face, her true opinion of him. Her eyes told him that she thought he was crazy, but the tone of her voice said she would not hold that against him, and he accepted that with thanks.

"I just want to know if there are stories from other Spirit Elders that may help me," he prompted her.

"You think that I would know how to cross over to a world I have never seen? You think too much of my experience." She shook her head, still frowning at him, clearly thinking about what he was asking.

She raised a chubby hand and held the flat of her palm toward him, as if stopping him from interrupting, even though he had not tried to do so. Her eyes were tightly closed, as though she could see something in her memory that was otherwise, obscured by light from the room.

"Wait, let me think for a moment," she said, still signaling Jajeff not to interrupt.

After a few moments, she lowered her head and spoke more to her lap than to Jajeff, her voice sounding tired and distant.

"Very well, I will commune with Spirit for a time. I will send for you, when I have an answer."

She looked up at him, where he was still standing near her entrance, her eyes strong now, showing Jajeff that she had made a decision and was determined to go forth with it.

"But Jajeff, I do not like this. The elders sometimes talk of danger where worlds sometimes grow near. I do not understand what this means, but I will find out, if this is what you truly wish."

She leaned back in her seat and sighed loudly.

"You should find love amongst your own people, not in some world you have only seen through the eyes of small animals. Why, you probably do not even understand the words this woman speaks." She smiled at him ruefully, knowing that he could not.

Jajeff could only cast her a boyish grin, because it was true, he could not understand Song Flower's words nor even many things she did.

He stepped back into the room and leaned down to put his hand on her shoulder.

"I will learn her language," he said softly. "And, in return for your help, I will tell you her word for the corn she studies in her bundle of papers."

It took a moment for his last comment to register with Mother Lily, but when it did, she quickly turned toward the entrance to ask him about the paper, only to see him disappeared beyond the flap.

"What paper?" she asked the empty room. "I knew there must be more than a pretty girl involved in his sudden desire to venture into this other world," she said aloud, relieved to think that Jajeff had not completely lost his senses, after all.

Over the following days, Jajeff devoted himself to finding other animals in the Dim World that could give him better opportunities to learn the language spoken by Song Flower. Again, it was the kitten that helped him, at least when it was awake. From time to time, he found the kitten in a big room in Song Flower's lodge. There, a strange box sat at the center of attention, much as a fire pit held a place of importance in the lodges of his people. His first experience with the box was very distressing, because he could see many little people scurrying about, pointing and making loud noises inside its shining surface. He could tell that sometimes they killed one another, because he saw one die in the arms of another. It was a very disturbing sight and upset him so much that the kitten sensed his distress and began crying. Song Flower mistook its crying as a request for attention, and picking it up, left the room and the box with its tiny, warring people.

It took many visits, but Jajeff eventually came to understand that the box was a source of information and that the people inside were not real, only images put there by more of the wondrous tools of the Dim World. This fascinated him, and he determined to look into the

box as often as he could, hoping that he could associate words that came out of it with things that were visible on its surface. The kitten was of little use for such a purpose, since it preferred napping to watching the box, but after much exploration, he found an old dog in another lodge, whose master seemed to always be in front of the same kind of box. The dog would rather have slept, but with Jajeff's prodding, it kept its eyes open often enough for Jajeff to gain a great deal of information about the Dim World.

Thus, Jajeff began his education of the language and culture of the Dim World, and when Mother Lily finally summoned him to her lodge, he had already learned a few things he could tell her.

"I have found a way of learning Song Flower's language," Jajeff said in triumph, as he came into Mother Lily's lodge.

She was just setting a clay pot of water above her fire pit, when he came in.

"Oh, there you are," she said, startled by his sudden and boisterous arrival.

Jajeff hesitated for only a moment before he excitedly continued telling her what he had learned.

"I have discovered that the people in the Dim World have a box that talks and gives them information about almost everything you can imagine," he said, continuing with a description of some of the things he had seen on the box, being careful not to mention the anger he had sensed in the images.

If Mother Lily thought the Dim World was as violent as it seemed to him, she might refuse to help him, out of fear that he might somehow unleash that anger against her people. She always thought of her world as a friendly and uncomplicated place. When her world did seem angry, when people died very young or winters were especially hard, she always told the people that it was an honest hardship brought to the Hawk People for reasons that most often, did not directly concern them.

"Father Spirit has an interest in other part of his world too, and sometimes hurts us by accident as he makes changes elsewhere. We may suffer, but we should not believe that Father Spirit has abandoned us or has become angry with us," she would say, and always conclude with a wise nod of her head as she reminded the people that: "We should not take everything he does personally."

Mother Lily was appropriately impressed with his story about the talking box.

"You mean to tell me they actually have little people in these boxes? My goodness, I would never have dreamed of such a thing. Where do these people come from?" Her eyes were round with wonder.

"No, no, Mother Lily. The little people are really just images of ordinary people. I do not know how they do it, but somehow, they make pictures of people and things, and show them on the side of the box so that you can see them. The images even move with the sounds they make." Jajeff saw that Mother Lily was truly interested, so he tried very hard to let her see the box through his experience.

"Once, I even saw some of our own people in the box. I think they were at a gathering of nations, conducting a ceremony that looked a little like the Greeting Of The Spring. I could not tell for sure, because the image of them was interrupted by white people trying to toss a ball over a fish net while they drank from oddly shaped cups called things like Coors or Pepsi, depending on when you see them."

"Then there are some of our people in the Dim World? It is not just the white people you have mentioned?" she asked, concern showing on her face.

"No Mother Lily, there are not just white people, I have seen people of all colors, from almost black skin to the lightest of tan, like Rubaby has. In fact, with shorter hair, she would look just like many of the people I have seen.

"It is a wondrous world with every imaginable kind of person and tool. I just know they have a way to give us more food for the winter," Jajeff finished, his eyes focusing on a place far beyond Mother Lily's small lodge.

Mother Lily looked at him while his last words slowly registered in her thinking. She knew that he did not like to explain all of what made him do the things he did, and it was sometime up to his friends to discover his true motives.

"This is the second time you have said something about food in the Dim World, tell me what you are really up to."

Jajeff looked down at his feet.

"I do not really know what I am up to. As you know, I have been trying to find a way to improve my food, so that I can be strong without eating meat." He looked at Mother Lily to see if she understood.

"Yes, and so far, you have been sick twice and have sniffled all winter. I would say that you still have much to learn," she said, trying not to sound critical of Jajeff's struggle to learn how to live without meat.

"Well, I saw Song Flower studying a picture of corn drawn on paper. By that, I have come to believe she may know about food, and may be able to help me . . . the whole tribe learn to eat better." He paced excitedly, his hands waving in the air to emphasize his words.

"Can't you see? They must have many new foods and methods for storing that food for the winter. Look at our storeroom. It is nearly empty of all but the dried meat, and this has been a mild winter. We scurry around every fall, trying to pack away enough food to last, never knowing if it will be enough, or if we will be able to eat it before the animals do. Would it not be a good thing to know we have enough food for the winter, and to have the kind of food that we do not have to kill for?"

He waited for Mother Lily to tell him if she thought he was crazy. He was confident that what he was trying to do made sense, but he very much wanted her to support him. After all, she was the closest he came to having a family, and what she thought was important to him.

Mother Lily reached a hand out to Jajeff and they embraced for a moment before she responded.

"You have had a rough time of it Jajeff, and the way you have accepted your lot and still maintained your sense of humor and friendly spirit, has made me proud. Had Father Spirit intended you to starve, he would have seen to it by now, so I am confident that you will find a way. It is just that I cannot see how any good can come from traveling to the Dim World. I am told that it is dangerous, and that often, the traveler does not return. I would hate to lose you," she concluded, her eyes telling Jajeff that she was sincerely concerned for his safety.

"Then you have learned how I can cross into the Dim World?" he asked, taking hold of her reference to traveling there.

"Sit down and tell me more about what you have learned of the Dim World. I will tell you what I have learned after you have given me more information about our hidden neighbors." She carefully sat down in her favorite seat and waited for Jajeff to sit down.

"And what have you learned from this talking box? Have you learned the name of Song Flower's tribe?"

"No, but I do know what they call the shiny beasts they travel in. They are cars, or sometimes automobiles, and they have many different types of them that they talk about in their television. Television is what they call the talking box I have described."

"The way you have described this thing, it seems that they have learned to put your gift in the box, so that others can see?" Mother Lily's face clearly showed her amazement in what Jajeff was telling her.

"So it appears, Mother Lily. Many of the images look real, so I believe so. But other images are made-up, like drawings that are made to look so much alive that I am often not sure how much is real and how much is made-up," Jajeff answered, fidgeting in his seat as he did, trying to wait patiently for Mother Lily to decide it was time to tell him what she had learned.

"You have discovered such an amazing world. I just cannot imagine how it would be to live there. It sounds so different from our world, how can you expect to understand it, merely by watching a box?"

"It is possible, Mother Lily, really. I will admit that at first, what I could see did not make sense, but after a while of watching, I began to see patterns that formed pictures in my mind. I compare each new picture I see, with the mental pictures I have already formed in my mind's eye. Sometimes I have to rethink the old pictures, but after a few changes, they seem to become true impressions. Really, Mother Lily, I am confident that by studying what I can see in the box, I will eventually come to understand everything I need to know about the Dim World."

Mother Lily looked at him for a long time before responding, and Jajeff knew she was ready to tell him what he wanted to know. When she did speak, she began by slowly shaking her head.

"Well, perhaps you can, but first you must find a way across." Mother Lily paused to let her words sink in. When she was satisfied that she had Jajeff's full attention, she continued.

"I have talked to my sister Spirit Elders from the coast and from the plains, and we believe we have found a person who can help you cross over to the other world. There is a man who lives some fifteen days journey south of here. He is known to be a Crystal Master, but he is also known to be a crazy old man. If he behaves like a Crystal Master for you, he may be able to help you into your Dim World. If he behaves like he usually does toward strangers, he will run you off with rocks and barking dogs, because he does not like to be disturbed. My sisters suggest that you bring him something very interesting to show that you are a man of great depth and understanding of things, for he loves the gift of knowledge above all else."

As he listened to Mother Lily, spirits tickled the back of Jajeff's neck, causing chills to crawl onto his head and make his hair itch. He knew of Spirit Elders who were Crystal Masters from stories told around the evening fire, but he never dreamed they really existed. Then Jajeff reviewed what Mother Lily had said and realized there was other news in her words.

"Your sisters?" Jajeff felt light headed, as he realized he was being let into an inner circle of gifted people, who generally remained out of sight.

Mother Lily laughed, delighted that he had noticed her mention of her sisters.

"Yes, my sisters from the Water People and from the Goat Eaters and Skin Traders, who have the same gift of seeing I have. I must trust your maturity in these matters, if I am going to help you, Young Jajeff. We hold our privacy sacred and believe our gifts are gifts to nurture and protect, since Father Spirit has seen fit to give them to us and not to others. Every one of the Northern Hawk People know of my gifts, but few know how strong they are or how they work." She waited for him to respond.

"I understand Mother Lily. I will respect this that you tell me, as if it were my own secret." He thought for a moment before continuing, a little uncomfortable that he was just now learning her secrets and wondering why she never advised him to keep his gift private.

He knew that he was still very young, compared to Mother Lily, and that there must be many things that remained for him to learn before he could consider himself a true Spirit Elder, like her.

"You said your sisters helped. Did one of them know this man?"

"Only by reputation, but knowing of him is enough to find him. Morning Wind, my sister of the Water People, was able to tell me where he lives. You must go to the great valley, beyond the big river, south of Little Sister. There, at the farthest end of the valley, you will find his lodge. He has a big reputation in those parts, and you should have little trouble finding closer directions, once you are in his land."

"What should I bring him that will make him accept me?"

"I cannot tell you this. I can only say that Morning Wind said the man knows everything that is worth knowing and holds that knowing things is greater than life itself. You must find something that will interest such a man." Mother Lily said this with a definite nod of her head, indicating to Jajeff that she was finished with the subject.

"Now, tell me more about the talking box with little people in it," she demanded enthusiastically, making herself comfortable for a long conversation.

Jajeff fidgeted for a moment, wanting more to make his preparations to visit the Crystal Master, than to remain with Mother Lily and talk of the Dim World. He could see no way out, however, and began describing one of the stories he watched on the talking box. Before he finished, One Who Knows came to the entrance and knocked lightly, asking if Mother Lily was in.

"Yes, One Who Knows, come in," Mother Lily answered, obviously happy to have her visit.

One Who Knows beamed a smile at Jajeff as she came in, cautious not to trip on his feet while her eyes adjusted to the darkness of the lodge. They were good friends and Jajeff would have asked for her, had she not been asked for by Beaver, one of his very best friends.

"Happy to see you smiling, Jajeff. The smile looks much better than that old frown you have been wearing the last few days," One Who Knows said to Jajeff teasingly.

"Oh, sometime he is too serious, like an old man who forgets that the problems of the world are not his alone to solve, as if Father Spirit can not do things without his help," Mother Lily said, obviously enjoying watching Jajeff's face turn red.

"Sometimes even Father Spirit can use some help," he countered, trying to find the upper hand. "If I did not worry about such important things, then who would you have to talk about."

"Ooh," One Who Knows responded. "Unfair, it is not just we women who enjoy talking."

She poked at Jajeff's chest, laughing, trying to get him on the defensive with a threatening finger.

"Now, children," Mother Lily intervened with exaggerated exasperation.

Jajeff put his hands up and backed toward the entrance.

"Okay, okay, I know when I am no longer welcome," he said in mock dejection.

Then he winked at One Who Knows as he turned his attention to Mother Lily.

"Thank you, Mother Lily, I will see you before I leave," he said before disappearing beyond the entrance.

Jajeff went directly to Shield Hand, so that he could ask permission to journey south. It took some time for him to gain access to Shield Hand, since he was with the elders discussing plans for an early morning hunt. When he did finally stand before him, Jajeff was careful how he worded his request, not wanting to give Shield Hand a reason to say no.

"Why do you wish to travel so early in the spring? It is still cold, and as you know, there are sometimes very big snows in the early spring," Shield Hand asked, curious, but not overly concerned.

"I have heard of a teacher who might help me learn more about my gift, and I am anxious to see if this is true." Jajeff held his breath while Shield Hand looked at him, evaluating his behavior and assessing the truth of Jajeff's words.

"You will travel alone?"

"Yes, I may be there until next winter, and I cannot ask others to be away so long at my convenience," Jajeff answered, treading close to the edge of truth.

"Go in safety, Jajeff. I look forward to new stories of your adventures, when you return." Shield Hand nodded his head to Jajeff and then turned back to the elders, who were sitting near the fire pit, were Jajeff believed they must have sat forever.

Two days later, Jajeff was on the trail. He had yet to discover a gift for the man he would ask to help him but hoped that Father Spirit would show him the answer along the way. With this exception, he traveled in happiness, confident his path would soon lead him to Song Flower.

The first part of Jajeff's journey was the most difficult, since there was still a great deal of snow on the ground, and in places along the way, it was very slow walking, especially on the shadow side of mountains and in gullies where the sun could not reach to melt the snow. He traveled straight south, trying to quickly reach the lowlands where there would be no snow.

On his fifth day on the trail, he came out of the mountains, to a swollen river that cut across the world like a seam between two worlds, separating the northern forest from a southern valley, as if Father Spirit had put it there to separate his flat creation of grass and rolling hills, from his mountainous creation of volcanoes and tall trees.

Jajeff knew of the river, and had expected to have some difficulty crossing it, but he had not dreamed that it would be so wide, nor moving so fast. He walked up and down the riverbank, better than a day either direction, but could find no hint of a way across.

As he searched, he could not help but notice the similarity between his difficulty in finding a way to cross the river, and his efforts to find a way to cross into the Dim World. Seeing this, he laughed to himself and made a silent promise that he would cross the river, even if he had to swim.

He eventually retreated to a place near an overhanging cliff, where he could see the river while remaining dry in the rains that frequented that place. After making camp, he decided to use the gift Father Spirit had given him, and sought a high flying bird to help him scout the river for a likely place to cross.

He joined with a hawk flying along the riverbank, looking for fish near the surface of the water. The hawk did not seem to mind Jajeff in its head, and it even flew over the place where Jajeff sat, as if to show him that it knew where and who Jajeff was.

Jajeff remained with the hawk for a long time, almost losing himself in the mind lulling sensation of soaring in the wind. Lost himself, that is, until he suddenly realized that he was flashing toward the water, and a large fish that was rolling at the surface. Jajeff disengaged just in time to avoid experiencing the kill, but moments later, he felt drawn back to the bird, and reluctantly returned, not wanting to share in the sensation of the hawk's feast.

Somehow, the hawk must have known what Jajeff was looking for, because just under the tree the hawk had chosen to eat its kill, were two men preparing to launch a canoe into the river. Jajeff stood and ran to the river's edge, looking up and down, trying to see the men. It was no use, there was only the undisturbed riverbank as far as he could see.

"Where?" he demanded of his mind, and fought to calm himself so that he could regain contact with the hawk.

"Where," he asked the hawk, and urged it to fly to him, so that Jajeff could trace the direction the bird would fly.

Reluctantly, the big bird grasped the fish it had hardly tasted, and launched itself into the air, veering downstream and toward the other side of the river as it did. That was all Jajeff needed, and he quickly gathered his pack and ran upstream.

He saw the men as soon as he reached a place where the river turned. He smiled at his good fortune, and regaining contact with the hawk, thanked it also, showing it an image of his people celebrating their heritage as Hawk People.

While he did so, an idea came to him, and he visualized the hawk dropping its kill on the canoe, as an offering of friendship.

"Yes," he thought to himself, triumphantly, it would be good to give these strangers a gift before asking them a favor.

"Your fish, my friend, give them your fish," he thought to the hawk, again visualizing the bird swooping down near the two men and dropping the fish in their canoe.

He felt the bird respond, as if cursing.

"There are other fish, give your kill this one time, it will be great fun for you," he returned in his head, trying to think in images and sensation of fun and happiness.

The idea of fun seemed to appeal to the primal instincts of the hawk, because after circling over the two men, it suddenly folded its wings and fell from the sky, toward the canoe, which was only halfway across the river.

The men had seen Jajeff, standing alone on the rocks where they would land, and they had also noticed the hawk, circling high above their heads as if measuring their progress across the river. When the hawk began falling toward them, they stopped rowing and sat transfixed, watching its graceful swoop toward the water and their canoe. Jajeff could hear them talking to each other in excited tones, their voices becoming even more excited when the bird's flight became level. Jajeff grinned when the men became silent, stunned by the hawk's strange behavior as it streaked past them, no more than a man's height above their heads. Both men ducked, hiding their heads with their arms, yelling loudly for the crazy bird to go away.

"Thump!" the sound of the fish hitting the bottom of the canoe came to Jajeff, and behind it, astonished shouts from the men, as they examined the gift.

One of the men turned and looked at Jajeff for a long time. He was joined by the other, as the canoe drifted in the strong current.

"Will you not come to greet a stranger?" Jajeff asked, shouting across the water.

The two men talked together, frequently looking at Jajeff as they did, and then they began rowing toward Jajeff, their expressions solemn, showing their uncertainty in the wisdom of their decision to face the stranger who could command the hawk.

Shortly after that, he helped them pull the canoe onto the bank and introduced himself.

"I am Jajeff of the Northern Hawk People. I have come to visit the Crystal Master, who lives at the distant end of this valley." He showed them his empty hands, but otherwise stood tall with pride.

Both men were visibly shaken by their experience. The tallest of the two stepped forward and extended his hands in greeting, his head slightly bowed.

"Spirit Master, I am Two Finger of the Beaver People, and this is Fish Hunter, my brother," he announced, and quickly took a step back from Jajeff.

Jajeff had mixed feelings about the Beaver People's reaction to him. He had intended to impress them enough so that they would be willing to take him across the river, but he did not want to frighten them.

"I am only a watcher, please do not fear me," he said, once again holding his open hands out in front of himself.

"Oh, we are not frightened. You have shown us a great gift, and we wish to thank you for showing us," Two Finger answered sincerely, and he poked his brother to make him stop staring at Jajeff.

"Yes, we . . . we are happy you are here," Fish Hunter stammered, trying to be relaxed.

"How can we serve you, Jajeff?" Two Finger asked, obviously embarrassed for his brother.

"I need to find a way to cross this river. Can you help me?" He looked at the canoe, meaningfully.

The brothers glanced at one another and Two Fingers quickly agreed to ferry Jajeff across. Fish Hunter would remain so that there would be room.

Once on the other side, Two Finger pointed toward a low hill.

"My people live at the base of that mound. You are welcome to visit us on your return. Perhaps you will share a story with us, and after a fine meal, we will return you to the other side of the river."

"Yes, I would enjoy sharing with your people. Thank you, and may your people have a fruitful summer," Jajeff said, trying to appear as wise as he could.

He included the good wishes to the Beaver People, because he had seen Spirit Elders offer such good wishes, and believed it might be expected of him. He felt a little foolish doing so, since he had seen less than seventeen summers, but he recognized that there was a certain amount of protection in the respect others gave to Spirit Masters, no matter their age. As a traveler, he felt it was okay to use his gift in that way, as long as he did not abuse what Father Spirit had given him.

Jajeff had no further need to impress strangers on his journey south, and as he came closer to the southern end of the big valley, he began asking questions of the people he encountered along the trail.

"Do you know of the Crystal Master, who lives beyond the first line of southern hills? he asked each one.

"Yes," answered a lone man. "He made a grizzly chase my brother away once, when my brother had tried to sneak close enough to see what the Crystal Master was doing."

He was a big man who did not seem easily intimidated by old men, but Jajeff could see that he was clearly unnerved talking about the Crystal Master.

"He is a good man, but with a mean streak. He helped my people overcome the dry season one year, by bringing rain to the fields. The crazy old man only asked for help from us to lift a ladder, in return," the man continued nervously. "True, it was a big ladder he had built, but we would have been happy to do much more, for the help he had given us. After we helped him, he ran us away, so that we would not see what he was doing with the ladder."

"Has he ever asked for food or herbs or skins? Anything of value?" Jajeff had asked other people who knew of the Crystal Master. Always, the answer was the same.

"No, never, but sometimes we give him food, so that he will protect us from angry spirits, but he asks for nothing, except occasional help moving or lifting things too big for him alone. He is always building things that are bigger than he is."

When Jajeff had asked what those things were, the people could never answer in a way that made sense. They just did not know what the old man was doing.

"What he builds is as crazy as he is," was all they could say.

It was early evening of his twelfth night on the trail when Jajeff decided what he would give to the Crystal Master in return for his help. He had been struggling with the question nearly constantly since Mother Lily had told him of the need, and had many times, asked for help from Father Spirit and the Earth Mother. He knew from talking to the people he encountered on the trail, that he was growing very close to where the Crystal Master lived, and after being told so many times that the old man was truly crazy, and was apt to do almost anything to a stranger who interfered with his mysterious work, Jajeff was becoming almost afraid to continue his quest.

Jajeff was sitting on the bank of a stream, watching the fish chase bugs in the evening light, when it suddenly struck him. His labor would be his gift to the old man. He would offer to help the Crystal Master for a time in turn for his help crossing into the Dim World. The one thing the old man apparently valued above all else was the strength to lift and move things he could not move by himself. Surely, that would be a good gift. He thanked Spirit for the help and prepared himself for the final day of his journey, confident that he finally had his gift.

On one of the first sunny days he was given since he had left his village, Jajeff came to a strange structure towering high above the small valley. An old man was sitting at the top, strapping something into place with leather and wood.

Seeing the man and sure that he was the Crystal Master, Jajeff's bright mood turned to tense concern as he forced himself to boldly walk to the structure's base.

"Are you the Crystal Master?" he asked, shouting so that he would be heard.

"Of course I am, who else would be foolish enough to be up here on this rickety old thing?" the Crystal Master answered back without looking at Jajeff.

"I would like to speak with you."

"You are speaking to me, young fella," he answered, still not looking at him.

"Perhaps you can come down here." Jajeff said, hopefully.

"Who are you that I must take time from my Talking Pole to receive you?" The old man shouted down at Jajeff from where he perched, like a bird on a cross-arm of the spindly wooden structure, many paces above the trees. Jajeff became dizzy each time he tried to look up at the man, but felt that he must keep an eye on the old man, out of fear that the structure might fall on him before he could get away.

"I am Jajeff, of the Northern Hawk People. I have come to help you with your work in return for help crossing into the other world."

"Huh?" the Crystal Master responded, as if he thought Jajeff had said something crazy.

"I must find a way to the Different World."

"Nonsense, young fellow," the Crystal Master called back, as he began climbing to the ground, mumbling something about featherheaded young men, as he did.

Once on the ground, he turned from his ladder and looked Jajeff up and down, as if measuring him for a new cloak.

Jajeff wondered if the Crystal Master was not thinking of him as grizzly food, and he felt a chill run up his back.

"So, Jajeff of the Hawk People, what is this about you wanting to get into a Different World?" the Crystal Master asked, almost growling at Jajeff.

Jajeff involuntarily took a small step backwards, as the Crystal Master stepped very close in front of him. The old man's face was wrinkled and rough from too much sun, and he was much shorter than Jajeff, with a stocky build that seemed to help his deep raspy voice sound convincingly like the bear Jajeff was imagining.

"I have seen into it and wish to be there myself. Can you tell me how to cross over?" He answered, speaking quickly, one word nearly on top of the next, lest the old man become angry and stop him before he finished.

The old man stepped back a little, and took another look at Jajeff, this time with a little less of a scowl on his face.

"That depends, young fella. There are many worlds. Which one do you fancy visiting?"

It had not occurred to Jajeff that there might be more than one world beyond his, and he was uncertain how to answer. He noticed the subtle change in the Crystal Master's attitude toward him after hearing that he had seen into a different world, and Jajeff pressed on with new confidence.

"I know it as the Dim World. It is the place that has many people and television and cars." His words were still rushed, he realized, and he struggled to show the self confidence that befitted a Spirit Master.

"T . . . television and cars?" The Crystal Master responded uncertainly.

"Yes, and many other wonderful tools. Cars are shiny tools that hold many people inside, and that can move across the land faster than a man can run," he answered, more relaxed, now that he was aware of knowing something of the other worlds the Crystal Master did not.

"I was afraid that was the world you were talking about," the Crystal Master said with an even darker scowl on his face. "It is a dangerous place, and I know of no one who has crossed into that world and lived to tell of it. Why should I help you and have your loss on my head? Would not your people seek me out for revenge?" The Crystal Master shook his head and turned toward a large lodge made of split wood and stones, that stood not far from the Talking Pole.

The thought of his people avenging his death was a novel idea to Jajeff, but he could not associate such an idea with his mission, since his was a personal quest that had little to do with his people.

"All I want to do is go to the Dim World. No one is going to be angry with you, if you tell me how to do this thing."

Once again, the old man stopped and looked Jajeff over, his eyebrows raised, as if he was surprised by Jajeff's words.

"No one would miss you?" he said in a sincere voice. "I doubt that."

He shook his head again, and still talking, continued walking toward his lodge with surprisingly quick steps, for such an old man.

"So, you have seen this Dim World and think you know what it is like." Once again, he stopped to face Jajeff. This time, he slowly walked around him, examining him like a piece of wood he was about to carve into a totem. Then, he snorted and waved a dismissing gesture at Jajeff, as he turned back toward the lodge.

"You are but a snotty-nosed kid, who understands nothing but adventure. I cannot help you."

"Please wait!" Jajeff called, and ran after the old man, suddenly frantic that he might lose his opportunity to gain the Crystal Master's help. "I apologize if I have made little, what must be great in your eyes. Please help me understand."

The man went into the lodge without so much as a backwards glance, closing the heavy wooden flap behind him with a definitive thud.

Jajeff heard the Crystal Master yell at him from inside. "Go away!" After which, Jajeff heard no other sounds from within the lodge.

Stunned, Jajeff stood frozen in front of the lodge, not knowing what to do or for that matter, if the man was truly rejecting him or just being cantankerous.

"How could this have gone so wrong," he asked himself, as he searched his mind for an explanation and an alternative.

For the lack of a better plan, he sat on a stump directly in front of the lodge entrance and continued to search his mind, reviewing his conversation with the Crystal Master for a clue of where he had failed. He could find nothing in what he had said that could make the man be so rude to him, nothing.

It was the middle of the day when Jajeff had first talked to the Crystal Master, and by dark, he was still sitting on the stump, trying to find a way to convince the old man to help him. He had resisted the urge to try talking to him through the wall of his lodge, because it seemed to Jajeff that doing so, would be demeaning, as if he would be begging for help.

Having been treated so rudely, he would have given up and returned home, except for the constant image of Song Flower floating in his mind's eye and thoughts of what he would have to tell his people, if he returned without even having tried to cross over to the Dim World. He knew of no other course of action for finding a gateway into the Dim World, except with the help of the old man hiding within the lodge so close, if he would only agree to help.

"It just is not fair," Jajeff often complained to himself, and continued to explore his options for a way to convince the Crystal Master to help him.

When it got dark, and the Crystal master had not come out of his lodge, Jajeff's thoughts turned to fears that the Crystal Master might call a bear to run him off, as he was known to do in the past. Then Jajeff grinned, and suppressed a laugh as he quietly moved away from the stump, disappearing into the darkness, unseen by the Crystal Master. Thinking of a bear had given Jajeff an idea, and he wanted to be sure to have carried it out before dawn.

The Crystal Master remained in his lodge through the night, obviously hoping to avoid being bothered by the Jajeff, hoping he would eventually go away. At the first light of morning, he carefully pushed the flap away from an opening, to see if Jajeff was still in front of the lodge. To his relief, Jajeff had left, but when he looked closer, he saw that two very large bears were laying in the clearing in Jajeff's place. One bear looked up at him and growled loudly and then stood, stretching the sleep from its great body. The other lifted its head from its paws and shook it wildly before yawning. Both remained in front of the lodge, watching the entrance, not trying to come in, just watching.

Alarmed, the Crystal Master quickly closed the opening and armed himself with an old club he sometimes used to run raccoons away from his storage bins. He waited for a while before looking again, but when he did, he could see that the bears continued to placidly lounge about in his clearing. Seeing this, he began to suspect mischief from Jajeff.

"What manner of trick is this?" he asked out loud, making the bears growl. "Is he a shape shifter, who can become Brother Bear as he wishes?"

Then, he remembered that the boy had told him of seeing into the other world, even to know there were shiny creatures there. No gift of seeing he knew of would permit such clarity of seeing and also bring bears to his lodge, except that of a Watcher. Believing he was dealing with a Watcher gave him quite a different attitude about the boy, even to thinking of him as an equal, a very young equal, but Spirit Master, nonetheless, one that would eventually become a Sprit Elder.

He returned to the opening to see if the bears were still there. Where there had only been two, there were now three, and the third was stirring up trouble with the others. The Crystal Master was impressed.

"This boy is good," he said again to the bears. But, can he keep you bears from eating me?"

Then, he thought for a moment before continuing.

"Or, was that what you had in mind, Spirit Master Jajeff of the Northern Hawk People?" he called loudly into the forest, and grumbled to himself as he watched the bears turn and look at him.

"Young Watcher, I can see you are a gifted Spirit Master," he shouted. "You have shown me that I may have been too hasty to turn you away."

The three bears growled and moved toward him, licking their lips as they did. The Crystal Master saw this and lifted his club as he began to retreat into his lodge. Then he stopped, noticing that the bears were hesitating. They looked around, their noses in the air, sniffing loudly. First one growled, and then the others answered, as all three hurried away in the same direction.

Relieved, The Crystal Master cautiously pulled the wood from his entrance and stepped outside.

"I am happy you have decided to help me," Jajeff said with a broad smile.

The Crystal Master jumped, as if he was afraid one of the bears had returned, and swung around to face Jajeff where he stood at the corner of the lodge. Jajeff laughed, delighted with the success of his little trick, and held both hands up between them to show that he meant no harm.

"It is only me, Crystal Master. Brother Bears have left to eat the berries I found for them." He smiled and waited for the Crystal Master to regain his composure.

"The Spirits! You are a trickster, Young . . ."

"Jajeff." Jajeff helped him.

". . . Jajeff. The Crystal Master said, slumping down on a log in front of his lodge. "You have frightened the life from me."

"I am sorry, but I knew of no other way to convince you I am worthy of your time."

"Well, you managed. How did you get those fat old bears to come and stay in my clearing?"

"First I joined my mind with them. Then, I thought of wonderful berry bushes in front of your lodge. They knew all about your lodge and knew exactly where to investigate. Next, I found a ravine near here with many berry bushes that they have not yet discovered. When I wanted them to leave, I simply remembered to them where the bushes are. Brother Bear will always go where the food is."

"Yes? Since you have associated my lodge with food for them, I will have to build a stronger entrance cover. That will be my next and most urgent project, thanks to you."

"I will help you do your work." Jajeff said excitedly. "You will find me a very good worker."

"You should at least help me protect my place from those bears," the Crystal Master said sarcastically. "But let us first discuss your Dim World, since that is what has brought me all this trouble."

Embarrassed, Jajeff lowered his head. "I want very much to go to the Dim World, and you are the only person I know of who can help. Forgive me, if I have made you angry."

"Very well, but please, no more tricks," the Crystal Master replied with a pained look on his face, remembering his shock at finding the bears so near his lodge.

"I will try to teach you what I can, but it will take time, and I have much to do on my Talking Pole before the rains return. Since you are going to be around here to help me, you will know me as Crystal Master Jackpaw."

The Crystal Master pointed toward one of the small outbuildings, made from the same split wood as his lodge, and told Jajeff to go and clean the straw from the floor, so that fresh straw could be put in its place.

"This is work you can do for me, so that I will have time to help you. I will be inside my humble lodge, working equally as hard, so when you have finished, come to the entrance, and I will show you what I must have done next."

Jajeff worked hard for many days, before he finally had the grounds and outbuildings clean enough to satisfy the Crystal Master. Old Jackpaw, as Jajeff came to think of him, hardly talked to Jajeff, other than to give him instructions about the next task he was to do, or to complain about how poorly he thought Jajeff was performing. Jajeff didn't mind the treatment, though, because he felt he had earned it by bringing the bears, and he remained ever hopeful that Jackpaw would soon help him cross to the Dim World. Meanwhile, Jackpaw spent most of his time working in his main lodge, which he never allowed Jajeff to enter, so Jajeff really had very little opportunity to complain.

Jajeff was curious about what Jackpaw was doing in his lodge but did not feel he knew the Crystal Master well enough to ask questions about his activity and was afraid he might upset him by seeming to pry. His curiosity was soon satisfied, however, the day Jackpaw called for him to come to the lodge so that Jajeff could help him. When Jajeff arrived, he found the Crystal Master standing beside a funny looking carved piece of wood, with crystals and dark pieces of rock embedded in it.

"I need to have you help me carry this to the top of my Talking Pole." Jackpaw announced, displaying obvious pride in his creation.

"What is it?" Jajeff asked him without thinking.

"Never you mind, what it is. It has nothing to do with you, nor with you wanting to go to your Dim World." Jackpaw answered tersely, obviously not wanting to explain.

Jackpaw's response was enough to warn Jajeff to handle the old man like a porcupine. He obediently carried the strange object over to the tower, Jackpaw close behind him.

"Up there." Jackpaw said, pointing to the top of the tower.

"Up There?" Jajeff responded, beginning to wonder just how much he would have to endure, before learning Jackpaw's secret for crossing into the Dim World.

"Yes. You wanted to help me, so help me by taking this Direction Giver to the top of my tower, or are you afraid to?" Jackpaw grinned at Jajeff, obviously enjoying his reluctance to climb so high.

Jajeff was afraid, but he knew that being afraid would not help him find Song Flower, so he took a firm grip on the Direction Giver and began the long climb. Jackpaw stood on the ground, well out of range of a possible falling Jajeff, and watched him climb. When Jajeff had reached the top, and was safely seated on the small platform there, he had a chance to look around, while Jackpaw began his climb to join him. It was exhilarating to Jajeff, as he looked over the treetops of the small valley. It was an experience very different from flying with a bird, yet it had much of the excitement with one addition: he could feel the tower sway in the wind and look down the ladder to see it bend and twist in rhythm with the wind's push. Being high in the air, but still being connected to the ground, gave Jajeff a truer sense of height than even a cliff could. He was delighted to discover that he was afraid of the height and relished the danger he felt each time the tower jiggled, as Jackpaw took another step. Of course, he knew that it was safe enough, or else the old man would not venture to the top. At least, Jajeff hoped he would not.

"Pretty good, huh?" Jackpaw said, when he also had reached the top.

"Nearly as good as flying," Jajeff answered, holding tight to the Direction Giver, so that it would not fall.

"Flying?"

Jajeff explained to Jackpaw his preference for watching through the eyes of birds and how being a Watcher had let him come to know of the Dim World, by seeing through the eyes of animals. This was the first time Jackpaw had given him a chance to tell his story, so Jajeff took advantage of the opportunity and explained everything in honest, straightforward terms.

When he had finished, Jackpaw grinned at him and patted him on the back.

"I knew you were a powerful Watcher, by the way you brought the bears. Others, such as myself, have seen into this Dim World of yours, but few know of the details, as you do. It figures that a Watcher would be able to see there better than others, because you actually go there." When Jackpaw had finished speaking, he made a point of looking over the forest and nearby hills and of watching a buzzard glide nearby.

Jajeff followed his gaze, and joined briefly with the buzzard, urging it to swing closer to their airy perch. The bird did, and for a moment, he could see himself and Jackpaw from the buzzard's perspective.

Jajeff's mind was full of pride and wonder in his gift, and he found himself marveling at the conversation he was having with the Crystal Master.

"Almost as equals," he thought to himself, and thanked Father Spirit for letting him be with such important Spirit Elders, such as Jackpaw and Mother Lily.

"It is the only way I know of to go there and live to tell about it." Jackpaw added with a sullen voice, still watching the buzzard.

Jackpaw's last words brought chills to Jajeff, as he remembered that Mother Lily had also warned him of the danger of crossing into the Dim World.

Jackpaw said nothing more about Jajeff's quest for the rest of the day, concentrating instead, on securing his device to the tower.

Several days later, on his third climb to the top. Jajeff decided that he had gained enough confidence in his understanding of Jackpaw's moods to, once again, ask what it was for.

"What is this thing you are building?" Jajeff asked, holding his breath after asking, still not sure how the volatile old man would respond.

"There is a vortex here, a river of energy that is also felt by other Crystal Masters. It is part of a grid we use to communicate with one another."

How crystals and other rocks held high in the air would help communication made little sense to Jajeff, and he foolishly said so.

"That is why I am a Crystal Master and you are not, foolish young man. Just as there are aspects of your gift of seeing that I do not understand, because I do not have your gift, so there are aspects of my gift you may never understand. Especially never, if you do not learn to look beyond what you know." He turned away from Jajeff, muttering something about thick-headed youngsters, and returned to his lodge.

Jajeff could only grin, and try not to seem more foolish than Jackpaw had made him feel. It was becoming obvious to him, that his curiosity was not appreciated by the older man, and he resolved to find ways that he could show the Crystal Master that he was worthy of respect as an equal, despite his curiosity.

Three full moon cycles after Jajeff first came to the Crystal Master, Jackpaw called him to come in from a nearby stream, where Jajeff was moving rocks to divert water toward Jackpaw's lodge. When Jajeff returned, he found Jackpaw and two strangers, sitting in front of the big lodge.

"Come, Jajeff, join us in the shade," Jackpaw said with unusual politeness in his voice, as he indicated a vacant stump.

When Jajeff was seated, Jackpaw introduced him to the men, with a flourish of respect Jajeff was not accustomed to receiving from the Crystal Master.

"Jajeff of the Northern Hawk People, please salute Pohaw of the Western Plains and Crow Eyes of the Desert People."

Jajeff stepped forward with both hands held in front of his chest and then together in a grip of friendship. The two men bowed their heads ever so slightly in acknowledgment but otherwise said nothing, nor did they offer to salute him in return.

"I am honored to be in your presence," Jajeff said formally.

"Ya, you should be, youngster," Jackpaw said, already tired of being polite. "They have traveled many days to talk to you about gateways into the other worlds."

The blood ran hard in Jajeff's ears, as he tried not to show his excitement.

Pohaw was the first to speak, but his words were frequently added to by Crow Eyes and Jackpaw.

"Only occasionally does someone have the gift to see into the other worlds. As Jackpaw tells us, you have this gift," Pohaw said, nodding his head with every word, as if he could not speak without forcing his words from his mouth. "In nearly every instance, those who can, have become restless and have tried to cross over to explore the other worlds for themselves."

The old man finished pushing his words out, and waited for Crow Eyes to take over. Jajeff listened entranced by Pohaw's mannerisms, marveling at his long gray hair, and how it danced around his face in the slight breeze. Pohaw was very old, even older than Crow Eyes and Jackpaw, but his eyes were bright and strong, and Jajeff knew they must be able to see much more than an ordinary man could see.

"While this is not true of most worlds, none who have crossed over to your Dim World have ever made it back alive," Finished Crow Eyes, a sly grin on his old face, as he watched to see Jajeff's reaction.

Jajeff felt chills run up his back, remembering that this was the third time he had been warned about the danger of his quest.

"But that does not mean they have died," Jajeff responded, determined not to let stories of danger keep him from Song Flower, or the promise of new foods he believed could be found in the Dim World. "Perhaps they simply did not wish to return. After all, it is a very interesting world."

He was sure he could find a safe way to see this new world and refused to let these men scare him away from trying.

In his mind's eye, he remembered Song Flower, as he first saw her playing with her kitten. "She is so beautiful," he thought to himself. "I can not bear to watch her only through the eyes of a kitten."

"One man died halfway across. I am told it was not pretty," Pohaw said in a sullen voice, ignoring Jajeff's comment.

Jajeff could only smile at the men, while trying not to seem more foolish than he thought they must believe him to be.

"You see," Pohaw continued. "There are certain places and moments in time, the distance between the two worlds diminishes to nothing. It is then, that we can cross the barrier between them. In this way, we have traveled to the Quiet World, where people live in harmony with Father Spirit by using the energy of crystals to run their great nation. There, we have traded our knowledge of nature for crystals and the understanding of how to gain access to their powers."

Pohaw paused for a moment to let his breath catch up with his need, and Crow Eyes took up their explanation.

"In this case, the differences between the worlds is not strong, and it is relatively safe to move between them. This is true as long as one is careful not to be in-between when the

barrier returns. But in the case of the Dim World you speak of, the difference in spiritual energy is too great, and the barrier does not so much go away, as it weakens for very short moments, only letting the traveler get partially across before it returns, trapping him neither here, nor there." He made a grim face, and crossing his eyes, he stuck his tongue out to emphasize what would happen to a person who is caught in-between two worlds. Then he laughed at his joke, contented with his wisdom.

"Though we have not witnessed this ourselves, we know that you cannot cross into this world, alive," Pohaw finished, nodding his head wisely.

The men were quiet then, letting Jajeff absorb what they had told him, so that he would understand that there would be no crossing into the Dim World.

Jajeff closed his eyes and tried to visualize how a gateway might open and close, and what it would look like, when it did. His efforts were futile, however, and he decided that the only way to deal with these warnings, was to go and see for himself. With this decision, his thoughts became filled with a new determination not to be turned away by three old men, no matter how impressive their gifts might be.

"Would Father Spirit have given me this gift, had he not intended me to use it to help my people?" he asked the men, knowing they could not reasonably answer without knowing what was in Father Spirit's mind.

"I will find a way to cross, because I believe Father Spirit intends me to cross," he finished, using his determination like a shield to deflect the Crystal Master's words of warning.

The three men looked at Jajeff as if he had said something foolish, but did not otherwise, respond to his words. Becoming concerned that he may have angered them, Jajeff attempted to move the conversation back to a safer subject by asking about Pohaw's reference to more friendly worlds.

"There is more than one Different World?" Jajeff asked, trying to make his voice sound friendly and interested in what they might say.

"Yes, of course." Answered Jackpaw, obviously happy to move away from Jajeff's stubbornness. "You see, we believe there are many divergent worlds, and that each world becomes as it is, because the people there have found new ways to believe in Father Spirit. The way our world looks and behaves is an agreed upon thing, that we all create through our respect for Father Spirit. The people of your Dim World must think very differently about Father Spirit than the way we do here, and this difference has caused their world to change from ours."

"Despite all of the wonderful tools they have," Pohaw added, trying not to breath too hard as he did. "I would say that they have not changed the world for the better, judging by what we have learned."

"You mean our world could become like the Dim World, if we think the same way they do?" Jajeff asked, a little incredulous.

The thought astounded Jajeff, and he sensed a new urgency for learning to understand the Dim World, and why it was so different.

"It is better to say that the Dim World could have been like ours, or perhaps better yet, would still be like ours, if they had not learned to worship their tools instead of Father Spirit. We simply do not know," Crow Eyes answered for Pohaw.

Jackpaw took up the conversation, as he stood and stretched. "We do know that there are a few like ourselves in the Dim World, people who know Father Spirit in nearly the same way as we do, but there does not appear to be enough of them to improve the condition of their world."

He picked up a large clay pot and poured water into a cup, and then returned to his seat. "It is at the places where they worship Father Spirit as we do, that we have been able to see across, and then only during their ceremonies," Jackpaw concluded, his eyes closed, apparently remembering the last time he saw into one of the other worlds.

"We will take you to such a place, so that you can see a gateway for yourself," chimed in Crow Eyes, as if to finish the discussion.

News that they were willing to take him to a gateway, even if it was just to look, brightened Jajeff's outlook considerably, making him feel even closer to his goal.

"Tomorrow?" he echoed, grinning to show his gratitude. "You know of such a place near here?"

"Perhaps tomorrow, after we have prepared," Pohaw corrected him. "We will take you to a place where we have seen across several times in the past."

"Yes, but not every time we have looked, Pohaw. They do not have ceremonies every day, you know," Jackpaw reminded Pohaw.

"You will see across, Watcher, if Father Spirit believes you are ready, but you will not attempt to cross. You must promise this, or we will not take you." Jackpaw concluded, his voice full of authority.

Jajeff was no longer bothered by doubts about crossing into the Dim World, should he have the opportunity, and the more he thought about it, the more he was certain Father Spirit had giving him the Eyes of the Forest for just that reason. However, he knew that, if there was one opportunity, there could also be others, and so, he could see no harm in agreeing to only look when they showed him the gateway.

"I agree," he answered, solemnly holding his right hand over his heart in the universal gesture of sincerity. "I promise not to attempt to cross into the Dim World when you show me the gateway."

The three men glanced at one another, apparently satisfied with Jajeff's promise.

"Very well then," Pohaw said with a satisfied nod. "We will begin our preparation at first light."

While Pohaw had been speaking, a new thought had been taking shape in Jajeff's mind, pushing at him, as if trying to make room for itself amongst the many things that he worried about. The men were about to retreat to the lodge where they would talk of old times, and of what must be done in the morning. However, before they were able to stand, Jackpaw noticed a deep frown on Jajeff's face and stopped to ask what was bothering him.

"What now, Young Watcher?" Jackpaw asked, making no attempt to hide the irritation in his voice.

Jajeff shook his head as if he did not wish to answer, but then decided he must.

"If Song Flower's people did not know of Father Spirit, would they not be in danger of angering him?" Jajeff asked, expressing the alarm that was growing in his mind. "How could her people live without respect for Father Spirit's other children and the land?"

"Huh?" Jackpaw said, blinking at Jajeff with exaggerated bewilderment.

"I mean, what about the people living in the Dim World? If they have such a wrong way of thinking of Father Spirit, should they not have some penalty to pay?" Jajeff struggled for words, trying to make the men understand his concern. "After all, we are taught from childhood, to respect Father Spirit and our brothers of the forest. When we do not, we often suffer hardships, such as longer winters than normal or shortages of food. What are the consequences for Song Flower's people?"

"Song Flower is the girl I told you about, the one he wants to ask for in the Dim World," Jackpaw explained to Pohaw and Crow Eyes.

They nodded their heads in understanding.

"We do not know these things," Pohaw answered sincerely. "You must know that Father Spirit can distinguish between the actions of an individual and those of a whole nation. Each of us must pay for the nations wrongs, but it is not a personal thing, and in paying, we sometimes grow stronger than we might otherwise. If this woman has a good heart, and is true to what is in her heart, then she will not anger Father Spirit, and even though she may pay for those things her people do to anger Father Spirit, it will not be a personal thing and she may grow strong because of it."

"Yes," added Crow Eyes. "But, if she does not have a good heart, then Father Spirit will find a way to make his anger very personal for her."

"And then she will really learn something." Jackpaw said gleefully, and slapped Crow Eyes on the back, pushing him and Pohaw into the lodge ahead of him.

Jajeff watched them go into the lodge, and winced as the flap fell into place with a thump. Jajeff still could not understand why Jackpaw was so determined to keep him out of his lodge. It was as if Jackpaw felt Jajeff was not fit to be in such an important place, because every time custom indicated that Jackpaw should ask Jajeff in, he would simply shut him out.

Tired and confused, Jajeff shrugged and turned to the small lodge he had been using for a sleeping area.

"Pohaw was right," he thought to himself. "I really do not know enough about Song Flower or her people, to judge how they respect Father Spirit. I must wait until I can learn more."

He settled down on his sleeping pad and closed his eyes, searching with his mind for the familiar feel of an old dog lying by his master's chair in the Dim World.

## The Gateway

The next morning, Jackpaw sent Jajeff on an errand to find the herb flowers he needed for one of his special teas. When Jajeff was well out of sight, the three Crystal Masters gathered in Jackpaw's lodge, in the space he normally reserved for communion with Spirit. In this place, the subtle energies wielded by the Crystal Masters to direct their crystals, was strong and clear, without hint of the confusion brought by untrained minds. Jajeff would be an old man before he would be asked to join such a gathering, for only the Spirit Elders understood the careful pace needed when Crystal Masters treated with Spirit.

"Your young friend is certainly full of challenge. Is there no limit to what he would do for our help?" While he spoke, Crow Eyes puffed on his pipe, while pushing fresh herbs into the polished wood bowl to feed its small ember, blue smoke billowing into the air around his ancient face.

"Look around my lodge. There is hardly any work left for me to ask him to do. Soon, I will have to build another lodge, just so that I can have work for him. He is clever too. You should have seen him prepare the hide from the deer my friends gave me. He will not eat of its flesh, but he knows how to give it proper respect and has tanned its hide for me with the skill of an elder." Jackpaw pushed a skin of fermented juices across the table toward Pohaw and leaned back in his seat before continuing, the chair's old hide and wood creaking as if ready to collapse.

"He is a good boy, but he has not learned the limits of his gift nor the danger of what he asks. I have invited you to travel this great distance from your lodge, so that you may help me teach him the foolishness of his desire. Perhaps together, we can convince him to return to his people and find a more fruitful use for the gift Father Spirit has given him."

Pohaw accepted the skin without comment, only nodding his head slightly to show agreement with what Jackpaw had said, and even after filling his cup, he remained silent, somberly staring into the cup's dark liquid. He was the most experienced of the three and his silence soon overtook Crow Eyes and Jackpaw. When he was satisfied that he had their attention, he took his crystal from a pouch, held close about his neck with a leather thong, and placed it on the table before him. The others also brought their crystals to the table and continued to watch him, preparing their minds for the ceremony.

In their silence, there was communion and mutual understanding of what they must do. Pohaw first spoke words requesting the presence and protection of his protector Spirit, Shining Spear, a long dead shaman who had remained to guide Pohaw's dreams.

Then Crow Eyes, next in experience and age, called upon Little Fox, his old friend of the dream world, to bring the wisdom and protection of their brothers of the forest, at a time the three men are most vulnerable to unhappy spirits.

Last, Jackpaw sang to Father Spirit to join in the circle and help them find a way to guide Jajeff to safety while he was on his journey.

"We seek your help to find a way to save this foolish, but good boy, whom you have sent to my lodge," Jackpaw said loudly, talking to the air between the three men.

After all three men had finished calling on Spirit, Pohaw beat on a small drum to set a cadence, and all three men sang the secret name of Father Spirit, until each man understood exactly what must be done.

As they sang, a crow sat on a tree limb outside of Jackpaw's lodge, where it could look into the entryway. But Jajeff could not see what the old men were doing. While Jajeff

watched, the crow grew frightened of the place and flew away, as if something from the lodge was chasing it. Jajeff thought he heard the sounds of men chanting and of drum beats over the frenzied sound of the crow's wings, but he was not sure. He did not try to overhear the men's council again.

Jajeff knew he was on a make busy task to give the Crystal Master's time to gather their powers, so he did not hurry, choosing instead to enjoy the fine sunny day and to delight in communion with a family of coyotes that lived near Jackpaw's lodge. By late afternoon, there was still no signal from the Crystal Masters for him to return to the lodge, and he was forced to hold himself available, working to control his impatience and trusting that the Crystal Masters would be true to their word.

Before darkness came, he returned with his burden of herb flowers, and stored them in one of Jackpaw's small lodges, as he had been directed. Much later, when the first stars were beginning to appear in the night sky, the three old men came out of Jackpaw's lodge and invited Jajeff to join them in food and conversation.

"We have been all day, communing with Spirit and finding the best path to follow. We well eat now, and sleep early, for the first rays of morning must find us on the path," Jackpaw announced formally, ignoring Jajeff's obvious impatience.

"Were did you say you put those rabbits?" Crow Eyes asked, rubbing his hands together enthusiastically. "I could eat ten of them." He disappeared around the lodge, looking for Jackpaw's drying rack.

For a while, the men busied Jajeff with the preparation of food, leaving no opportunity for him to ask questions until they were seated to eat. Jajeff respectfully waited until each Crystal Master had taken his first bite of food before venturing a question about his quest.

"Pohaw, tell me more about the gateways. What does one look like? How does it feel to cross one. Do you . . ."

"Hold on, now, Watcher. One question at a time," Pohaw said with a laugh, interrupting Jajeff's string of questions.

"A gateway is not so much a place that one can go to as it is a place in the air that is a momentary weakness in the barrier between the two worlds," Pohaw explained, obviously enjoying the opportunity to talk about something important to him.

"Its existence varies from moment to moment, like the fluttering of a butterfly, and like the butterfly, it can be at any place you happen to come across it." Pohaw swung his arm in an expansive gesture to indicate every place at once, nearly knocking a skin of water from a stump as he did. "When you find one, it is usually there only for a blink of the eye and then it is gone again, as if it had never been there in the first place."

"And there is no sense hanging around for it to open in the same place again, because it may never open there again," Jackpaw added, mumbling around a mouth full of hard bread and rabbit.

"But surely they must be a little predictable or you could not find one at all." Jajeff tried to understand what the men were saying, but none of it made sense. To him, a gateway should be in a specific place. The idea that something as important as that should be so unpredictable disturbed him.

"I see Song Flower in the same way each time I look, and her kitten is in the same lodge each time I look. I would expect a gateway to be as predictable." Jajeff tried to make his voice sound reasonable, but it seemed to him that Pohaw was making gateways more mysterious than they really were.

"You would, would you," Jackpaw said sarcastically. "Well, there are some places that are more apt to have a gateway than might other places. But you must remember that these things do not exist for our pleasure. They are there because something or someone on the

other side has done something to make them exist. That is all. No one can know what might make one appear, nor where."

"Besides, if they were so easy to find, you would not need us to help you, would you now," Crow Eyes added with a sly grin.

"You are so good to be with, I am sure I would find some other reason to learn from you," Jajeff countered, hoping to show proper respect in the process.

"Ho, ha!" Crow Eyes laughed. "You are also gifted with the mind of a chief, Young Watcher." He playfully tossed a piece of sweet root at Jajeff's bowl.

This was turning into a truly interesting puzzle for Jajeff, and he did not want to let himself be distracted from his questions, so he tried to return to the subject.

"Then how is it that you are able to know where to look for a gateway?"

"Just as you have a gift, so do we. Our gift is in knowing how to commune with the crystal. Among other things, the crystal helps us find the place where the gateway will open next, but only when there are three of us, can we feel sure to find one and hold it open long enough to see across." Pohaw patted the pouch hanging around his neck.

Jajeff looked at the three men sitting around him on logs and stumps, contentedly eating their food. "Is there another way to find and open a gateway? I mean, if I am to cross into the Dim World, I will need to be able to find and open the gateway so that I can return." Jajeff had visualized a much different kind of gateway, one that was more tangible, such as a bridge of land, or a tunnel in a mountain, a place that could be hidden and then found to cross.

The Crystal Masters looked at one another, grinning, not so secretly sharing their mirth at Jajeff's foolish hopes. Crow Eyes was the first to answer.

"We have told you, Young Watcher. Your Dim World is a dangerous place, and Father Spirit will not permit a single place to become a gateway. And when he does permit a gateway to form, he keeps it secret, so that the danger will not seep into our world, and then Father Spirit only lets us look across to let us know how good life is in our world."

"Yes," Jackpaw took up the conversation, "you will need to have our gifts to see into the Dim World, and when you see, you will understand why we have made you promise not to cross. The gateway will be very weak and may open only a little, so that you can see and hear without some animal's senses." Jackpaw's voice was laden with warning when he talked about Jajeff's promise.

The Pohaw and Crow Eyes nodded their head in agreement, closely watching Jajeff for his reaction, and he realized that any sign of argument from him now, could cause the men to cancel the search for the gateway. Jajeff put his hands between his knees and stared at his feet in what he hoped looked like a submissive attitude. Within his mind, was the thunder of hope that the old men were wrong, and determination to find a way into the Dim World.

He looked up at Jackpaw for the briefest of moments, meeting his firm gaze and smiling weakly at him, contrite, with his head still turned down, so that the Crystal Master would see that he was willing to be submissive to a Spirit Elders. Jackpaw smiled back at him, but their eyes were locked together for a longer time, and Jackpaw knew that Jajeff was fooling them as the coyote fools the rabbit. Jackpaw's grin grew broader, but he did not tell the other men.

"Our spirits have been called, and they are ready to assist and protect us," Pohaw announced in a decisive voice. "In the morning, we will take you onto the hills, where we have heard drum beats from the other side, and where we have held the gateway open long enough to see across," he promised as a serious look came to his face and he pointed at Jajeff.

"You will see. You will see the other side and how dangerous it would be for you, if you tried to cross."

"We will show you." Both Crow Eyes and Jackpaw agreed.

Jajeff stood and stretched, indicating to the others that he was ready to retire to his sleeping pad. "If we must be on the trail before dawn, I will sleep now, so that dawn will be here early," he said, smiling to show that he was making a joke.

"Yes, we had all better sleep, for tomorrow will be a test of our strength," Jackpaw agreed, and turned toward the house, Pohaw and Crow Eyes, close behind.

The next morning found Jajeff following the three men on a trail toward the nearby mountains that bound Jackpaw's valley, and by mid-day, they were at the edge of a different valley, close to the place where they had once found a gateway into the Dim World.

"We are very close now," Pohaw said, his hand held high to stop the others. "We should bring our shields to the ready, and walk toward that flat place that stands over the valley." He pointed to a shallow slope on the western side of the valley, dotted with oak tree and covered with a fine blanket of yellow grass. "I feel the shadow from the Dim World is very dark there."

The three men moved ahead of Jajeff and began walking together, like a three pointed shield intended to protect him from an unknown danger. Each man held a short staff of polished manzanita, blessed with brightly painted carvings depicting protector spirits confronting strange beasts in endless battle. Large crystals were neatly attached to the ends of the staffs with straps of leather, so that they could glisten in the sun, forming magical spears to ward off angry spirits. The men waved these staffs in front of themselves with each step they took, as if, Jajeff imagined, they were clearing evil spirits from their path. From time to time, sunlight reflected into Jajeff's eyes from one of the crystals, enhancing his sense of mystery and convincing him of the power they held.

The terrain grew hilly and dotted with manzanita bushes and young oak trees, indicating to Jajeff that there had been a fire there not many years before. The air was dry and dusty, because it had not rained for many days, and it was hot, hot like the air could burn. Jajeff's clothes hung on him and chafed his arms and legs, as he walked, and as the day became afternoon, he found himself wishing for the night and a chance to rest. He was not accustomed to such heat.

Occasionally, the men stopped and conferred amongst themselves, as if Jajeff was not there. Sometimes, when they were stopped, one of them would step ahead of the others and hold the crystal he carried in his neck-pouch, to his eyes and carefully examine his surroundings, while looking through it. All of this made Jajeff very curious to know why they were doing these things, but he had been warned that there would be no talking, while they traveled with the crystals, and that only when they stopped for the night, would they discuss what they were doing.

Finally, darkness forced them to quite for the day, and Pohaw called a stop to their search.

"We will rest here, and in the morning, we will continue our search. I feel the energy is strong, and I do not wish to give up." Without further comment, he sat down on a nearby rock, and opening the pouch he wore on his hip, fished out a piece of dried fish for his evening meal.

Jackpaw and Crow Eyes also found rocks to sit on, leaving Jajeff to sit on the ground if he wished to be near them. Jajeff was exhausted, though, and gratefully sat on the ground where he had stood, also fishing in his pouch for bread and nuts to eat. When he thought the Crystal Masters were sufficiently rested, he pressed them for answers to the many questions he had thought of during the day.

"Why do you wave those crystals around. Do you gain power by this?" Jajeff hoped that he did not insult them by asking about their crystals, but he was curious, thinking that perhaps he could also learn to use a crystal to find a gateway.

"Very well. If you must know." Pohaw said laughing, while he poured water into a cup. "We are asking the crystals to show us where a gateway is into your Dim World. We have learned to know that the crystal will become brighter when one is nearby."

"Yes, it is as if something from the other side leaks into our world and disturbs the crystal," added Jackpaw. "You should think of this as another sign of the danger there is in your Dim World."

"But did you not tell me there were worlds other than the Dim World?"

"Yes," agreed Pohaw, waiting for Jajeff to make his point.

"Then how do you know which world the gateway leads to?" Jajeff asked with an even voice, hoping he did not seem to be trying to trap the Crystal Masters into showing a secret.

"That is easy," Crow Eyes joined in. "There are places we already know to go to, when we want to enter those other worlds. They are easier to find and more readily open for us to enter, if we so choose. It is only your Dim World that is so wicked that it cannot have a true gateway of its own." He seemed to delight in pointing out that Jajeff had chosen the most dangerous of the worlds they knew.

"You mean there are fixed places you could take me to that have gateways into other worlds? But yesterday, you said that gateways were changing." Jajeff's voice showed his confusion.

"There can be such places without being known to the uninitiated," Crow Eyes answered with a laugh, looking at Pohaw and Jackpaw to see that they shared his humor. These places are very sacred and can only be found by Elders of the Crystal. Without our help, you would only see desert or trees or rocks, but you would not see a gateway. This is because you must have the gift of seeing, which only many years working with the crystal will give you." Crow Eyes slowly shook his head. "If the gateways were not thus protected, who knows what chaos would be in the land."

"Tell him about the fire sticks," Pohaw suggested.

"Oh yes, the men with fire sticks who came into the Quiet World." Crow Eyes moved to sit on the ground so that he could lean on his rock. "Arkan has told us of a break in the barrier between the Quiet World and a world much like your Dim World. He said that they were trying a new crystal bending technique that was to produce a great deal of power for their villages. The moment they began the test, a thunderous, threatening sound rolled across their valley and light flashed everywhere as if all of the lightning in the world was unleashed there at one time."

Crow Eyes paused to allow the magnitude of what he was describing to reach Jajeff's mind, and then continued, his voice heavy with sadness.

"When Arkan was able to see past the blinding light, he saw many men running out of the air, round metal hats shining in the still flashing light, sticks pointing ahead of them, spewing fire and noise, and small pieces of metal that tore at everything they hit."

Crow Eyes paused to shake his head, and Jackpaw took up the story.

"Arkan said that these men killed everyone they saw with their fire sticks, and only stopped after they ran out of power. Then they huddled together and looked around themselves, as if frightened of the lightning and thunder."

"But what happened then? What did Arkan do?" Jajeff asked, intrigued by their story. He had not dreamed that they could know of such things.

"Arkan told us that his people were forced to turn their crystals on the men, and kill them were they stood," Crow Eyes answered, with a definite nod of his head.

"Yes," Pohaw took up, "you must think of this story as a warning of what could happen, if gateways were not well guarded by Father Spirit. Those who cross into the other worlds bear

great responsibility not to unleash forces they cannot control, nor should they behave in a way that will cause harm to unsuspecting people on the other side. This is only reasonable."

Jajeff wanted to ask more questions, but after the story about the fire sticks, the three Crystal Masters insisted that it was time to sleep, reminding Jajeff that they would begin at first light, and he should take advantage of what time he had left to sleep.

It was on the third day, and a hard day's walk from Jackpaw's lodge, that Crow Eyes held his crystal high toward the sun and loudly chanted his thanks to Father Spirit in his native tongue.

"I have felt the gateway opening here, Young Jajeff." Crow Eyes held his crystal to his eyes and looked around at the forest clearing and the meadow that fell away before their vantage point.

"This one seems to be here, because our brothers on the other side have gathered for a tribal council in this place. There are many here who think as we do, and they are making the differences between the worlds less. Jajeff, you must be in this place and open your heart to Spirit, so that you may sense the opening." Crow Eyes put his crystal in its pouch and stood holding his crystal pointed staff in front of him with one hand, his other hand pointing to a place where Jajeff was to sit.

Jajeff knelt down beside Crow Eyes, as he was instructed, while Jackpaw and Pohaw stood close behind him, ready to grab him if he decided to jump across the gateway. He whispered the power words to Spirit, as he was told he must do when this moment came, repeating phrases calling on Spirit to shield him and to give him wisdom in the face of the unknown.

"And please let this be my way across to find Song Flower," he added under his breath, so that the men would not hear.

Crow Eyes also began chanting in a deep, rhythmic voice that suggested much greater personal power than one would have expected of such an old man. Pohaw and Jackpaw joined in, forming a shield of sound that enveloped Jajeff and made his body tingle and vibrate in answer to their collective voices. The Crystal Masters scanned the region about them with their crystals as they chanted power words, searching for any hint of the Dim World, short shafts held like spears in front of them, as if warding off angry spirits.

Despite his excitement, Jajeff felt himself slipping into a deeply relaxed place within his mind, as the words of power rolled from his lips. He felt his body sway in rhythm with his breathing and smiled as a breeze pulled at his hair, cooling his face, even as the sun warmed it. He felt at one with the Earth Mother and was happy to recognize her caress on his face. Moments passed, as he moved deeper into the cavern of his mind, thanking the Earth Mother, finding peace in her love. The air turned bright where his voice joined with the voice of the Crystal Masters, filling the world with the powerful light of their voices.

Jajeff was grinning at the beauty of the glowing air, when he noticed that other voices were also chanting, their words seemingly merging with his words, to fill the air around him with the sound of many voices singing in unison, voices streaking the glowing air with new colors that sometimes seemed to take form and dance, as if alive. He looked around to see where the other voices were coming from, but could see no one else. The three Crystal Masters were chanting as before but were not making the sounds he was hearing, nor were they beating the drums that now rattled his lungs and made his blood run hot. He saw the three crystals pointing at the place where the sound seemed to be coming from, their clear tips glowing with an eerie blue light such as he had never seen before. Now and then, one of the men pushed his crystal shaft closer toward the sound. The tip sparking with flashes of red and green fire from the wound it made in the barrier between the two worlds. The sound grew louder.

Jajeff found that he could hear the sounds best with his eyes closed and quickly closed them, abandoning his own chanting, so that he could better hear the ghostly phrases drifting in the air and feel the thud of skin drums, like the ones his people used for special ceremonies.

He could see, he suddenly realized, a sense of wonder and excitement sweeping through his thoughts. He could see in his mind in the same way he saw through the eyes of animals. What he saw was fuzzy, as if he was seeing through a fog, but he could see well enough to know that there were other people standing around him and the Crystal Masters, people who had not been there before. They were dressed much as he was, in woven cloth and leather clothing, while still others were dressed in the brightly colored cloth of the cities he had seen in the Dim World. He could tell that distortions in the air just in front of him were caused by the presence of still other people that he could see through, as if they were being intercepted by the gateway, itself. The people were standing in a circle around an old man, who held an eagle feather and a shallow bowl to the sky, as he chanted in an unfamiliar tongue, different even from the one Jajeff had been learning from the Dim World television. Other people watched from a distance, curious but not part of the circle, as if they were spectators to village games.

Jajeff could feel the unity in the hearts of the people in the circle and knew that there was only goodness in that place. He could see no danger there, only a people calling to Father Spirit, and he felt a strong urge to go and be with them, so that he could dance with their drums.

Then, he remembered Song Flower and how he had promised himself that he would find her and bring her back to his world. He knew the gateway was open and realized that the Dim World was only steps away from him, if only he would act.

Forgetting his promise to the Crystal Masters, he sprang to his feet and rushed past Crow Eyes, before any of the men could think to stop him, the air flashing in his eyes, as he stepped past their crystal-tipped shafts.

Passing through the shadowy forms of people made his whole body tingle and hurt, causing him to cry out in pain. He had moved only a few paces past a shadowy figure, before something nearly solid resisted him like an invisible cobweb that pulled at his body and slowed his every move, making his body hurt with the feeling of a thousand bees stinging him everywhere at once. Still, he moved forward as if his life depended on it, fear growing in his thoughts as he came to understand how real the danger was. He struggled until he stood before the startled man who stood at the center of the circle.

Despite his pain, Jajeff raised his hands over his head and shouted praise to the sky, thanking Father Spirit for helping him cross the gateway. Then, as he fell to the ground unconscious, he thought of how proud Song Flower would be of his determination and success.

Much later, Jajeff woke to find Jackpaw shaking a feather under his nose and chanting words of prayer. There were crystals neatly placed on the ground in a circle around him, and Crow Eyes and Pohaw sat cross-legged on either side of him, their hands resting on his chest and stomach. They too, chanted the words of prayer.

"What happened? Why did you bring me back? I was on the other side." Jajeff sat up and looked into the eyes of each man, in turn. "Why?" he demanded, tears of frustration gathering in his eyes.

"You ran from our crystal circle and passed into the other world for but a moment, before you returned and fell to the ground unconscious." Jackpaw said with a sad but relieved voice. "We did nothing but bring the life back to you that you so carelessly threw away."

"But I was there. I was in the Dim World," Jajeff insisted, nearly pleading with the Crystal Masters. "I was there," his voice trailed off as he slumped back to the ground to stare into the darkening sky.

"Yes you were, but being there nearly killed you before the Dim World threw you back. We warned you of the danger, but still you tried to cross over," Jackpaw said, nearly spitting his words out, he was so angry. Then, he abruptly rose to his feet and began gathering his crystals, not looking at Jajeff, a deep scowl on his face. The other men joined him.

"You are a foolish young man who has not learned to obey his elders. We will not help you die again," Jackpaw concluded and walked away from Jajeff, Pohaw and Crow Eyes close behind.

The Crystal Masters stopped to eat when the dark was nearly complete, but since the moon was full, they continued on to Jackpaw's lodge, walking in the night as if it were day. Jajeff was a little dizzy at first, but he had no trouble keeping up with the older men, though he remained a respectful distance behind them to avoid drawing more anger from Jackpaw, even remaining some distance away from them while they ate.

When they reached his lodge, Jackpaw said something to Pohaw and Crow Eyes, and went directly into his lodge. He returned holding a pouch and offered it to Jajeff, who had just walked into the clearing from the trail, timidly, uncertain what he should do.

"Here is food for your journey," he said, holding the pouch out to Jajeff. "You have earned both our respect and our anger while you have been with us. Return to your people and tell them what you have done and that we have shown you every respect you could ask. But, do not come to us again, nor send others to us for more crazy attempts to cross into the other worlds. Tell them that we will not be a part of their needless death."

Jajeff took the offered pouch, feeling a growing sense of defiance at being condemned by three old men.

"And Watcher," Pohaw interjected, "you have learned much from us these days. I know you will continue to try crossing into the Dim World, so use what you have learned with wisdom." He held his hand up between him and Jajeff, a kindly smile on his face, melting Jajeff's growing anger, even as it was forming. "I will ask Father Spirit to guide your steps. Be strong Watcher."

Pohaw's repeated reference to him as a Watcher, made it clear to Jajeff and the others, that Pohaw was recognizing him as a Spirit Master in his own right. Jajeff did not know exactly how to take the recognition, but it did serve to lessen some of the sting of being sent away.

Jajeff lowered his head slightly, as he thanked the three men, and apologized for his brashness. Then, he turned and walked away from them and into the woods without looking back. He was very happy to be away from the men's anger, to be alone with Mother Earth.

## The Hawk and the Trout

The journey back from the southern valley was long and tedious for Jajeff, because he knew every step of the way brought him closer to the moment he would have to tell his people of his adventure, about how he had failed to find a way into the Dim World and how he had angered the Crystal Masters. He could not bring himself to tell of his attempt to cross over without honestly describing the anger he had brought on himself from the Crystal Masters, for that was also part of his adventure, and he was an honest man.

It was on the seventh day of his journey home that he found the crystal in the pouch, along with the corn cakes Jackpaw had given him. It was a single, perfectly clear stone, nearly as long as his thumb, nothing else, just the crystal. Jajeff wept with relief, holding the crystal to his heart and singing the song of acceptance he had heard the Crystal Masters sing, whenever a crystal had helped them in some small way. Jackpaw was stern, but he was not without heart, and Jajeff knew that the gift of a crystal from a Crystal Master must be considered very seriously. Jackpaw had been angry with him, but giving Jajeff the crystal, he was indicating his respect for Jajeff's gift, and perhaps even approval of his objectives. This made Jajeff feel better, making the rest of his journey seem much easier.

Jajeff entered his village early on a cool, fall afternoon, and hardly paused to accept welcoming greetings from his friends, as he made his way to Mother Lily's lodge. He wanted to face her first, since he valued her opinion of him, even over Shield Hands.

"Mother Lily, where are you?" he called into her lodge.

She did not answer, so he entered, thinking that she could be sleeping, but she was not there. After searching for her near the stream, he decided that she must be fulfilling her duty as an elder in council, something she forced herself to do on occasion, so that Shield Hand would not forget her.

"Just as well," he thought to himself, deciding that it would be best if he told all of the elders of his journey at one time.

He turned and walked resolutely toward the council lodge, focusing his mind on appearing strong and confident, preparing himself to tell the council that he angered an elder, as if he were a proud warrior announcing a successful hunt.

As he entered the council lodge, Jajeff saw that there were more people in the lodge than usual, and so he remained just within the entrance, where he could listen to what had attracted so much interest, without interrupting their conversation.

"There is no use arguing about the storage space, Shield Hand," Broken Paw said in his usual whisper. "The mice can find a way in, no matter what we do. We will just have to grow more than they can eat."

"Nonsense!" Shield Hand growled back. "If we store more, they will just multiply and eat more."

He looked around at the elders.

"Why are there no ideas for a better way to store the food we have worked so hard to gather? Surely, there must be something we can do."

"We will build a new storage space in the air, so that we can watch to see that no mice climb into it," Two Feathers offered, looking around at the other elders for agreement. "Then next year, we will be able to store more food," he added smugly when no one disagreed with him.

"Next year?" Mother Lily asked sarcastically. "What do you propose our people should eat this year? There is even less food to carry us through the winter than last year, and last year, three of our elders and Whistling Girl's first born, died for lack of enough of the right foods. We can send everyone into the forest to gather all of the food they can find, but it will not be enough, and if the winter is very hard, there will be more sickness and dying because all we will have to eat is meat.

She looked at Jajeff where he stood, silhouetted by light from the entrance.

"And what is the matter with that?" Shield Hand wanted to know.

He looked around at the elders with raised eyebrows and his tongue stuck out. Many of the elders laughed at his funny face. Mother Lily did not laugh, but rolled her eyes and raised her hands in a helpless gesture.

"Meat alone will not keep our children healthy any more than will seeds and roots alone," she responded, and grinned at Jajeff, waving him over to her side.

Shield Hand followed her gaze and spotted Jajeff.

"Welcome Jajeff," Shield Hand called to him, apparently happy for the interruption. "Come and tell us what you have seen in the southern valley.

Jajeff took a deep breath, stiffened his back and stepped into the council circle with deliberate steps, looking at each of the elders as he did. He stopped by the fire pit, where he felt certain the elders would see light from the fire reflect from the crystal he wore around his neck.

"I have just returned and have come directly to stand before you, as Crystal Master Jackpaw has requested." Jajeff said in his strongest voice, slowly turning to look again at each elder as he did, attempting to shield himself from his embarrassment with his forcefulness.

The elders and Shield Hand listened in silence, fascinated by the forceful attitude they were witnessing in a usually quiet boy.

"Jackpaw and his helpers, Pohaw, Crystal Master of the Western Plains, and Crow Eyes, Crystal Master of the Desert People, agreed to show me a gateway into the Dim World, but only if I promised not to attempt passing through it. They told me that doing so might kill me, and they refused to help me die." Jajeff paused for a moment, now looking deep into Shield Hand's eyes. "They found the gateway for me, and in the excitement of the moment, I attempted to cross."

The elders began talking amongst themselves, whispering in excited tones, looking at Jajeff from the corner of their eyes as they discussed his words.

Jajeff finished his announcement. Louder now, so that he could be heard over their babble. "Just as the Crystal Masters had warned, I was nearly killed by the gateway. They brought life back into my body and banished me from their lodge, commanding me to come to you and tell you what I have done, and how I have been treated well by these people."

Once again, he paused to look around at the now silent elders.

"I have done this that I have been asked," he finished and abruptly walked away from the council circle.

"Whoa, Watcher, where are you going," Shield Hand called after Jajeff before he had reached the entrance.

Jajeff stopped, but did not turn to look at his chief.

"I have shamed myself and my people. I have no right to be in the council lodge," he answered in low, steady tones, his misery clearly discernible in his voice.

"Come here. You are taking these old men far too seriously." Shield Hand's voice was full of kindness and humor as Jajeff obediently turned and retraced his steps to stand in the circle.

"Perhaps you should tell us why you broke your word. Surely, you had a good reason," Shield Hand suggested, giving Jajeff his full attention.

"There is no excuse for what I have done, Chief Shield Hand, except that I had journeyed there to find a way of entering the Dim World and I felt compelled to pursue my quest. Even though I gave my word to the Crystal Masters that I would not attempt to cross, when I saw the gateway open, there was only the thought of Song Flower in my heart, and I could not resist." Jajeff explained, his gaze locked on the fire pit near his feet.

Shield Hand waited until Jajeff had finished speaking, and then stood and moved around the fire to stand in front of him so that he could look more closely at Jajeff's crystal. He bent his head to look even closer. Then, he reached out and lifted the crystal from Jajeff's chest.

"What is this? Are you a Crystal Master now?"

"No. Crystal Master Jackpaw gave this to me, when I left him. It was hidden in the food he gave me for the journey."

Shield Hand spun the crystal between his fingers, seeing the firelight glisten from its surfaces, as they passed before his eyes. The message of the gift was not lost on him, either.

"He must have been terribly angry with you. I can see this because he gave you food for the trail and a gift of power to protect you on your journey." Shield Hand shook his head in mock sadness. "Yes, I can tell that you must have been a very bad warrior."

Shield Hand released Jajeff's crystal and turned to look at the elders, so that he could measure their agreement with his words.

"In the past, you have demonstrated both good and bad judgment in carrying out your responsibility to the people. But, you have always been true to your word, even in your promise to the Crystal Masters to come before me and tell me of your brash deed. Perhaps the lesson here is not your disobedience but how strong your desire to be in the Dim World has become. I will remember this, when I ask you to do things for me in the future. If you are in the middle of another attempt to cross into this other world, I will find someone else to trust."

Shield Hand laughed, delighted with his wise words and with the response of the elders, who were all nodding their head in agreement. He put an arm around Jajeff and led him to the entrance.

"Those old men were more worried that we would take revenge, if they sent you back only as a memory to this world. Do not worry about this wrong they think you did to them." Shield Hand spoke loudly to be sure that everyone heard, then he slapped Jajeff on his back, propelling him out of the lodge.

"I will expect a fuller accounting of your adventures," Shield Hand called after Jajeff, and with a sigh of resignation, returned his attention to the council.

Relieved, Jajeff left the council lodge and retreated to his space in the bachelor lodge, where he could think about how his life was going and what he should do with it. After being away for so long, he noticed that the bachelor lodge had changed in little, subtle ways that only served to aggravate his growing sense of inadequacy. This time, he realized that he was the oldest there and that the other young men were probably already courting young women with plans to have a family of their own.

"Am I to be forever in this place?" Jajeff asked himself in the darkness of his corner of the lodge.

"Oh, Song Flower," he cried, silently to himself.

As he let his frustration fill his mind, he once again, vowed to find a way into the Dim World.

Winter was fast approaching and there was little time for Jajeff to feel sorry for himself, as he helped to harvest the pathetic remains of their corn crop. Much to Jajeff's regret, the

corn seed he had worked so hard to gather from the Desert People, had not produced any better than what his people already grew. If anything, the new corn had produced less, and the many worms that feasted on corn, seemed to prefer the new verity, forcing Jajeff to accept that his people had gained very little from his effort.

Jajeff knew Mother Lily was right, and that the coming winter would surely take more of his people, as the cold and the harsh conditions found the weaker members of the tribe and tested their desire to live. Thus, was Mother Earth's way of keeping their brothers of the forest strong and he accepted this, but Jajeff could not accept that his people should be similarly culled to keep his tribe strong. He knew there had to be a way to make life easier for his people, and he felt certain that his gift was somehow linked to that objective. Certainty of this tormented him as the days shortened, heralding the approach of winter.

Many of the men worked hard to build an elevated storage lodge, with wooden legs suspending its floor many hands above the ground so that the children could see if animals tried to reach the food stored inside. The rest of the people scoured the forest to harvest everything edible they could find before the first snow made it impossible to look further. When the snow did arrive, the new food lodge was nearly full and everyone agreed with pride that they would have plenty to hold them until the spring harvest of berries.

With the snow, came the winter routine of crafts and story telling, as the Hawk People found ways to remain productive despite being confined to the lodges for warmth. True, there was still ample work that required the people to be outside, but most of their daily life revolved around the fire pit and the family. Of course, Jajeff did not like being forced to huddle in the lodges any more than the others, especially since he had no family to be with, but he appreciated the extra time to watch the Dim World and to learn of Song Flowers mysterious culture.

When Jajeff became lonely, he would either go to the council lodge to listen to stories, or seek out Mother Lily and engage her in a discussion about things he had learned from the Dim World.

"Really, Mother Lily," Jajeff said, earnestly leaning forward in his seat as he tried to explain one of his theories about gateways between the worlds, "there could be people right where we are now, only in another world. I can not be sure where I was at the time, but once when I was with a dog, I was able to see a cluster of lodges near a stream that looks much like ours." He grinned at Mother Lily. "There could be a person sitting at a table in the Dim World, right where you are sitting now."

"My word!" Mother Lily exclaimed, squirming in her seat and looking around as if she expected to see a spirit hovering nearby.

Jajeff stifled a giggle and pressed her for more ideas about how he could find a gateway. "So you see Mother Lily, if I am right, I might be able to find a gateway just about any place I look."

"Well, don't bother to go looking for another Crystal Masters to help you." Mother Lily answered, sadly shaking her head. "I have already heard from my sisters that you are not to be trusted. Gifted or not, having once disobeyed your teacher, you have become a marked man in the community of Spirit Elders."

"But I had to try . . . Song Flower . . . ." Jajeff tried to explain, knowing there was no good excuse.

He was able to suppress the feelings of inadequacy, the memory of his trip to the Crystal Master often evoked. After all, Shield Hand had passed his disobedience off as unimportant, but Mother Lily's words brought back the reality of his transgression. He had violated a sacred trust between himself and a Spirit Elder.

"Nonsense, you have better wisdom than that," Mother Lily said, shaking her head. "Has this shadow woman cast a spell on your mind?" She did understand Jajeff's behavior but could not accept it as proper for a gifted young man who would someday be a Spirit Elder in his own right.

"No! It is not her fault. I was overcome with the excitement and . . . and . . . and I wanted so very much to see her with my own eyes. Yes, Mother Lily, Song Flower has cast a spell over me, but it is a good spell that I am happy to have. I will find a way to cross over, and I will bring her back to show you why I love her. You will see."

"Yes, I suppose I will see," Mother Lily agreed, adding more calming tea to Jajeff's cup.

Jajeff was greatly saddened by the news that other elders were also upset with him, not so much because he had wished to ask help from them, but because Mother Lily's news showed that the people he most respected also felt he had proven himself an ungrateful guest to an elder. If his parents were still living, they would have felt shame at his behavior. But instead of his parents, the community of gifted ones sat in judgment of him and found him wanting.

Understanding that he was developing a reputation amongst the elders as an undependable student, Jajeff became self-conscious and uncertain of his good judgment. He began finding ways to avoid attracting attention to himself when he was around others, by remaining at the back of the council lodge, away from the fire where he could be with people without being drawn into conversations. He was well aware that he was beginning to avoid his people. He was even fascinated that the joy of life could be taken so easily by a single unthinking deed, but knowing what he was doing did not help, and he continued to retreat from the social life of his tribe.

As the winter became more difficult, and there were fewer opportunities to move about the village without great discomfort from the cold, Jajeff busied himself by looking for a gateway around his village. He moved with the Eyes of the Forest everywhere he could think of, prowling the snow covered thickets with ground squirrels foraging in their larders for a winter meal, looking up and down the rivers with otters, even venturing into the lake with muskrats. Nothing he saw or sensed, offered him any suggestion of being out of the ordinary. Frustrated, he even ventured into the woods with snowshoes, while holding his crystal to his eyes, just as he had seen the Crystal Masters look through their crystals while looking for the gateway.

As if his mind were an animal emerging from hibernation, the winter thaw found Jajeff slowly coming to accept that there was little he could do about his past deeds, and that it was he who felt most awkward about angering the Crystal Masters. His people seemed unconcerned about it and made it clear that he was always welcome to join them as they told their stories around the fire pit.

His return came one winter night, when the children were especially restless and their mothers were near the end of their patience. Most of the people were gathered in the council lodge to share the warmth and work with their crafts. The snow had been falling for two days, and the wind blew hard enough to make the lodge shudder and threaten to collapse. Being trapped inside for so long, everyone was feeling on edge and needed a diversion, something Jajeff had once been very skilled in providing.

Recognizing his duty to the people, Jajeff rose from his corner in the great lodge and began to dance amongst the people. He moved slowly to show the gradual changes of the seasons, beating two sticks together to mark the passing of days and to attract the children's attention. He knew the children's favorite stories and knew that they would dearly love to hear one of them, but this time he chose one that matched his mood and that was suitable for his reluctant return to the center of attention.

"I will tell you of a day. You must tell me which one," he said with the voice of the wind and he pivoted around the small space, surrounded by children and grateful adults. Letting the fire be his sun and the round face of Mother Lily be his moon, he danced back into the world to the delighted claps and chants of the children.

"Jajeff, you are different from the other men of the Hawk People and you may as well accept this," One Who Knows told him after his dance, gracing him with a warm smile. "The people have accepted this in you, and are gladdened when you use this differentness to teach and entertain them. Please do not go away again."

She held his hand and squeezed it warmly, then returned to sit beside Beaver, the man whom she hoped would ask for her.

Jajeff felt warm all over, happy to be reminded that his friends had never left his side, even though he had been too depressed to have noticed. His renewed sense of worth seemed to free his mind, and let him see the world and his goals more clearly than ever before.

"The spring thaw is beginning to warm the mountains, finally making it possible for me to renew my search for a gateway," he told himself, and redoubled his efforts to understand the Dim World in preparation for the day he would cross over.

To his delight, Jajeff discovered that Song Flower's world view was much in accordance with his own. She read many books about spirit and things of the earth and often talked to Bonnet, her cat, about her thoughts as if he could understand. Jajeff was beginning to understand some of what she said, and did everything he could to encourage Bonnet to listen attentively, believing such a good listener would bring even more such conversations.

It was the first day he was able to sit comfortably in the sun without his heavy cloak, that Jajeff found an agitated Bonnet pacing in front of the closed door partitioning Song Flower's resting room from other parts of her lodge. Jajeff could hear Song Flower crying on the other side of the door, and understanding Bonnet's concern, joined the cat to wait impatiently for someone to open the door. After a few minutes, Bonnet cocked his head toward the door and quickly moved to the side, as footsteps preceded the door's opening. Song Flower's mother, Jennifer, carefully stepped out and closed the door behind her, being careful to keep Bonnet from entering the room.

"I'm sorry, Little Bonnet," she said with a sad voice, "why don't you stay out here, until we can understand why Morine is ill. Come on now, Let's go have some treats." Jennifer picked Bonnet up, giving Jajeff a momentary sense of vertigo, and soon Jajeff found himself trying to ignore the smell of the treat Jennifer gave Bonnet. This was made difficult, because Bonnet had his nose pushed close to the food, while licking and nibbling to savor every morsel of the gooey substance, so recently scooped from a metal container.

The sunlight had moved from where Jajeff was sitting beside the bachelor lodge, and the renewed cold was tugging at him to go inside, but Song Flower's father, Ed, came into the kitchen and asked if Song Flower was feeling better. Jajeff resisted going inside and gave Bonnet a mental kick to get the cat to quit making so much noise slurping its food and to pay attention to the conversation. Obediently, Bonnet looked up with its eyes cocked toward Ed, as if waiting for the answer.

"The poor dear," Jennifer said in a hushed tone, so that Song Flower would not hear. "She is still running a temperature, but she doesn't seem to have a bug. I suspect she is making herself sick over this engagement. I don't think she really loves Benjamin."

"Loves? My Song Flower loves someone else?" Jajeff was so startled, he nearly lost contact with Bonnet, the increasing cold forgotten.

"Well, if she doesn't love him, why did she agree to marry him?" Ed asked in a sarcastic voice.

"Oh, I think she believes it would be the best thing to do. I suppose it will just takes some getting used to for her. Besides, he is a good boy and comes from a good family, so she should be happy enough."

"Ya, and the fact that her family holds the mortgage on our farm has nothing to do with it either, right?"

"Oh Ed, that isn't the reason she is marrying Benjamin. They grew up together. Everyone figured they would get married, when they grew up. You know that. Benjamin will graduate from college a year from this May, and his father has promised him a good job in his bank when he does, so everything is coming together just perfect for the two of them to get married in June."

"But if Morine doesn't love him . . . ."

"She is just confused, that is all. She will get over it."

The conversation changed to other subjects, and Bonnet insisted on returning to Song Flower's door. Jajeff withdrew from the cat in shock, and despite the cold, remained very still, trying to visualize a future not graced with Song Flower's presence. Some of what was said remained a mystery to him, but he understood enough of the conversation to know that Song Flower was to be asked for in May. Since he recognized May as a period of time in the spring, he understood that he must find Song Flower and win her heart by the following spring, for he knew that he would have no hope of bringing her to his world once she was given to another man.

He stood and paced around the perimeter of the lodge, agitated, trying to understand the meaning of what he had just heard, his breath trailing a vaporous cloud behind him. He frantically reviewed all he had learned about marriage in Song Flower's culture, which was a great deal, since there was much about marriage on the Dim World television.

First, he knew that Song Flower and this Benjamin would have to leave the family lodge to live in their own place. They might even leave the tribal grounds, the city, to live in some other village, where they would both be able to find work. Song Flower would have to work, even after having children, and while she worked, likely as not, Benjamin would find other women to lay with, and eventually Song Flower would have her life ruined. She would be forced to raise her children by herself with little support from her people. Jajeff knew that not all families took this path, but enough did, to make him even more worried for Song Flower's safety.

As he had been taught to do when there was a very important thing to consider, Jajeff retreated to the forest, to walk in silence amongst the animals and the trees, letting the sounds of nature do the talking for him. This was his people's way of seeking communion with Spirit, to ask for guidance in some important aspect of life. It was not a thing to undertake lightly, for one must agree to eat very little and to test the body in many physical ways, including depriving it of sleep. Jajeff knew that this stress on mind and body over many days would drive all petty thoughts out of his mind, leaving room for Spirit to reach into it and help him know the proper way to see his problem. He also knew that once begun, the path he took must be followed until understanding became clear for him. To do less would bring even further shame on his name. Thus was the urgency he felt to rescue Song Flower, that he undertook this path.

It took many days in the forest for Jajeff to finally begin feeling himself part of Earth Mother's plan. There was still a great deal of snow on the ground, and his feet were constantly cold despite his heavy shoes. He had still eaten nothing, nor had he slept for three nights since leaving his village, and the strain had left his head empty and light, open it seemed, for new understanding to enter.

The sun was not yet at its highest place in the sky, and the morning air was still and crisp, with the freshness that comes after a morning frost. It was Spring, and the world was full of little things moving about, as they recovered from the long winter. Near the stream, everything was the golden brown of last year's dried vegetation, still pushed down where snow had been and spotted here and there with the brightest green Earth Mother knew how to grow.

Despite the crisp air, this was Jajeff's favorite time in the forest and he greeted each new thing of nature with a glad heart, especially the invigorating feel of the cool air on his face, balanced by the penetrating warmth of the sun on his back. His love was so great for Earth Mother's spring face, that he held her memory in his mind to return to when the winter became nearly unbearable and snow seemed a permanent part of the world.

Jajeff's joy for Earth Mother was great, but he did not forget his strong yearning for Song Flower nor the reason he had embarked on his quest, and as he walked, he often called questions into the wind, hoping Father Spirit would answer him with a sign, but Father Spirit had shown no indication that he noticed. On the fourth day, he found himself by a singing brook that fed his village's stream. He was frustrated, and felt little hope left in his heart for success in his quest.

"Oh, Earth Mother," he cried, asking her to come and hold him and tell him how to understand the pain in his heart.

"Why? Why did I come to know this beautiful woman, only to have her remain out of reach and now to be given to another? Why have I been given the gift of knowing of her, if I am not to know the love of this person in my heart?"

Only Brother Raven could answer his cry, hovering high overhead, waiting for a reason to leave his sky. "Caaaw!" It called back to him.

*"Your problem is your own."* It said to the noisy human on the ground.

"Why can I not find a way across to the other side?" Jajeff asked the wind blowing the newly budded leaves in the trees above his head.

"Whishhhh!" answered the wind.

*"Only you know your problem,"* it said to Jajeff, as it reached mischievous fingers into his hair.

Jajeff pulled a small flower from the mass of green grass and bushes that cradled the end of the log he sat on, and tossed it into the stream. A hungry trout rolled at the surface and quickly took the flower into the depths of its home.

"Am I to be doomed to be like you, Brother Fish, to live forever on the other side of the water, never to know the joys of life on this side?" Jajeff said to the fish, throwing another flower to it, and was shocked out of his dreaming by the screech of a large hawk, as it followed the flower to the water and snatched the fish from its home.

"Screeeech!" Brother Hawk thanked Jajeff, as it flew to its nest, the trout swinging crazily from front to back with each pull of his mighty wings.

Jajeff could sense his totem animal's expression of wisdom. *"Depend on yourself, and the world will be yours."*

In shock, Jajeff sat still, alertly staring after the hawk, dumbfounded by how it had taken the fish, just as the fish had rolled to the surface to catch the flower. He knew something important had just been shown to him, but its meaning remained unclear. Confused, he found a small place among rocks, where the sun could warm him and where he was protected from the wind.

"What did Brother Hawk tell me after catching the fish?" Jajeff asked himself, "Depend on myself?" Always good advice, Jajeff knew, but he could not see how it would answer his question. He knew that the raven waited in the air for opportunity to come that was to its

liking, while the hawk looked for a way to make the world work for it. Knowing that what Jajeff did once he might do again, the hawk must have started its dive the moment Jajeff had taken up the second flower, Jajeff realized with growing respect for his totem.

Jajeff stood to feel the breeze on his face. Its cold sharpened his attention and helped him follow the tenuous flow of his thoughts, as he tried to understand what Father Spirit was tell him. The image of a hawk snatching a fish from the water floated in his head, as he remembered what the wind and the crow had told him. He realized that he was not simply a witness to the world or the struggles that took place in it every moment, but was a participant, every bit as much as was the hawk.

Excited at his new thoughts, he left his rocks and began making his way back to his village, sure that Father Spirit had given him a vision, and that somewhere in that vision was the answer to his question. He was also sure that he would not soon understand the vision on his own because he had been too long on the path without food. As was the custom of his people, he knew he could turn to the elders for help in understanding what Father Spirit had given him, so with his empty stomach and tired body forgotten, Jajeff hurried back to his village.

Once in the village, Jajeff went directly to Mother Lily's lodge, finding her hanging freshly gathered river grass to dry.

"My word, Jajeff, you look as if you have not eaten for days," she exclaimed, a worried look on her face. "Come in, and let me feed you so that you will not die in front of me."

"Thank you, Mother Lily, I am hungry," Jajeff agreed and thankfully followed Mother Lily into her lodge, happy that he did not have to face the stale bread and dried roots waiting for him in his lodge.

"I have had a vision, Mother Lily, one that I wish you to study with me, to assure that I do not mistake its meaning." Jajeff sat in his usual place by the fire pit and eagerly accepted the fresh broth of grass and roots, Mother Lily offered him. "I have seen Brother Hawk take Brother Trout, even as I invited the trout to come to the surface with a flower. It was as if Brother Hawk has shouted a message to me, and now I must understand what it has said," he managed to blurt out between gulps of the warm soup.

Mother Lily sat down and watched Jajeff wolf down his food, listening intently to his story and marveling that he had not died of starvation in the forest. When Jajeff had finished his food, she gently took his bowl and held the warm palm of her hand on his forehead.

"Close your eyes and let your head be heavy, my young friend," she whispered in a monotone voice. "There will be time enough for you to understand your vision after you have slept, and made your head clear again.

Jajeff obediently closed his eyes as he slumped down in his seat, and was soon dreaming of his lodge, warm with the presence of Song Flower and a fine son. He slept the sleep of a man who was confident he would realize his dreams.

When Jajeff had slept long enough and had refreshed himself so that he was fit to be in public, Mother Lily called a council to assist him in understanding his vision. Once they had convened in her lodge, she explained to them why they were asked to come, and without further preamble, began the council ceremony.

"As is his right, Jajeff has asked for our assistance to understand a vision, given to him by Father Spirit," she began formally. "Now you will listen to his words, and lend him your experience so that he will see the meaning of what has been said to him.

She sat at her table, holding a small clay fire pit between her hands, blowing softly into it, so that life would come to the embers smoldering under brown leaves, bits of lichen and dried moss. A sweet smelling smoke curled up around her face, to fill the space between herself and the three elders who had come to assist her in understanding Jajeff's vision.

"You have asked Father Spirit to answer your prayer," she said to Jajeff. "He has given you a vision, Young Jajeff, so you must tell us what you have seen."

Jajeff stood a respectful distance from the table, so that he would not crowd the four elders, and nervously told them of his visions. He told them how the raven had floated on the wind waiting for food to come to him, and how the wind had moved the trees and stirred the air about his head and how the trout had disturbed the water only a little, being sure not to be too tempting a target for predators. He described his surprise at the sudden appearance of the hawk, when it had anticipated his actions so that it could be at the water's surface when the fish took the second flower. He told them of these things and of what the birds and the wind had said to him in his mind. Without exaggeration and without seeming too prideful, he told them all that he saw and felt, in that magical moment by the stream.

"And do you not know what this means to you?" Mother Lily asked, pulling smoke into her lungs and holding her breath, as Spirit embraced her thoughts.

"Only vaguely, Mother Lily. My heart was in pain when I entered the woods, and all I knew was that I desperately wanted to find a way to the other side, so that I could rescue the one I love."

Mother Lily looked at him from the corner of an eye, a small smile forming on her lips. She found joy in his strong will and untempered desire, despite her wish that he would choose a woman of his own people.

"Can you not see the similarity between the water's surface and the barrier between this world and the Dim World?" Wondering Wolf, the oldest man in the tribe asked, as he also let smoke from his mouth.

Jajeff thought for a moment, trying not to think of Wondering Wolf as a fire breathing bear, and then nodded his head.

"Yes, I recognize that the barrier between the Dim World and ours may be the same to me as the barrier between the water and the sky must be to the trout." He held his breath, trying not to breathe the smoke filling the small space.

"Young Jajeff, there is more. You have been seeking others to tell you the way, when the answer is within yourself. Your problem is your own, and only you can solve it." Wandering Wolf pulled more smoke from the air and nodded his head toward Mother Lily as he spoke. "Mother Lily means well, but she cannot tell you how to find the way across, even if she is a Spirit Elder. You must do this for yourself."

"But, surely this is not what my vision is telling me," Jajeff protested, feeling certain that there must be more to his vision.

"Yes it is," Wandering Wolf answered, leaning toward Jajeff to emphasize his conviction. "Like the raven, you have been in the world looking for answers. You must be like the hawk, seeking out the moment when your destiny comes most naturally within reach."

Jajeff sensed that he was about to be dismissed and frantically searched his mind for more questions to coax the elders into telling him more of what he needed to know.

"I have already searched the forest for a gateway, but there is no sign of one. How can I know where and when that moment is?"

"Considering what you are attempting to do, I would think you would find the answer to that question where the sacred stones guard our memories. The hawk is only able to cross into the fish's home when the fish is closest to the surface. The moment the fish's destiny was determined was when both the fish and the hawk were at the same place at the same time. The place and the time was determined by the flower you tossed for the fish. You see, Young Jajeff, you too, were part of the vision." Wandering Wolf relaxed into his chair. "I can tell you no more."

Mother Lily looked at the other elders. Each, in turn, shook their head and relaxed into their seat. She turned to face Jajeff, still performing her role as elder.

"You have heard our answer, my friend. Go now, to the sacred place as Wandering Wolf has said, and commune with Spirit living there. I am sure you will find your answer." Then she turned her attention to the others seated at the table, as if Jajeff no longer existed. The council was over.

Obediently, Jajeff left the presence of his elders and returned to his living place in the bachelor lodge. It was early afternoon, and he was happy to see that there were no others there to disrupt his thoughts. He was well rested from his time in the forest and was free for the moment from any duties, so he retreated into his inner visions to try to understand better what the elders had said to him. Soon, he found himself high above the place where the big river emptied into the ocean, long lines of sand reaching north and south from where he hovered in the wind.

Jajeff recognized the inner feelings of one of his favorite hawks and quickly acknowledge the greeting he felt it signal toward him. As one, Jajeff-hawk laid softly on the air that lifted over the warm land, adjusting muscles to balance themselves on the gentle, ever-rising hand of air, lifting them upward against their constant fall. No other experience was received with more heart-felt thanks by Jajeff, than was that of soaring with Brother Hawk. Jajeff felt warm thoughts toward his host and heard its screech of delight.

Without warning, a pouch laden with scraps of leather intended for Little Buck, struck Jajeff in the head and abruptly returned him to the lodge.

"Oh, sorry Jajeff. I didn't expect you to be here." The grin on La Friend's face betrayed his true intent, despite his apology. Little Buck started laughing and prepared to throw a cup of water toward La Friend.

"Hold it, you two!" Laughing, Jajeff held his hands up between his two friends. "You will one day startle my life away, sneaking up on me like this. Can you not find other places to do your battles?"

"No, we can't," Little Buck answered defiantly. "A new storm is coming from the North and promises rain soon. You wouldn't want us to get wet, would you?"

"Only if it would drown you." Jajeff grinned to show that he was making a joke, but he knew the two younger men would consider his word a sign that he was not entirely forgiving of their callous interruption of his privacy.

"Did we expect a storm this afternoon? I do not remember old Thunder Belly saying anything about a spring storm," Jajeff asked, thoughts of the trout and the hawk floating in his head.

"No, nothing." La Friend answered. "Go see for yourself. It looks as if Stone Mountain's bonnet has grown into a tremendous storm cloud."

The skin on the back of Jajeff's neck prickled, as if a spirit had brushed against him. In the spring, the mountain often had a smooth puff of cloud curling downwind from its peak, but it seldom blew into a storm cloud. For it to do so now seemed fortunate indeed, especially since the sacred place of stones the elders told him to visit, was on the Stone Mountain's flank.

"Could this be the small flower thrown into the stream?" Jajeff wondered to himself.

Jajeff got to his feet and ran to the entryway to see the cloud, Little Buck and La Friend close behind him. Sure enough, the cloud hovered directly over the sacred place, torrents of rain clearly falling from its belly.

"I must go there now," Jajeff said in a whisper, pushing the two young men aside, as he turned and rushed back into the lodge. Within moments, he had packed his things for a journey and was on the trail that would take him to the mountain.



## Into the Dim World

Jajeff approached the sacred site Wandering Wolf had spoken of with caution, not wishing to disturb the spirits living there any more than necessary. It was a small meadow clinging to the flank of Stone Mountain, really little more than a flat place surrounded by tall trees and partially bounded by a narrow stream that emerged from the rocks, and quickly fell away into the valley after circling the small clearing. His people believed the meadow to be a place of power inhabited by nature spirits who were friendly to the Hawk People, a special place to be visited by his people only when those spirits were to be asked for assistance.

The stream flowing near the clearing was uncharacteristically swollen with rain water and a multitude of leaves and small twigs that had been washed from the land. It provided a happy rushing sound, as it fell through log-jams and rocks, the floating things jostling against obstacles in a merry dance, seemingly trying to be first to the next quiet place in the stream. The sound of running water was joined by the sound of wind moving through the pine needles and leaves on the trees covering Stone Mountain's flank. Some of the trees, those surrounding the clearing where the sacred circle was drawn in the grass, formed a bowl filled to the brim with these sounds. The place invoked a heady feeling for Jajeff, bright and fresh with excitement for what he knew would follow. Everything around him was damp from the recent rain. The sunlight, streaming down through breaks in the clouds, made droplets of water in the trees and bushes sparkle and dance, giving color and substance to the pervasive sound, the dancing lights making Jajeff think of little spirits tending to their duties amongst the branches.

Jajeff cautiously entered the clearing from the side near where the mountain began its long cascade into the valley, and carefully examined each place that a person could hide, seeking to assure himself that no one else was there. Anticipation making his scalp crawl, he slowly walked around the clearing, being careful not to step into the circle of rocks, a place of honor usually reserved for a Spirit Elder. He listened between the sound of the wind and water, trying to tell if there was a sign that a gateway could be forming there, but all was as it should be.

Satisfied that he was alone, Jajeff crossed to the large, flat stone at the center of the clearing and sat on it cross-legged, with his bundle of supplies at his side, making himself comfortable, so that he could quickly find that quiet place within himself, from which he could listen for signs of the other world. Other stones were arranged around the center to form four spokes pointing to the four corners of the world. He chose the center stone, because he was alone there and knew no one could say he should not. Nevertheless, he felt a little uncertain, knowing how the elders would disapprove of his taking the seat of power without permission from the oldest Spirit Elder.

It felt good to sit and dry his rain-soaked clothes in the sun, after his long, almost running hike up the mountain to the sacred site, and he closed his eyes to let the sound and the warmth calm his thinking. In his mind's eyes, he saw himself at the center of a sparkling world, rimmed in deep shadows, and shot through with misty shafts of silver sunlight. The muffled sounds of the forest came from everywhere, filling his senses and making him feel intensely alive.

"Finally," Jajeff thought to himself, "I have found the gateway that will lead me to the Dim World." He thanked Father Spirit with all his heart and waited, certain that he would soon be in the Dim World.

He may have fallen asleep, because it was near sunset when he next opened his eyes. He did then, only because of the drum beats he heard echoing from the trees around him, the sound making him think he was sitting at the center of an Earth Spirit prayer ceremony. He struggled to remember where he was, shaking his head to clear his mind. The sound of drums persisted, floating in the air like puffs of smoke from an elder's pipe. Thump, thump, thump . . . he strained to see into the shadows behind the first line of trees, believing the drums must be hidden there, but he could see no drums, nor were there people to beat them. He was alone, yet he continued to hear the sounds of drumbeats, and now, the chant of many voices singing to the forest and the setting sun. Jajeff put his hands flat on the rock, feeling it vibrate, realizing that the ground shook with the steps of unseen dancers circling him, their cadence following the strength and quiet in each drumbeat, scuffing the ground with bare feet.

He could smell the smoke from a fire but could not see the fire.

Jajeff slowly rose to his feet, and still in a crouch, pivoted on his stone to see every part of the clearing. There was a slight glow of fire, where his people let the sacred fire burn during ceremonies, but nothing else, and when he tried hard to see the glow more clearly, it was not there.

Jajeff grinned, almost laughed, wanting to scream his triumph, for he knew what was beginning to happen for him. He knew the special clearing, half-way up the side of Stone Mountain, must be sacred in both worlds, and even though most of his brothers in the Dim World had abandoned the ways of their ancestors, he knew some were still true to the old ways. The clearing held great power that his people drew from, when it was especially important for them to be heard by Father Spirit. Sometimes, his people would also ask Father Spirit to bring rain to their land. When they did this thing, the great bonnet would fly away to the dry places and wet the parched soil. The special rain was a gift Father Spirit gave to the people, and they were careful not to ask very often, fearful they would pay too high a price the next winter. Jajeff believed that people on the other side were trying to ask for the rain but did not know how to tell Father Spirit where they needed the water. Without direction, the storm could only hover where it was born and empty its burden on the mountain. He did not know this but sensed it could be true, and like the hawk expecting the fish to come to the surface again, he prepared himself for what he most desired and what he knew would come.

He stood very still, waiting to see what would happen next, praying that the gateway would open, but uncertain what he would do when it did. As the drum beats grew louder, sparks of light began to flicker around his eyes, making his skin tingle whenever one touched him into his chest. The air grew thick and hard to breath, and the sparks of light hurt when he breathed them. His eyes watered, and his hair stood out from his scalp, as if wind blew it in all directions at once.

The drums grew even louder, until they filled Jajeff's hearing to its limit and rattled his lungs, each beat answered by more sparks of blinding light. When he thought he could take the sound and the light no longer, a voice called out from the trees, requesting Father Spirit's attention for the ceremony. Jajeff could tell that the man had said this, and he smiled when he heard the dancers chant their agreement in answer to the call. When the voices became quiet, the drums became less demanding . . . more pleasing, permitting the sparks to fade from Jajeff's sight. And as his eyes adjusted to the evening light, he was able to see many people standing in and around the clearing, watching and chanting prayers to Father Spirit, as others danced around the sacred circle in step with the drums, shadowy figures at first, but becoming solid and real as he watched.

Jajeff took a deep breath and waited to see what would happen next, unwilling to test the gateway, lest he be killed as he nearly was before. He thought about Dim World things, as he had decided he must to help open a gateway, remembering things he had seen in the television

or while communing with animals in the cities. Thus, he hoped to make the difference between the worlds even less.

The people moved about and talked amongst themselves, becoming more distinct as they did, and Jajeff could see that, while they all faced toward the circle, one man faced the people, talking and gesturing as if he were giving them instructions. Jajeff noticed that a few of the people were looking directly at him, and that several of the dancers were eyeing him from the corner of their eyes.

"Who is that man?" one of the people asked, pointing at Jajeff, making Jajeff realize that they could see him.

"I am here!" Jajeff thought to himself, suddenly realizing that he must be in the Dim World for the people there to see him. At first, he could only marvel at his good fortune, but then he remembered Father Spirit and all of the prayers he had offered to ask for this moment. With a cry of victory, he lifted his arms to the sky in thanks to Father Spirit for this great gift, also remembering to praise the elders of his people for their wisdom. He did this even as he came fully into the Dim World.

Jajeff's voice rose over the sound of the drums and the many dancers, to echo from the wall of trees surrounding the clearing and to fill the clearing with his triumph. When he had finished singing his thanks, he lowered his arms and looked around himself, at the dancers, standing where they had been when he first appeared in the center of their sacred circle, at the small clusters of people standing around the big drums, their sticks held suspended over the skin as if frozen there, and at the spectators scattered amongst the trees, mouths open in shock, eyes wide with disbelief. Jajeff looked at these people and realized that he must seem to be a spirit that has appeared to them, as if out of nothing, and he became concerned that they might be angry with him.

He had thought of this many times, about what he would do when he did make his way into the Dim World, and what he could expect Dim World people to do if they saw him enter. Now, before him, was a whole tribe of Dim World people, frozen in disbelief at his sudden arrival. He had no idea what to do.

The man who had been facing the people, turned to see what the commotion was all about, and seeing Jajeff standing at the center of the sacred circle, waved at him, yelling with an angry voice that Jajeff could not easily understand.

"Hay there!, What are you doing in the circle? Get out of there!" he yelled, waving Jajeff out of the circle.

Keeping an eye on the angry man, Jajeff tried to casually reach for his pack where it had sat beside him, but found that it had not crossed over with him. He did not want to seem silly, groping around in the air for nothing, so with a smile, he turned and standing as tall as he could, walked toward the man who was waving at him, trying to seem as harmless as he did.

The dancers stood aside as he approached them, moving in the silence that still hung in the air, their bare feet scuffing the ground with muffled sounds that were quickly lost to the clouds hanging close overhead. As he passed the dancers, they closed a circle around him, following him in silence, their feathers and bells wafting musical sounds into the air. The people standing in the trees began to talk among themselves as he approached them, their low voices like a wave of sound washing around the edge of trees. Jajeff was surprised to see that most had the white skin of the dominant people of the Dim World, and he was a little sad to see that they even dominated the ceremonies of those who practiced his ways.

"Why have you interfered with our ceremony?" the man asked when Jajeff was still several paces from him.

The man did not look like a chief to Jajeff, nor did he seem very old, but unlike many of the white faced people, Jajeff knew that the man was of his people, his voice and his

appearance reminding Jajeff of many elders he had known in his world. The man's voice was no longer angry either, only curious and uncertain as he looked Jajeff over, apparently trying to understand who he was and where he might have come from. This encouraged Jajeff, as he recognized that curiosity was often the sign of a Spirit Elder, and that he would be safe as long as he fed that curiosity.

Jajeff stopped in front of the man and held his hands between them in formal salute, palms open to the sky so that the other would know he was of open heart, his head bent forward a little to indicate his submission to a Spirit Elder.

"I apologize for interfering with your ceremony, Spirit Elder," Jajeff said with the most authoritative voice he could manage. "Forgive me, and I will go on my way."

The man looked at him, his head cocked a little, an inquisitive look on his face.

Jajeff realized that he had spoken in his native tongue, rather than using the language he was learning from television.

"I come in peace," he said, hoping that he was making sense.

The man blinked, and straightened his head as he cleared his throat, seemingly shaking himself out of his shock.

"You what?" he asked, his voice almost squeaking.

"Where did you come from?" the man demanded, anger sneaking back into his voice.

His words signaled a rush of comments from the other people, and they began to move closer, so that they could hear and see what Jajeff might do next.

Jajeff listened to the man's words, frantically searching his memory for some clue to what his words meant. He realized that he was taking too long, and he began to fear that he would not be able to understand the Dim World language. His confidence was slipping rapidly, and he was beginning to seriously consider running into the woods.

"Do you understand my words?" the man asked, talking slowly so that Jajeff might better understand him. His face showing concern now, more than anger or curiosity, perhaps thinking Jajeff might be lost, more than an intruder.

The man's words nearly made an audible click in Jajeff's mind as he recognized their meaning.

"I know words," Jajeff answered, beaming a relieved smile at the man.

The man smiled too, and the people standing close enough to hear the conversation, murmured amongst themselves, and it seemed to Jajeff that they moved around as if they were a single, restless creature trying to decide if he was a friend or something they should eat.

"You do understand. Good, now can you tell me where you are from?" the man asked, speaking slowly, as if Jajeff must read his lips.

"I from here, but other world," Jajeff answered. "I look Song Flower, food."

Jajeff could see that the man was confused, and he tried to think of something that would help resolve the situation. He was beginning to regret that he was not better prepared to speak the Dim World language, and was rapidly coming to recognize that he could be in serious trouble. He noticed that the people-creature had surrounded him and was restlessly moving about, stirring up dust and making strange, hissing sounds as lanterns were lit to ward off the deepening darkness.

"I Jajeff," Jajeff offered, still holding his hands open to the man, eyes darting between him and the creature.

That seemed to be the missing clue the man needed, because his face brightened, and he smiled broadly.

"Ja Jaff?" he asked, dipping his head as if to encourage Jajeff to answer.

"Jajeff. I Jajeff," Jajeff agreed, relieved to see the man smile, noticing that when the man smiled, so did the creature.

"Okay, Jajeff it is," the man agreed. "Well, Jajeff, I am Bob Gray Feather, and these people are Native Americans, who have come to practice the old ways, and the others are our friends, who have come to watch and learn from us." Bob waved his arm to introduce the people around him.

Jajeff looked at the white people as the creature resolved itself into individual faces, and decided they were the friends, and then at the ones who's skin looked more natural, dark like cured hide when it has been treated with the red earth, and he decided they must be the Native Americans. The white faces fascinated him a great deal, because other than the occasional party of French or Chinese traders, he had little experience with people who had different colored skin.

"Okay, Jajeff. Can you tell me where you are from?" Bob asked, interrupting Jajeff's examination of the people.

"From there." Jajeff pointed toward the small valley below the mountain. "Not your world."

Everyone involuntarily looked in the direction Jajeff pointed, and then at one another before looking to see what Bob would do next. Their expression turned from curious to incredulous, as they realized how improbable it was for Jajeff to be from where he was indicating. Bob took his hat off and scratched his head, as if he was trying to make sense of what Jajeff was telling him.

"You mean from across the lake?" he ventured and quickly glanced at the people standing around him and Jajeff, as if looking for help.

"From village by stream." Jajeff answered, unmistakably pointing down the slope of the mountain.

"I don't know, young man. That lake was there before you were born. Why, I believe they filled the dam more than twenty years ago," Bob answered, shaking his head as if to tell Jajeff that he had given the wrong answer.

Bob leaned back on his heels and made eye contact with one of the Native Americans standing near the big drum. The man began making his way through the crowd to Bob's side.

"Dam?" Jajeff walked past the crowd to a place he knew he should be able to see the valley and the river cutting through it. Even in the darkness of the mountain's shadow, he should have seen fires from his village. Instead, he saw a large lake that completely filled the valley, and he realized that the lights he could see along the lake's edge, must be the glass balls they used in the Dim World for light. In this world, Jajeff's his village did not exist.

Jajeff turned to Bob, tears coming to his eyes.

"My world, no dam. You kill world." Jajeff said in a quiet, sad voice, and turning away from the bewildered people, he began walking toward the lake.

"Now hold on there, young fellow. I would like to ask you a few more questions." Bob ran after Jajeff, leaving the crowd to wonder at the meaning of what they had seen.

The man Bob called to his side, signaled to the men still standing at the drums, and they promptly resumed the thud, thud, thud of drum beats. The dancers shrugged, and returned to the circle to continue their demonstration of the old ways, one eye on the circle, one eye on the sacred stone at the circle's center, fervently hoping that another person would not suddenly appear. Satisfied that he had something to show the visitors, Bob's helper casually turn their attention back to the dancers, and soon, they were engrossed in the Native American ceremony, already forgetting Jajeff's strange arrival.

Bob caught-up with Jajeff in the parking lot, and put a hand on his shoulder to stop him from going further.

"Wait! I you need to explain why you were in the circle." Bob insisted, as he stepped around to confront Jajeff.

Jajeff stopped, and considered the elder while he tried to find the words he needed to explain himself so that Bob would understand. Bob patiently waited for Jajeff's answer, contented for the moment, to admire Jajeff's authentic Native American clothing.

"My world different. Only Native American here in my world . . . no white people. I come to this world when you do Native American things. World same then." Jajeff had a pained look on his face as he watched Bob for sign that he understood.

Bob released Jajeff and stepping back, took his hat off and wiped his brow before putting it back on, whistling softly as he did.

"Boy! That is a hard one to swallow," Bob told Jajeff, shaking his head in denial. "You mean to tell me that you live in a different world and that we just saw you come into this one during our ceremony?"

Jajeff nodded his head vigorously.

"Yes, gateway. You make world same."

Bob thought for a moment, obviously uncertain if he should believe Jajeff. Then, he gave Jajeff a suspicious look and poked a finger toward his chest.

"If you are from another world, why have you come here? It must not be a very easy thing to do, or else, we would have people popping in and out all of the time. No, you must have an awfully big need to be hear for you to go through this gateway of yours."

Jajeff considered the question and wondered how he should answer. Even in the twilight, Jajeff could tell that Bob was a good elder. The hand, he had put on his shoulder, was firm but careful not to hurt him, and Bob's voice was not threatening. Jajeff decided to trust him and began speaking in slow measured tones, explaining why he had come over.

"Yes, Father Spirit help. I find Song Flower and learn about grow food. This make me work."

While Bob tried to make sense of his broken English, Jajeff leaned his back against a hard bodied thing he knew to call a car and rubbed his pants against the smooth surface, admiring the flashes of bright red, as firelight from the ceremony reflected from its shiny surface. Then his stomach growled, reminding him that he needed to eat, and that his supplies were still lying on the center rock in his old world.

"Everything other world. Need help find food. Find food your land?"

"This is not my tribal land either. It is government land, and they get kind of testy when they catch people hunting out of season," Bob answered with a kindly smile, still trying to decide if he was going to believe Jajeff's story.

"No hunt. Find food," Jajeff corrected him, beginning to realize that he understood Bob Gray Feather better than Bob did him.

"Find food?" Bob asked, his face twisted to exaggerate his confusion. But then his face relaxed as recognition came to him. "Oh, you mean you are a gatherer. You eat nuts and roots, and all that sort of natural stuff."

Jajeff could not follow everything Bob said, but understood enough to know that Bob had the right idea.

"Yes. Gather food," he agreed hopefully.

"I'll tell you what. If you really did come from a different world, you are going to need something to eat and a place to sleep, while you get situated. What say you come home with me until you can decide out what you are going to do next? Then, you won't have to go looking for roots in the government forest without a permit."

Jajeff thought for a moment. Government was something he heard Song Flower's father talk about like it was a band of exiled warriors, and he knew enough to stay away from it.

"Yes," Jajeff agreed, fervently hoping that he was agreeing to something that was not going to get him in trouble.

Bob led Jajeff to his car and asked him to get in the back seat.

"I have to go back and explain why I am leaving, so don't touch anything while I am gone." He turned toward the sacred clearing and quickly disappeared into the crowd.

When he returned from telling his people good-bye, he found Jajeff sitting rigidly in the middle of the back seat, as if he was afraid to move.

"What is the matter? You look awfully uncomfortable sitting like that."

Jajeff looked around at the interior of the car and shuddered.

"Bit me." Jajeff's eyes were wide with fear, and his voice quivered a little, not at all appearing to be the confident warrior who had stood before Bob at the sacred circle.

"Bit? Oh, you got a shock when you slid in. It is normal to make electricity when you move on the seat, when the air is so dry. Don't be afraid of it." Bob tried not to grin.

Jajeff considered Bob's words for a moment, and deliberately sliding across the seat, touched the door handle, drawing a bright, blue spark as he did. Seeing the spark jump from his finger to the door handle, Jajeff laughed and slid across to the other door, drawing a spark on that door, also.

"Electricity," Jajeff said and laughed, sliding back across the seat to create yet another spark.

"My world have electricity. Not big," Jajeff offered, and pushed on the door, trying to open it.

Bob reached in through the open window, and showed Jajeff how to open the door. Then he showed Jajeff how to open the front door and held it open for him.

"If you will get in the front seat, we will leave now, and go to my home."

Jajeff looked at Bob in the dim light for a moment.

"We move in car?" he asked doubtfully.

"Yes, that is the only way to get to my house. I live over a hundred miles from here," Bob answered, watching Jajeff for a slip that would indicate that he was lying.

Jajeff nervously looked into the car, remembering all of the images he had seen on television, of people happily riding in cars. He knew they must be safe, but the image of a blue creature flashing along a canyon rim was also strong in his mind, and that creature seemed dangerous to him.

"Creature dangerous," he said, speaking as if he was stating words given to him by Father Spirit.

Bob shrugged, still holding the door open, his patience beginning to fade.

"Yes it is dangerous, but so is venturing into a world you know little about."

Jajeff straightened to look at Bob.

"You trust car?" Jajeff asked dubiously.

"Yes, as much as anything in the white man's world. I trust it," he answered sincerely, and gave Jajeff a gentle push, encouraging him to get in.

Jajeff did get in. Bob walked around to the driver's side and got in.

"Your world. That's what I want to talk to you about," he said as he made himself comfortable.

"Talk? You ask, I ask," Jajeff agreed, sitting stiffly, looking everywhere on the dashboard for anything that might harm him.

Jajeff had seen that Bob had closed his door, and so, gingerly closed his. Then he watched Bob put his seat belt in place, and after several false starts, connected the one on his side. He winced as the seat buckle snapped in place, and immediately began to panic, as he tried to pull free.

"Here, young fella, just push here," Bob hastily reached over and released Jajeff's seat belt. "It is so that you will not get hurt if we have to stop quickly. You do not have to, but I would put it on if I were you."

Jajeff took a deep breath and attached and released the buckle several times, before feeling comfortable enough to leave it buckled. He grinned at Bob as he moved his hands away from the buckle, an obvious look of triumph on his, otherwise, tense face.

"Good," Bob said with a reassuring smile, and started the car.

When he did, Jajeff howled in terror and tore at the door handle in a frantic attempt to get out of the car. The door came open and Jajeff hurled himself toward the opening, only to be stopped by his seat belt. Bob laughed and put his hand on Jajeff's shoulder to hold him down and calm his frenzy.

"Hold on, now. It is just the sound of the engine running in the car. What did you think we were going to do?" Bob suppressed his laughter and tried to concentrate on helping Jajeff get used to the car, as Jajeff panted in excited gasps and looked around himself with eyes so open Bob thought they might drop out.

"See car, no feel car. Where noise?" Jajeff carefully put his hand on the dashboard to better feel the vibration from the engine, and then he put his ear against the dashboard to listen to it.

Bob watched Jajeff's actions with amusement. If he ever believed Jajeff was lying about not being from his world, his doubts disappeared, when he saw how genuinely frightened Jajeff had become when the engine was started, and how quickly he had calmed down after he understood what it was.

"You really have never ridden in one of these, have you?" Bob asked, deciding to try understanding Jajeff better, rather than trying to find a flaw in his story.

"No. I see car with dog. Not same," Jajeff answered, still holding his ear to the dashboard, his eyes closed now, so that he could concentrate on the sound.

"How could you have seen a car, if you are from another world? Have you been here before?"

"No." Jajeff lifted his head and looked at Bob for a long time. "I see world, eyes of dog. Cat too."

Jajeff knew he was asking this elder to believe a great deal without proof, but he could see no other way to proceed. At least he had found someone who was of his people and who had an open mind. He knew how mean some people in the Dim World could be if they felt like it, and knew he was very lucky to find this friendly elder. He thanked Father Spirit over and over again in his mind.

What Jajeff was saying to him, suddenly registered in Bob's mind.

"You can see through the eyes of animals?" Bob asked, trying not to show his amazement.

"Yes. My world, your world," Jajeff answered matter-of-factly, closely watching to see if Bob believed him.

"Is that how you have learned how to speak my language, by hearing through our animal's ears, or do your people speak English?"

"English?"

"Yes, the language we are speaking now."

"Not English, my people Northern Hawk People." Jajeff carefully pronounced his people's formal name.

Bob reviewed all he could remember about native people of the area, but could not place the boy's tribe.

"Is this the traditional home land of your people? My people are the Shasta, although there is some Modoc in my blood.

Jajeff did not recognize these tribes but did not think it strange, since there were so many different tribes in his world.

"Live in valley." Jajeff again pointed at the lake, and again, became visibly agitated, as he remembered the dam.

Bob hurried to ward off the boy's agitation with a new question.

"So your world is really like this one?"

"Different," Jajeff corrected, patting the car's dashboard. "No car. No tech . . . technology. Different technology."

Jajeff held his crystal up for Bob to see.

"What is this?" he asked, trying to look at the crystal in the dim light, not making sense of it or why Jajeff had shown it to him.

"Technology. Crystal Master use see your world."

Jajeff gently pulled the crystal from Bob's hand and leaned back in his seat to wait for Bob to think about what he was saying. After a long pause Bob shook his head and reached for the gear shift.

"I don't know if you are being honest with me, but my inner sense of right and wrong tells me to trust you, and if you are what you say you are, then you need to be protected until you have had time to learn how to behave in this world," Bob said, deciding that he had better make sure Jajeff understood what he intended to do.

"Besides," he added, grinning broadly, "there are just too many questions I want to ask you. Are you interested in coming to my house to stay while you figure out what you are going to do?"

"Your house?" Jajeff echoed, trying to be sure he understood Bob.

"Yes. I live in Portland." He thought for a moment. "You might know it as a big valley south of here, perhaps four days walk."

"Yes, big valley," Jajeff agreed.

"I live in a city there. You are welcome to come and stay for a while."

"I go big city," Jajeff agreed, nodding his head and folding his arms to indicate that he had made a decision.

Bob sighed loudly, and putting the car in gear, let it roll slowly out of the parking area. Jajeff was afraid for a moment and looked at Bob for reassurance. When he saw that Bob behaved as if everything was normal, he held onto the dashboard and gleefully whooped and hollered all the way down the mountain road. Once they reached the relatively level highway, he sat quietly in the darkness, staring at the countryside streaking past. Occasionally, he asked Bob to name some building or object, but otherwise, he made it clear that he wished to say no more while there was so much to be seen.

The city was almost too much for Jajeff, and he slouched down in his seat so that he could barely see over the window frame, as the city raced by.

"This is the outskirts of Portland." Bob offered, hoping to help Jajeff feel more comfortable. "I take it you have not seen a city through animal eyes."

Jajeff did not answer, he was so intent on watching the city from the safety of his seat.

It was quite late when Bob steered the car into the driveway of his house, and Jajeff was nearly exhausted from the tension of driving through the city, and from trying to understand all of the new sights and sound he experienced along the way.

"Your lodge?" Jajeff asked as he eased himself out of the car, cautiously looking around for signs of danger.

"Yes, this is my house. Now, try to move quietly. Fran is sleeping, and if we wake her, she will keep you up all night with questions." Bob led Jajeff into the house and down a dark hallway.

"In here. This is our guest room," Bob whispered, holding the door open for Jajeff.

Jajeff peered into the room, dimly lit by a glowing thing near the floor of one wall.

"I sleep here?" Jajeff asked, with a doubtful voice.

He recognized the bed as a sleeping pad, but his back ached just thinking about sleeping on such a soft thing.

Bob was tired and did not want to try explaining everything Jajeff might want to know about the room, so he gently pushed Jajeff toward the bed and backed out of the room.

"Just sleep on the bed. You will be okay until morning," Bob said, as he closed the door.

Jajeff stood, looking first at the now closed door and then around the room, trying to put what he saw into perspective with what he knew of the Dim World. He understood some of the things he saw, the light switch and the desk sitting in the corner. He recognized these things because he had seen similar things before, but now he marveled at his good fortune to be able to see them in person.

He raise his hands in thanks to Father Spirit and only barley remembered not to speak his prayer out loud. Then, he pushed at the bed a couple of times, and then sat on it, bouncing a little to test how soft it was. Moments later, he was asleep.

Jajeff woke the next morning and lay still until he was able to remember where he was, and then marveled that he had actually fallen asleep on his first night in the Dim World. There were no openings for light to enter his room, and he had only his instincts to tell him that the sun must be up, yet he could hear no sounds to tell him Bob was moving about. He did not want to chance waking Bob, so he relaxed and searched his mind for the telltale sense of Bonnet, hoping to see if being in the Dim World would make his contact with the cat any different.

He found Bonnet watching, as Song Flower harvested flowers from her yard. Despite the clouds, he could tell that the sun had been up less than an hour, because the air was still crisp and dew still filled hollows in leaves and flowers, giving the garden the sparkling look of a fairy land. Song Flower hummed a happy song, while she cut a bright red flower from a large plant, while Bonnet's eyes darted here and there, looking for field mice or large insects that might scatter away from her probing. Jajeff smiled and gently pushed at Bonnet's awareness, trying to get it to move its eyes a little less quickly, so that it would not make him sick.

Jajeff's communion with Bonnet was sharper than ever, and the sight of Song Flower had an entirely new feel to it, since there was no barrier between them.

"Soon, I will be able to meet you in person, One I Love," he thought, and the cat meowed loudly, causing Song Flower to look at it, curious to know why it cried.

"What is it, Bonnet, did you . . ."

Jajeff was pulled back to himself by three muffled bangs, sounding from the wood door. He shook himself to alertness and looked around trying, to understand what had disturbed him.

Since there was no answer, Francis Gray Feather slowly opened the door, finding Jajeff sitting cross-legged on the floor beside the guest bed. With a quick look around, she could see that Jajeff had slept on top of the bed, but otherwise, had not disturbed the room.

"My goodness, Mr. Jajeff, it looks as if you haven't even been here yet. Are you sure you didn't go back to your world to sleep last night?" She said with a cheery voice that sounded to Jajeff like sunshine, itself.

Like Bob, Fran was in her sixties with silver gray hair that was streaked with the strands of black like raven feathers woven into her gray main.

Jajeff did not answer, he was so confused by her sudden arrival. Instead, he just watched her as she stepped into the bathroom.

After a quick look around, she turned to Jajeff and studied him with large, almost round eyes that gave her a perpetual air of wonder.

"Why, you haven't even used the sink or toilet. You must be about ready to burst."

The kindly tone of her voice told Jajeff that she meant well, but he was not sure he understood her meaning.

"Burst?" Jajeff echoed, still trying to understand who the woman was and what she wanted.

"You know. Don't you need to go to the bathroom?" She could see that Jajeff still did not understand and squatted, as if she was about to relieve herself and then stood with her hand in front of her mimicking a man urinating. "You know, nature's call."

Jajeff got the idea.

"I disturb you. Go outside," he answered, hoping it was okay.

"Outside? Oh, you mean they still use outhouses where you come from. Surely you know how to use a toilet." She continued to stand near the bathroom, a questioning expression on her face.

Reluctantly, Jajeff shook his head. "Toilet?"

This brought a new light to the story Bob had given Fran the night before, when he had brought the stranger home and had crept into their bed, trying hard not to disturb her. When she told him she was awake and to stop being so sneaky, he had explained that he had brought home a young stray named Jajeff. Then, he told her the boy was from a different world and rolled over to go to sleep, leaving her to naturally assumed he was saying that the man was a white man or was from another country. Even in the morning, when she asked Bob to repeat what he had said, she still doubted he was telling the truth and figured he was trying to cover some problem this Jajeff may have gotten into. However, now that she could see Jajeff with her own eyes, her doubt slid away like a lost memory.

"Here, Mr. Jajeff, let me show you how these gadgets work." She turned and went back into the bathroom, waving her arms about, pointing at objects and saying their names.

Jajeff got to his feet and eagerly followed her into the bathroom. After she had explained, as well as she could without demonstrating, she gave him a toothbrush and left him to explore.

"Now you use that toothbrush, you hear? Just like I showed you. We will have some food waiting for you on the back porch when you come out." She softly patted him on his arm and left the room talking to herself about how strange the world was becoming.

Jajeff watched her leave and then stared at the toothbrush for a while before he poked it in and out of his mouth, as she had instructed. He could tell that he had much to learn about the Dim World, and felt a little discouraged that even the simplest things were proving to be beyond his ability to understand.

Jajeff quickly made himself as fresh as he could without his supplies, and left his room to go looking for the Gray Feathers. He found Bob and Fran on the back porch, enjoying the morning sun before it became too hot to be pleasant.

"Good morning Jajeff." Bob said, as he indicated that Jajeff should use the third chair on the porch.

Bob had one of the large pieces of paper that Jajeff had come to know as news, spread out on the table in front of him, a cup of the Dim World coffee was sitting beside him, still steaming in the cool morning air.

Bob gave Jajeff a friendly smile, watching him carefully, as if he were waiting for Jajeff to do something unexpected.

The offered chair was sitting beside a small table with a plate and eating tools on it. Jajeff recognized them and knew what he was expected to do with them, and strangely he thought,

this recognition encouraged him, giving him the sense that he really was going to learn the Dim World ways.

Jajeff watched as Fran went inside, soon to return with freshly cooked eggs, what Jajeff thought might be shredded root, and thin slices of cooked meat. He leaned toward the food to breathe its fine flavors, as she put it on his table, and leaned far out of the way as she poured coffee and orange stuff into containers that were also sitting on the table.

"I bet you have eggs in your world," Fran ventured, making light conversation. "One thing that must be the same between us, is that people everywhere have to eat." She took her seat, and watched with Bob to see if Jajeff would know what to do with the food.

Jajeff had seen people use the eating tools and understood much of the morning ritual of eating eggs and strips of meat, and he thought that he could behave well in this circumstance. However, to his embarrassment, his hunger demanded that he eat quickly, and in only moments, he had consumed all the eggs and roots that were on the tray. When he finished the last of what he would eat, he daintily wiped his mouth with the napkin, just as he had seen Song Flower wipe her mouth after eating. He sat back and looked at the Gray Feathers. They stared back at him with an amused look on their faces.

"You seem to know how to use silverware well enough," Fran said in a friendly voice, politely moving the conversation away from Jajeff's table manners. "How is it that you understand silverware but don't understand bathrooms?"

"Television. See people eat. No use bathroom."

"You watched?" Fran asked, suddenly alert.

"I see, I hear, know sounds."

"See, I told you." Bob said triumphantly. "He has learned about this world by looking into it through the eyes of our pets."

Fran looked first at Bob and then at Jajeff, her eyebrows raised until they nearly touched her gray hair, her kindly continence giving way to tension, as she visibly struggled with who Jajeff was.

"Where are you from, really?" she demanded of Jajeff, almost pleading for him to say something that would somehow deny Bob's assertion.

"You kill land by sacred place." Jajeff felt a surge of loss, remembering that he saw water where he should have seen his village.

He struggled to suppress his anger at the people of the Dim World, remembering Song Flower, and how he felt certain that she would not have flooded his beautiful land, just as he supposed the Gray Feathers would not. He said a silent prayer to Father Spirit for keeping the destroyers of the Dim World away from his world.

"That would be Long Creek Reservoir," Bob said matter-of-factly. "He got real upset when he saw that the valley was full of water." Bob's low, flat voice betrayed his own sense of loss, as he frowned at his cup.

Fran glanced at Bob and reached over to hold his hand.

"When did you live there?" Fran wanted to know of Jajeff, still trying to make sense of his story.

"Now. I come, find Song Flower. Go back," he answered, frustration forcing tears to his eyes.

Jajeff was beginning to feel overwhelmed by the tremendous number of details he had to cope with, remembering Dim World words, trying to suppress the urge to run away from the Gray Feathers so that he could look for Song Flower, coping with the bombardment of new sights and sounds, even smells, that were previously filtered through the senses of his host animals. He knew that he would not survive long in the Dim World, much less succeed in his mission, without help from people like the Gray Feathers, and that frightened him almost

senseless. The fact that Bob had given him a safe place to sleep and food to eat, did make him feel a little better about them, but he also feared that the Gray feathers could turn him away if he did not answer their questions to their liking.

"What would I do then," he wondered, watching the two elders struggle to understand his fragmented phrases.

Fran and Bob looked at each other for a long moment, tension passing between them in almost visible waves, as they measured one another's willingness to believe Jajeff's story. Then, they looked back at Jajeff, and Fran tried again to make sense of what Jajeff was claiming.

"Can everyone in your world see through the eyes of animals?"

"No. Spirit gift," Jajeff answered slowly, cautiously, beginning to wonder if he should not change his story.

"Can you do this any time you want? I mean, can you see what my horse is looking at?" Bob asked, with new resolve in his voice, clearly determined to test Jajeff's story.

"Horse?" Jajeff asked, wondering what a horse was.

Bob's eyes widened, and again, he and Fran glanced at one another. This time they smiled.

"You don't have horses in your world, do you," Bob said, without asking.

"What horse?" Jajeff asked again.

Fran rose and went inside, returning moments later with the image of a large animal somehow impressed onto a shiny flat surface. Jajeff recognized the animal from television, but he did not know it to be called a horse.

"This is a picture of our horse. We keep her in the building over there," Fran said, pointing to a large building beyond a stretch of closely grazed grass.

"Find horse," Jajeff agreed, and he closed his eyes and looked for something in his mind that might be the senses of a horse.

As if running through the forest, looking behind trees and under bushes for animals that might be hidden there, Jajeff searched through the multitude of thoughts and impressions that filled his mind, trying to find a sense that matched the horse in Fran's picture. He paused to touch a squirrel scampering between nearby trees, and the bright flashes of the many birds that were always present in his mind, and then he felt the hard, new sensation of what must surely be a horse. Jajeff probed, asking permission to share a moment with the new animal, then merged his senses with it, carefully at first, as was his custom with new experiences.

The horse stood in a small space bounded by strips of wood obviously designed to keep it restricted from movement in the larger room. The grass under its feet was old, fouled with his droppings, and the building, smelled like something dead and rotting. Anger surged in Jajeff mind and he urged the mighty animal to push its broad chest against the strips of wood, telling it that they were puny things that it could break without trying. At first, the horse resisted his suggestions, but Jajeff's anger was contagious, and the horse stepped forward and leaned its great weight against the wood, breaking it into many pieces.

"Again," Jajeff said out loud so that the Gray Feathers could hear him and wonder what was happening in his mind.

"Again. Against wall with light," he urged the horse, and smiled a warm thought to the horse, as it broke the flimsy wall and stepped into the daylight, and onto an expanse of green that offered clean food for it to eat.

Jajeff withdrew from the horse and opened his eyes, blinking, grinning mischievously.

"I find horse, it free now." Jajeff announced and calmly sipped on the delicious orange liquid.

"Well, I guess that settles that," Bob said with a relieved look on his face. "Our horse is in the mountains for summer pasture. You must be mistaken."

Fran put her hand on Bob's arm.

"Hold it Honey. Jajeff, can you tell us what you saw? What do you mean 'it is free now?'"

Both of them look at Jajeff, expectantly.

"See horse, small space, dirty. Tell horse break wood, break wood again. Plenty food now--sunlight too," Jajeff struggled to answer, then looked at Fran to see if he had communicate the meaning he intended.

Without a word, Bob rose to his feet and hurried across the green and stood on his toes to look over a wooden wall. After a moment, he slowly returned, shaking his head in amazement.

"My God, Jajeff, you actually see through the eyes of animals," Bob said as he returned to his seat.

He looked at Fran.

"The Brinkley's horse is lose in their back yard. You remember how filthy we thought it's stable was the last time we were over there?"

Fran nodded her head, and they both looked at Jajeff.

"Can you do this with people, to?" Bob asked, his voice a little edgy.

"Elders say no . . ." Jajeff started to answer, but Fran cut him off.

"Hold it, don't change the subject so fast" Fran demanded, giving Jajeff a long, hard look before continuing. "I know this must be as hard for you as it is for us, but I have to be sure before I can believe you. Yours is such a strange story, it is just too important for us to be mistaken about."

"See that house down there?" Fran pointed to the roof of a house just down hill from theirs. "The people that live there have a pet that is home. It has the run of their house. Tell me what the pet sees."

Contrary to Fran's concerns, Jajeff was enjoying himself, since their questions gave him a chance to prove himself, and he hoped, earn the respect he needed to gain their continued help. He closed his eyes again and put his attention on the indicated house. It was hard for him to blindly search for an animal, since he usually knew what kind of animal he was looking for, or as with the horse, at least what it looked like.

For Jajeff, there was always some sense of distance associated with the touch of an animal's senses, and he used it to measure everything he could find that seemed nearby. After several false contacts, he found himself with a strange sort of pig, and felt certain that it was living in the indicated house. When he did, he laughed and pointed at the bacon. His people did not eat meat cut in the same way as the bacon, but he recognized the kind of animal that gave bacon from watching television.

"Is pet breakfast?"

Fran grinned at Bob, and clapped her hands together excitedly.

"No, not breakfast. It is a pet pig. Now tell me about their house."

"Pig with car. See dark, two white box, end of car. Car red. Shiny dugout on wall."

Jajeff opened his eyes to look at the Gray Feathers.

"True?" he asked.

Fran nodded her head and made a whistling sound between her teeth. "Yes, okay. They keep their pig in the garage, when they are away. They have a red car, a clothes washer and dryer, and a small boat that they hang near the car. You could not have known these things without being there, or being clairvoyant."

"Clairvoyant or seeing with the eyes of animals, the end result is the same. Jajeff can see places that he is not physically near," Bob contributed in a soft voice, his tension dissipating as his acceptance grew.

Fran reached across the table to Bob and they clasped hands, both squeezing reassuringly and smiling.

"Do you realize how important this is?" Fran asked Bob. "I know of no one who can so readily demonstrate spiritual gifts."

Fran looked at Jajeff, as she sat back in her chair.

"Jajeff, why have you come to us? Tell us more about how you came into this world and why." She asked, her voice dreamy, with the wonder of Jajeff's gift.

Jajeff explained to the Gray Feathers the best he could, with the few words of their language he had available to him. He described his first discovery of their world at the great canyon and how he came to recognize that he was seeing a different world. Then he described his efforts to cross into their world, and how he hoped to find new foods to help his people better survive the winters. Frustrated with his limited vocabulary, at one point in his story, he stood and danced, mimicking the buzzard, telling his story to the Gray Feathers in much the same way he had told the story to his people.

When he had finished, the Gray Feathers sat transfixed, trying to imagine the reality of what he had said.

It was Fran who came to her senses first. "Wasn't it dangerous to come from your world to ours?"

"Finding way hard." Jajeff lowered his gaze to his lap and sat quiet for a moment. "Finding way back hard too." Jajeff looked at Bob. "You make clouds, I go back?"

"When you are ready to go back." Fran corrected him with a smile, growing impatient with his broken English.

Jajeff looked at Fran with a blank expression on his face.

"That is the correct way to say what you were trying to say, Jajeff," Bob explained. "And yes, I will help you when you are ready."

"He likes trying to make the clouds come," Fran said with a grin, and Bob blushed.

Jajeff relaxed a little, trusting that he would have help returning to his world when he was ready.

"Jajeff, who is Song Flower?" Fran asked casually, curious about a person Jajeff had mentioned several times.

Jajeff leaned back in his chair and remembered when he had first seen Song Flower. He had been deliberately avoiding telling them very much about his quest to find Song Flower, but their kindly response to his story softened his concerns, and he felt it was time to tell them the rest of his story.

"Saw Song Flower. Love her. Come to find. Ask for her," He answered in a dreamy voice, closing his eyes for a moment to remember her face.

Fran gasped, and Bob nearly spilled his coffee.

"You saw a girl on this side and want to marry her? That is what has brought you here?"

Jajeff nodded his head with a smile.

"Song Flower and food," he added.

"My word!" Fran said, shaking her head in amazement. "For a girl."



## Ferndale

Once Jajeff had succeeded in convincing the Gray Feathers of where he had come from, it was they who began planning his future in their world and how they would help him. Bob came around first. Mainly because he wrote books about Native American culture and recognized that, given Jajeff's apparent understanding of early Native American culture, he might have personal knowledge of how Bob's people lived before settlers came from the east to take the land.

"Jajeff, this is exciting," Bob told Jajeff as he led him into a small room that had shelves filled with books on every wall, and a table that was covered with stacks of paper and a small television sitting behind a tray full of buttons. "You might be able to give me the material I need to write a best selling book about our people before the white man came."

Although he did not understand what it took to make a book, Jajeff did understand the concept of trading ideas instead of goods.

"Tell you about people?" Jajeff agreed.

"Yes," Bob said absentmindedly, as he opened a display case and removed a pair of leather shoes.

"Now, look at this. These are what my people wore before the white settlers came into this country. Unlike these soft leather moccasins, your shoes are made with thick leather soles stitched to a combination of soft leather and carved wood tops, eminently practical for a people without machinery, yet by the looks of them, as comfortable and durable as my shoes."

Bob pointed at Jajeff's shoes.

"Are those the kind of shoe you always wear in your world?"

"Mine?" Jajeff looked down at his shoes and then at Bob's. It had never occurred to him that his shoes might be different. "Yes."

"Do you think it is possible that my ancestors wore shoes like that, or like these?" he indicated his moccasins.

"I not know," Jajeff said with a shrug. "I have moccasins, too. Wear in lodge, no good outside."

"They are not suitable to be worn outside." Fran corrected him as she came into the room.

"Aw, Fran. Let the boy alone," Bob said with an exaggerated whine in his voice.

"Well, if he is going to live in our world, he had better learn how to talk. People will think he is retarded, or something."

Bob shrugged and winked at Jajeff.

"Well, boy, you may as well listen to her. She is right."

Bob returned the moccasins to the display case, and bringing out an old bone and wood pipe, asked Jajeff if his people used pipes. Jajeff answered by describing some of the ways pipes were used by his people and a little about the plants they smoked. This process was repeated for nearly every item in the case, after which, Fran brought out pictures of native villages and asked questions of her own. By evening, they had asked Jajeff questions about nearly every aspect of life in Jajeff's world, and all three were exhausted from the effort, Jajeff tired of trying to explain his world, the Gray Feather's head spinning from all of the details Jajeff had been able to give them.

Fran stood and stretched before turning toward the kitchen. She stopped beside Jajeff and felt the sleeve of his shirt.

"You mean you actually make clothes from cloth you trade from the French and the Chinese?" Her voice was tinged with wonder at the quality of his garment.

"Yes, they take furs. Sometimes, garments we fix. I trade fire root for cloth. This is good trade."

Fran's eyes crossed a little and she resisted the urge to correct Jajeff's speech. Then she smiled and poked a finger in Bob's direction.

"You have got to help me teach Jajeff better English," she said forcefully.

Bob ducked his head a little and made a funny face at Jajeff.

"Okay, okay, I will," he agreed and waved a finger at Jajeff, as if scolding him for using the wrong words.

"I am going to find us some dinner," Fran said with feigned despair, and left the room.

"She is right, you know," Bob said after she had left the room. "You must learn our language well enough to fit in, if you are going to succeed in finding Song Flower."

Jajeff nodded his head.

"Thank you. I trade my people story, you help."

"You will trade information about your people for help from us, I think you are trying to say," Bob corrected. "Sometimes it is hard to know for sure."

The Gray Feathers waited until after they had finished putting away the dinner dishes and they were alone in their bedroom, to discuss what they believed and didn't believe about Jajeff's story.

"I just don't know, honey," Bob managed to get out around his tooth brush. "The boy could not have known what was in that house, and I don't know of anyone who can speak English as poorly as he does."

"You heard him speak his language, though. Did you understand any of it?" Fran asked, from the bed.

"Yes. I recognized many of the words--enough to believe he was truly speaking an old language. If nothing else could convince me, that would."

Fran absentmindedly played with the ribbon on the sleeve of her robe, while she remembered some of Jajeff's mannerisms.

"You know, Hon, if his story is true, it means he has no place to live. He probably thinks he can go to the next village and trade some furs for that girl he wants. He will get lost and end-up getting in trouble."

Bob considered her last point, while he washed his tooth brush. Then, he joined her on the bed and kissed her lightly on her cheek.

"I can't conceive of him actually finding this girl and talking her into following him into his world. Just trying to convince her that there is such a world would land him in the loony bin." Bob laughed as he settled into bed.

"He seems to have managed to convince us," She gently reminded him. "I think it is kind of romantic, his quest for the girl of his dreams."

"Yes, literally the girl of his dreams," Bob agreed. "Perhaps the more important mission for him, is his quest for better ways of growing food plants in his world. Can you imagine how rough it would be if we lived in a world without the foods we are so accustomed to?"

"Yes, but we can teach him about growing plants right now, his quest could be over, except for the girl."

"I think it is more complex than that. He evidently needs more than simple information about plants. Remember, he lives at a higher elevation than Portland, and the winters are harsher there. He needs to have someone show his people how to deal with growing

problems as they come up, if they are going to really improve their diet. We can teach him about our world and help him find this girl, but I think it is going to be a little more difficult to teach him what he needs to learn about growing and storing food.

"Besides," he added. "It would be good to have him around the house for a while, so that I can do more research for a book."

The next morning, the Gray Feathers convinced Jajeff to stay with them, so that they could help him better understand the ways of their world. As they had suggested to Jajeff the previous evening, Jajeff could return the favor by telling them about the way his people lived. Jajeff liked this arrangement, since he was able to give something in return for their help, and he committed himself to teach them everything he could about life in his world.

The Gray Feathers and Jajeff quickly settled into a pattern, beginning each day with a running conversation on the back porch over breakfast, as they worked with his grammar and diction, and as he told them stories about his people. This was a surprisingly convenient arrangement, since they were able to teach Jajeff as he taught them, keeping everyone deeply engrossed in the project for days on end.

The Gray Feathers were amazed about how comfortable Jajeff's people were without the technology of their world, and admired how close his people lived with nature.

"The things you tell us about how your people live with nature, reminds us of how much our people have given up for technology," Bob told Jajeff one morning over coffee.

"We have technology, but it is different from yours." Jajeff corrected. "No electricity, but we do not need it to help us do more. We have balance in people and land, that permits land to support us."

"Yes, but what do you do in the winter when it is cold?" Fran wanted to know.

"Stay in, near fire pit. When we go out, we wrap ourselves in warm clothes, same as you. We . . ." Jajeff thought about what he had just said, the gray Feather's waiting patiently for him to finish his thought.

"We sometimes get cold and often, the winter will take our weakest. It can be hard, but it is all we know." He looked around the back yard at the many signs of Dim World technology, at the many ways wood had been so casually used to control Mother Earth.

"We suffer, but we do not waist the tree to put needless barriers in the way of animals. We suffer, but we are also much alive, and the suffering is little compared to benefits of living close to Mother Earth."

The Gray Feathers nodded knowingly, appreciating Jajeff's candidness about his people's lives.

"Is that why you want to find better food?" Bob asked. "To help your people be strong to survive the winters?"

"My people mostly eat meat. By itself, meat is not enough to keep the body strong."

"And you want to find ways to teach your people how to grow more food crops." Fran finished for him.

"Yes, more food, and ways to store food for winter. Some winters, we eat everything we store, and even eat the last goat." Jajeff was quiet for a moment, thinking of his people in the winter. "Then in spring, we must go to next village and trade for goats to begin new heard."

Bob and Fran were so amazed at the very existence of Jajeff's world, they frequently found themselves wanting new proof to reassure themselves that he was telling the truth. Jajeff was always patient when they asked him to prove himself again, and gladly demonstrated how he could see through the eyes of animals. Occasionally, he pointed out places on the river or in the foothills around Portland, where he had traveled in his world,

describing the way it had been before there were so many people and how the change had displaced a family of beavers or a place where large fish could be caught.

"Once," he told them while he pointed at a shopping center near the river, "I camped overnight and fished, where those buildings and parking lots are in your world."

The Gray Feathers looked where he pointed and tried to imagine how the land might have looked before the shopping center and other buildings had been built.

"Was that it?" the Gray Feathers wondered. "Was it the belief in shopping centers verses the belief in open rivers and wilderness that made the two worlds exist?"

They just didn't know what to think of it.

"Jajeff," Bob asked. "You lived high in the mountains. How is it that you know so much about this area?" He was not suspicious, but as was his habit, he always tried to help Jajeff be consistent in his story.

"I pass through here on two journeys. Once to find Crystal Master, once to trade for tools."

Jajeff grinned, remembering how he had convinced a hawk to drop a fish on a canoe, not far from the shopping center. He told the Gray Feathers his story, laughing loudly as he did. They laughed too, being even more amazed at his gift.

It was Jajeff's experience with the Crystal Masters, however, that finally put things into perspective for the Gray Feathers and removed any lingering doubts they still had about his story. At that time, they had nearly lost sight of the fact that he was from another world, because he was doing so well in learning to behave like a normal young man of their world. They had even begun thinking of him as just one more reservation youth they had invited to their home for a vacation in the city, but the reality of Jajeff's story came crashing back to them when the subject of crystals came up. It was dinner time, and Fran was bringing food to the table, while Jajeff and Bob were washing up from their work in the garden where Bob was teaching him about their plants.

"Honey, when you come in, will you bring my crystal vase for those flowers you cut?" Fran called from the kitchen.

Bob came into the kitchen with the vase and sat it on the counter. Moments later, Jajeff came running in and stopped in the middle of the kitchen, looking around the room as if he was looking for a fire to put out.

"What?" Bob asked, a little perplexed by Jajeff's behavior.

"What's gotten you so stirred up?" he asked again, watching Jajeff with amusement.

"You use crystals?"

"Crystals?" Fran echoed Jajeff.

"I heard you ask Bob to bring the crystal," Jajeff said, a ring of urgency in his voice. "Crystals are sometimes carried by Crystal Masters and can be used to find gateways between the worlds."

Bob reached over to the vase that was sitting on the counter just inches from Jajeff's elbow, and flicked it with his finger. The vase rang with a bright, bell like tone. Jajeff bent so that his ear was near the vase's rim, a delighted smile relaxing the urgency from his face.

"This is the crystal Fran asked for," Bob explained, flicking the vase again. "It is crystal glass, not like the crystal you wear around your neck."

This brought up a whole new subject for the dinner table, as Jajeff explained his experience with the Crystals Masters. It was when Jajeff reached the part about the gateway opening in the hills, at the southern end of a small valley south of Portland, that Bob's eyes opened wide. He whistled softly.

"What is it?" Fran asked, putting her hand on Bob's.

"Remember the gathering south of Eugene? I told you how a crazy man had run out of the crowd yelling in a strange language, and then disappeared back into the crowd again before anyone could react?"

"I remember," she agreed, still mystified.

"Jajeff," Bob said, turning to Jajeff. "I was in the circle that day you tried to come into this world. I saw you." He sat still, too stunned to think clearly, reviewing the memory of that moment in his mind.

"I saw you run in and thought I saw you turn and leave, but now I guess I didn't see you leave after all. When it happened, I thought it was sort of funny. It seemed that I could see through you but decided it had to be the excitement of the moment." He looked intently at Jajeff.

"Yes, it was you. I remember your face now. You were talking in the same language I have heard you use here. You were trying to get in even then. How strange all this is. How strange."

There was no longer any doubt in Fran's nor Bob's mind. Jajeff was indeed, from a parallel world, and they were changed forever because of the experience of knowing Jajeff.

After the discussion about the Crystal Masters and Jajeff's first attempt to cross into the Dim World, the Gray Feathers began to treat him with new respect. They had repeatedly tested his ability to see through the eyes of animals, almost as if it were a game, but now they began to realize, that by their standards, Jajeff was a Spirit Warrior in his own right. Sure, he was still very much a youngster, without the maturity and experience years of life brings, but they were discovering that he had extensive experience in the ways of Spirit, and that his gift of the Eyes of the Forest was likely possible only because he had an ingrained gift of perception and clear sightedness, not shared by most people. Yet, for all of his spiritual maturity, he was very much a primitive when it came to social standards, and they had to watch him closely whenever they were in public places.

"I think it would be almost impossible for someone from our society to fake being from your world, Jajeff," Fran said with wonder in her voice. "Your lack of understanding of even the simplest customs is proof in itself of your story, but when we consider the funny things you think you know about our world, we realize that no one would have dreamed of interpreting what you would see on television, the way you have. What a strange place you must think this is."

"I see things as they are. You see things as you know them to be," Jajeff responded, sounding more like a philosopher than a primitive. "Which is right? Since I cannot know what is intended, I must accept what I see as true, and you must see it as it is to the rest of your world. First, it must be as I see it, because that is what it is, second, it is what you expect it to be, because you have been taught to know it in that way."

Fran and Bob stared at Jajeff, hardly believing their ears. Fran nudged Bob in his ribs.

"Go ahead, say something intelligent to match that," she said with a laugh.

Bob just rolled his eyes and continued to drive.

They were driving around Portland, showing Jajeff the city and continuing the English lesson Fran had insisted Jajeff needed before she could let him continue on his quest. Jajeff was an eager student and asked Fran to name everything he saw as they drove.

"I have hard time finding animals to see your world."

"I have a hard time finding animals to see your world with," Fran corrected

"The fact that you were able to learn as much as you did is pretty impressive to me," Bob offered. "But I am curious. Why do you think it is so unsafe here that you feel you must rescue Song Flower from our world?"

Jajeff thought about Bob's question for a few minutes. He was driven to find Song Flower because he wanted to ask for her, and yes, he did feel that the one he loved would be better off living in his world. "But why?" he wondered to himself. "Why did he continue to feel she was in jeopardy living in the Dim World?"

"It is hard to explain. I feel her people do not respect Father Spirit, and I fear she will be punished as her people are punished for ignoring Father Spirit's guidance."

Bob whistled softly.

"That is a mouth full. Our people also feel this to be true, and have warned the white people that Father Spirit's wishes are being ignored."

"Then they have not listened?" Jajeff was incredulous that the dominant people in the world, would be unable to hear warnings that were so important to them.

"Some do. Most are very good people, and they try to be good stewards to the land, but there are so many things that force them into destructive decisions." Bob shook his head as he talked, making it clear that he felt sad for the world.

"And, this is something we can do nothing about except take care of ourselves," Fran interjected.

"Jajeff, the other day, you said something about it being unhealthy here, also."

"Yes, it is for the same reason I call your world the Dim World. I always know when I am with animals from your world because vitality is low. There is not as much health here as in my world."

"It is not as healthy," Fran corrected.

"Yes. I always feel weakness in the animals I commune with in your world, as if they are not as healthy as those in my world. I do not know why this is so, perhaps they do not eat as well, or perhaps there is something in the air. Mother Lily believes it is the penalty you pay to feed so many people."

"Mother Lily? You have mentioned her before. Who is Mother Lily?" Fran wanted to know.

"She is a Spirit Elder of my people. She has much wisdom and can see many things beyond our village, even without the help of animals. She is my teacher."

"Oh Bob," Fran exclaimed in a wistful voice, snuggling against his side as she talked. "Wouldn't it be wonderful to live as he does? He is right, you know. We do pay a penalty for having so many people in our world, and it is killing us, . . . draining our vitality, just as he says."

"I am sorry if I make you feel bad, Fran," Jajeff offered, recognizing that he may have hurt her feelings. "Sometimes, I forget that I am talking about your home."

"It is a very nice world," he ventured, trying to find a way to make her feel better.

"Oh, it's okay Jajeff," Fran said, patting his arm. "Do not feel that you have to say things to make me feel better. The fact is, we do pay a penalty for living here, but we also gain a great deal of benefit from our medicine and technology. I just wonder if we don't pay too much, that's all."

They were quiet for a time, as Bob took them through the heart of the city.

"Jajeff," Bob said, breaking the quiet, as he pointed at the people walking on the sidewalk. "You told us you had a few French and Chinese people around but otherwise, there were only the many nations of your people. Yet, what do you see around you here?"

"I see many Chinese and white men and black men but none of The People."

"We are taught to think of all people as 'The People,' Jajeff," Bob gently corrected him, "but that is my point. Because I recognize your culture as the same that my grandfather lived in, I am going to assume that your world is the same as this one, only different in some way, because something different has happened in this world that did not happen in yours."

"How about Jajeff's world simply being in our past?" Fran offered.

"No, I don't think so," he answered, his voice doubtful.

"Jajeff, what season was it in your world when you left?" he asked Jajeff, excitement growing in his voice.

"The same as it is here. It is always the same, when I look into your world."

"And your rivers are pretty much the same as our rivers?"

"Yes, only cleaner and not blocked," Jajeff answered Bob, now looking at him with growing curiosity.

Then, Bob pointed at a large mountain on the northeastern horizon of the city.

"That mountain. What does it look like in your world?"

"The same. Little Sister lost her top twelve, thirteen Springs ago. The Fish Eaters had to move their village before she did; otherwise, they would have been destroyed with their lake."

"Yes, that is true. Mount Saint Helens blew her top in the Spring of 1980, and the lake at her feet was covered with mountain." Bob was excited.

"This is what I thought," he continued. Probably as near as we will be able to tell, our two worlds are the same, only our histories are different. You are not from our past, but from the present of this planet . . . in a different reality."

"My word!" Fran said, amazement in her voice.

"The Crystal Masters have said this to me," Jajeff offered. "And, I have proven this by the way I have come into your world." Jajeff twisted in the front seat of the car, so that he could better see Fran and Bob. "They say the worlds are very different now, because of the way people have learned to live differently from one world to the next."

Jajeff stopped talking, while Bob pulled the car onto the levee that bordered the Columbia River near the airport. Jajeff knew of airplanes and wanted to see them land and take off, and was momentarily distracted as he watched a large one glide over the road in front of him.

"How?" Jajeff asked, but could not finish his question, he was so taken by the immensity of the silver aircraft.

"How does it fly?" Bob asked for him. "By burning a fuel not unlike the oil you can draw from fish. They burn this fuel so fast that the exhaust pushes the plane forward. Once the plane is moving fast enough, those wings will lift the plane up, much as wings lift a soaring hawk."

"Well, there is a lot more to it than that," Fran reminded Bob and Jajeff, "but that is pretty close to how it works."

"What are you, some kind of engineer, or something?" Bob asked Fran sarcastically joking with her.

He rolled the car into a parking area between the river and the road, and parked so that they could see the planes.

Jajeff could not be distracted from the planes for nearly an hour, he was so interested in seeing them land and take off.

"They are even mightier than Brother Hawk," he mumbled at one time, but was otherwise content to watch in silence.

The Gray Feathers honored his desire, and let him watch in peace. Thus they were surprised, when without warning, Jajeff began to speak.

"You are of the same people as I, because your ancestors have lived in this land for many generations. The white men are not of the same people, because their ancestors lived in a different land many . . . miles from here, even across the great water to the east. This is also true of the yellow man and the black. We too, are taught that the people with different colored skin are of the same people in the eyes of Father Spirit, but that they have different ways and different values. Not better but different." Jajeff's voice was a monotone, as if he were reciting something he had learned in school.

Jajeff stopped talking and was silent for a moment to let his words make sense to his friends. He felt a certainty in his words that surprised him, and wondered if Father Spirit had decided to help him understand how the two worlds came to be. The thought brought a chill to his back as he realized that he might be speaking with the guidance of Spirit just as he believed Spirit Masters, such as Mother Lily did when they sat in council.

Fran and Bob exchanged glances and shrugged, as if to acknowledge that they might never come to understand the young Watcher. Bob grinned and rolled his eyes humorously, making Fran smile.

"Our people do not use tools in the same way the French or the Chinese do," Jajeff continued. "Chief Shield Hand has said that they walk with the Forest Spirit as we do, but that they are also fond of finding ways to make the Forest Spirit help them. Where there are three of something in the forest, we may take one and leave two. They will take two and leave one. This is enough for the one to become three again, but it is harder for the Forest Spirit, and sometimes it cannot recover as fast."

Again he waited for his friends to think about what he had said, while he enjoyed the warm glow of happiness, recognizing that he had taken yet another step on his path toward spiritual maturity. He wanted to change the subject and talk about Spirit and his personal triumph, but he knew that his growth was a personal thing that would probably not be understood by his friends. He remained silent for a moment longer before continuing

"Could it be that somewhere in your past, someone decided to always take three? Such a decision would change the world so much that very soon, the world would be very different than it would be if the decision had not been made." Jajeff finished, letting his words hang in the air, his broad smile the only evidence of his personal triumph.

"My word, Jajeff, I never dreamed you were such a philosopher." Fran exclaimed and then sighed and looked at Bob. "You know, Honey, Jajeff may be right. Western civilization does have a tendency to take everything it can from nature."

"Well, I don't know about everything," Bob pitched in. "The industrial revolution was mostly fueled by resources taken from the land, such as coal and lumber, and it is true that many of these resources have been nearly depleted, but we have learned to give back to the land, as well. Oh sure, sometimes we make a mistake and over do it, but perhaps that is what we have to do in order to find out what is too much. After all, the resources don't come with a sign telling us how much is too much." Bob laughed at his little joke, but his laugh was weak, as if he was not sure of his words.

Jajeff followed most of what Bob had said, and felt sure Bob was supporting his words.

"Manifest Destiny!" Fran said with a definite sound to her voice.

"Huh?" Jajeff asked, having never heard of the term.

"Manifest Destiny began during the colonial days of this country, as a belief that it was a God-given right for the United States to control the land from coast to coast," Fran explained, looking at Bob for agreement.

She continued when he nodded his head.

"Today, Manifest Destiny has become symbolic of the belief that God has given certain populations of Humankind, the right to dominate the land, its creatures and other people as they see fit."

Jajeff thought about Fran's words for a moment. The idea of Manifest Destiny had an interesting sound to it, but then he remembered what Bob had said about Mother Earth not having signs to tell people how much could be taken without harming the environment.

"Manifest Destiny puts man's judgment ahead of Father Spirit. If you own the land, and you can do anything you want with it, then you are like Father Spirit. If you do not have the wisdom of Father Spirit, you may wreck your land." Jajeff thought for a moment before continuing. "It is better that you do not own the land, but share it with Father Spirit's other children."

Fran nodded her head in agreement.

"It is true that many people believe that Humankind's real task is to be a good steward of the land and its creatures," she added, "but the most common belief is that it is okay for the dominant society to take everything it wants, no matter what the consequence might be for the environment or indigenous people, plants and animals."

"I will bet that you do not have the concept of Manifest Destiny in your world," Bob interjected to Jajeff. "If you do, I will bet it is believed by only a few in the east."

"No, I have heard of no such belief," Jajeff confirmed. "The French are from the east and the Chinese are from the west. Both have told us that all their people believe in Father Spirit and in their responsibility to protect the land, just as my people are stewards for our land." He shook his head slowly. "I know of no one in my world who would dream of using the land without first asking the spirit that lives there. After all, it is not our land."

Bob took the next logical step in the conversation.

"Then your world and ours may have become separate, when the dominant society began believing that God expected of them to use the land as they saw fit, rather than to share it with the other creatures, that it was preordained by God, or Humankind's Manifest Destiny, to dominate the land and the creatures." Bob said, his voice showing excitement in finding an explanation for the different worlds.

He continued.

"It is as if a time stream encounters an important decision and branches into two streams, one stream for each possible answer to the decision. They are parallel at first, but as the effects of the decision are felt, they would become increasingly different. If the separation was caused by our adoption of the world view represented by Manifest Destiny, the two worlds have probably been evolving on separate paths for better than a thousand years." Bob waved his hands excitedly to emphasize his words. "Because your people do not feel as free to take from the land, your society would have been unable to support the vast populations necessary to have the industrial revolution, the nuclear age, and all of the benefits electricity has brought to our world."

Fran had tears in her eyes by the time Bob had finished speaking. She put a hand out to him and he took her in his arms.

"Oh Bob, we have lost so much. What will we do with this world?"

"Fran?" Jajeff asked, concerned for her distress. "What is it?"

Bob smiled reassuringly at Jajeff while he held Fran, but said nothing to make Jajeff understand why Fran was crying. Jajeff had learned enough from the Gray Feathers to know how close the Native Americans had once been with Mother Earth, and how they had been driven from the land by the invasion of the technologically stronger people from other lands. They had learned to accept this and had made a great effort to adapt, rather than remain apart, as had many of their people. Yet, there was always a shadow over them, following them and reminding them that they were no longer part of the land, and found it almost impossible to respond to Father Spirit's call for communion.

Jajeff wanted to tell them that it was all right and that Father Spirit would understand, but he was not sure that Father Spirit would understand. He could only put his hand on Fran's back and gently rub her shoulder to reassure her.

Fran eventually stopped crying and regained her composure, trying to seem relaxed in her seat between Bob and Jajeff.

"I am okay, honest," she told Jajeff, sniffing a little as she did.

Bob shrugged, and started the car, and was soon steering it into their driveway.

That evening, Jajeff could hardly sleep, his mind was so full of thoughts of Manifest Destiny and of a whole people apparently turning their back on Father Spirit. There was much that he wanted to understand about the Dim World so that he could teach his people. Even more important than bringing new foods back to his people, Jajeff believed, was his ability to teach his people what had happened to the Dim World, and that they must avoid the same thing happening to their world.

The next morning, Jajeff woke with a renewed sense of urgency to find Song Flower, and before it was time for him to join the Gray Feathers for breakfast, he took a moment to find Bonnet, so that he could see his love. He found Bonnet just as Song Flower was gathering her books, and watched as she went out the front door with Benjamin.

"To the window," Jajeff urged Bonnet, and the cat leaped onto the back of a chair near the front window, just in time for Jajeff to see Benjamin's car move away from the house.

"Where does she go?" he wondered to himself, and in response, Bonnet meowed at the window, letting Jajeff know that he did not like being left alone, either.

Frustrated, he withdrew from the cat.

Until he had experienced life with the Gray Feathers, he had no idea how he would find Song Flower. He knew what the name of Song Flower's village looked like. At least, he believed he would recognize the name if he saw it again, but having seen the name only once, he was unable to describe it to the Gray Feathers, and he had to admit that he had no idea of where Song Flower actually lived. He believed she was nearby, because of the feel of his contacts with Bonnet, and because he knew from his experiences in her back yard, that she lived in a warm and moist climate.

Despite everything he had learned about the Dim World, he still had no idea how he was going to find Song Flower, and as he joined Fran and Bob in the kitchen, he was determined to do something about it right away.

"Good morning Jajeff," Fran said, as he poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down at the table.

Jajeff started to say good morning, but Fran held her hand up to stop him.

"No, don't say anything. I am just fine. Sometimes, when we get to talking about the old days, or when I get overly involved in the white man's world, I get a little emotional and begin letting off steam. I'm okay now." Fran had a determined look on her face, as if she wanted her words to prove that she was, indeed, better.

Jajeff had decided that it would be better if he said nothing about her emotional outburst the day before, but after her little speech about being better, he decided she really wanted to talk more about it. He searched his mind for a way to help her feel better.

"You know that Father Spirit lives here as well as He does in my world?" Jajeff stated, more as a question, than as a statement of fact.

Fran blinked and laughed a little.

"Yes, of course," she agreed and waited for him to explain what he was driving at.

"Then, you must know that Father Spirit will always show you the path he wishes you to follow, if you will only take a moment to listen."

"Yes," she agreed, still waiting.

"In my world, there is a belief that my people are the stewards to the land that Mother Earth entrusts to us. But sometimes, despite all that we do, Father Spirit decides to destroy the forest with lightning and fire, and other times, he will flood the land, drowning our brothers before they can run for safety. My people see this, and mourn for this loss to Mother Earth, but we know that it is Father Spirit's way of maintaining balance and accept this as part of our world."

Jajeff paused for a moment, so that he could collect his thoughts and to give Fran and Bob time to absorb his words.

"When I see your world in so much pain, the land changed so, and the air thick with smoke, I mourn for Mother Earth, but I also recognize that Father Spirit has made this so, and accept that he must know what he is doing. It is true that I do not want my world to become like yours, but it is out of selfishness, that I would work to prevent it, not out of fear for Mother Earth. When I find her, I will ask Song Flower to return with me, knowing that she may benefit from breathing the clean air of my world, but also knowing that she may be hurt by the cold or the poor food. There is good and bad in both worlds, so forgive me for making you believe my world is better than yours." Jajeff finished and quietly sipped his coffee.

Fran looked at Bob, wonder in her expression. Then she turned to Jajeff and favored him with a warm smile.

"Even though this is all so different to you, you still believe Father Spirit favors us here?" she asked, the wonder showing in her voice.

"Yes. Bob told me so, yesterday," Jajeff answered definitely, and looking at Bob, he explained. "When you said that your people also give back to the land, I realized that sometimes, Mother Nature needs help. Perhaps Father Spirit is teaching you how to help Mother Nature in ways my people could not dream of."

Jajeff noted with a deep sense of satisfaction that his words seemed to be once again, inspired by Father Spirit. Filled with a sense of certainty in what he was saying, he waved his hand toward the back yard and the garden as he continued.

"Think of your garden, is it not like your world? Are your people not learning to garden the forest, instead of letting it grow as it will? This, I think, is the best way to look at your world, as a garden that is still being cultivated and that will soon be in bloom."

Bob blinked at Jajeff and then looked at Fran, and back to Jajeff.

"Are you a shaman in your world?" he asked, sincerely.

"I know of shamans. No, I am only a Watcher," Jajeff answered modestly.

He did know what Bob meant by shaman, and took the question as a complement, meaning that Jajeff's words were close to the mark. He saw that Fran's eyes were shiny, with little tears threatening to fall from their corners. Fearing that she might have another attack of emotions, he decided that it was time to speak of Song Flower.

"I need to talk about finding Song Flower," he announced, and waited for their response.

Bob nodded his head in agreement.

"I expected you to bring that up pretty soon, it has been three months, and you have learned enough, I believe, to make it on your own for a while." Bob hesitated for a moment, and Fran took advantage of the silence.

"You may be ready to be out on your own, but you still have no idea where she lives. What are you going to do?"

"In my world, I could find where her people live from the elders. If they did not know, surely they would know someone from a different village who would. Then I would simply travel to that place and introduce himself to her chief. If Song Flower was not already bound to another, I could formally request permission to see her, and after a time, and if all was well between us, I could ask her father for her. This is true of my world, but I know now that it is not even a little true of your world, so I do not know what to do."

"Well, first we have to find her," Bob interjected. "Then we can figure out how you are going to find the opportunity to ask for her."

"Listen to you, Bob, you are beginning to sound like Jajeff," Fran said with a laugh. "He can't just go ask for her in this world."

"Well . . ." Bob tried to respond, but Fran cut him off.

"Jajeff, you need to learn more about reading before you leave. You know enough about our social customs to get by, but your reading is the pits."

"The pits?" he echoed, feeling his frustration grow.

"Yes, terrible. You need to be able to read better. Then, I'll bet you will be able to use that cat of Song Flower's, to find out where she lives from one of her letters or from a street sign."

It was true. From the day he had come to live with the Gray Feathers, Jajeff had taken advantage of every opportunity to learn the social customs of the Dim World. He had known that it was not enough to simply learn how to speak well in their language, he understood that he also needed to learn something of their recorded words and the places they chose to build their villages. Television had given him a head-start in learning the language before he arrived, but the written word was quite a different matter. Fran was a patient teacher, and was able to devote many hours to his education. But it was not easy for her, and unlike teaching him to speak correctly, teaching him to read was boring to her, and as did Bob, she quickly grew tired of the chore, giving that part of his education the least attention.

"How can I quickly learn to read, so that I can find Song Flower. There is little time before winter returns, and I had wished to return with her before the first snows." Jajeff looked from Fran to Bob, hoping one of them would have an answer.

"I am sorry, Jajeff. I guess we just are not cut out to be English teachers," Fran admitted. "If you read as much as you can, I am sure your reading will improve."

"But not soon," Jajeff countered.

Before Fran could answer, Bob cleared his throat and made a proposal.

"Why don't you begin by reading the map of this part of the country?" Bob suggested, his enthusiasm telling Jajeff that he thought his proposal was a good one. "We have an atlas in the other room, and you could read it, looking for a familiar word that might tell you where Song Flower lives."

"This sounds like a good idea." Jajeff agreed. "Where is the book and I will begin now."

Bob took him into the living room and pulled the dictionary and road atlas out of the bookcase. Jajeff accepted the atlas, the dictionary, and a simple reading book about animals and retreated to his room to try and apply what Fran had already taught him about reading.

It took Jajeff several days of diligent study with the dictionary, and browsing through the atlas, to figure out how to find the word he had seen drawn on a piece of paper in Song Flower's home. Bob's idea worked, though, and he eventually decided the name was Ferndale, and after finding it on the map, he was convinced that he knew where she lived. He was ecstatic.

"See, here is where I must go." Jajeff put the atlas on the kitchen table where Bob and Fran were drinking coffee.

Doubtful, they looked at the place Jajeff pointed to.

"How do you know this is where Song Flower lives?" Fran asked, wondering if she had really taught him enough for him to find his way around an atlas by himself.

Jajeff described each step he took to find the word "Ferndale," and how he had found it on the map.

"You know, Ferndale is pretty close to here. It is on the coast in California, just a little south of the Oregon boarder," Bob explained, also doubting that it could be the place Jajeff was seeking.

"I must go there," Jajeff announced in a determined voice.

"Whoa, Jajeff. Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Bob responded with equal determination.

"Yes, wait a minute. You still don't know what you are going to do, when you do find Song Flower. Shouldn't you have some kind of a plan of what to do, before you go running off to where she lives?" Fran added in support of Bob.

"I feel that I have stayed here too long. It is important that I do not stay beyond your welcome."

"Nonsense. You are earning your keep by the things you tell us of the old ways. In this way, you are more than paying us back."

Fran laughed and playfully pushed at Bob's arm.

"You old goat. You don't want Jajeff to leave until you finish your research on that book."

"No, that isn't it . . . . Well, maybe it is a little true, but I have kind of gotten used to having you around, Jajeff." Bob said putting his hand on Jajeff's arm to show his sincerity.

"I would like you to stay, until you know for sure what you are going to do. When you are sure, Fran and I will drive you to Ferndale and help you find a way to know Song Flower."

Jajeff agreed to stay a little longer, but having figured out where Song Flower lived, he was anxious to go there and see her in person. As it was, every quiet moment was filled for him with thoughts of Song Flower and visions of him talking to her and walking hand in hand with her back to his people, and he could hardly bear to see her only through the eyes of Bonnet. Three weeks after he had discovered Ferndale on the map, he could take it no longer and insisted that the moment had come for him to continue his journey.

"I must go now, if I am to complete my journey before the snows come. Will you help me?"

"Very well," Bob answered, resignation in his voice. "Have you decided how you should proceed?"

"Yes . . . , I think. I know nothing of this place or what Song Flower does beyond the door of her home, but there is nothing more I can do from here to prepare myself for being in Ferndale. I must simply be there and trust in Father Spirit to tell me what to do next."

"What can we do to help?"

"Help me get to Ferndale, and then let me find the way on my own. I will live in the woods and venture into the city to find work. Perhaps I can help tend mountain goats or entertain the children."

Fran and Bob shared a knowing look between themselves, and then Bob indicated to Jajeff to sit down and listen to him.

"I have done some checking," Bob began in a businesslike manner. "Ferndale has farms where cattle are worked for their milk and not their meat, and there are many hay farms. You should be able to find work there, if all you ask is a place to sleep and food enough to live--and perhaps some free time to look for Song Flower."

Jajeff liked that idea, and the following weekend, Fran and Bob packed Jajeff's few belongings in their car and drove him to the northern coast of California, where the Eel River opened into a delta, as it emptied into the Pacific Ocean. Ferndale was there, near the river and only a few miles from the ocean.

It was the time of first harvest for the farms that blanketed the river delta, and the Gray Feathers needed to take Jajeff to only three of the sprawling farms, before he was able to find work.

"Can I still ask your help crossing back into my world, when I am ready to return?" Jajeff asked awkwardly.

He knew that the Gray Feathers had been more than generous in their help for him already, and he felt sure he was asking more than he should.

Bob put his hand on Jajeff's shoulder and squeezed it in a manly gesture of friendship. Then Fran put her arms around him and hugged him like a mother. She pushed back her tears without speaking and stepped back to the car. Jajeff, too, held back tears as, Bob put an arm around him and lead him toward the bunkhouse the farmer had told him would be his home.

"You have given us great pleasure in knowing you and in the way that you have opened so many doors of understanding for us. There is nothing we can do that will repay this that you have done for us. Do not feel uncomfortable, if you must ask us to come and help you." Bob put ten, twenty dollar bills, along with instruction on how to contact him, in Jajeff's shirt pocket.

You will need this to help find your Song Flower and to make it back to use, when you are ready. Do not hesitate to call or to come back, and yes, I look forward to a great ceremony, when we dance Song Flower and you across to the other side."

Bob left Jajeff in his new sleeping place, sitting alone on a rickety sleeping pad. Alone and more frightened than he could remember ever being.

## Song Flower

The work Jajeff found was much harder than he had expected work could be on a farm, and life there was not nearly as wonderful as it always looked on television. It left him little time for anything but eating, sleeping, and nursing his sore muscles back to health, before returning to the fields the next morning. The farm Jajeff found work on was several miles from Ferndale, and since the farmer wanted to get his hay in before a rain delayed the harvest, there was never enough time for Jajeff to visit the town, much less, look for Song Flower.

Since he was young, of modest build, and knew nothing about running machinery, Jajeff was teamed with a one-armed laborer, to do odd jobs in support of the main haying crews. Their principal task was to go into the field each day to collect broken bundles of cut grass, which the big machines sometimes left behind during the bailing process. Being the only one with two arms and knowing nothing about driving, Jajeff was naturally the one who had to pick up the hay, while his partner, Ted, stayed in the truck and drove.

"You ought'a be proud to be able to work with me," Ted told Jajeff, his first day in the fields. "I know more about haying than any two of those lunks out there with the machines."

They were in an old pickup, making their way across the first field, being careful not to get stuck on one of the dirt ridges that crossed the field. Jajeff was looking at Ted from the corner of his eyes, trying to see how he drove with only one arm without seeming to stare. Suddenly, Ted looked directly at Jajeff, catching him and making him turn red with embarrassment.

"You want to know about this here arm, don't ya." Ted somehow flapped the empty sleeve with the stub.

Jajeff said nothing, but managed to nod his head dumbly.

"It was more than six years ago this time of year. I remember, because we were haying just like today, only I was running the bailing machine. Dammed thing got jammed with a rock, and I was trying to clear it, when it bucked and tore part of my arm off. I didn't even know it happened, until I tried to lean against the bailer with this arm." He waved the sleeve again.

"Jajeff blinked, his eyes wide in amazement.

"I had the thing turned off, too. It must of had some movement saved up behind that rock. Enough movement to eat my arm." Ted grimaced and rubbed the stub of his arm, while he steered the lurching pickup across the field with his knee.

Ted was quiet for a while after that, a frown on his face, obviously remembering the moment when he lost his arm. Jajeff was also quiet, trying to imagine the many ways the pickup could hurt a person who might not be as cautious as necessary. The idea of dangerous tools was a new one for him, and it took a while to sink in.

"You kill the bailer?" Jajeff wanted to know, thinking it might be natural for Ted to want to destroy the tool that had taken his arm.

"Kill?" Ted laughed and took a closer look at Jajeff. "No, it's just a machine. I'll admit that I haven't gotten near one since then. Folks hereabouts know how it happened and see to it that I have work doing other things. Plenty of other things need doing around the farm. Things away from the machinery."

Ted looked closely at Jajeff again and shook his head grinning, mumbling something about a strange one. Then he stopped the pickup and pointed at a bail of hay laying alone in the field, one of its two wires broken, spilling hay onto the ground.

"There's your first one. Get the fork and throw the hay into the back of the truck," Ted instructed Jajeff. "And, try not to poke your eyes out with the wire," he added as Jajeff bounded out of the cab to begin his duties.

Jajeff did as he was told, finding the first load easy. It was only after he had filled the pickup a few times that he began to realize how hard it could be.

He knew the hay was not something people would normally eat, but as he slowly came to realize the tremendous amount of hay that was being harvested by the farmers in the area, Jajeff began to wonder why the same effort was not being expended on something people could eat.

"What will all of this grass be used for?" Jajeff asked Ted, his "Broken Bale Partner, as Ted liked to call himself. It was late their first afternoon working together and Ted had yet to realize how new Jajeff was to his world.

"What? Your kidding, right?" Ted could not believe the young Indian could be so naive.

"No kidding, I think there is too much of this hay for Mr. Williams' animals."

"Hell, he don't even feed this stuff to his animals. They can graze year-round in his pastures. This here hay is to feed the animals of those dry land folks in the Valley."

"He sells it?" Jajeff was incredulous that such an effort would be wasted on growing animal feed.

"Of course. Where have you been, anyway?"

Jajeff knew enough not to answer questions like that and quickly found a way to change the subject.

"Is selling a kind of trade?"

"Trade? Yes, it is a trade of his hay for them rancher's money," Ted answered, chuckling at his own humor

Jajeff understood money but had not related the exchange of money for things given freely by Mother Earth.

"What does he do with the money?"

"He has to pay us for bringing it in and truckers for hauling it to the valley. Then he has to buy seeds and pay folk like us to plant next years hay. Heck, most of the time, he hardly has enough money left to buy seed again. It's the cost of fertilizer that hurts."

"Fertilizer?"

Ted rolled his eyes in amazement at Jajeff's questions.

"Chemicals that feed the hay. Chemicals make it grow faster and lusher than without. These farms have been worked for so many years with the same type of crops that the soil is nearly spent."

"Do the chemicals take energy from the earth?" Jajeff asked, beginning to understand something that Bob had told him about the Dim World and their dependence on chemicals for nearly every aspect of life.

"Heck if I know. All I know is that the hay grows best if you put fertilizer on it." Ted's tone of voice told Jajeff that he was growing impatient with Jajeff's constant stream of questions.

"Come on and load that broken bail," Ted said in a slightly irritated voice.

Jajeff liked Ted and came to think of him as a good, honest friend, and Ted acted as if he liked Jajeff, even if he did treat Jajeff as if he were a little retarded. But, even though Ted seemed to find Jajeff's constant stream of questions entertaining, and answered every one of them as well as he could, Jajeff was learning that Ted could grow impatient, when he asked too many, and so he quickly jumped from the pickup to recover the broken bail.

"You know, Mr. Williams could grow lots of corn on this land," Jajeff ventured later the same day. "Corn would feed people instead of animal."

"Huh?" Ted asked, responding the way he usually did when he was stalling for time to think.

"Are you one of those tree huggers that think it is wrong to waist land raising food for cattle?"

"Tree hugger?" Jajeff had never heard of such a person.

"Ya, one of those environmentalists," Ted elaborated.

Jajeff knew what an environmentalist was, because Bob had included it in the list of unsafe subjects that he should avoid talking about with people he did not know well enough to trust with his secret.

"No, I am just curious. Why does he not grow food for people, rather than food for food for people." Jajeff tried to sound harmless with his question.

"Food for food?" Ted wrinkled his nose and gave Jajeff an odd look, while he tried to figure out what he was asking.

Then, he figured it out and laughed, deliberately making the pickup swing wildly from side to side on the dirt road they were traveling on.

"You sure have a funny way of looking at things, Jajeff."

Ted was quiet for a few minutes while he thought over Jajeff's question.

"I recone it must be worth more money to Mr. Williams to grow the hay than to grow the corn. Maybe the corn don't grow so well around here, 'cause none of the other farmers around here grow much corn for sale. Maybe it is just easier to grow hay. Hell, I don't know!" Ted finished and jerked the pickup to a halt near yet another broken bail of hay.

"Fetch, Jajeff," Ted demanded with a sly grin. "See if a few broken bails will give you something else to think about.

Jajeff grinned at him in turn, and got out of the pickup.

Late one afternoon, less than two weeks after Jajeff arrived at the farm, Mr. Williams came over to the bunkhouse to talk about the work his hired men were doing and to find out what their plans were, after they had finished with his hay. Since most of the hay was already in the barn or on trucks for shipping, the men knew their work for Mr. Williams was nearly finished and that they should have already made plans to move on.

"You all have worked hard and have done a fine job for me," Mr. Williams said to the men, as he walked around the old table, sitting by the bunks. "I figure we should have the last of the hay in the day after tomorrow. Do you boys know where you are going next?"

They all had answers, and each explained how he was to go next to one farm or another to help with the harvest. Mr. Williams noticed that only Jajeff remained quiet.

"Hey, Young Indian. What are you going to do?"

Jajeff recognized being called "Indian," as an inevitable recognition of his darker skin and different features. "Prejudice," Bob had called it, but he sensed no hostility from the farmer and flashed the man a shy grin before he responded.

"I have not thought past this work because I had hoped it would last longer, but given me more time to see Ferndale."

"Ho! You want me to give you more work, do you? Ted tells me you don't drive or anything else that could be useful on a farm." He swaggered over to stand beside Jajeff.

"Ted says you work hard enough, but what could you do for me? After the hay is put away, I can relax and tend to my chores around the house for a month or two before worrying about my next crop. This I can do myself.

Mr. Williams shook his head and patted Jajeff on a sore shoulder.

"No, young fella, I am afraid you are going to have to leave my farm with the other men, after the work is finished."

Mr. Williams looked into Jajeff's eyes for a moment, as if looking to see if there was more to Jajeff than he first noticed. Jajeff tried not to squirm under the old man's gaze, and was relieved when Mr. Williams shook his head, and turned his attention to small talk with the other men.

Jajeff felt a chill crawl up his back, and he could hear his heart beat in his ears, as he struggled to hide the panic he felt, as he realized that he was going to have to find other work. At his first opportunity, he went outside and found a place in the yard that he could think in privacy. There, amongst the buildings of a world still strange to him, Jajeff called on Father Spirit to guide him, asking that he be given the courage to do what he must, to find Song Flower.

On the last day of harvest, the men collected their pay and packed their belongings into cars and pickups, as they prepared to leave. Jajeff packed his belongings too, but otherwise, stood around and watched the other men leave, one by one.

"So, what are you going to do? You want to come along with us to the next job?" Ted was concerned for Jajeff, and as he had done all the while they worked together, he made an honest effort to guide him through the world of the migrant worker.

"I thought I was hired as a farm hand, not a temporary worker to be turned out after the work is finished." Jajeff was near tears with frustration.

"No, that's not how it works anymore, Jajeff. Besides, Mr. Williams is right. There's not much to do on his farm, once the hay is in. May as well go find work on the next farm. Soon all of it will be in, and we will be going into the valley to help pick the trees. You might like that--not as heavy."

"No, I must stay in Ferndale."

He looked at Ted's old pickup and considered what he needed to do.

"Can I get a ride with you to town?"

Jajeff knew that Ted's next work was miles from Ferndale. He did not know what he was going to do in Ferndale, but he was sure he did not want to go further away from the area. He would find something to do for money in the town.

"Sure, Buddy. I'll drop you off in town. Maybe you can buy me a beer."

Jajeff was familiar with beer, because he had seen Bob and Fran drink it when they wanted to relax. He also knew that it robbed their awareness and sometimes made them argue with one another. The only time he saw them fight was when they were drinking beer, and he wanted nothing to do with it.

"Okay, I'll buy you lunch but not beer."

"One of those, are you. Okay, lunch it is."

When they got into the small town, Ted led Jajeff into a restaurant and got him to sit at the long counter set against one wall, promising him that they could buy lunch there as well as they could from the tables.

"Well, good afternoon, friends, what can I bring you?" A man came through a doorway that led to a room behind the counter. Jajeff recognized him as a bartender right away, because he was dressed just like the ones he had seen on television, complete with an apron wrapped around his ample waist and a tough frown on his face.

"Sure, a draft for me, okay?" Ted asked the bartender.

Jajeff shrugged and ordered a cherry soda, something he had learned from Fran in Portland.

"We don't have cherry soda here, kid. How about a coke or something we have." The man looked Jajeff over, trying to determine if he was old enough to sit at the bar. He decided to let it go, since Jajeff wasn't asking for a beer.

"A coke is okay, and a hamburger for him," Jajeff answered.

"And you?"

Jajeff searched his memory for the appropriate food to order in public. Fran had told him that restaurants carried vegetables, but that they were usually canned and not very good tasting.

"Sandwiches." She told him. "Sandwiches are what we usually eat for lunch. That, or soup."

"Sandwich. Egg sandwich, please," he asked, trying to sound nonchalant.

"Good enough." The bartender agreed and disappeared back into the room, after giving them their drinks.

Ted was watching Jajeff, while they was negotiating with the bartender. He noticed that Jajeff could hardly keep his attention on their conversation, he was so busy looking around the bar and out the window at the people walking by the restaurant.

"Have you been here before?"

"Huh?" Jajeff was startled by Ted's question and was not sure what he was asking.

"This town. Have you been here before?" Ted repeated.

"No, but I have wanted to be here for a long time." Jajeff scurried through his mind looking for a plausible explanation for being interested in the town.

The fact that he was finally in the same town that Song Flower lived in, was just beginning to sink into his awareness, and his excitement was to growing, making it difficult for him to suppress the urge to grin, like a child who knew an adult secret that the other children did not know.

Ted looked around at the town outside of the restaurant and shook his head in disgust.

"What on earth do you think you will find here? This is about as sleepy as a town gets."

"Song Fl . . . a friend of mine lives here somewhere. I thought I might look for her."

"A girl?"

"Yes," Jajeff admitted, waiting for Ted to make a sarcastic remark.

"Okay, that explains a bunch. You sweet on her?"

"Sweet?"

"Ya, you know, do you like her?" Ted shook his head in dismay at Jajeff's ignorance of the language.

Jajeff focused on Ted long enough to answer that he did like her but that he didn't want to talk about it. He was afraid Ted would complicate things with his cavalier approach to life, by telling everyone about Jajeff's search. For all Jajeff knew, the bartender might be a close friend of Song Flower, and he was not prepared to announce to the world that he had come for her. He just didn't think people would understand.

"Well, where are you going to stay." Ted changed the subject, as he could tell Jajeff wanted. "You are going to have to find a place to sleep."

"I will sleep in the forest."

"The forest! No, I don't think so. Around here, that is liable to get you arrested. Besides, the forest is pretty far out of town. Not having a car, you will be spending all of your time going and coming. Can't do much work that way."

Jajeff thought about what Ted was saying. He knew the forest was too far from town but could not think of anything else to say that would satisfy Ted. Truth was, he had no idea what he was going to do.

"I just got here. I will find a way. If I am to succeed, Father Spirit will help me find a way."

"Father Spirit, huh? Ya, sure, he will help, but in the meantime, you better spend a little of that money you earned from Farmer Williams to get a room." Ted took a long draw from his beer, just as the bartender returned with their food.

"You need a room?" The bartender asked, as he set the plates in front of them. "I couldn't help but overhear that you need a room. I got one upstairs I can rent to you pretty cheap."

"Do you have work?" Jajeff had come to associate a room with a job in this world.

"No, I'm afraid not now. My boy takes care of about everything I can't do myself."

Ted poked Jajeff in the ribs.

"Take the room. It don't look like there are many places to stay around here."

"You got that right," the bartender agreed. "Well, do ya want it?"

"Let me think for a moment." Jajeff tried to look busy with his food.

"Suit yourself." The bartender returned to the cover of his back room.

Jajeff's hesitation was intended to give him more time to search his mind for alternatives. He changed the subject by asking Ted to tell him more about his next job, hoping that something would happen to help him decide what to do.

They had finished their food, and Ted had downed the last of his second beer without anything happening to help Jajeff make up his mind, so deciding there was no alternative open to him, he called the bartender.

"How much do you want for the room? I do not have much money."

"How much do you have?"

Jajeff laid his money out on the counter to show the bartender.

"Shoot, put your money away, dummy!" Ted growled at him.

The bartender just grinned, and soon, Jajeff found himself sitting by himself in a little one room apartment overlooking Ferndale's main street, his sense of triumph in finding Ferndale, rapidly giving way to uncertainty in his ability to make his way in the foreign society.

At first, Jajeff was afraid to leave his room. This was the first time he was truly by himself in the Dim World, and he was not sure what he should do next. He knew that he had limited financial resources and that his stay would be short, if he could not quickly find a way to bring Song Flower back to Portland. He realized that his original intention to live in the surrounding forest was foolish. This he understood after seeing the town, because all there seemed to be around the town was farms and open country. He was in the middle of Dim World society without a way of earning a living and without an understanding of how to behave without drawing unwanted attention to himself. The summer days were growing shorter, and if he didn't do something soon, he would be forced to return home alone, taking what he had learned of growing food with him, so that it could be used by his people for the next growing season.

The times he had joined Bonnet to see Song Flower didn't help his confidence, either. It seemed that she was always away from her lodge, and when she was there, Benjamin was there too, sitting around talking to her or doing what they called homework with her. This bothered Jajeff, and he tried several times without success to get Bonnet to bite Benjamin, when he got too close to Song Flower. Once, when Benjamin held and kissed Song Flower, Jajeff's anger rose so sharply that Bonnet screeched loudly in sympathy and raced around the room in a panic for several minutes. Jajeff forced himself to remain calm after that, not wanting to abuse his host.

The bartender's son, Mike, helped Jajeff finally have the nerve to get out of his room. It was on the second day, and Jajeff was sitting on the floor by the open window, the soft sea

breeze blowing against his face, his eyes closed, deep in communion with a buzzard that soared high above the farms at the edge of town.

Mike came to the room to see if Jajeff needed anything like towels or fresh sheets. Thinking that Jajeff was out, he knocked once and used his key to open the door before Jajeff could react. Mike took one step into the room and stopped dead in his tracks.

"Ho, man. I thought you were out of here. Sorry."

Jajeff struggled back to reality and quickly got to his feet and stood in a defensive crouch facing the intruder.

"Take it easy. I didn't mean to startle you." Suddenly faced with a man about ready to pounce on him, Mike held his hands out in front of himself and slowly backed out of the room.

"Wait. What did you want?" Jajeff relaxed his posture, standing more erect and less threatening.

"Just checking to see if you needed anything. It's my job."

"I need food."

"You will have to go down stairs for that. We don't do room service here."

Mike looked Jajeff over for a moment with a critical eye, as if he was trying to decide if Jajeff was safe to be around. He cocked his head to one side and motioned vaguely in Jajeff's direction with the room keys he held in his hand. The air jingled between them.

"You okay? You seem a little confused, or something."

"I'm okay. I just don't know what to do." Jajeff was almost in tears.

Normally, Mike would have backed away from a stranger talking like that, but he was a good boy, and Jajeff was clearly close to his age. He couldn't let even a stranger be alone feeling like that without trying to help, much less a boy living in one of his family's rental rooms.

"Well, that depends on what you are supposed to be doing. Everyone is supposed to be doing something." Mike ventured a response, not sure how to go about helping Jajeff.

Jajeff frantically ran through his options in his mind. He knew that not everyone could be trusted with his story. The Gray Feathers warned him that some people would report him as a dangerous person, if he told them that he was from another world, or that he was there to find a particular girl take to her back to his world. They said that it could cost him his freedom, because he could never stand close questioning without being found out as a person who must be locked-up to protect the public from his insanity.

They were very serious when they told him these things, and he believed them. Still, he didn't know what his alternatives were. On the one hand, he could not simply stay in his room until his money ran out, because then he would be, what the Gray Feathers called, a vagrant, and vagrants were put in jail. On the other hand, he had discovered that he didn't have enough confidence in his ability to be around strangers without some guidance. He just knew that they would somehow sense his difference and begin asking questions. The farm seemed safe enough, because many of the hands were secretive about their past, but here in a town . . . .

"I am supposed to be . . . ." Jajeff tried to come up with an answer but could not and sat on the edge of his bed with a miserable look on his face."

Mike came over and sat beside him.

"Hey, you are in trouble, aren't you?" Mike asked, excited about the prospects of a boy his age running from the law.

"Oh, no, not in trouble." Jajeff did not want this boy to think he was in trouble with the law.

"I just don't know what to do next. I don't know your town and . . . ." Jajeff did not know how to finish his excuse without sounding like he was not telling the truth.

"What are you doing here in the first place?" Mike asked, disappointed that Jajeff was not a fugitive. "No one accidentally ends up in Ferndale."

There it was, the direct question he feared most from strangers. Jajeff knew he would eventually be challenged about why he was in Ferndale and always hoped that a good answer would come to him at the time. Now, faced with the question, he searched his mind but found no answer. He could only lower his head and not answer.

Mike watched Jajeff's struggle for an answer, and when none came, he waved his hands in the air in a helpless gesture and walked over to the window, so that its light would illuminate Jajeff's face when he looked at him.

"This is weird. Here you are sitting in this room by yourself in one of the smallest towns in the world. You don't know what you are supposed to be doing here, yet you obviously want to do something or else you wouldn't be so upset. So what is the deal? Why would you be in this boring little town, if you didn't have business here?"

Jajeff just shrugged his shoulders.

Mike rolled his eyes to the ceiling and lifted his hands, palms up.

"What have you brought me this time?" he asked the ceiling, and looked back at Jajeff, dramatically exaggerating his despair, as if he were rehearsing a school play.

"Okay, I tell you what," Mike offered. "Why don't you come on down to the bar, and I will fry up a hamburger for you."

"I can't." Jajeff's voice was even more pathetic than before.

"Why not?" Mike wondered, about ready to give up on him.

"I can't eat meat." Jajeff felt miserable.

"Oh ya? That's interesting. I've never meet a vegetarian. Come on, I'll cook you a potato or something." Mike left the room, pausing only long enough to see that Jajeff was following him.

The mention of food had already caused his stomach to rumble, forcing Jajeff to follow Mike. Jajeff had not missed Mike's interest in the suggestion that he was a vegetarian, and Mike's response suggested that someone's difference could be attractive.

"Perhaps I do not have to hide all of my difference after all," Jajeff mused to himself as he watched Mike fry potatoes and eggs for him.

Mike served Jajeff at a small table in the kitchen of the restaurant, and then sat and watched him eat the eggs and potatoes, fascinated at the unique way Jajeff used his spoon for everything and at how clumsy he was with the paper napkin.

"You live on a reservation?" Mike asked, after Jajeff had finished his food and had set back to catch his breath.

"Yes, in Washington, north of Portland. I live there all of my life." The Gray Feathers had told him that people didn't know much about life on reservations and admitting to living on one would cover many differences others might detect in him.

"Ya, I can tell. You eat like you haven't used a fork much. You sure you don't want to talk about what you are doing here?"

"I have dreams about here. I come to see my dreams." There it was, the explanation he hoped would be there, though he wondered about the wisdom of talking about dreams.

"Oh ya? You dreamed about Ferndale? Neat! Wait until my friends here about this. Tell me more." Mike squirmed with excitement. The Humboldt area had many free thinking people, and such ideas as meditation and lucid dreaming were common subjects for casual

discussion in his college. Mike was taught to have an open mind but had few opportunities to practice such tolerance in his sheltered community.

Jajeff breathed easier, relieved that his story was well received.

"It is a religious thing with me, very personal." There, Jajeff used the ultimate shield for privacy, as Fran had called the protection of religious freedom.

Mike nodded his head with a wise sounding "hummm."

"Look, a few of my friends usually go to the beach in the afternoon to do school work. We get together on the South Jetty, because it is a good place to goof-off without adults bothering us. Tomorrow is a school day. Do you want to come along, when I get back from college?"

Jajeff thought the offer over for a moment before looking directly at the boy.

"You give me ride there?"

"Ya, sure. Be ready about three. I'll come up and get you.

"By the way. My name is Mike. What is yours?"

"Jajeff. I am Jajeff."

"Okay Jay Jeff. I'll see you tomorrow, right now, I have to get ready for a test." Mike stood and patting Jajeff on his shoulder in a friendly gesture, and left the room, reminding Jajeff to wash his dishes, as he did.

Jajeff washed his dishes as he was told, trying to stay out of the way of Mike's father, who was rushing in and out of the kitchen, trying to cook and tend bar at the same time.

"You meet my son?" he asked Jajeff, dodging him near the sink.

"Yes. He is a nice man," Jajeff answered honestly.

Mike's father hesitated for a moment, meeting Jajeff's eyes with a warm smile before rushing off with an order of french fries.

The experience made Jajeff feel safe and more confident that he could survive in the Dim World. Somehow, he had managed to make the transition from the farm to Ferndale, even finding a friend, without getting in trouble. He knew that he was a long way from achieving his goals, but having a safe place to stay and a full stomach, gave him confidence.

Fran had given him a pad of neatly lined paper and an ink pen so that he could practice what she had taught him about writing, and Jajeff busied himself in his room, with drawings of what he had learned about growing food, using some of the words he knew to support the drawings. He did this until Mike came for him the next afternoon, almost using the entire notepad, he knew so much.

Mike drove his father's old pickup. He had fixed it up with an ice chest strapped down to the cargo bed, and had welded a place to secure lawn chairs and a barbecue pit, making it perfect for trips out to the beach. Besides himself, there was just enough room inside the cab for Jajeff and Mike's school books, which Jajeff had to carefully put his feet around to avoid stepping on them.

"You read these books, Mike?" Jajeff asked, gingerly pushing a book aside with his foot.

"Yes, of course. Their from school."

"Where do you go to school?"

"Over at Humboldt State, around the bay from here in Arcata. You go to college?"

"No, no school. Mother Lily teaches me, as did the Gray Feathers and the Crystal Masters. I have many teachers, but they are no college."

Mike looked at Jajeff out of the corner of an eye while he drove, not sure he had been very smart being alone with such a strange person.

"You have Indian teachers, then."

"Yes. That is all we have, all we need in my world."

Mike drove them onto a bluff overlooking the ocean.

"Your world?" That got Mike's full attention.

Realizing his slip, Jajeff quickly changed the subject.

"This is the Pacific Ocean, yes?"

"Yes. You mean you have never seen it before?"

"I have seen it, but not from here. Is that where we are going?"

Jajeff pointed at a long finger of sand stretching away from the bluff.

"Ya. We call it the South Jetty. See that big log lying perpendicular to the dirt road with people by it? That is where we are going."

Mike carefully guided his pickup down the narrow road from the bluff and then gunned it once they were on the dirt road of the jetty, spinning the rear wheels and letting the rear-end swing wildly back and forth as he did.

"Whoa! You will kill us!" Jajeff frantically grabbed for something to hold on to.

"Na, no way. This is the only time I can let this old engine out without someone yelling at me."

About a quarter mile down the jetty road, Mike slammed on the brakes and let the pickup slide to a rest beside an old blue car, throwing sand into the air as he did. It was several moments before Jajeff could open his eyes to see if they were still alive.

"Come on scaredy-cat. Give me some help with this ice chest," Mike yelled at Jajeff from the back of the truck.

Jajeff slowly got out of the pickup and looked around, admiring the radically different world of the ocean shore. He could see mud-flats filled with glass-like calm water held there by the jetty, an occasional duck leisurely bobbing for food in reeds near the shore. He could hear the ocean beyond the sand dunes and piles of driftwood, but he could not see it from his vantage point. From the sound, he could tell that the ocean waves were very angry.

"Come on, friend. Give me a hand."

Jajeff rushed to help Mike, not wanting to make him ask a third time.

Mike's friends were sitting around a small open fire, when Mike and Jajeff walked up. Their meeting place was very private, protected from the sight of others and from the strong wind by a jumble of massive tree trunks washed there by past storms. One log, an old redwood better than five feet across, offered a fine back rest long enough for several people to lean against, while still sitting near the fire.

Three other ice chests sat at one side of the fire, along with a paper bag half full of empty beer cans and food wrappers. Three young women sat with their backs against the log, so deeply involved in conversation that they hardly acknowledged Mike and Jajeff, when they came into the sheltered meeting place. Two men also lounged comfortably in the sand, taking notes from books.

"Hi everyone. Say hello to Jay Jeff. He is living in one of our rooms and was bored, so I brought him along." Mike sat his ice chest down by the others and immediately reached into it for two beers.

"Here." Mike tossed one to Jajeff, who had just found a place to put Mike's books. "Have a cold one."

Jajeff caught the can and tossed it back to Mike.

"I do not drink beer, but I will drink some water, if you have it."

"You don't drink beer?" Mike was incredulous.

"That is good." One of the other men offered, looking up from his book. "I understand that Indians can't hold their liquor anyway," he added with a sneer, and looked at Jajeff, challenging him to respond in kind.

"Benjamin!" One of the three girls admonished the man.

Jajeff stared, first at Benjamin who had a sheepish grin on his face, and then at the girl. Song Flower smiled back at him and asked him to come and sit by her so that she could get to know him.



## The Beach

Benjamin threw a piece of driftwood at Jajeff.

"Hey, what are you staring at?"

Thunderstruck, Jajeff looked at Benjamin and again at Song Flower. She smiled politely at him, as Mike continued his introductions.

"Jay Jeff, that rude one over there is Benjamin; Cady is beside him; Mary, Jill, and Morine are over there. Morine is the one who can get you in trouble with Benjamin."

Jajeff stuttered once and then gave up talking, managing only a smile at the young people sitting around the clearing.

"Come on, Jay Jeff, have a seat," Song Flower repeated, patting the sand beside her, as she intently watched Jajeff.

Jajeff looked at Benjamin and hesitated long enough to meet his eyes with a steady glare, deliberately measuring his character. Benjamin returned his glare, but with a smug grin indicating to Jajeff that he would not shy away from a challenge for what he considered his territory. Seeing this, and not wanting to be cast out for causing trouble, Jajeff cautiously took a seat by the fire, a respectful distance from the girls. He still could not speak.

"Is your friend always like this?" Mary wanted to know, still smiling at Jajeff.

"Jay Jeff? Tell you the truth, I don't know. He is a little different, isn't he." Mike sat beside Jajeff and opened his beer.

"If you want something to drink, you might try pouring some of the ice water into an empty beer can. Sorry I didn't bring anything but beer."

Jajeff just nodded his head dumbly and busied himself with the task of washing out a beer can so that he could fill it with water.

"How could this be possible," he wondered, trying to get his mind to accept what his eyes told him was true.

He struggled to regain his composure before Song Flower decided he was a fool, but this was no easy task, for he could never have imagined himself coming face to face with the one he loved quite as he had then. Just as he was beginning to visualize himself running away to hide, the image of a hawk striking at a rolling trout flashed into his mind, reminding him to confront the world, rather than letting it decide his fate. Silently, he thanked Father Spirit for helping him find Song Flower so quickly, and smiling at Song Flower, he mentally shook himself and found the presence of mind to speak.

"I am happy to meet all of you," Jajeff began in a clear voice. "Mike is right. I have been a little confused. You see, I am not used to your culture, and sometimes I become lost in your ways."

Mike gave Jajeff a shocked look, startled by his suddenly strong voice and new command of the language.

"Not to worry, old buddy," Cady offered with a friendly voice. "If I were from a different culture, I would find us a little strange too."

"Ha, we find you a little strange anyway," Mary said to Cady with a laugh, a mischievous smiling on her face.

"Where you from?" Benjamin was not sure he wanted to be friendly with the stranger but saw no harm in finding out a little about him.

"I am from the land above the Columbia River. Mine are the Northern Hawk People."

"You are an Indian, then. What brings you to Ferndale?" Jill wanted to know.

Jajeff searched for words that could explain his presence in such an out of the way town, but Mike beat him with an answer.

"He came here because he dreamed about Ferndale." Mike looked at his friends to see their reaction, obviously enjoying being able to bring them such a strange story.

Jajeff looked around at the young people and the natural area they chose to make their meeting place. People who chose to be so close to nature shared a view of the world not unlike his own, he realized, and he finally understood why Father Spirit had given him the dream as an explanation of his arrival. There was a great cultural difference between him and these young people, but there was apparently also a common interest in Spirit. If he could not act like them, at least he could act different from them in a way that would let him share their sense of Spirit.

"Yes, I have dreamed of this place and have wanted to come to discover why. It is a very special place with many powerful spirits." He looked around at his audience and was pleased to see that they remained interested.

"You dreamed of Ferndale?" Song Flower echoed, intrigued by Jajeff's mannerisms and obvious confidence.

"Hey Indian. What sort of dreams did you have of this place?" Benjamin asked in a sarcastic voice, a scowl on his face after seeing how Song Flower smiled at Jajeff.

Jajeff wondered how far could he go without sounding too strange.

"I dreamed of a mighty bird soaring in the wind above cliffs near the ocean, and of a place where there were good people living in harmony with the land. I have spent all my life in my land, and now seek to see other places and to know other people. I hope you forgive me, if I have offended you by dreaming of your spirits."

"How interesting," Mary said in a dreamy voice. "You have brought us a real treat, Mike.

"Ya," Mike agreed, mystified at Jajeff's change in behavior. "I guess I have."

Jajeff listened to the banter amongst his new friends, trying to stay out of it as much as possible, hoping his reticence would protect him from too many questions. He could hardly take his eyes from Song Flower, and was pleased that she often met his gaze, and smiled when she did. He occasionally caught her watching him, as he looked at one of the others, or once, when he helped gather wood and tended to the fire.

"Looks like Indian's work to me," Benjamin observed when Jajeff pushed a new stick of driftwood onto the fire.

"Be nice!" Song Flower warned. "At least he is bring helpful."

Benjamin frowned at her and then glared at Jajeff. Jajeff tried not to grin back, but his heart was singing at Benjamin's discomfort.

Except for Benjamin, the small "study group" accepted Jajeff as a welcome addition, asking him many questions about his culture and insisting that Mike bring him back the next day, and the days after that. They were fascinated by his difference, finding his belief in dreams and reverence to nature something they all wanted to know more about. The Humboldt Bay community, an area that called itself "The Heart of the Redwoods," was a place of spiritual awakening for many of the young people who lived and attended college there. They were often taught to seek explanations for inconsistencies in things their parents were telling them about the world, to better understand why the world was the way it had become, and to look for ways to improve it.

When someone like Jajeff came along with stories about dreams and talk of respect for Mother Nature, they quite naturally wanted to learn all they could from him. Jajeff was a good looking young man with long black hair, that he kept pulled close to his scalp in a ponytail. He wasn't too big, by their standards, but his slight build seemed to suit his quiet

way of talking, and all in all, he was a person of striking, almost exotic stature. Mike, Song Flower, and the others all came to agree that Jajeff was a deep thinker with more important things to say than most people they knew. For kids in college, this made Jajeff a valued addition to their little group.

Naturally, Jajeff had no transportation of his own and was dependent on Mike for transportation to the beach, but since Mike usually wanted to go directly there after classes, he loaned Jajeff his bicycle, making it possible for Jajeff to move about as he wished. This was especially good for Jajeff, because it permitted him to spend his free time on the beach, even when the others were not there.

Jajeff quickly found that there really wasn't much work for him to do, since Ferndale was mostly a farm town, and the harvest was pretty well complete. He managed to pick up a few odd jobs that helped pay for his food and room, but he concentrated most of his effort in hanging around a plant nursery, not far from the edge of town. There, he made friends with Lee, an old man who seemed to know everything there was to know about growing plants, and who was willing to talk about it for hours at a time. Jajeff followed Lee around his grounds, asking questions and listening to stories from Lee's vast collection of experience with plants, staying up late each night attempting to make a record of what he was learning in his note pad.

Jajeff would have quickly used all his money, if it had not been for Earl, Mike's father. Despite his tough talk and rough continence, Earl was a kind man, who was always a little worried about a wild streak in Mike's character that occasionally got him in trouble. So, when he saw that Jajeff was fast becoming a good friend to his son, and he saw how much of a calming influence Jajeff was for Mike, Earl decided keeping Jajeff around was more important than collecting what little rent he received for the room. So, to help Jajeff be able to stay in town, he gave him a few routine chores around his restaurant to make him feel he was earning his way, and reduced his rent to nearly nothing, while giving him at least one free meal each day. Jajeff recognized Earl's kindness and did everything he could to make him feel his help was the right thing to do. Had Jajeff been there simply to live, he would not have permitted such obvious one-sided help, but as it was, Jajeff was thankful to have the free time to study plants and be with Song Flower as much as he did.

Jajeff had all he needed to be very happy in Ferndale, except Song Flower's affection, and at the moment, he could do nothing about that. He did not particularly like Benjamin as a person, but Song Flower and Benjamin remained engaged to be married as soon as the spring semester was finished, and he saw that it was necessary to get along with Benjamin, if he did not want to be driven away.

His frustration in not being able to simply ask for Song Flower, was aggravated by Benjamin and Song Flower's frequent shows of affection, their kissing or holding hands making it clear for all to see, that they were deeply in love. However, Jajeff could not accept this show of love, believing that Father Spirit would not have permitted him to come so close, so that he could be thwarted at the last moment of his quest. Trusting in this, he remained constantly vigilant, expecting Father Spirit to show him the true way to see Song Flower's affection for Benjamin, hoping to see evidence that she would rather be with him. But, as the days grew ever shorter heralding the approaching winter, Jajeff was forced to accept that he might be forced to return to his world without Song Flower.

Jajeff also knew that his small group of friends would eventually stop meeting at the beach, because of the approaching cold weather that would bring the winter rains. The previous year, he knew, they had resorted to meeting in the college library when the rains had come, a place much too far for him to visit without a car. So, even if he decided to return at

the end of winter, rather than before, he was sure that the changing season would force him away from the one he loved.

As all of these things loomed heavy in his mind, as he tried to overcome the many obstacles to his success, there was a nagging sense of foreboding, as if he was nearing a point of no return that he could not see nor touch. This feeling haunted him, whenever he let his mind wander from thinking about Song Flower or from thinking of plants. It was as if a voice whispered in his head like an echo of the sound of the seagulls or the ocean waves. It told him that the Dim World would claim him for its own, if he remained there much longer.

"The dirty sky looks natural to you." The voices would say to him.

"*Water should taste of chlorine.*" The voices agreed whenever he drank water from the tap.

"Your stomach has been upset because of the food and the water and the air, but it is no longer upset. You have become used to the Dim World. The Dim World is claiming you for its own. Soon, you will never be able to return, because you will think the Dim World is natural."

Jajeff did not listen to the voices at first, because he knew what they were saying and knew that he would move as fast as he could to finish his quest and return to his world, without their prodding. He did not listen to them later, because he was afraid of living his life without Song Flower, no matter what world he was in.

Jajeff did not listen, because one of the voices repeated over and over again inside his head. "*I will stay in this world, if I cannot return with Song Flower.*"

Another voice always answered, "You will die, the Dim World will claim you and you will die with a broken spirit."

Better than a month after Jajeff had joined the study group, on a particularly warm day without fog and with little wind, Jajeff had stretched out on his back in the sand, his head resting in his hands, his thoughts with a seagull as it floated high in the air. His eyes were closed, so that he could better see what the seagull could see, as it played in the wind that blew from the ocean and up against the bluff at the end of the jetty. The seagull he communed with, hovered high above the jetty where it could catch each change in the wind, as if it were surfing or sliding down a long, undulating slope. When the bird reached the bottom of the invisible slope, and had begun flapping its wings to gain more altitude, Jajeff smiled and thanked it, as he moved to yet another seagull just beginning the long drift down from the bluff.

From his seagull's vantage point high above the jetty, Jajeff saw a line of cormorants, hugging the water as they streaked along a growing wave. He reached out and found the leading bird and quickly joined with it, as it skirted only inches above the face of the wave. Startled by Jajeff's presence, the bird caught a wing-tip in the water and tumbled head over tail across the wave with a loud squawk and what seemed like a mental curse. Its sudden crash caused a chain reaction, as the other birds followed it, also tumbling into the water. Jajeff laughed at the unexpected results of his hitchhiking and sat up from where he lay on the beach.

"Do you always wake up laughing?"

Jajeff looked behind him and saw Song Flower sitting in her usual place against the log. Embarrassed, he shyly looked away.

"No, not usually. I had a funny dream."

"Tell me about your funny dream. What do Indians dream of?"

"Brother Cormorants were flying low, close to the water, when the lead one became startled and touched the water with its wing tip and tumbled into the waves. The others did

not react quickly enough and followed the leader into the water. It was very funny to watch all the birds tumble across the water."

"Were they all right?" She asked, genuine concern showing in her eyes.

Jajeff saw this, and wanted to hold her and praise her compassion toward Mother Earth.

"Oh yes," he answered instead. "They were not hurt, but I had to apologize for making them fall."

"You had to apologize?" She blink at him, baffled by his choice of words.

"Oops," Jajeff thought.

"It was in my dream that they fell," he hastily added

"Uh huh." Song Flower said doubtfully.

"There is something about your dreaming, my Indian friend, that has the sound of reality in it. Sometimes when you talk, I feel that you are describing what you have actually known and not just what you have dreamed."

"Is there a difference?" he asked, enjoying his first opportunity to be alone with her. "I am as happy in my dreams as I am when awake."

"Yes, I believe that you are."

"I did not expect you here so soon. Didn't you have a class this afternoon?" Jajeff tried to change the subject.

"Yes, but I ditched so that I could come to the beach to study. It is so much nicer here."

Song Flower shrugged, seeming to push her school work away from her attention. She watched Jajeff as he moved around to be more comfortable, sitting a short distance from her, where he could better talk to her. Their eyes met and for a long while, they did not speak, but let their eyes communicate a mutual trust that thrilled Jajeff.

"Tell me more about your dreams," she asked, breaking the spell.

Jajeff searched his memory for something new to tell her. Walking the balance between truthful stories of his world and saying something that would give him away, was very hard, and Jajeff was constantly afraid that he would make a mistake. Even though he was only a little dishonest, it was especially difficult to be dishonest with the woman he loved.

"I dream sometimes that I can see with the eyes of animals. This is especially true when I am between sleep and awake."

"I thought so," she said with excitement in her voice. "You have always described what animals do so clearly. It is as if you actually get inside their heads."

"This is a difficult thing to tell. Most people would believe I am not telling the truth and become angry with me." Jajeff was uncomfortably aware that he was stepping onto a path from which there was no return.

"I understand and believe you, but someone like Benjamin would not believe you. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes, and others."

"Okay, it will be our secret. Now tell me how you do it." Song Flower seemed delighted to be sharing a secret with him.

Jajeff described how it was for him to see the world from the perspective of an animal, being careful to avoid saying things that would tell Song Flower he was from a different world, or that his experiences were from anything more than dreaming. They talked together for over an hour, Jajeff speaking in honest and simple sentences, Song Flower listening intently, asking questions to encourage him to continue. She more than the others, had always asked him questions about his people and how he lived, as if she could hardly believe he could live without electricity or running hot water or that there were still people in her world who lived that way.

"You mean you do not have a toilet?" She was incredulous at the thought.

"We have one, of course. It is a place we designate away from the stream. Only two summers ago, I helped build a new lodge for it, so that the women would have privacy." Jajeff grinned at her, knowing how he must be shocking her.

"A hole in the ground?" she asked, amazed at the notion.

"No. More than that. We are not primitive. In your words, we are low-tech." He feigned indignation, making Song Flower giggle at him.

"Ha! Sounds pre-Columbian to me."

"I know of your Columbus. Yes, I live pre-Columbus."

"Now you tell me about yourself. Where is Benjamin?" Jajeff suddenly turned the conversation to her.

He leaned toward her, exaggerating his attention to her words, trying to make her smile again, but to his surprise, Song Flower scowled at Jajeff's mention of Benjamin.

"Benjamin? Oh, he is still at school, I think."

"You two ride in the same car to school, don't you?" He asked, alert to sense her emotions.

He wanted Benjamin to go away, but he did not like seeing Song Flower in distress. Still .

...  
 "No, not since we had our little knock-down and drag-out over the way I dressed for school. I got tired of him trying to tell me what to do, so I rebelled. You would think I was already married to him. Lord only knows how he will try to control me when we are married."

Jajeff recognized her words as an indication of an even deeper difference of opinion she had with Benjamin, and suppressed a shout of thanks to Father Spirit for his help.

Song Flower quickly warmed to this new turn of the conversation, as if she had no other opportunity to talk about her private life. Jajeff sensed that she needed to talk more and encouraged her to continue.

"Perhaps Benjamin does not understand that he upsets you. He is like the bear rubbing his back against a sapling. Sometimes the bear forgets that the tree cannot hold his weight."

"He is a bear, all right, but he knows full well what he is doing. That is the way his father treats his mother." Song Flower frowned, thinking of Benjamin and how uncertain she felt about him, when she thought of his mother and father.

Something came to her mind, bringing her to make an excuse for Benjamin.

"Oh, I don't know. He is a real jerk, but he is also a long time friend. I can't imagine not having him around to pick on me."

"You are very pretty and a smart woman who does not need to be picked on to feel worthy. I lov. . . like you without wanting to pick on you or make you less than me." Jajeff felt a brief chill run up his back, as he realize how close he had come to telling her the truth.

Song Flower eyed him suspiciously, obviously aware of his slip and his effort to cover up.

"You are a good man, Jajeff. Yes, I know that I do not have to put up with the way he treats me. If only my parents didn't owe his family money. Perhaps if they didn't, I would feel free to strike out on my own. As it is, though, it is better for everyone that I behave myself." She pulled her sweater over her bear knees, holding her arms around her legs, and sniffed loudly, trying to ignore the tears wetting her cheeks.

After having managed to talk about her true feelings to a sympathetic listener, Song Flower looked at Jajeff with a certain amount of regret, as if she felt she had said too much.

"Thanks for being a good friend and listening, Jajeff. Please don't tell anyone about what I said. Benjamin . . ."

"Not to worry. I will tell no one," he promised, deeply confused, knowing he had come so close to telling her of his love, yet seeing her just as bound to Benjamin as ever.

The relationship between Song Flower and Jajeff changed in many subtle ways after that afternoon. Jajeff noticed that Song Flower found ways to be closer to him, by standing on his side of the volleyball net, or insisting that he listen to her reports for school, or that he listen to her speeches. They were never alone, nevertheless, she found ways of confiding in him through the way she looked at him. Her smiles, her subtle facial expressions, became a secret code, that gradually moved them from friends, to . . . , well, Jajeff did not know what they were becoming, close for sure, but what else he could not know.

He knew that confronting Benjamin about the way he treated Song Flower would force her into a decision she might not be ready for, so Jajeff determined to bide his time, now more confident than ever that Father Spirit would show him a way to win her love. Every opportunity he had to do so, Jajeff conveyed the image of a proud man, confident in himself, and the world around him. In this way, he did everything he could to show Song Flower that he was right for her.

Less than two weeks after Song flower and Jajeff talked together, everyone was at the beach celebrating completion of an especially tough series of mid-term tests. Except for Jajeff, they were all drinking beer, but Benjamin was drinking more than usual and becoming more boisterous and generally more obnoxious with each can. Knowing that he and Song Flower were having a disagreement over when they were going to get married, everyone grew more uneasy each time he opened another beer, fearing that something would happen to set him off.

Oblivious to Benjamin's behavior, Jajeff was telling Song Flower, Mary, and Mike about how his people knew what the weather might do, when Benjamin abruptly stood and walked over to stand beside Song Flower.

"Why do you always listen to Jay Jeff? People would think you like him better than me." Benjamin grabbed her arm and forcefully pulled her to her feet.

Song Flower protested but could not free her arm.

Mike said, "Hey!" and jumped to his feet to stand beside Song Flower, one of his hands on Benjamin's arm. Benjamin turned and pushed him back to his seat with one swipe of a big hand and snarled at him threateningly.

Jajeff quickly stood and watched Benjamin, his breath held, his muscles tight. If ever there was a moment that Jajeff could take a life, Benjamin was moving him precariously close to it then.

Jajeff prepared to move, his growing anger a cold place in his mind, but Song Flower's eyes met his, and her eyes cautioned him not to move, not to interfere.

"Come over here and talk to us," Benjamin growled, pulling Song Flower toward the other side of the clearing, where Cady and Jill were still sitting.

"No! You're drunk. Let me go."

"No, I'm not drunk!" Benjamin shouted and hit Song Flower across her face with the back of his hand, knocking her to the ground, her face bright red with blood.

Jajeff was in the air the moment he saw Benjamin lift his hand and collided with him an instant after he hit Song Flower. Jajeff's head colliding against his stomach, forcing him to let go of Song Flower and to fall back against the big log.

"Why you son of a . . ." Benjamin shouted, trying to find his balance.

Jajeff got to his feet first and swung his fist at Benjamin's face, hitting him square on the nose and causing him to bleed profusely. Benjamin grunted and kicked out with his foot, catching Jajeff in the groin before he could dodge out of the way. Jajeff nearly fainted from the pain and almost wanted to thank Benjamin when he hit Jajeff square on the chin, knocking him to the ground, unconscious.

The next thing Jajeff knew was that he was lying against the big log with Jill and Mary trying to wake him.

"There you are, you silly Indian. We thought maybe Benjamin had killed you." Jill dabbed at his lip with a paper tissue.

"Song Flower!" Jajeff said, trying to get to his feet.

"Who?" Jill wanted to know, sharing a knowing glance with Mary.

Jajeff looked around, remembering where he was.

"Morraine. Is Morraine okay?"

"I'm okay, Jay Jeff." Song Flower stepped into the clearing from the path leading to the road. Mike and Cady were close behind her.

"I don't think that jerk will be bothering me again." Song Flower told them, a relieved expression on her swollen face.

She held her bare ring finger up for them to see. "Obviously, we settled once and for all when we are going to get married."

"When?" Jajeff had to ask.

He strained against Mary and Jill's arms, as they tried to hold him still, so that they could stop his bleeding lip.

Song Flower knelt down by Jajeff and put her hand on his shoulder, holding him firmly.

"Never, silly. I gave him back his ring and told him I never want to see him again."

Jajeff was ecstatic, especially since Song Flower showed that she felt responsible for his pain and tried very hard to make sure he understood her regret, by tending to his swollen jaw herself.

When Benjamin hit Song Flower, he also had somehow changed the feeling everyone had for their place on the beach. It seemed less friendly to them, and they all began to find reasons not to go there. It may have been coincidence, but everyone noticed that, as if on cue, the world around them also changed. The fall weather turned abruptly colder, as storms began to roll in from the ocean with more regularity. Final test time at the college came ever closer, as they scrambled to finish their term papers, and soon they would be faced with the last semester of college, before they would have to take their places in the world as adults. Little by little, the light-hearted spirit shared by Jajeff's friends changed to grim determination to finish the semester.

At first, it was just one or two who did not show up at the beach, but eventually, it was only one or two who were there. Jajeff, of course, was nearly always there, since that was the only place he knew to find Song Flower. Song Flower tried to be there as much as she could, obviously enjoying those times to talk with Jajeff, but even though she seemed relieved to be rid of Benjamin, Jajeff could tell that she also mourned his loss, as if she mourned the loss of a way of life. From things she said to him and the others, Jajeff suspected that she also felt new pressure to help her family, because she could no longer look forward to joining Benjamin's affluent family with hers.

It distressed Jajeff to see the group break-up, because he realized his opportunity to gain Song Flower's confidence and ask her to go back to his world with him, was rapidly passing as the winter approached. Very soon, his friends would begin meeting at school to study, and his time with them would be essentially over until they returned to the beach in the spring--if they did return. He would have no natural way of being with them, and so, he would simply become part of a happy summertime memory.

It was on what promised to be their last weekend on the beach, before the weather turned really cold, that Jajeff determined he would finally tell Song Flower the truth. As soon as he

found out about the gathering, he began meditating on what he must do and how he would do it, praying to Father Spirit for guidance and his help in creating the opportunity he needed.

"Father Spirit," he repeatedly asked the darkness of his room, "help me understand the way I must ask for Song Flower. Show me the way that will not frighten her or make her believe I am crazy. Do this for me so that I may return to my people, and help them grow food."

When the day came, with the exception of Benjamin, everyone was there, as if in tribute to their wonderful summer. The girls huddled against the big log by the fire, as they always did, deeply involved in their usual discussions about things desperately boring to the boys. Jajeff was passing a Frisbee with Mike and Cady, all of them trying to ignore the cold wind, as if hiding from it would somehow compromise their manhood. The wind was getting stronger, and they could hardly hear each other talk, because the waves were so large and so near on the beach, making Jajeff understand why it was their last gathering on the beach.

The surf along the South Jetty was normally very high, with waves bigger than six or seven feet the norm. They rolled toward shore one after another in rapid succession, to rise up and crash down at the edge of the beach, creating a strong undertow that made it very dangerous for people to play in the water. The ocean there, was to be looked at but not to be played in.

The little clearing they shared for so many months was several hundred feet from the water's edge, and hidden from it by many drift logs that normally protected them from the stronger winds. On this day, however, there was an incoming storm with strong winds, causing even higher waves of ten or twelve feet that rumbled onto shore, as if trying to swamp the jetty. The wind and the roar of the waves added a sense of excitement, primitive by comparison to the summer shore, that immersed everyone there in the experience of being close to nature at one of its mightiest moments.

Jajeff had just caught the Frisbee and was about to drift it to Mike, when he stopped in the middle of his swing. He closed his eyes and moved his head from side to side, as if scanning the beach with his closed eyes. Without warning to the others, he dropped the Frisbee and ran past Cady toward the beach.

"I have to help the dog!" He yelled, as he disappeared beyond a log.

Since the day they shared their secrets, Song Flower had learned to keep an eye on Jajeff, not obviously, but giving him just enough attention to always know where he was and what he was doing, while they were on the beach. When she saw Jajeff stop and listen with his eyes closed, his mannerism reminded her of that day she had caught him flying with the birds. When she saw him run toward the beach, she stopped talking to Jill and Mary and followed him, a chill of apprehension crawling up her back.

"What did he say?" Song Flower demanded, as she ran past Cady.

Cady ran to catch up with Song Flower, trying to tell her what Jajeff had said, waving at the others to follow as he did. They arrived at the ocean side of the drift logs just in time to see Jajeff dive head first into a very large wave that was just crashing to the beach.

"Jajeff, no! The undertow will drown you!" Song Flower yelled after him, but to no avail.

"Oh damn!" Song Flower cried running up and down the beach where Jajeff had gone into the water, staying just out of reach of the waves while trying to see beyond them to the place they developed, farther out in the open water.

"I was beginning to really like that guy, too," she cried to Cady, who was pacing her and wringing his hands, feeling utterly useless. The others of their group came and stood further back from the waves, helplessly watching for sight of Jajeff, as did other people they did not know.

"That is my dog he is trying to rescue," a woman yelled to Song Flower, assuming it was her husband who was in the water.

"A big wave got it before the dog could run. We figured old Bruno was already a goner in that water. That's why we didn't try to go after him ourselves. Don't know why your husband would be crazy enough to try and rescue him, either. No dog is worth losing your life over."

The woman knelt down, well out of reach of the waves, and scanned the water with a worried look on her face.

"Oh, I hope he brings Bruno back," she said, tears in her eyes, her lips trembling.

Song Flower gave the woman a brief look intended to shame her for letting her dog be lose in the first place, and then turned her attention back to the waves. After several minutes, she saw Jajeff's head bobbing in the water, hundreds of feet from the shore. First his head bobbed above water and then below the surface again in rapid motions, each time reappearing a little further up the beach as the current moved him north and the undertow pull him further out and under the water. The dog was nowhere to be seen.

As soon as Cady saw Jajeff, he started to run toward the water, but Song Flower caught his arm.

"Don't you dare, Cady! Don't you dare go and drown yourself too!" Song Flower would not let go of his arm and together, they walked along the beach, trying to keep pace with where they thought Jajeff might be.

"There, look!" Mike came running down beside them.

"You can see better from further up on the beach. He has the dog and is trying to get back to shore."

After what seemed like hours, they caught another glimpse of Jajeff, as he tried to swim back to shore with the dog. Moments later, a wave threw them both onto the beach, nearly at Song Flower's feet. Neither Jajeff nor the dog moved, and Song Flower cried loudly for help.

When Jajeff opened his eyes and tried to sit up, he found that Song Flower held his head in her lap and would not let him move.

"You are making it a habit of sleeping on the beach, you know. We can't have you doing this all the time." Song Flower cupped his head between her hands and tenderly moved it from side to side, emphasizing her words.

"We thought you were going to die out there. My God, you frightened us so." Jajeff's heart swelled with love and pride for Song Flower, when he saw that she had tears in her eyes.

"Is the dog okay?" Jajeff asked through a cut lip.

"Yes, you saved it." Cady answered, a little wonder still tingeing his voice.

Cady and his other friends crouched close around Jajeff and Song Flower. Other people also stood watching, well behind Jajeff's young friends, talking amongst themselves about how brave and foolish Jajeff had been, and how lucky he and the dog were to be alive. A wet dog was playing with a small boy in the distance, well away from the waves.

"See? He is over there acting as if nothing has happened." Cady pointed to the dog.

Jajeff tried to move again, but this time, he stopped himself, when he discovered that his arm was too sore to move. He felt it with his hand, carefully searching his bone for sign of a fracture. He found a cloth wrapped around his arm where it hurt most.

"You cut yourself pretty badly. We think the dog may have snagged you with a claw," Mary offered, when she saw his concern.

"I think I have pulled many muscles too. I hurt all over," Jajeff complained as he lowered his head back into Song Flower's lap.

"That does it. You are coming home with me," Song Flower said with determination in her voice. "You need to have someone look after you, until you feel better." Once again,

Song Flower moved Jajeff's head a little to emphasize her words and looked to her friends to help her get him to his feet.

They all knew that Jajeff lived by himself and would not have anyone to help him if he should need it, so they agreed that it was a good idea for him to stay with Song Flower. Jajeff, on the other hand, almost refused Song Flower's offer but came to his senses before he actually protested. Even if he could make it on his own, he could not pass up this opportunity Father Spirit had given him to talk with his Song Flower in privacy. He groaned a little and let his friends help him to Song Flower's car.

"Thank you Father Spirit," Jajeff thought to himself, hardly believing that he would soon see Song Flower's home with his own eyes, briefly thinking of Bonnet, and how nice it will be to hold the cat in his arms.

Jajeff had not seen Song Flower's home from the front, and considering her education and the importance of her father's profession as a farmer, he was a little surprised at its modest size and obvious age. He had come to understand that the relative wealth of people in the Dim World could be seen in the size of their homes and their cars. Seeing Song Flower's home, it was somehow pleasing to Jajeff to note that, not only did she drive a small, practical car, but her home was of suitable size for her family without pretense of wealth.

"Can you make it inside okay?" Song Flower asked Jajeff, when she had stopped her car in the driveway.

"Yes, if I can walk slowly." Jajeff opened the car door and gingerly stepped onto the driveway.

"Hold it, let me come around and help you." Song Flower's voice had a sense of urgency to it, as she rushed to Jajeff's side, and putting her arm around his waist, helped him walk into the house.

Jajeff thrilled at Song Flower's touch, the smell of her cheek so close to his face. For a moment, while she fumbled with the door, their faces were only inches apart. Once the door was open, their eyes met for a long pause before Bonnet meowed loudly, insisting that Song Flower should come in and breaking the spell between them. Song Flower nervously cleared her throat and busied herself with the door and the cat, while Jajeff tried to keep his weight off of a sore knee.

Bonnet meowed loudly at Jajeff's feet and repeatedly rubbed against his legs, nearly tripping him before Song Flower could get him into the guest bedroom.

"He acts as if you are a long lost friend," she observed of the cat, a curious sound to her voice.

Jajeff said nothing, being preoccupied with trying to decide what to do next, as he stood in the middle of the small room. Song Flower noticed his uncertainty and flashed a broad smile at him, pointing at his clothes as she did.

"Your cloths are still wet," she observed, pulling at his wet shirt sleeve, her nose turned up a little at the feel of the sandy cloth. "Take these off and I will bring you one of my father's robes while you are taking a shower. When you are finished, get in bed, and I will come in and doctor your wounds." She hesitated, looking into Jajeff's eyes, then turned and left the room, returning moments later with a robe.

Jajeff's heart was pounding, he wanted so much to embrace Song Flower and tell her of his love.

"Not yet," he told the room, and put his mind on getting himself cleaned up.

He was in bed for only a few minutes, when Song Flower came in and did what she could to help Jajeff's cuts and bruises.

"That dog really did a number on your arm," she observed, dabbing at the cut with a cloth soaked in disinfectant. "It should make your arm stiff for a few days. Is your knee any better?"

"It is tender, but it is only a bruise and the soreness will walk off in a few days." Jajeff considered what he was saying, and tried to change his story a little.

"It is not so much my elbow nor my knee. I ache all over, as if someone has been hitting me with a club." He grimaced to show Song Flower how uncomfortable he was.

"Oh, you poor dear," she said, pushing a strand of his hair away from his eyes. "I will bring you some aspirin and let you sleep for a while. That will help."

When she returned with the aspirin, Jajeff was fast asleep with Bonnet curled up in the space between his arm and his side. She stood near him for a few minutes, admiring the smooth features of his face, and marveling at the way Bonnet had taken to him, then she quietly left the room, closing the door behind her, a happy smile on her face.

Song Flower's parents had been in the field when she brought Jajeff home, and planned to be out for dinner that evening. However, they seriously considered canceling their dinner plans, when they discovered that their daughter had a stranger sleeping in their guest room. When Song Flower explained who it was and how he came to be in their house, they relaxed, having heard many good comments about the nice Indian boy from Song Flower and people in the town.

Song Flower waited until her parents had left, and driven by growing curiosity about Jajeff and the dog, deciding he had slept long enough and went to his room. She knocked once, and then slowly opened the door, trying hard not to be too rude about waking him. She saw that his eyes were open, though, so she came in and flopped down on the side of his bed, laughing as Jajeff scrambled to make room for her.

"Okay, Jay Jeff, you have to tell me how you knew that dog was in trouble."

"I heard its bark," he offered, knowing she would not accept such an easy answer.

He rubbed his eyes and yawned, trying to recover his sense of place.

"Not a chance." Song Flower pushed playfully at Jajeff's good arm, ignoring his struggle to wake up.

"You have told me that you have a special relationship with animals. Why, look at Bonnet." She pointed at Bonnet, lying on the bed near Jajeff.

"Bonnet has hardly left your side since I brought you home. You are like his long lost friend."

Jajeff looked at Bonnet, and for a moment, he brushed its mind with his, a special sort of affection he could show to an old friend. Bonnet purred loudly in response, loud enough for Song Flower to notice and give the cat a curious look. Then she looked at Jajeff.

"Listen to Bonnet. You would think it understands we are talking about it." She scratched Bonnet under its chin.

"Well, I am waiting," she said, wiggling a little closer to Jajeff, reminding him that she still expected an explanation.

Jajeff scrambled through his mind, looking for the best way to answer her question, knowing that it was only that moment that Father Spirit would give him to fulfill his dream. He could risk waiting no longer.

"I have the gift of the Eyes of the Forest."

"What?"

"I can see through the eyes of animals. This is not a dream I tell you of, but my actual experience. That is how I first saw you and how I came to love you, . . . through Bonnet's eyes, when Bonnet was a small kitten. That is why he behaves as if he knows me. We are old

friends." Jajeff watched Song Flower as he talked, watched her face go slack and her eyes glaze over as if she was going into shock.

Jajeff stopped talking and waited for what he had just said to sink in. He waited a long moment. Still, Song Flower said nothing, so Jajeff pressed on.

"At first, I could not understand your words, and so I did not know your name. I have named you Song Flower, because you are so beautiful and so kind and tender to Bonnet." Jajeff waited longer for her to comprehend what he was saying.

Song Flower absent-mindedly reached up and pushed her long hair away from the side of her face. She leaned forward, her attitude emphatic, as if she was about to attack him.

"You named me Song Flower?"

She had a nervous smile on her face, but otherwise, gave Jajeff no hint of how she was going to react.

"Yes. I hope the name does not anger you."

"Anger me? You have been watching me from the eyes of my cat, since it was a kitten, and you wonder if I am angry?" Song Flower stood and paced the room, stopping to look at him each time she turned.

"You are the most infuriating person I have ever met, Jay Jeff."

"Jajeff." Jajeff corrected, feeling his body go into a cold sweat. "My name is actually Jajeff, not Jay Jeff."

"Oh, Jajeff. Even your name is a mystery." Song Flower turned and angrily ran out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Jajeff continued to lay in the guest bed for several minutes, while he tried to sort out what had gone wrong, his heart feeling as if it were melting in his chest. He felt his world coming to an end, as he realized that he had failed at the last moment of his journey.

*"There is nothing in life left to you!"* His mind screamed, as he contemplated never going back to his world, for he would feel great pain returning without Song Flower.

Seeing nothing else he could do, Jajeff got out of bed, and despite the pain he felt in his arm and his leg, slowly dressed himself in his clothes Song Flower had washed and laid out for him. He knew he had no choice but to leave Song Flower's house, and felt fortunate that her parents were away, for he was certain she would have her father throw him bodily out of the house, if he had been there.

When he passed the kitchen on his way to the front door, Song Flower called to him from where she sat at the kitchen table. Her eyes were full of tears, and her voice was husky from crying.

"Where are you going? I'm not through yelling at you yet." Her voice was flat, sounding almost defeated, she spoke so quietly.

"I feel it is best that I leave. I have angered you. For that, I apologize." Jajeff continued toward the door, as if walking in a dream.

"No wait. You can't just leave like this." She hurried out of the kitchen and stood between him and the door.

"You can't tell me these things and expect me not to be angry, . . . and shocked. The surprising thing is that I believe you enough to be angry in the first place. I should be laughing at you for thinking of such a wild story to entertain me. I wish I were laughing, because then I could kick you out of my house without another thought." She stepped closer to him and started to hit him on his chest with her fists.

"Why are you doing this to me?" She demanded between clinched teeth, as she hit him.

Jajeff heard Father Spirit shout to him that the moment was now or never. Without thinking, he reached out and put his arms around her and pulled her to him, holding her close,

so that she could no longer swing her arms. He tenderly stroked her back, until she stopped struggling and began sobbing, her face pushed against his chest.

"Because I love you," he whispered in her hair. "Because I came into this Dim World to find you and to bring you back with me where it is safe."

## Dream's End

Jajeff followed Song Flower into her living room and sat on the couch beside her, where she held to his arm, pressing her side close to his while putting her head on his shoulder. Her eyes closed. An occasional snuffle to remind Jajeff that she was still upset. Neither spoke, preferring instead to savor the new feeling of comfort each found in the presence of the other. Song Flower knew the spell would be broken soon enough, when Jajeff finished telling his strange story, so she chose to linger in the warmth of his presence and marvel at the depth of her feelings toward him for as long as she could, before facing the truth. Jajeff felt Song flower's wonderful presence beside him and relished her strong hold on his arm, marking her every breath, basking in her warmth. He was happy to remain silent, not wanting to test her understanding further by telling her more.

"If only this moment would become our lives," Jajeff silently prayed to Father Spirit.

Only the ticking of an old clock above the fireplace and the drip of rainwater from the roof broke the silence, until Song flower sniffed loudly and cleared her throat to speak.

"You want to take me back with you to where your people live?" Her voice sounded to Jajeff, like a little girl's voice, trying to understand an adult's world.

"Yes," he answered, holding his breath.

She snuggled even closer to him.

"Why do I feel so confused? I know you have not told me everything and I think I am afraid to know the rest."

Jajeff said nothing. He knew she had to work it out for herself, that he could tell her more, but that she had to come to terms with his strange story in her own way.

"I don't even know how I feel toward you. Do I love you, or am I just afraid of being alone?"

Suddenly, Song Flower pushed away from him and sat on the other end of the couch, stiffly, a woman torn between anger and the desire to trust the man sitting beside her.

"I am still mad at you! I should kick you out of my house for spying on me. I would, but I am afraid you might not come back." She closed her eyes, tightly, as if trying to shut away the uncertainty in her life.

"I have come all this way to find you. I would come back, as long as I thought there was hope that you would see me," he told her, trying to sound reassuring.

This did not seem to help, because Song Flower continued to sit at the end of the couch with her arms tightly crossed against her chest. One foot nervously tapping the floor, as she stared intently at the dark fireplace in front of her.

Jajeff was also confused. He knew Song Flower had good reason to be upset with him, but he did not understand her reaction, first angry and then forgiving and then angry again.

Perhaps if she knew everything, he thought, but he struggled with the negative possibilities he faced in telling her.

"Have I told her too much already," he wondered, a sense of loss coming to his awareness.

Suddenly he saw himself sitting on the couch near Song Flower, who was watching him as he cautiously stepped into the room as Bonnet. Jajeff felt Bonnet sense the tension between the one he loved and the one it was so comfortable with in its thoughts, and recognized Bonnet's concern that the tension may be a danger to his comfort. Jajeff grinned as Bonnet jumped onto the couch between them and squeaked the way he had taught him to when he wanted attention.

Jajeff did not offer to pet Bonnet, knowing that he would soon pester Song Flower for attention, permitting him to see her more closely through the cat's eyes, than he could from his side of the couch.

"What am I doing?" Jajeff laughed to himself, shaking off the communion he held with Bonnet.

"This is a dream world I live in through the eyes of others. Like Hawk, I must make my own world," he commanded himself and with new determination, decided that not telling her everything now would cause her to forever distrust him. He would find a way to tell her that would not make her more angry.

"You like me because I am the only one who lets you win foot races on the beach," he said to Song Flower without looking at her.

Song Flower looked at him from the corner of her eye, while she scratched Bonnet behind an ear.

"You like me because I always let you practice your school speeches on me," he added, remembering the endless hours he had spent being her audience, while she practiced every one of her speeches. Some of them were very boring, and he was sure she knew how he had suffered for her.

Song Flower grinned mischievously remembering the punishment Jajeff endured, but did not otherwise move.

"You like me because you are afraid I might jump back into the ocean, if I thought you did not like me." He playfully poked Song Flower in her ribs, as he spoke.

She squeaked and jumped up, throwing a pillow at him as she did. Bonnet found sanctuary in the corner of the room.

"I like you because you always make me laugh, when there is little to laugh about," Song Flower added, as she tried to poke Jajeff in the ribs.

When Jajeff succeeded in defending himself, Song Flower picked the pillow up again and started hitting him on the head and shoulders.

"Damn you. Why are you so infuriating?" She yelled between blows.

Jajeff got to his feet, ducking to avoid the pillow and quickly picked her up and more or less gently put her on the couch.

"You love me because I love you," Jajeff told Song Flower, as he sat on the couch beside her and kissed her tenderly on the lips.

For that moment, they were of one mind.

"I love you because you are a kind and considerate person, whom I know very little about," Song Flower said when their kiss was finished.

"Jajeff, you have to tell me everything about you. Help me understand, so that you are not a mystery to me."

Song Flower watched Jajeff struggle to find words.

"Tell me your intentions, Mr. Jajeff." She said with a grin, kissing him lightly on his nose.

Jajeff let himself slip from the side of the couch and sat cross-legged beside it so that he could face Song Flower. He raised his hands above his head, and speaking in his own language, asked Father Spirit for strength and wisdom during his most trying test. Then he lowered his arms and closed his eyes for a moment, before looking at Song Flower. She watched him with great interest but did not interrupt him.

"I have asked Father Spirit for strength and wisdom, so that I will know how best to tell you the truth."

Song Flower sat up on the couch and crossed her legs, facing Jajeff, as he did her.

"I too pray for wisdom," she said, trying to keep a serious expression on her face. "Now tell me."

Song flower grinned at him, but Jajeff could tell she was nervous.

"I will tell you the whole story." Jajeff agreed, and took a deep breath.

"I am from this world of yours, only from a different reality, one in which the white man and others have not come to dominate the land. My people live today much as your Native Americans once lived before your country was colonized."

Song Flower listened without comment, the grip she had on her ankles, warning Jajeff of her growing tension.

"My friends in Portland, the Gray Feathers, believe my world and yours became separate places when our ancestors came to an important decision. By deciding in one way, they shaped reality as you see your world today. By deciding in another way, they shaped their world into a different reality, forming the world as I know it."

Jajeff watched Song Flower for signs of understanding. Other than a slight smile, her face told him nothing, so he continued.

"My parents were killed in a snow slide one winter. This was when I was very young and could not yet take care of myself, so my people raised me as a communal child. They have been good to me, but they have not been able to give me the family I had, nor the close sense of love only a mother and father can give their seed. Even though I was fortunate to have everyone in my village accept me as their child, few invited me to their fire, and I spent most of my time alone."

Song Flower's expression softened, and she put her hands on Jajeff's cheeks, but did not interrupt his story.

"Many years ago, before I was permitted to sit with the warriors, I discovered that I could see through the eyes of animals. This is a gift Father Spirit has given me, and it has earned me training from the Spirit Elders, for the day I will take my place in their circle."

Jajeff turned his head slightly and kissed Song Flowers palm before continuing.

"I worked with this gift every opportunity I could make, exploring the world around my village and coming to know the animals who lived with my people. All this was good for me and my people, but still I was lonely."

"Then one day, I joined with a bird high above your Grand Canyon and there, I saw one of your cars. I did not know it was a car, nor did I realize I was in your world. I thought I was seeing a new kind of shiny creature in my world. I did not know there was another world."

Jajeff put his hands on Song Flower's hands, where she held them against his cheek. He could tell that she was beginning to relax, because her hands no longer trembled.

"Are you not going to ask me a question?" he asked, teasingly.

She shook her head, blinked a couple of times and smiled at him.

"Not yet. I want to hear it all." She moved a hand to Jajeff's forehead and pushed hair from his eyes.

"Please, go on."

"It took me a long time to realize that I visited a new world, and when I did, I was very excited and tried hard to see more of this new world. I eventually learned to recognize the new world by the difference in feeling I felt from the animals. Your animals seem weaker, with less vitality than those of my world, so I came to know your world as the Dim World."

Jajeff took a long breath.

"One day, I found myself with a kitten playing with a piece of ribbon. When the kitten looked up at its friend, I saw the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life. Then a most distressing thing happened to me. Before I could realize what was happening, I fell in

love with this wonderful woman and promised Father Spirit that I would find a way to know her in person and to bring her back to my people to be my mate."

Jajeff reached out and held Song Flower's hand.

"I named you Song Flower and dedicated my life to finding a way to come to this moment. I am asking you to come back with me now and be with me through our lives."

Song Flower leaned forward, an earnest expression on her face, as she pushed a strand of her hair behind her ear.

"I have always been Song Flower to you, even when you called me Morine?"

"Yes," Jajeff answered, fearing that Song Flower was about to throw another temper tantrum.

"What about your people? Would I be Song Flower to them or would I be a stranger from a different world that they will not know or trust?"

"My people know what I am doing, that I have come here for you, and yes they wonder why it is that I do not find the young girls in my village suitable to be my mate, but they respect my desire. I am a Watcher, and they expect me to be a little different."

"A Watcher?" She struggled to keep up with the things Jajeff was telling her.

"Yes, that is what they call a person who has the gift of the Eyes of the Forest, one who can see through the eyes of animals."

"Are you a Shaman, or something?" She asked, trying to relate his words to familiar concepts in her world.

Jajeff nodded his head in agreement.

"Yes, in your culture, the closest thing would be a Priest or a Shaman. When I take my place as an elder, I will be one of the spiritual leaders of my people."

"And If I did go to your world. What would I be?"

"If you return with me, you would be a respected teacher, if you would tell my people how to grow plants. You see, there is another reason for my coming to your world."

"Oh! Here it comes, the rest of the story." She playfully pushed Jajeff away.

"Yes, there is something else I learned about your world, that excited me and made me want to find a way to journey here," Jajeff managed to say as he struggled to right himself.

"My people's principle food is meat they get from the animals they hunt, or from goats they have learned to raise. We gather a great deal of edible plants and also grow some, but not enough by your standards, to balance our diet. Our lack of carbohydrates, chlorophyll and other plant nutrients, reduces our vitality making us more vulnerable to disease and less able to endure hardships, especially near the end of winter, when all there is left to eat, is dried meat. This can become a serious situation, because too often, many of our elders and sometimes our youngest, die before the spring harvest can replenish our storerooms. Mother Lily and I believe it is our poor diet that weakens us, making some of us more vulnerable to illness than we might be otherwise."

Jajeff paused, remembering the elk he had died with.

"As you know, I am a vegetarian. I became one when I was in communion with an elk at the time my people killed it," Jajeff closed his eyes tightly, trying to push away the image of the meadow careening wildly as the elk fell to its knees.

Song Flower put her forehead against his, her hair cascading around his face and shoulders.

"It's all right, Jajeff," she murmured, and kissed him affectionately on his nose.

"Since then, I have refused to eat meat, and have dedicated myself to finding ways to improve my diet. I do this so that I can be strong, and prove to my people that they can live without killing our brothers of the forest."

"When I saw that you were studying about plants, I could no longer resist falling in love with you. For, not only can you be a wonderful mate for me, but you can also help my people learn to grow food."

"That is why you have been so interested in my school work, and why you spend so much time at the nursery." It all suddenly fell into place for Song Flower, and she happily hugged Jajeff as she continued.

"Is there no end to the surprises you bring to me? Not only are you from a parallel reality, but you have come here on a mercy mission to save your people. How wonderful." Her voice had the sound of genuine admiration for Jajeff.

"You know about my interest in the nursery?" Jajeff asked, surprised.

"Sure, everyone knows everything you do in this town, you have provided no end of entertainment for us. Which, by the way, is an indication of how dead it is around here," she added, sarcastically.

She cocked her head and thought for a moment.

"I have read some about how our Indians . . . I mean, Native Americans lived before white men came to this country. They lived a hard life and did not live long because of it. Not only did they die prematurely from disease, but they were often blind from chipping flint."

"Blind? There are no blind people in my village," Jajeff replied, amazed that she would think such a thing. "We use the metal tools we trade from the French, however, flint is still used when we need a truly sharp edge, but we do not go blind when we prepare it, we know how to work safely," he finished indignantly.

Song Flower blinked, and then giggled.

"Obviously, I have been listening to my teachers without thinking about what they were saying. I am sorry." She was genuinely embarrassed.

Jajeff saw this and quickly moved on.

"It is true, we live hard lives by comparison to your life, but we are healthier for it. Perhaps we do die younger than your people. More of our children die I know, but Mother Lily claims to have seen over seventy winters and she is still strong."

"Look at your world," Jajeff added, deciding he must risk insulting her about her world to make his point. "Do you not see that you are killing yourselves with guns and the chemicals you put on the ground and the way you treat your food? All the Spirit has left your food before it touches your lips. There is nothing in it that will feed your Spirit, only food for your body--food and poison. You do not thank the Spirit of the food before you take it, and take all you want without considering the future. This is no . . ."

Song Flower reached out her hand and tenderly put her fingers to Jajeff's lips.

"Hush, my love. You have made your point. We are even taught in school that there are problems with our world, so I agree with you. Dim World, indeed." she said, an eyebrow raised, comically, questioningly his name for her world.

"Then you will come to my world?" he asked, excited by her apparent understanding.

"It isn't that easy, Jajeff." Her expression became serious again.

"Huh?" was all he could say.

Song Flower grimaced, thinking of the things she felt responsible for in her life.

"My parents are getting old and need my help to take care of the farm. That is why I am trying to get a degree in college, so that I can find work that pays enough to help them keep the farm. Without my help, I fear they will lose it, and losing his farm would kill Father."

"They could come with us to my world." Jajeff began to feel his chest tighten and his neck muscles grow tense.

"They are old and set in their ways. If I am afraid they would die if they had to leave their farm, surely you can see that they could not go to your world. I am sure it would be much too

hard for them." She held his hands in hers and looked into his eyes, her eyes pleading for his understanding.

Jajeff felt the rush of panic trying to take his breath and freeze his heart. He heard the sincerity in Song Flower's voice and knew that she was setting an obstacle in front of him that he might not be able to overcome.

"How could this be?" Jajeff shouted in his mind, frantically searching his thoughts for a way to relieve her of her obligations and answer her concerns about living in his world.

Though he had no parents to feel obligated to, he knew that his people were devoted to their elders and would not consider abandoning them if they needed help. If Song Flower held similar feelings for her parents, he feared that he might make her feel trapped if he continued to press her to follow him. Like the hawk, he decided that the best approach was to wait and look for a better opportunity in the future to change her mind.

"After all," he reminded himself, "had not Father Spirit helped him come this far?"

"I will try to understand," he said and kissed her hands.

Song Flower watched him for a moment, trying to determine if he was really okay about her answer, but she could not read his countenance, other than to see that he cared very much for her.

"Tell me more about your world," she said in a reserved voice.

Song Flower and Jajeff talked for hours about his world and how it was different or the same as hers. Her major in college was agriculture, but she had taken several courses in biology, and she wanted to know everything Jajeff could tell her about how pristine his world was and the difference he sensed between the two. She was especially fascinated in how he was able to see through animal's eyes and made him demonstrate his gift by going into another room and telling her what she did in front of Bonnet.

"Tell me what it is like to see through Bonnet's eyes. Can you also smell with Bonnet's nose?"

"Yes, I can smell, but not as well as I can see with its eyes."

"Oh, I always wanted to know how cats communicate with each other. Are they really talking when they meow?" Song Flower asked with true excitement in her voice.

"Yes and no. They meow to focus the other cat's attention on them and their sound carries the energy they need to communicate their thoughts, but it is the energy that they use to communicate with, not the meow."

"Sound energy."

"No, thought energy. The sound is only to focus the thought. When the other cats hear the meow, they turn their attention to the cat who meows, and for a moment, they commune, much as I commune with Bonnet. Through their Spirit, they become one. Not words as we use, but oneness, a knowing of what each cat knows."

"Can you commune with me?" she asked, the sound of her voice making it evident that she would be uncomfortable knowing he could.

"The elders of my people have warned me that I should not. Putting it in the words of your culture, doing so would violate a taboo." Jajeff thought for a moment, thinking of all the times he had been tempted, but that he had deliberately chosen not to commune with people. "I guess I am a little afraid to try. There is a part of me that believes that I might become lost in the other person's mind."

"Oh, how scary," Song Flower agreed, relief in her voice. "But then, how about Bonnet. Can you teach me to commune with Bonnet?"

Jajeff said that he could try and suggested that it might take years, years they could have together in his world if she would join him. Song Flower ignored this and asked him more

questions about life in his world. Jajeff answered every question she could think of, all the while, searching for a way to convince her she should return with him.

Before the clock struck midnight, Song Flower's parents came home and quickly retreated to their bedroom to give their daughter privacy with her "nice young man." When the morning light came, Song Flower and Jajeff were still sitting in the living room, talking of his world and of his people. Jajeff periodically returned to the subject of Song Flower returning to his world with him, but each time he did, they struggled with the question of how she could leave her parents, only to retreat from the subject in defeat.

"I do love you, Jajeff." Song Flower said at one time in their discussion, as she put her arms around his neck and kissed him warmly. "But, I owe my parents much, because of all they have done for me, and I cannot leave them.

"Besides," she continued, "I am not sure I could live like you say your people live. Why would I want to deliberately give up all of the things in my world I am so accustomed to having? I might go with you because I love you, but love alone may not support me, and I might learn to hate you for taking me away from my television and my car. Have you thought about this?"

Jajeff had, but could not imagine anyone not being glad to live in his village, to live close to Mother Earth and experience the kindness of his people.

"I believe there is a way for you to return to this world, if you are not happy in mine. Having crossed the barrier once, I am sure it can be done again, and again. So you see, if you go with me, you would not be condemned to remain there forever, unless you wish it. Perhaps, with the help of the Gray Feathers, we can return to shop in your great stores and ride in your car. We could even go to a movie," Jajeff was fond of movies on the big screen.

"Oh, a movie, you say." Song Flower pushed at his forehead with hers. "With such a guarantee, how could I resist?"

"Then you will come?"

"Oh, Jajeff, we have been through this already. I can't." Song Flower closed her eyes to suppress her tears. "Why can't you stay here in my world, instead of me going to yours. You have friends here, and we could be together without my having to leave my parents."

Such an idea had been forming in Jajeff's mind while they talked, but the idea frightened him, mainly because it was so tempting. He did have wonderful friends in the Dim World and he liked it well enough in Ferndale.

"Perhaps, if it is the only way I could be with Song Flower . . .," he thought, but an empty storage room drifted into his memory, recalling the rapidly approaching winter and thoughts of the weakest of his people dying from malnutrition.

"I have made a promise to Father Spirit and my people, that I would use my gift to find new food," Jajeff pushed at a tuft of hair falling on Song Flower's forehead, gently folding it into her shiny main. "Can you see this? My people have a good life, but there are times of hardship that I can help them through by improving the food they eat," he explained, his misery clearly evident in his voice.

They were quiet for a long while, both thinking of the commitments they had made and how these responsibilities might keep them apart.

"Jajeff, what are we going to do?" Song Flower asked in a soft voice. "You cannot stay and I cannot leave."

"Perhaps I can return to my people this spring and teach them what I have learned," Jajeff offered, speaking as the idea came to him. "Then I can come back to Ferndale, free to make us a home here," he finished, trying to sound enthusiastic about living in the Dim World.

He said this, but even as he spoke the words, Jajeff could feel his Spirit crying out in fear of staying too long in the Dim World.

"It is not safe here. The Dim World will kill you."

Song Flower watched him, as if she could read his mind. She kissed him again and took a deep breath.

"You are such a noble man, torn between helping your people and being with me." She thought for a moment. "I know now, that what I first loved in you is your culture, that which you carry in your mannerisms and the way you speak. This would be lost to you if you remained in my world. You would be changed, as you adapted to become a worker and a consumer. You would change, and I am not sure either of us would like what you would become."

"I can learn. Surely, where I live does not decide who I am." Jajeff wanted to argue more convincingly, but he was not certain he believed what he was saying.

"Look at you!" she insisted almost angrily, trying to make Jajeff see what he was up against by wanting to live in her world. "You don't even know how to read or write or drive a car. Here you are, a young Priest in your world, reduced to an illiterate Indian in mine. Sure, you can learn, but is it worth giving up your life in your world, your position with your people?"

"I would give these things up for you." Jajeff felt a small tear fall to his lip.

"No. You would learn to hate me instead," she countered, suspecting that Jajeff's stubbornness was clouding his judgment.

"You have told me that this world is not healthy for me, and you are right. But I have been born into it, and I am better able to cope with it than you. In fact, you should have already been exposed to some of the same diseases that wiped out many of your people, when the white man came to this continent. You should be sick now."

Jajeff brightened, finding something positive he could say about staying in her world.

"I know of this sickness, but think it is okay. When the French first came from the eastern ocean and after that, the Chines from the western ocean, many of my people did die of sickness brought by the visitors, but that was long before I was born, and my people have had no trouble since then."

Song Flower blinked, surprised to have been contradicted on such a strong point.

"Interesting," she admitted. "You may have already gained some immunity then, but I am sure there will be other nasties waiting for you, if you stay. From what I have learned in college, I fear you will not have enough immunity for this world."

Song Flower looked closely at Jajeff.

"You fear staying here too, don't you?"

Jajeff looked down at his lap and mumbled something Song Flower could not make out.

"What?" she asked, trying to understand what he had said.

"I dream of things in your world. Things turning on me and killing me," he said, as if he was admitting a weakness. "I often dream of being locked into a car so that people cannot rescue me and are forced to watch me starve to death. I also dream of being ran over by a car or having one chase me into Mike's restaurant."

Then, Jajeff laughed.

"These dreams do sound funny, don't they."

"Not if they bother you," Song Flower replied, trying to reassure him.

"Would you be sick in my world?" Jajeff asked, fearing that he my have discovered yet another reason why his love could not live in his world.

"I don't think so. Your world should be relatively pristine, and I have had immunization shots for nearly every disease you could dream of. No, I would probably be just fine there."

Relieved, Jajeff returned to the main question.

"Do you want to come to my world?"

"Yes. I want to, but I cannot now. Please understand."

Song Flower was shocked by her admission to wanting to join Jajeff in his world.

"Oooh!" she moaned, and hugging her knees close to her chest, withdrawing from Jajeff to examine her thoughts. Jajeff watched her for a few minutes, but when it was clear that she wanted to be alone with her thoughts, he kissed her on her cheek and returned to his room.

After Jajeff left the room, Song Flower wept in silence until her parents began moving about in their bedroom. When they did, she retreated to her room, where she was finally able to sleep.

Late that afternoon, Jajeff and Song Flower had a light dinner together, and then after thanking Song Flower's parents for their hospitality, Jajeff returned to his apartment.

Before Jajeff left, the conversation between him and Song Flower was about little things, such as the weather and when they would see each other again. Neither one wanted to reopen the question of how they would build a future together, and instead, they concentrated on enjoying each other's company as if they had forever. Jajeff was content to trust in Father Spirit to help him find a way, and Song Flower was just content not to worry about it until she had to. Both enjoyed the other's company as if they had discovered love for the first time.

Jajeff decided that he would need to find a dependable source of income to help him survive the winter. Since he had spent so much time talking with the man, he quite naturally went to Steven Webb, the owner of the local nursery, and asked for a job.

Steven liked Jajeff, and knowing first hand how much Jajeff had come to know about plants, and he had no trouble deciding to give him a job.

"So you will pay me to work for you?" Jajeff asked Steven, trying to make sure he understood their agreement.

"That is what I am saying, Jajeff. I will pay you seven dollars an hour to work around here, and guarantee you at least twenty hours a week. Lord knows I have more work than that, but that is all I can afford."

"I will need your Social Security Number," Steven added.

"Huh?" Jajeff had no idea what he was talking about.

"Oh, oh. You mean you don't have one? You aren't an illegal alien, or something, are you?" Steven gave Jajeff a suspicious look.

Jajeff was not sure what an alien was, but knew for sure he had no Social Security Number, although, he suspected it was some kind of identification like Mike's drivers license number.

"I am not illegal, but I have no number. We do not need one on the reservation," Jajeff told Steven, hoping Father Spirit would forgive his half-truth.

"Oh, that's right. I had forgotten about where you are from. Okay, young fella, you go ahead and start working, and I will see what it will take to help you get a number."

Jajeff thanked Steven and promised to be at work at exactly seven-thirty, the next morning, and in the following weeks and months, the job became an important part of Jajeff's life, as he found immense pleasure working with the many different types of plants Steven sold. The job was also a blessing of a different sort, since Song Flower was very busy with college, and continued to study at the college library with her friends, she was unable to spend much time with Jajeff, leaving him to fend for himself. This left Jajeff with many hours each day, to study plants and explore different ways of improving his people's food.

Despite their implicit agreement to ignore the subject, Song Flower never ceased to struggle with the conflict between her desire to be with Jajeff and her desire to finish college and help her parents. She saw that Jajeff was happy working at the nursery, and that he was very proud of the money he was earning, and she was happy for him, but the realization that he was so happy also made her see just how different he really was from her, and how simple

his needs were compared to the complexity she had come to expect in her life. Intellectually, she knew that her complex needs were a conditioned response to her environment, and that living in his world would probably result in a different set of responses, but knowing that did not ease her mind about Jajeff's ability to get along in her world.

"What am I thinking," she asked herself, interrupting her train of thought. "He isn't going to stay in my world and I am not going to his world, so I have got to stop worrying about it."

In an effort to come to terms with her desire to follow Jajeff, Song Flower quite naturally turned to her friends for advice, and asked Mary and Jill to join her in Eureka for a little shopping, some coffee and a great deal of talk. Still not sure how to explain the truth about Jajeff, Song Flower had told her friends that he wanted her to be his wife and live with him on his reservation. After she had told them this, it was naturally all they could talk about.

"So what are you going to do?" Mary asked, her voice low as if they were sharing a secret.

"Ya? Are you going to drop out and be his squaw?" Jill wanted to know, excited at the prospect.

"Jill! Be nice, now." Mary warned, with a grin.

"He is a Native American, and I would be his wife, just like I would have been for Benjamin." Song Flower had a broad grin on her face, enjoying the center of attention.

"Okay, but things would be really different." Jill pushed her point. "I mean, look at your hand. Where is your engagement ring?"

"Why, I don't have one," Song Flower answered, a little bewildered.

"See, that is my point. Benjamin didn't dream of asking you to marry him before he had an engagement ring to give you." Jill leaned back, satisfied that she was right. "You have to admit that living with Jajeff on the reservation has got to be a world apart from living with Benjamin in the city," she concluded.

"More than you could imagine," Song Flower agreed with a sigh.

"Well, I think it is a great idea, myself." Mary offered.

"Look at Jajeff. He didn't come by his manners and way of thinking in one of our schools. I bet his people are just as nice as he is, and that living with them would be like living in paradise compared to what we have facing us in our cut-throat society. Don't you watch any public television?"

"Sure I do, but what if I said that his people didn't. In fact, they don't even have televisions or modern medicine or anything we expect to have as part of everyday life." Song Flower waved her hands in the air to emphasize her point.

"You're not describing life on any Indian reservation I ever heard of, Morine. What are you not telling us about this proposal?" Jill asked, a suspicious look on her face.

Song Flower looked at her friends, trying to suppress a grin, trying not to show how close to panic she was. Could she trust them, she wondered. Their faces told her yes. They were her friends.

"He didn't come from a reservation. He came from a parallel reality in which this country was never settled by the white man. He lives very much like Indians lived hundreds of years ago in our world." Song Flower watched her friends' faces and giggled at their blank expressions.

Mary was the first to recover.

"Is that why he knows so much about nature?" she asked.

"You don't believe her, do you!" Jill nearly shouted, exasperated by her friend's gullibility.

"Come on, Jill, haven't you sort of wondered where such a perfect person could have come from? Morine's story makes more sense to me than a reservation."

Jill looked first at Mary and then at Song Flower, a nervous grin on her face.

"Morraine, Jajeff told you this?" she asked.

"Yes, but hold on Jill, don't go over the edge on me. At least not until I have given you a few details. Let's go for a ride, and I will tell you everything, but before I do, you must promise me you will keep it a secret."

"Even from Mike and Cady?" Jill wanted to know.

"Yes, them too. Let me be the one to tell them, so that I can be sure they understand. Even if you don't believe him, it is awfully important that no one finds out about Jajeff. They are liable to lock him up, or something."

The girls agreed to silence, and the three of them quickly finished their coffee and left the shop. Song Flower spent the next three hours in the old Carson Mansion's parking lot overlooking the wharf, telling them everything she knew about Jajeff, his gift and his world. When she had finished, she had succeeded in convincing Mary and Jill of Jajeff's sincerity, if not in his story. They would need more proof to believe his story.

"This still doesn't help you with your decision to go with him, does it." Mary put her hand on Song Flower's hand and softly rubbed her knuckles, which were white from gripping the steering wheel, she was so tense. "You still don't know how to make the decision, do you."

Song Flower shook her head in sad denial.

"No, I don't. I honestly think I love Jajeff, but I am afraid to let that be my reason for any decision I make about him. There are just too many weird aspects to all of this."

"Tell me again why you can't go with him to his world. Not your concern about living there, the one that comes first." Mary was obviously fishing for clues to help clarify Song Flower's decision process.

"I have to help my parents with the farm. I can't just up and leave the world and go to a place where I would not be able to help them. After all they have done for me, it would be as if I abandoned them."

"But if you were to marry someone of this world, like Benjamin, you would still be here, at least somewhere in this world, to help them. Is that it?" Mary had a thoughtful frown on her face, as she stared unseeing at the bay and the gathering fog.

"That is it, exactly. They are getting old, and the farm is their life. I am constantly afraid they will lose it, because they can't pay their bills. This can happen, I know, because sometimes their crops do not bring enough money to cover their yearly expenses."

"So you are going to sacrifice yourself for them." Mary made the statement, as if she thought she had just made an irrefutable point.

"Yes, only I don't think of it as sacrificing. They are my family. They helped me when I needed them and I want to help them, now that they need me."

Mary's point seemed to vaporize. Seeing this, Jill giggled at Mary's dismay.

"Any more great arguments, Dr. Mary?" Jill asked, and playfully poked Mary in her ribs.

"What is your point, anyway, Mary," Jill asked, dodging Mary's elbow.

"I just don't see the problem." Mary answered, as she looked around Jill at Song Flower. "Morraine, if you are committed to helping your family, then there appears to be no question. You can't go with Jajeff to some other world. Now, if he just wanted you to go down the street, then I would say grab him, he is too good to let get away."

"Hold it a minute!" Jill insisted. "Morraine, have you talked with your parents about this?"

"Ha! Are you kidding?" Song Flower answered, a little shocked at Jill's question.

"No, I am serious," Jill confirmed, more than a little sarcasm in her voice. "It seems to me that they deserve to participate in your decision to sacrifice yourself for them."

Song Flower was quiet for a long time, her friends patiently waiting to hear what she was going to say next. Jill's question forced Song Flower to review her reasons, to question and answer each point in her reasons for wanting to help her parents.

She shook her head.

"It would do no good to talk about this with my parents. Sure, they would give me their blessings, because they want me to be happy and that is what they are supposed to do with their kid." Song Flower became quiet, pensive, so that Jill could tell there was more.

"But?" Jill prompted her.

"But, I would know that they are worried about losing the farm, they are always worried, they will eventually need my help and I have to be here when they do."

"Then, I agree with Mary," Jill said with a definite nod of her head. "But, if for some reason, you decide that you don't have to help your family, or if you could figure out a way to do it from Jajeff's world, then I would say go with him. My God, if you can't go, tell him I would be happy to go in your place." Jill added, trying to lighten the conversation.

Jill grinned back at Song Flower's glare.

"Just to keep an eye on him until you can join him, that is," she hastily added, an even broader grin on her face.

Despite Song Flower's confusion, and the ever present tension Song Flower and Jajeff felt concerning his request for her to join him in his world, there was no question in their minds that they were in love, and they spent Song Flower's Christmas break from school enjoying unreserved happiness in their new relationship. The Christmas holidays were full of glowing experiences for both of them, as Jajeff joined Song Flower's family in their annual celebration of Christ's birth, a lesson in alternative religion Jajeff would carry with him for the rest of his life. They continued to following their unspoken agreement to accept the relationship and not to do anything that would threaten their immediate happiness, by not discuss Jajeff's home world. For the time, they were simply two young people deeply in love.

Song Flower's parents, Jennifer and Ed, welcomed Jajeff into their home as an almost daily visitor, especially during the holiday season. Jajeff liked to engage Ed in conversations about farming, often to the neglect of Song Flower, leaving her to help her mother in the kitchen, while the men talked of farming in the living room.

Jajeff did not ignore Jennifer, by any means, and frequently became involved in discussions of cooking with herbs and the way many of the herbs in her little kitchen garden could be used as medicine.

"So, what do you think of Jajeff and your daughter being so close?" Ed asked Jennifer the morning after their big Christmas dinner.

Ed was sitting at the kitchen table drinking a cup of coffee, while Jennifer was trying to figure out how to put more food in the refrigerator.

"Huh?" she asked, her voice muffled by the refrigerator door.

"Jajeff. It looks to me like Morine and Jajeff are getting a little serious."

Jennifer backed out of the refrigerator and sat comfortably on the floor.

"I would say 'getting' is an understatement. It seems to me that they are glued together at the hip. He has been over here all but three evenings sense he was hurt."

"Ya, but you don't mind, do you? I mean, he is so interesting to have around. Unlike Benjamin, he can carry on a conversation about something other than baseball or football."

Jennifer struggled to her feet and joined Ed at the table to finish her coffee.

"He is nice . . . and intelligent too, but I worry about Morine. He hasn't a stitch of education and may never earn more than he is making now at Steven's. What kind of a future can he give her, anyway?" She sipped her coffee and thought about her daughter being married to a bum.

"Hell, money isn't everything. Compared to Benjamin, Jajeff is a genius, not to mention that he is a nice guy." Ed slowly shook his head. "I always worried about Benjamin."

"Why is that?" Jennifer asked, always interested in talking about Benjamin.

"He is such a spoiled brat, and Morine being so strong willed, I always wondered if he might not try to slap her around."

"Not Benjamin. He loved Morine too much." Jennifer thought for a moment. "In fact, I kind of miss him. I still don't understand why Morine had to brake up with him."

"She said he is a jerk. Isn't that enough? I mean, what if she had waited until she was married to him and got pregnant, before finding out he is a jerk? That would be a fine fix."

Jennifer was quiet. She knew that she was the only one in the family who still thought Morine should marry Benjamin, and tried not to make it an issue.

"But how about Morine's future?" Jennifer asked, still concerned about Jajeff's education. "What can Jajeff offer her?"

"Happiness, it looks like to me. These days, it is okay for the woman to be the prime bread winner, so with Morine's education, I think they will do just fine. Besides, maybe Jajeff would be interested in taking the farm over when you and I are ready to retire to Hawaii." Ed winked at Jennifer.

"Oh, Ed!" Jennifer replied, knowing that Ed would rather die in his tractor than give up his farm, even if it was to his daughter.

Usually Jennifer and Ed's conversations about Morine and Jajeff ended with the decision that Jajeff would make a fine son-in-law, and an admission that Ed would like to have Jajeff lend him a hand on the farm. Jennifer understood Ed's desire for help, but she forbid him from asking Jajeff, saying that she did not want to force him on Morine.

The spring semester, and what was to be Song Flower's last semester in college, began just as the weather turned wet and cold. As if the god of love had determined the two lovers had enjoyed themselves long enough, almost overnight, Song Flower became a tormented, harried student, spending nearly every waking hour either at the college or home studying. Jajeff tried to continue to be with her when she was home, but he soon discovered that she had little time to spend with him, and although their times together was intensely enjoyable to them both, such times grew shorter and farther apart.

"This is so important to me Jajeff, I hope you will understand," Song Flower told Jajeff one of their rare evenings together, as she cuddled closer to him in front of her living room fire.

"Yes, I have talked with Mike about this, and he has told me that college is all or nothing at all. If you don't give it all of your attention, you would fail, and your dream would be lost." Jajeff did understand, but could not ignore that her college also conflicted with his desire for her to return with him, and felt he would be less than honest if he did not say so. "I do want you to return with me, but at the same time, I cannot ask you to give up your dream to finish college."

Song Flower snuggled even closer to Jajeff, nearly purring in his arms.

"I know, my love." She agreed. "Such a dilemma," she added in a subdued voice, and refused to talk of the subject the rest of the evening.

Despite their best efforts to find time together, with each passing day, the distance between them seemed to grow, testing their character in ways Jajeff was not prepared for. At first, he remained confidently patient, trusting Song Flower's love and believing that the time would soon come for them to be able to be together, as they had been during the holidays. But, as Song Flower became ever more involved in school, he began to grow more uncertain in Father Spirit's ability to help him bring Song Flower home. He also began to sense a change in his health, feeling his muscles grow soft from lack of exercise and he began

suffering persistent congestion in his longs, congestion that Steven said was an allergic reaction to something.

Early March, Jajeff left one of the greenhouses at the nursery, to walk to the office. He stopped, and looked around, trying to place the sound he was hearing, and then smiled as a flight of geese crossed the sky in a long "V," above his head. Seeing the geese pleased him, because their flight told him it was time for winter to begin releasing its hold on the land. They also told him that the time for him to return to his world was rapidly growing near.

"I have seen geese flying north today," Jajeff told Song Flower that evening.

"Yes, I saw a flight too," she answered absentmindedly, as she arranged her books on her small study table.

"The geese can tell when it is safe to return to the north. They know the snow will begin melting soon." He waited for her to understand what he was trying to say.

It took only a moment for his words to sink in, and when they did, she stopped her preparation and looked at him, concern on her face.

"You are going to go home, aren't you?" She asked, her voice flat with despair.

"No, not yet. I will remain with you longer. It is just that I must think of returning."

Song Flower went to him and they hugged for a long time. Jajeff had intended to tell her that he would return right away, but being with her chased away such thoughts, leaving only thoughts of his love for her.

"I will stay as long as I can," he assured her in a whisper.

Two weeks later, Jajeff did not show up at work. Thinking that the usually prompt Jajeff might have slept in, Steven called Earl and asked him to check on Jajeff to see if he was okay. When Earl didn't get an answer to his knock, he opened the door to Jajeff's room and stepped in, finding Jajeff still in bed.

"So, Jajeff, you planning to sleep all day?" Earl asked, enjoying his task of rousing Jajeff out of bed.

"I think I am going to die," Jajeff mumbled, and coughed several times to prove his point. "Your world is finally getting to me."

"My world?" Earl asked, a little confused.

"Never mind. I just want to sleep until I die."

"Oh, it looks to me like you just have a cold." Earl carefully looked Jajeff over without coming too close to him.

"Cold, yes, but I have never had one like this before."

Earl left Jajeff, and after letting Steven know that Jajeff would be out for a few days, returned to Jajeff's room with a couple of different cold remedies. Jajeff grudgingly took one of the remedies, but moments later, was in the bathroom throwing it up.

"Thank you for trying Earl, but your medicine is not good for me. I will have to get over this on my own," Jajeff said as he crawled back into bed, feeling even more miserable than before.

Earl stood by Jajeff's bed for a few minutes, but could think of nothing else to do.

"Look, I have to get back down stairs to take care of my customers. When Mike comes home, I'll send him up to check on you and bring you some food." With that, he left Jajeff to fend for himself.

Hours later, Mike came into Jajeff's room with Song Flower, Jill, and Mary.

"Hey, what is going on?" Mike asked Jajeff, trying to sound cheerful as he did.

They were shocked to see how sick Jajeff looked, and wondered if it was really only a cold. Song Flower sat on the edge of the bed and stroked Jajeff's forehead.

"What on earth is wrong, Honey? You look terrible."

She could not hide the concern in her voice, and Mary and Mike both looked at her, and then at each other as the gravity of Jajeff's situation came to them. Mike was the first to respond, as he put his hand on Song Flower's shoulder to reassure her.

"Do you think this is something that we are all immune to, like chickenpox, or something?"

"No," Jajeff answered. "I had such sicknesses when I was little. This is a cold."

"Then why are you so awfully sick?" Mary wanted to know.

"He is not as strong as he was when we first met him, are you Honey?" Song Flower fiddled with his blanket as she spoke. "You told me this world was unhealthy, and now you are proving it."

Jajeff nodded his head.

"I guess so," he agreed contritely. "My body has not needed to cope with the many chemicals everywhere in your world, and I fear that my body is beginning to grow weaker as those chemicals accumulate in my system. I know of no other explanation that can account for how this cold could be so bad."

"You mean we grew up with these chemicals and have become immune to them, and you have not?" Mary wanted to know.

"Something like that," Jajeff agreed. "I don't believe you can ever be completely immune to the chemicals, but surely you have developed a tolerance to them that I have not." He coughed loudly, a deep rasping cough that made his visitors shudder and want to hold their throats.

Song Flower stood and turned to Mike and Mary.

"I think Jajeff needs some rest." She announced as she herded them out of the room.

"What are you going to do?" Jill wanted to know. "He needs to have someone keep an eye on him."

"I know." Song Flower thought for a moment. "I will just have to skip school for a few days, and try to keep up with my school work from here, while I stay with Jajeff."

"Are you going to take him to your house?" Mike wanted to know.

"No, I am afraid he will infect my parents."

"Good, then I can help you with him. That way, you won't have to miss all that much class."

For the next three days, Song Flower stayed with Jajeff almost constantly, leaving him only when he was sound asleep, depending on Mike to watch him when she slept or could not miss class. Jajeff was seriously ill, his condition becoming increasingly severe as time passed, causing Song flower to ask her family doctor to visit him and certify that Jajeff did only have a cold, and not something more serious.

"Well, Morine, I have examined your friend, and as far as I can see without a more extensive work-up, he is suffering from the mother of all colds. You have done well to keep him down, because I can see that he is not accustomed to being sick." Doctor Leary reported to Song Flower outside of Jajeff's room.

"Thank you Doctor, his cough sounds so awful, I sometimes think he is going to die."

"It looks as if his fever is breaking, and I think he will show a rapid recovery over the next few days."

Doctor Leary's attitude became speculative, and he took Song Flower by her arm, to walk her farther away from Jajeff's room as he talked.

"You know, it is interesting. I understand he is from a reservation, up north."

"Yes," she confirmed, wondering what he was leading to. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, he seems almost too healthy to be sick. It is as if he was brand new in some ways. When I examined his throat, I could not help but to notice that he had no fillings, not a single one, yet his teeth are nearly perfect."

"But at the same time, he shows some indication that he has been poisoned by something in his environment," he added, a confused look on his face. "Have you ever taken a close look at the base of your fingernails?" he held his hand up to Song Flower and pointed at one of his fingernails. "See, there are several subtle indicators around the fingernail that I can use to assess some aspects of the general health of an individual. I can't be sure, but I would say that Jajeff has been getting into some toxic chemicals where he is working, although I cannot imagine what it might be at the nursery. I know Steven prides himself for using organic techniques."

Song Flower shrugged and told the doctor that she would talk to Jajeff about it.

"So you think he will be okay?"

"Yes, he should be up and around tomorrow, as a matter of fact. As I said, he is very healthy, otherwise. But, if he doesn't stay away from those chemicals, I fear he will be sick again, and next time, it may be worse."

She followed the doctor to his car and thanked him for helping her. After she watched him drive away, she remained outside of Earl's restaurant, choosing to walk around the block so that she could have a chance to think about the doctor's words. What the doctor had said about chemicals in Jajeff's body, was just as Jajeff had said, confirming to her, that the man she loved was, indeed, being harmed by her world.

She knew that Jajeff was procrastinating about returning to his world because he wanted to remain with her, and because he continued to hope she will change her mind about following him. But, just as she felt obligated to her family, she knew he felt obligated to his people, and that his mission was an important one that must be completed.

"He wants me to follow my dream," she reminded herself, "and I want him to follow his dream."

She could see no alternative, and reluctantly, she returned to Jajeff's room.

"The doctor confirmed everything you said," she announced to Jajeff when she returned.

She sat by Jajeff's side on the bed and kissed him lightly on his cheek.

"This world is not good for you. As soon as you are over this cold, you must return to your people." She looked into his eyes, trying to see if he was going to agree with her. "Besides," she continued, "it is time for you to return so that you can help your people with spring planting. I know you have been putting it off because of me."

"Yes, I need to return, but I have thought about this and believe I can stay another month and still return in time for the planting," Jajeff answered, putting his hand on Song Flower's hand and squeezing it affectionately. "I will be okay. This cold will be gone in no time. You will see." His voice was made thick with the sound of congestion and his swollen throat.

"Yes, it will, but if we are right about your body's reaction to all the chemicals in my world, as the doctor warned me, the next cold will come soon after this one and it will be worse, maybe bad enough to kill you." She was nearly pleading with Jajeff to accept that he must return to his world.

Jajeff said nothing, as if he was trying to ignore her words.

Seeing this, Song Flower raised his hand and closely examined his fingernails.

"Look here," she pointed at his fingernails. "It is just as the doctor has said. See? You can tell that you are being poisoned by something in this world, because your fingernails are becoming flat, almost concave!" She was nearly frantic, pushing his hand toward his face, demanding that he recognize how serious his condition really was.

Jajeff had noticed that his fingernails were doing unusual things, but had figured that it was the result of his diet or something natural to the Dim World, certainly not poison.

"It is just because I am eating differently," he mumbled, and pulled his hands under the cover.

When Song Flower saw that Jajeff was not going to accept her explanation for his misshapen fingernails, she closed her eyes and prayed for strength before speaking again.

"You aren't going to leave without me, are you?" she asked, new determination in her voice.

Jajeff hesitated for a moment, noticing her abrupt change in attitude.

"Well?" She asked, insistently.

"I know I must, but leaving you now seems so final. I am afraid I will never see you again."

Jajeff answered her, knowing that he was behaving as the crow, aloft in the air, waiting for the world to give it what it needed, rather than behaving as the hawk, anticipating the moment to strike at the trout. He knew, but could not muster the presence of mind to do anything more than stall for time, wanting instead, to curl up under his blanket and sleep until he felt better.

Song Flower lowered her head for a moment, and then tenderly kissed Jajeff, before she stood and walked to the door, about to do the hardest thing she would ever have to do in her life.

"Jajeff, you are not using your head," she told him, her voice becoming stern.

"I will not follow you to your primitive world. Why do you think I am getting a college degree?" she asked, sarcasm now heavy in her voice. "I want to be around people who are educated and who can teach me new things about science and literature. You can't even read well enough to tell me what is in the newspaper. How could you think we could ever live together?" She fought to keep back her tears, as she finished.

"Song Flower, why are you saying this?" Jajeff asked, struggling to clear his muddled mind from the grips of his cold, trying to understand the meaning of Song Flower's sudden change of heart.

"Don't you see, my love for you cannot last past the day I am ready to go into the business world. You have been great company, but now I no longer have the time for you." She fumbled for the door handle, tears beginning to cloud her vision.

Jajeff was speechless, and could only stumble about in his mind for something to say that would stop her from saying such things.

"Now go home, and leave me alone. It has been fun knowing you, but now it is time for both of us to go on with out lives." She started to lose control, and quickly opened the door. "Go away!" she shouted as she hurried from the room.

Stunned, Jajeff remained in his bed, trying to understand what had just happened. Perhaps without the cold, he would have been able to see beyond Song Flower's words to understand that she did love him, and that it was because of her love that she found it necessary to hurt him. But he was tired and could not think clearly, and the only thing he was sure of, was that he had just been rejected by the one he loved.

His mind focused on the only thing that made sense to him, and he yearned to be once again breath the pure air of his world. The thought of returning to his world became a bright light in his mind, driving out the pain left by Song Flower's words, and giving him a purpose to focus on as he struggled to behave as the hawk.

"If she wants me out of her life, then I will go," Jajeff told the room, and cried himself to sleep.

Having made the decision to return, he felt a growing sense of urgency to begin the long journey, but his sickness was an obstacle that he could not easily ignore, and it forced him to remain in his bed through the next day.

Late that next evening, Mary and Jill came by the restaurant and joined Mike to visit Jajeff, and to see how he was coping with his cold.

"I haven't heard hardly a sound out of him all day," Earl told Jajeff's friends before they went up. "I gave him some soup earlier, and he seemed okay, so at least he is still alive. But you kids shouldn't stay too long, because I don't think he wants much company. The time I was up there, he seemed to be in a strange sort of mood."

"Has Morine been by to see him?" Jill wanted to know, her instincts alerted by Earl's words.

"No. No sign of her since she and the doctor were here yesterday."

"Odd," Jill said to the others, "Morine was really upset at college today, but she wouldn't talk about what was bothering her. I just guessed that Jajeff's being sick was on her mind, and when she skipped her last class, I assumed she was coming to see him."

"Well, let's go see how sick he is," Mike suggested, and lead the way up the stairs.

"Hay Jajeff? Are you in there?" Mike yelled, as he beat on the door.

There was no answer, so Mike tried the door, knowing that Jajeff never locked it. They found him sitting cross-legged on the floor, a blanket wrapped around his shoulders, the room dark except for light from the street.

"Hey, old buddy. What are you doing sitting here in the dark?" Mike turned on a light.

Jajeff looked at his friends from eyes, red from crying. He sniffed and stood stiffly, sadly looking around, first at the room and then at his friends.

"Song Flower will not return with me. Now, I have angered her so that she does not wish to know me." he sighed loudly.

"What?" questioned Jill, hardly believing her ears.

"Ya, what are you talking about?" Echoed Mary.

"Song Flower has chosen a different life than I can give her. She will not come back with me, nor will she stay with me here." Jajeff paused for a moment, thinking of his duty to his people. "I have waited too long already and must leave by first light of the morning, if I am to return in time to help my people plant the spring crops."

He looked at each of his friends.

"You have been very good friends to me, and I will miss you a great deal. Thank you for being so kind."

Jajeff lowered his head and returned to his place on the floor, his eyes closed, his thoughts focused on repairing his body.

"Wait a minute," Mike protested. "Surely Morine doesn't . . ."

Seeing that Jajeff was not going to respond, Jill raised her hand toward Mike, interrupting what he was about to say. She stepped around Mike and kneeled down beside Jajeff, where she paused long enough to look at him for the last time, and then kissed him lightly on his cheek.

"We are going to miss you, my friend, take care of yourself in your world."

Except for a faintly noticeable change in his breathing, Jajeff did not respond.

Jill stood and took Mary and Mike by an arm to lead them out of the room.

Once they were in the hallway, Mary turned to Jill and gave her an odd look.

"What did you do that for?" She wanted to know.

"You heard him. He is going to return to his world. I just wanted to tell him we will miss him."

"Oh," was all Mary could manage to say.

"I think we should go to Morine's and find out what she said to Jajeff," Mike pitched in, feeling a little belligerent at the idea that one of his friends had been mistreated.

Jill looked at her friends. She knew they loved Morine and felt very close to Jajeff, so she could understand their confusion and desire to fix Jajeff and Morine's relationship, but she also knew that there were limits beyond which they had no business interfering.

"Mike, Mary, lets go find Cady and go get a pizza," she suggested, her voice hopeful that her friends would agree.

"But . . .," Mike began, but was interrupted by Jill's hand on his arm.

Mike could see that she had tears in her eyes.

"This is serious, Mike, we must let them fix it themselves."



## One Heart

Jajeff listened, as his friend's footsteps moved away from his door, and when he felt sure they had gone, he quickly gathered his things and left the building, stopping only long enough to say good-bye to Earl, to tell him that he would never return, and thank him for his many kindnesses.

"What is your hurry, Jajeff?" Earl looked at Jajeff with a critical eye, trying to determine if he was well enough to be out of bed. "You know, you could wait until morning to go."

"Yes, but this is when Spirit is strong," Jajeff replied and quickly disappeared through Earl's back door, not giving Earl the opportunity to talk him out of leaving.

Jajeff had come to know the night as a time in which Spirit was particularly strong, especially when the moon was full, as it was then. For him, traveling at night reinforced a healing process, in which the night spirits nurtured his mind and soothed his sense of loss.

Jajeff instinctively realized that going home was going away from things like buses and crowds of Dim World people. The only link he had to his world, was his sense of belonging to the Hawk People and of being an integral part of the system of life that surrounded his village. If he was going to open the gateway, he knew he must work very hard to recapture that sense of oneness with Mother Earth, that he had known before coming to the Dim World. Naturally, what this understanding meant to Jajeff, was that he must walk to Portland, along the coast, where he could find ample food without the need to mix with people. So, knowing he had some time before the spring thaw released winter's grip on his village, he turned north from Ferndale, and disappeared into the darkness and away from the eyes of the Dim World.

When Mike returned home that night, Earl told him that Jajeff had left.

"What?" Mike asked, hardly believing that Jajeff would actually leave.

"Ya, he came down right after you kids left, and after paying the last of his rent, he told me good-bye. He walked out the back door with everything he owns in a backpack. I checked his room. It is as if he has never been here."

"Why did he have to do it," Mike muttered, despondently.

"What?"

"Jajeff. He told us he was going to leave, but somehow, I had hoped he would decide to stay," Mike answered, and picked up the phone to tell his friends.

They agreed to meet at Song Flower's home early the next day, and by eight the next morning, Mike, Cady, Mary, and Jill were standing around Song Flower's kitchen table, their attention focused on Song Flower, trying to understand why she had been so hard on Jajeff.

"I had no choice." Song Flower said in despair, as she slumped down at her kitchen table, a forlorn look on her face. "You have all seen how sick he was. The doctor said he would probably be sick again, but that next time it might kill him." She looked at her friends, her eyes pleading for them to understand. "I did the only thing I could think of, to make him go back to his world."

"Well, you succeeded. We think he has decided to walk back to Portland. He was going to wait until this morning, but I think we spooked him into leaving last night." Concern was in Mike's voice.

"Was he okay?" Song Flower had tears in her eyes, as she asked.

Jill and Mary each took one of her hands to comfort her.

"Sure, he was just fine for a fellow who had just had the one he loves kick him out of her life," Cady said sarcastically.

"Now, that's not fair, Cady. Morine did the right thing, and you know it." Jill gave Cady a stern look, as she defended Song Flower's decision to drive Jajeff away.

"You do still love him, don't you Morine?" Mary asked Song Flower.

Song Flower hesitated for a moment before answering. She knew that her friends might undue her efforts to make Jajeff go home, if they thought she would reconsider.

"Yes, I do still love him, but there is no way it could ever work out with him staying here, and I cannot go with him. Please accept that and leave it alone."

After that, Song Flower became silent, leaving the others to search for things to say that would make her feel better. There really was nothing any of them could do. As long as Song Flower felt she could not go with Jajeff, sending him back without her seemed like the best thing. Like it or not, she had done right by Jajeff, when she had made him think she wanted him out of her life.

That Morning, Song Flower went to school as she normally would, but by noon, she had still not attended a class, choosing instead to sit on the library steps looking at Humboldt Bay, spread out beyond the small town that supported the college. From her vantage point, the bay was framed in tall redwood trees that managed to hide most of the college from the rest of the world and heighten the feeling of oneness with nature, she often felt while on campus. The tranquil scene soothed her mind without forcing her to think beyond the beauty of what met her gaze. She desperately needed to avoid rousing her mind to think, because each time she did, Jajeff stood in the middle of her awareness, under the bright light of her sorrow and regret.

She cried a lot that morning, secretly, so that no one would notice. She cried until all that was left within her was a hollowness, where the man she loved remained but would no longer face her. Why had she not spent more time with him, she asked herself, thinking that perhaps everything would have been better, if she had not buried herself so thoroughly in her school work. It was no use though, like his sense of oneness with nature, she knew Jajeff required time and attention to know and love. His pace of living just did not agree with the world she lived in, but thinking this, she wondered if she had not made the wrong choice by choosing an agriculture business career instead of Jajeff's world.

Song Flower knew there could be no possibility of her entering a disciplined classroom while she felt the way she did, so she remained outside, where the air was fresh and the birds kept her from being alone. When fog obscured her view of the bay, she left the front of the library and walked into a wooded area, to be alone with nature. She found a giant tree trunk to sit on and cried openly, where only small birds could see her. Once, when a bird came close and watched her for a long time, she wondered if Jajeff could be with the bird, but when it flew away, she decided that he must surely be too busy finding his way back to Portland to spend time watching her. With the thought of her love walking in the wilderness of her strange world alone, she cried even more.

When the rain had left her with the choice of retreating to one of the buildings or returning home, she chose home, and was soon in her bedroom listening to the saddest records she had, and crying as if the world were coming to an end.

When Jennifer returned from shopping and heard Song Flower listening to music, rather than studying in silence, as she normally did, Jennifer became concerned and went to Song Flower's room to see if her daughter was okay.

"Honey, you in there?" she asked through the door, not wanting to walk in on her daughter, unannounced.

"Yes Mom, come in," Song Flower answered in a sullen voice, sniffing loudly as she did.

"You poor dear, have you caught Jajeff's cold, or something?" Jennifer asked, shocked at her daughter's red face, and runny eyes.

"No, not yet, but I will probably have it before long, the way everything is turning so rotten for me." Song Flower sniffed again, and busied herself looking at her audio cassettes.

Jennifer sat down on the edge of the bed, beside Song Flower.

"What is wrong, Honey? You seem to be feeling miserable."

"I had to tell Jajeff I didn't want to be with him, in order to get him to go home." She flopped backwards across the bed. "I hate myself!" she said, nearly spitting out her words.

Jennifer knew that there had been an on-going disagreement between Song Flower and Jajeff, and she had tried to question her about it, but Song Flower would only say that it was something they needed to work out between themselves.

"Do you want to talk about it?" she persisted.

"No, not now, Mom." Song Flower hugged her mother. "I will be fine. Just let me work this out by myself for a while, okay?"

"Well, okay Honey, but remember that even if I am an old-timer, I can still help you think things through." Jennifer rose to her feet and went to the door.

"I will, Mom," Song Flower answered, and returned to her music.

Jennifer remained by the door to watch her daughter go through the motion of sorting her audio cassettes. She knew her daughter well enough to recognize that she was deeply distressed about whatever had really happened between Jajeff and her, but there was little she could do without seeming to interfere. She shrugged, and quietly closed the door, praying her daughter would come to her for advice before it became too big of a problem.

By all accounts, Jennifer was a good mother. She didn't really think it was wrong of her to want her daughter to get an education, so that she could help the family keep the farm. After all, the farm had paid for a roof over Song Flower's head all her life, and now it was paying for her college. It seemed reasonable to her that Song Flower should bring something back to the farm, especially since they so often had trouble making the bank payments. Considering these things, Jennifer had mixed emotions about the news that Jajeff was no longer in her daughter's life, especially considering how it distressed Song Flower.

Song Flower's parents made it a rule to treat her as an adult, by giving her a great deal of freedom to do as she wished in their home, however, after she had refused to eat or go to school for two days, Jennifer decided her daughter's distress was just too great to ignore. She waited for the next time Song Flower come out of her bedroom and into neutral territory, and then confronted her by insisting the two of them sit and talk about her problems.

"Morraine, Honey, will you at least talk with me about this? You haven't so much as cracked a smile for two days and I am beginning to worry about your health. Have you eaten anything since Jajeff left?"

"I'm okay, Mom. I just need a little time to think. Please?" Her voice was listless, as if she didn't have the energy to talk.

"No deal. I want you to sit down and explain to me what is going on." Jennifer put her hands on Song Flower's shoulders and attempted to steer her toward the kitchen table, but Song Flower twisted away and ran out of the kitchen.

"Mom, he is gone, that is all that matters," Song Flower cried and ran back to her room, locking the door behind her.

Stunned by her daughter's outburst, Jennifer stood in the middle of her kitchen, feeling a new fear for Song Flower's health, form into her thoughts. Not knowing what else to do, she went to the barn where Ed was working on his bailing machine, and insisted that he sit down, so that he could pay attention to her.

"But Jennifer, I've got grease all over my hands, can't this wait?" Ed protested, as he backed out from under the cowling of the engine compartment.

"No, it can't wait! Your daughter needs our help right now." Jennifer tossed a rage to Ed and waited as he wiped his hands and sat down on a bail of hay beside her.

"Okay, what?" Ed demanded.

"Well, you know Morine has been moping around the house these last few days."

"Yes. You told me she was upset because she went and ran Jajeff off. She deserves to be upset, but she ought to get over it, okay." Since Ed had enjoyed Jajeff's company, he was still a little upset, that Jajeff was no longer around.

"I don't think she is going to get over it so soon, and if she doesn't pay more attention to her health, I am afraid she is going to make herself really sick." Jennifer hesitated for a moment before continuing. "Ed, I think Morine is suffering from one of those clinical depressions."

"Now Honey. Your daughter is too ornery to be clinically depressed. I'll tell you what. Lets you and me just go up to her room and have a long talk with her." Ed stood and held his hand out to help Jennifer.

"She won't talk to us about it, that is what worries me," Jennifer told him, without standing up.

"Come on, we just won't go away until she does. You can tell her you don't think she loves you or something, that ought to get her talking." He pushed his hand closer to her, urging her to take it, and then helped her to her feet when she did.

Once on her feet, Jennifer hesitated, holding on to Ed's hand to keep him from leaving the barn.

"What are we going to say to her?"

"Hell, I don't know. Something will come up."

"No, that isn't good enough, Ed, this is serious. I think she loves him so much, that she can't stand it without him." She was near tears.

"Then why did she send him away?" Ed asked, exasperated.

"I don't know, but if she loves him so much, it seems to me that we have to find out why and help her get over it, so that she can be with him."

Jennifer searched her memory for a clue to why Song Flower would have sent Jajeff away.

"It's that reservation," Ed said, "Remember? Jajeff was learning everything he could about growing food, so that he could go home and help his people. Growing season is coming up and I'll bet they had a falling-out about her not being able to go with him because of school."

"Do you think? I mean, if he wanted her to go with him, she would have to drop school . . ., and so close to graduation." Jennifer had a pained look on her face.

"Well, Honey. Is school more important than your daughter's happiness?"

"Ed! That isn't fair. You know darned well that her degree will help assure her happiness in the future." Jennifer started walking toward the house, clearly upset by Ed's remark.

"Now hold it, Honey," Ed said, running after her. "I didn't mean anything by that, I only meant that she maybe didn't need her degree on the reservation, and that it is more important that she is with the one she loves, than it is for her to have that old degree."

Jennifer stopped and looked at her husband.

"You think so?"

"Yes. I know it would be for me."

"We would have to let her go," Jennifer said, a hint of defeat in her voice.

"Yes, I know, but then, we were going to anyway, if she had married Benjamin."

Jennifer stepped up to Ed and they hugged for a long time. Afterwards, Ed went up to Song Flower's room and knocked on her door.

"Honey," he said through Song Flower's door, "your mother and I want to talk to you."

After a moment, Song Flower slowly opened the door, letting her father see her for the first time in days.

"My God, you look like the Devil has been chasing you." He put his big arm around her shoulder before she could react and guided her out of her bedroom.

"Dad!" she protested, trying to twist away from him.

"Not this time, Young Lady. We are going to talk." Holding her even tighter, he guided her into the living room and sat her down beside her mother on the couch.

"Young Lady, this has gone far enough. I want you to pack your things and go after your Indian friend," he announced as he sat in his easy chair.

"Huh?" Jennifer said, and laughed at her husband's blunt way of handling such a delicate situation.

Song Flower could only blink at him, not comprehending the meaning of his words.

"Now Ed, let me handle this before you make her think we don't love her." She patted Song Flower on her arm.

"Honey, what your father is trying to say is that we think you really do love Jajeff, and we think it may have been a mistake for you to send him away. Being married to an Indian and living on a reservation doesn't sound like much of a life, but then, my parents didn't think being married to a farmer and living on a farm sounded like much of a life either."

Jennifer reached her hand out to Ed, before continuing.

"My parents were wrong, and probably, so are we. That you love each other is all that matters to God. Never mind what others think. Go to him and be happy."

Song Flower slowly shook her head.

"But mother, you need my help to keep the farm. I will graduate soon, and then I will begin helping you so that you and father won't have to work so hard." She held her head down, concentrating on folding and refolding her handkerchief.

"I was afraid you were doing this for us," Jennifer said, satisfied that she had found the source of Song Flower's problem. "Now you listen to me. We may have suggested that it would be nice if you helped us around here after you graduated, but that was only if it worked out that way. We would never dream of letting you make a mess of your life, just so you could help us. That isn't why we raised you--so that you can take care of us. Why that would be awfully selfish of us." Jennifer had just a touch of indignation in her voice.

Song Flower looked at her parents without comprehension.

"Honey, we will make it just fine." Ed assured her. "The rains came, as they were supposed to last year, and we received a good price for a good crop. That is the way farming is. We have always lived from crop to crop, and we always will. Your working to help us would not really change that when you get to thinking about it. Now tell us you will go find your friend and give your father a son-in-law." Ed's earnest voice and the worried look on his face spoke more of his concern for his only child than could his words.

Song Flower replied in an emotionless monotone.

"He doesn't live on a reservation. He lives in a different world. If I go with him, it would be to a different world that you would not be able to visit."

"He what?" Both Ed and Jennifer said at the same time, bewildered by Song Flower's unexpected comment.

Ed was the first to recover.

"Do you want to explain what you mean by that?" he asked in a dry voice.

Jennifer nearly jumped to her feet.

"Well I can see that this is going to take a while," Jennifer said nervously.

"You need to eat something, Morine, so why don't we take this into the kitchen so that I can prepare us some dinner, while you tell us what you mean?"

Song Flower and Ed also stood and joined her in the kitchen.

Song Flower had still not accepted her parent's denial that they needed her help, and felt the truth about Jajeff would bring them to withdraw their permission for her to follow him, but telling two older people, who could still remember their daughter's over-active childhood imagination, about Jajeff's other world, was no easy task.

"Do you have anything that can prove this story?" Ed wanted to know after he had heard her explanation.

"What your father means, Honey, is how did he convince you that he was telling you the truth and not fantasizing about a more glamorous home than a reservation?"

"No, nothing tangible other than Bonnet. He repeatedly demonstrated to me how he could see through Bonnet's eyes." Song flower picked Bonnet up and looked into its eyes.

Ed watched her and the cat for a moment before speaking. Jennifer busily stirred the gravy.

"Every time I talked to him, I felt like I was talking to a preacher," Ed recalled. "He always looked at things in such a positive way. His mannerisms are pretty different from people around here, but I always figured it was just his Indian up-bringing or something."

"Yes, it was like he was from a noble family, wasn't it Ed," Jennifer offered as she served dinner.

They ate dinner in silence, both Jennifer and Ed trying to come to terms with a new image of Jajeff, Song Flower tensely waiting to see if they would still think she should follow him.

After the dishes were put away and they had returned to the living room, Ed leaned back in his easy chair and patted his stomach.

"That was a fine dinner, My Love, you out-did yourself this time."

He was quiet for a moment, carefully considering his next words.

"Being a man, it's not my place to say, but it seems to me that a woman can either have a career and be a busy wife or she can stay home and raise a family, being a full-time wife and mother. There is honor in both ways, and it all depends on what brings the woman the most happiness that decides what is best for her."

Jennifer and Song Flower recognized the approaching moment, as one of the occasions Ed would remind his family why they had so much respect for his judgment. He was about to make the kind of profound statement that set him out as the head of his household, and often, the leader of the community.

"Living in this 'other world' with Jajeff sounds like you would be choosing to be a full-time wife and mother. This would not necessarily mean that you would waste your education, not by any means. I am sure you will find many ways that it will be of considerable help to you, even in a world without electricity."

Song Flower could hardly believe her ears.

"Dad, what are you saying? You sound like you think I should go primitive."

"No, I don't see it like that. Actually, the idea of living in such a world has always appealed to me. I have often wondered how it might be if I could suddenly go back and live on this delta before there were settlers here. In fact, thinking of how I would live in the wild is one of the ways I entertain myself while I am running the tractor."

"Why Ed, I never dreamed you had such fantasies." Jennifer said with a grin.

"Well, I do," Ed answered indignantly.

"Now it seems clear to me that the only way you are going to get over this grief of yours is to go find Jajeff and marry him. If he can manage to take you back to his world, then I expect you are in for the adventure of your life." Ed looked at Song Flower for a moment before continuing. The bottom line, Honey, is that I believe you have to follow your heart and go after him."

Having spoken his mind, Ed waited to hear his wife explain to his daughter what he was really trying to say. To his surprise, she agreed with him, as she hugged Song Flower and kissed her on the cheek.

"I agree, Sweetheart. Go to him with our blessings. You know we can't go with you while the plowing is still unfinished, but we will be with you in spirit. Go, and be with the man you love."

"But Mom, Father, I may never see you again."

"Oh, I doubt that," Ed said in an exasperated voice. "If Jajeff can find a way to get himself here and both of you back there, wherever the devil 'there' is, I reckon he can find a way for you to bring our grandchildren home for a visit. Don't you agree, Grandma?" Ed grinned at his blushing wife.

Song Flower was too stunned to speak. She had not dreamed that her parents would feel this way about her following Jajeff, and for a moment, wondered if she could be mistaken their intention.

"Perhaps they are trying to use reverse psychology on me," she thought to herself, but when Jennifer began talking about all of the things she would need to do before leaving, there was no doubt in her mind.

Song Flower kissed both her parents and retreated to her room to think about what they had said, and even as the reality of their word came to her, she slipped into her first good night's sleep in days.

The next day, Song Flower called her friends and asked them to come over so that she could say good-bye. She was already packed and had her car loaded when they arrived, and seeing how loaded her car was, they all laughed at her, asking how she expected Jajeff to carry so much across the magical gateway, or from the other side down to his village.

They all gathered around her in the front yard, talking and hugging, each telling her how happy they were for her, and how relieved they were that she seemed so much better, now that she was doing what she really wanted to do, rather than what she thought she must.

"Oh, Morine, I can't tell you how much better you look," Jill said as she hugged Song Flower. "You were in such turmoil over your obligations."

"Obligations that were her own idea," Jennifer added, a little defensively.

Song Flower stepped over to her mother's side and put her arm around her, as she talked to her friends.

"Mom and Dad think I was being foolish for giving up Jajeff so that I could help them with the farm." She kissed her mother on the cheek.

"I told you that you should have talked it over with them," Jill reminded her.

Jill's comment brought a pause to the conversation that Cady quickly filled.

"Do you expect Jajeff to have packhorses waiting?"

Song Flower laughed.

"No silly, there are no horses where Jajeff's lives. I intend to leave some of it with the Gray Feathers so that I can use it when we come back across to visit."

"Do you think that will work? I mean, do you really think you can come back to visit?" Mary asked, hopefully.

The idea that Song Flower might someday visit her friends made them feel better, making their final parting much happy than it might have been, otherwise.

"Now I have to figure out how to find Jajeff before he crosses over. All I know is that his friends are Bob and Fran Gray Feather and that they live somewhere in Portland. If I can't find them there, I will have to go on to the mountains somewhere north of the Columbia River and hope for the best." Song Flower's sparkling eyes and happy face showed her excitement.

"Should we come along to help?" Mary offered.

Song Flower hugged her and then each of the others, as everyone began sniffing and trying not to cry.

"No, my friend. I will be fine. You have to finish school. Do finish school, and make me proud of you all."

"Dam, I hate this," Mike said, a miserable look on his face. "I hate saying good-bye to you. We will miss you."

"Yes, I know, and I will miss you." She looked at each of her friend in turn. "I love you," she added, trying not to cry.

Song Flower rushed over to her parents and hugged them for a long time.

"I would say that I will write, but I guess it won't be possible."

"You just come back with a happy grandson to show us," Ed said, also trying to hold his tears back, first patting Song Flower on her back, then giving her a huge hug.

Then, Song Flower quickly climbed into her car and drove away, crying loudly as she did. Her parents and her friends stood in silence, watching her begin a journey that they would all dearly love to join.

On the twenty-fifth day of his return journey, Jajeff finally entered Portland and made his way to the Gray Feather's home, happily looking forward to seeing his friends. He was nearly to the front steps of the house when he spotted Song Flower's car in the driveway. When he did, he abruptly stopped, afraid to even think of what it might mean.

The pain of losing Song Flower was deeply buried in his memory for the day Mother Lily could help him deal with it. If Song Flower had only come to say good-bye, she would reopen the wound he felt from her loss, and he knew that this might prevent him from being able to release the Dim World well enough to permit his passage through the barrier into his world. As he thought about this, and remembered the pain that he was trying so hard to ignore, his anger grew, and he turned to leave.

Song Flower had been with the Gray Feathers since the first day she had come to Portland and had spent nearly all her time sitting on their couch by the front window, or on their front porch, where she could see Jajeff, when he arrived. It had never occurred to her that her car might cause Jajeff not to come to the house, or else she would have hidden it, so that he would come in and give her a chance to explain why she was there. As it turned out, when Jajeff did arrive, it was Fran who was watching the yard, while Song Flower took a short nap. The two of them had worked together in this way, since Song Flower's arrival.

When Fran saw Jajeff, she ran outside to greet him, before he could make his escape.

"Boy, are you a sight for sore eyes." She said with a cheery voice, as she hugged him warmly, ignoring the fact that he was trying to leave.

"We were worried sick that you might have died of that cold you had. What did you do, come by way of Mexico?"

"I did not hurry." He answered, still a little dazed, only halfheartedly returning her hug. "I wanted to fit into my world, when I return."

"That is it? You have been stalling all this time while you remembered how to be an Indian?" She was incredulous.

Fran rolled her eyes in dismay and began pulling on Jajeff's arm to lead him into the house. He resisted, causing her to turn and face him with fire in her eyes.

"Don't you get finicky with me, young man. You know darned well who is in there waiting for you. I am not going to listen to any moaning about broken hearts. I have heard enough of that from Song Flower to last me a lifetime."

"I am not getting finicky, my good friend. There is nothing I can give her that she wants, so there is no good that can come from me talking to her. Don't you understand?" Jajeff almost pleaded with her to understand. "If I do not have my mind firmly focused on my world, the gateway will not open, and I will not be able to return to help my people."

Fran stopped tugging on his arm and looked into his eyes, deciding that he was as angry with Song Flower as he was sincere about needing to keep his mind focused.

"Jajeff, you are right, I didn't understand, but you need to trust me in this. What Song Flower has to say to you will change everything. Give her a chance."

"What does she want to say," he asked, dubious that she could say anything that would make a difference.

"It is not for me to tell you. Come on," she began tugging on his arm again. "Just trust me."

Jajeff let her lead him through the front door, but once he was inside the house and the door was closed behind him, he refused to move another inch, feeling a stubbornness that he had not known before. Somewhere in his mind, he knew a part of him was howling like a scared animal, its fear of being hurt again threatening to penetrate into his mind to confuse his thoughts, but a stronger part of him felt anger that he was so helpless to convince Song Flower of his love. He knew that seeing her again would reopening the wound and torment his heart with more thoughts of the impossibility of their being together, thinking this, his anger grew even stronger.

Fran stopped and looked at him for a moment.

"You don't trust her, do ya, Young Jajeff."

Jajeff said nothing, his face frozen in an emotionless mask.

"Very well, but don't you dare go back out that door," Fran warned him, her voice telling him of her concern for his well being. She turned and disappeared into the back of the house. Moments later, she returned with a disheveled Song Flower trailing close behind her. Fran stepped aside to watch what they would do, as Bob came up behind her and put his hands on her shoulders. They had worried expressions on their face, sensing that the moment of truth for the two lovers was at hand.

Song Flower stood not more than six feet from Jajeff, still rubbing the sleep from her eyes. She recognized how stiff he stood and realized that she needed to move gently, not to seem too casual about what she had put him through.

"What can I do?" Song Flower searched within her mind for a way to make peace with the man she loved.

Bonnet came into the entryway, curious about the commotion and wanting some attention. Song Flower would not take her eyes from Jajeff's, but she sensed Bonnet's presence and remembered Jajeff's gift.

"I love you and want to go with you into your world to be your wife, but you cannot know what is in my heart from me telling you." She waited a moment to judge Jajeff's reaction.

Jajeff did not so much as blink, he was so tense. At first, he tried not to glare at her, his anger was so strong, but as he looked at her beautiful countenance, and remembered how soft her cheek was against his, how wonderful it was to bury his face in her luxurious main, his

anger softened. Softened, at least, until her last words bubbled up to the surface of his thoughts and made his face feel hot with fresh anger.

Song Flower sense this from Jajeff's stern expression, but satisfied that he was listening to her, she continued.

"I know that you have been warned not to commune with humans by your Spirit Elders, but please . . . , touch my mind the way you do Bonnet's and see for yourself what is in my heart. See with my eyes, the pain I feel from not having you by my side these days."

"You may miss me, but this does not change your need to be with college people who are interesting." Jajeff startled himself, his anger showed so much in his voice.

The Gray Feathers visibly winced at Jajeff's comment, fearing that he might be ready to pick a fight with Song Flower.

Song Flower closed her eyes for a moment, squeezing tears from them to run down her pale cheeks.

"Look into my heart." she pleaded with a nearly inaudible voice.

Jajeff did not move, and after a few seconds of not feeling the change in sensation she expected when Jajeff would join with her mind, her tears welled up to cloud her vision, and she wept uncontrollably.

"Please." She said weakly.

Jajeff felt tears come to his eyes as well, as his desire for Song Flower's love subdued the anger within him. He looked at the Gray Feathers for a moment, seeking advice from them, and felt reassured by their urging expressions.

"Go ahead, do it," Fran's face seemed to tell him.

She too, had tears in her eyes.

Jajeff closed his eyes and extended his attention to the image of the one person he held most dear in his life. Visualizing Song Flower's smile and her happily reckless way of being in her world, he mentally brought his thought to her mind, as if he were immersing himself in a vast pool of deep, velvety blue water.

He entered her awareness carefully at first, as if he was not sure what was below the surface, but soon he moved faster, as he grew accustomed to the feel of her Self swirling around him mind. Her mind was much stronger than any animal's mind he had felt, frightening yet awe inspiring in its intensity, as he let himself become one with the blueness, the velvetness of her thoughts.

Light flashed in his head and he abruptly saw himself standing like a stone statue, his anger molding his features into a wooden mask.

Communing with Song Flower, was both exhilarating and shocking. It was as if he were two people, and he could easily forget which one he was or where he ended and where Song Flower began. He moved carefully around the edge of the soft pool of her mind, as if being careful not to let her see him, being careful not to disturb the surface nor to look too deeply into her depths.

*"You must come closer and see for yourself."* Jajeff heard Song Flower say from within the pool.

"I am afraid."

"I know you are, but I love you, as I know you love me. My parents have given me their blessings, and I am free to be with you."

Jajeff saw her parents, as Song Flower had seen them, loving and supportive.

"All that I said before you left, I said for you. Speaking those horrible words was the only way I knew to release you and let you return to your world, where you would be safe."

"Can't you see, I was sacrificing myself for you?"

"And your parents."

*"And my parents."* Song Flower agreed with something like a mental shrug.

Jajeff felt himself relax his tension in a single shudder, as he stepped across the distance to stand in front of Song Flower without breaking contact with her mind. Using her vision to guide him, he tenderly put his hands on either side of her cheeks and lifted her face to his. She closed her eyes and Jajeff felt himself glow a brilliant blue, as he kissed her, illuminating the pond, exposing every dark place and hidden corner, as his inner self merged with hers. One thought, one being, one heart, he found her and embraced her in the velvety pool.

*"I love you, Jajeff."* Song Flower told him with joy in her thoughts.

"I love you, my Song Flower, forever I love you." Jajeff knew what was in Song Flower's heart.

Naturally, Fran and Bob Gray Feather could not tell what was happening within Song Flower's mind, but they knew from talking with her, that she was sincere, and from this, that they wanted Jajeff and her to be together, as it seemed Father Spirit had intended from the start. So, they were delighted, when they watched Jajeff step over to Song Flower and kiss her gently on the lips, and they held each other, thinking of the wonderful thoughts that might be flowing in her mind.

Moments after Jajeff and Song Flower kissed, Jajeff put his arm around Song Flower and turned toward the Gray Feathers, smiling warmly, all evidence of his previous anger vanished from his face.

"My friends, it is time for us to prepare the gateway into my world. Song Flower will cross over with me."

Fran and Bob came up to them and all four hugged and held hands, the Gray Feathers congratulating the young lovers, Jajeff and Song Flower thanking them in turn, for their persistent faith in Jajeff's dream.



## Journey's End

Less than three weeks after Jajeff returned to Portland, Jajeff was with Song Flower and the Gray Feathers at the edge of the sacred clearing. From their vantage point on the rocky slope bounding the southern extent of the meadow, they could see all the clearing, as well as the road and small parking lot that served the people as a staging area for their ceremonies. They had been waiting nearly an hour for the arrival of their friends, who would help Jajeff and Song Flower cross into Jajeff's world. While they waited, they filled the time searching out the familiar sense of oneness that came with the presence of the mountain spirits, preparing themselves for the moment they would bring the two worlds together by resurrecting the knowledge of Father Spirit in the Dim World. If only for a day, they would return to the old ways, by becoming at one with their ancestor, at one with Father Spirit.

Other than an occasional sacred word spoken loudly for Spirit to hear, they were quiet, Jajeff and Song Flower leaning together to share their warmth, Song Flower cradling Bonnet in her lap to keep him quiet. As part of their preparation, each remembered moments of oneness they had experienced with nature, trying to recapture the feeling of that moment, trying to make it part of their view of the world.

The sun was just rising above the mountain's top, when the small party of Native Americans arrived and began their preparations for the ceremony. As soon as they saw their friends enter the parking lot, Fran and Bob rose to their feet and joined them, leaving Jajeff and Song Flower to continue their preparation.

Jajeff and Song Flower watched the activity for a few minutes with interest, then returned their attention to clearing their minds of Dim World thoughts. This was a new way of thinking for Song Flower, but she had been coached by some of the elders who lived near Portland and she had a clear idea of how to proceed. It had been a hectic time for her, because Jajeff insisted that she learn enough of his language to communicate for herself, without needing him to interpret every word for her. She had also learned many of the customs she would be greeted with in Jajeff's world, and her mind swam with things to remember, as well as things to do and not to do. When the time came, she would fill her awareness with every thought of Jajeff's culture she could recall, to make her more a part of his world than of the one she was to leave behind.

As the sun rose higher above the mountain's peak, trees and rocks carved the new light into mist-filled shafts, that divided the clearing with areas of brightness and areas of dense shadow, reminding the people of the sacredness of the place and permitting Spirit to move among them with greater strength. Jajeff watched the activity below him, the muffled voices and casual, almost dream-like motions of the people, and imagined himself already in his world, watching this activity through the eyes of a small animal, sunning itself on the rocks above the clearing. He saw the people's preparation and sensed their respect for Father Spirit and knew that, even as he watched, the difference between the two worlds was becoming less in this place.

As the mist evaporated from the air and the sun rose even higher in the morning sky, the people lit small fires to keep children and old people warm during the ceremony, and to cook the food all would eat in celebration of Jajeff and Song Flower's successful journey into the other world. Smoke from these fires drifted into the clearing, taking the place of the mist and adding to the sense of illusion Jajeff was feeling for the Dim World.

After a time, a single old man stepped from the trees to stand within the clearing but outside of the sacred circle. A single drumbeat drifted from the trees behind him and echoed from the wall of trees surrounding the clearing. It signaled others to attention and was quickly answered by a second beat, this time from a much bigger drum, then another, and another, filling the clearing with thunder, sounding to Jajeff like his heart beating in the air above his head.

Dum-dum . . . dum-dum . . . dum-dum . . .

The Spirit Elder raised first one foot and then the other in step with the drumbeats. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, he moved around the circle, his eyes closed, yet knowing every step, his rusty old voice speaking homage to Spirit, asking for permission to use the circle for the ceremony his people were about to offer.

"Father Spirit, I ask you to be here in this place we have made for you, so that you can let us honor you and the ways of the people and our brothers in this world," he chanted when he reached the first corner of the world, which was marked by a line of rocks connecting the center stone to the circumference.

The Spirit Elder continued to dance until he reached the next corner of the circle, where he turned to face the center. With arms raised high above his head, he shouted words to the sky that Jajeff could only partially understand, and then he turned to resume his slow dance around the circle, stopping at each corner of the world to shout a prayer as he did. Jajeff felt the back of his neck crawl with a primal chill, as he watched the old man dance, and he sensed the power the man carried in his heart.

None of the people there had any idea what needed to be done to help Jajeff and Song Flower return to his world, so it was decided that they would immerse themselves in what they knew of their old ways.

"We will simply go and be who we have always been," Bob Gray Feather had told the others who would participate in the ceremony. "Rather than stifling our instincts so that we might behave like the white man, we will act like Native Americans for a change."

All who were there for the meeting agreed and planned to have a great day remembering the old ways.

"No tourists this time," one woman insisted at the planning meeting they had held the night before, and everyone had emphatically agreed with her.

The send-off for Jajeff and Song Flower would be a fine experience for everyone concerned, but it would only be of The People.

When the Spirit Elder completed the circle, eight men stepped into the edge of the clearing, moving with the beat of the drums as they did. They were like ghosts in the shadows, as they mimicked the animals with which they shared the world. They moved from the trees toward the circle's edge, slowly at first, as if they did not wish to startle the spirits living there, then faster, as the cadence quickened, filling the sacred place with drumbeats and echoes of drumbeats, until dancing men and the sound of drums filled Jajeff's senses and quickened his heart.

Jajeff rose to his feet and beckoned Song Flower to do the same.

It was time.

He squeezed Song Flower's hand and pulled her a little closer to his side, as she clung to his arm, grateful for the familiarity in such a strange situation.

"How wonderful," she thought, mesmerized by the dancing men. "It is as if they are part of the forest. Their dancing and their singing seems to blend so naturally into the trees and the sky." She dared not speak out loud, lest she break the spell being woven for their sake, but she wanted to show Jajeff how she felt about the dance.

"The dance," she thought, thinking how she might communicate her feelings, and holding Jajeff's hands outstretched between them, she stepped with the drums, as she saw the others do and smiled at him, her eyes twinkling in the morning sun.

Jajeff watched for a moment and then put his head close to hers, so that she could hear his words over the drums.

"Good, my love, the elders have taught you well. Let the Spirit of the drums guide your feet, as you follow me, for I must also dance for Father Spirit and for the people, to show them how to open the gateway. Remember to think with the language you have been taught, so that my world will recognize you."

Song Flower kissed him on his cheek and smiled at him, as she continued to step with the beat of the drum.

He took up their packs and quickly moved to the center of the circle, where he placed them, so that they would be ready when it was time. Then he stepped into the space between the dancers and the drummers and held his arms out in front of himself with palms open to the sky, as if he held the medicine pipe before him. Head held high, he slowly turned to face each of his friends, who had come to help them across.

"My friends." Jajeff began, first facing Fran and Bob Gray Feather, who led the cadence of the drums.

"Father Spirit smiles on us today." He slowly turned, talking to each of the others in turn.

"Not for the dance we do, although I am sure he is grateful for your good dance. He smiles for the gift you give us this day, for it is in taking time to give of yourself that you most honor Spirit. I too smile today and thank you from my heart, for this gift you are giving to Song Flower and to me."

Fran and Bob smiled broadly at Jajeff's words. Old men let tears come to their eyes, and the children studied Jajeff's movements, imprinting his words on their memory, their parents proud to return to the old ways for a while.

"My people on the other side of this gateway know little of your world and its ways. They live close to the land, in harmony with it and with all the creatures who share the land with them. That is their reality, and that is the reality that must be shared by us, if the difference between the two worlds is to be removed in this place. This sacred place is also sacred in my world, so you can see, this is where the gateway should be."

Jajeff paused to look at the people and assess their readiness to open the gateway. Their smiling faces told him that it was time.

"Now let the drums speak to Spirit, as we open the gateway together," he shouted, waving his arms to the sky for a moment before lowering them and turning to see that Song Flower was also ready.

Jajeff listened to the drums for several beats and then crouched low, while he pivoted to face the center of the circle. He moved as the old man had moved, but in quicker steps, and anticipating the sound of the drums, as if leading the drumbeats, he traveled the path of sacred knowledge around the circle of the world. It was a large circle, and his pace took him a long time to return to the beginning. The other dancers followed him, letting his steps lead theirs, until they were spread evenly around the circle, moving in resonance to the sound of the drums.

As he moved, Jajeff let the drums find their way into his Self, until he no longer knew which he was: the sound or the motion. He danced the dance of power that had been taught to him by the Crystal Masters and the dance of love that had been taught to him by Mother Lily. He moved his Spirit beyond the ring of rocks to the center and felt the brightness, where his world leaked into the Dim World, and knew the gateway was opening. Still dancing, he

stepped into the circle and moved toward the flat rock at its center, sensing the power that rested there, in that honored place.

As Jajeff had instructed, as soon as Song Flower saw him enter the circle, she took Bonnet into her arms and carefully stepped from the rocks and moved toward the circle herself. It frightened her to do so. Everything was so strange around her. Even Bonnet seemed disturbed by the sounds and feelings that permeated the place. She could tell, because it buried its head in the bend of her arm and meowed loudly.

As she moved closer to the center of the circle, she began to feel light-headed, and her sense of dread for what might happen to her was so great, she had to force herself to step onto the center rock, her eyes closed tightly, her breath frozen in her throat. When her feet did touch the rock, her skin began to tingle, as if a thousand sparks danced over her body and into her mind. Without warning, memory of the comfort and safety of her bedroom crowded into her thoughts, and despite her excitement and her true desire to follow Jajeff into his world, something in her wanted to run and hide and curl into a tight ball, until she knew she would be back home. There was no longer a "tomorrow" or a "pretty soon" that she would have to face crossing into Jajeff's world. The moment was now, she realized, and she tried to control a shiver that shook her body, nearly making her drop Bonnet. She whimpered once and turned, looking for Jajeff, seeing him still dancing only feet from where she stood.

"Hurry, Jajeff," she whispered urgently to him and braced herself against the waves of sparks crawling about her body.

The sparks did not hurt her skin, but confounded her mind and made her uneasy, uncertain that she could hold her nerve and keep from running away. She focused all of her attention on Jajeff's dancing form, still moving toward her with frustratingly small steps. Still the sparks came, numbing her body and making her head feel like it belonged to someone else. She could not stop her tears, and crying with abandon, she pulled the packs close around her legs and waited for the one she loved to join her on the rock.

As Jajeff turned in his dance, Song Flower came into his view and he saw her distress. For a second time, he touched his mind to hers and felt his love for her, touched her love for him as if it were a tangible thing, and for a moment, they were one. He continued to dance, a dance that now seemed to be her dance, as well. Together, they felt mesmerized by the whispering, tingling sparks, and together, they knew thoughts of power and oneness with the Spirit, and these thoughts calmed Song Flower and drove away her fears.

Calmer now, Song Flower marveled at the graceful movement of the one she loved, and recognizing that every move had meaning and purpose, she sensed the power brought into the world by his homage to Spirit. Seeing the quiet young man move with such confidence reminded her of the reasons she had fallen in love with him and why she had promised her life to him.

"How could she be afraid," she wondered, and wiped her tears with the back of her hand, smiling at her brief relapse and at the fairy dust dancing in her eyes and caressing her skin.

Confidently, she waited for her man to finish his dance.

When Jajeff reached the rock, he turned to face his friends and the warriors still dancing outside of the circle. His friends stood like shadows amongst the trees, hidden in the sparkle of sunlight reflecting from the dust and the smoke that hung in the air, each watching for a sign that the gateway would open. Jajeff and Song Flower could almost see the sound of the drums, as it made the air dance above the heads of the warriors, still spinning and stepping in cadence with the vibrating air, their chants mingling with the young lover's heartbeat, moving them into synchronization with Jajeff's world.

Song Flower held her breath and bit her lip against the tingling in her arms and legs and the feeling of her hair standing away from her scalp. The sensation was almost overpowering, and she held herself against a new urge to run. She watched Jajeff and felt his muscles, looking for a sign that the strange feeling washing over her was not expected. He turned his face and smiled at her reassuringly, and then bent down and kissed her on her forehead.

"It is happening," he told her in a whisper. "We are going home." His voice sounded like the wind, complementing the small tear at the corner of his eye, dreamy and full of hope.

He turned and happily waved again to the people of the Dim World.

"We will come again. In the fall before the Gatherer's Moon."

His voice echoed from the trees surrounding the clearing and became lost over the flank of the mountain, over the valley and his village.

There was no smoke in the clearing.

Song Flower caught her breath as she felt the sparks float away in the air.

"Oh! They are gone." Her voice sounded bewildered.

"Yes." Jajeff was as impressed as she was and hesitated to move, lest he find himself back in the Dim World.

Having withstood the onslaught of so many strange sensations, Song Flower could remain strong no longer and sat on the rock with a sigh. Holding her knees to her chest, she cried, relieved to have finished her ordeal.

Jajeff sat down beside her to comfort her and assure her that all was as it should be.

"Do not be afraid, my love. You are safe in my world now. Life will be different, and it will be good. You will see." He spoke in his own language, since they had agreed not to use hers on Jajeff's side of the gateway.

Song Flower heard him, but had to wait for a moment, while her mind remembered the words. Once she understood his question, she released her legs and embraced him and cried even harder, her face buried against his chest, overwhelmed by happiness and relief.

Bonnet stepped onto Song Flower's lap, between her and Jajeff, and meowed to show its concern. Jajeff touched Bonnet's mind for a moment to acknowledge the cat and also reassure it that all was well.

"See, my love, Bonnet is also concerned for you." Jajeff held Song Flower and waited patiently for her to overcome her distress.

After a while, Song Flower stopped crying and seemed to be sleeping in Jajeff's arms. Still, Jajeff held her and whispered reassuring sounds into her hair.

"My God, Honey, these trees," Song Flower said, wonder in her voice. "Look at them. They are huge."

"Huh?" he responded, startled and a little confused by her sudden alertness.

He released her and watched her set up and look around the circle of trees, her eyes sparkling with tears, her cheeks wet and rosy with color.

Seeing Song Flower's face, her expression balanced between fear and wonder, Jajeff felt a powerful sense of goodness well up from his heart, to fill his mind with pride and happiness. The reality that he had truly returned to his world with his love held tightly in his arms, came rushing to him, making him want to sing his thanks to the world.

Jajeff kissed Song Flower for a long, soft moment and then stood and raised his arms to the pure, blue sky, so perfectly ringed by ancient forest.

"Thank you, Father Spirit, for guiding me and blessing me with this gift." He chanted these words loudly to the sky, again, and again to show his sincere happiness.

After this, he took Song Flower by the hand and helped her to her feet as he picked up their packs.

"Come, I will make us a camp, so that we can rest and become accustomed to this world before returning to my village."

"Before we do anything, can you commune with Bonnet and try to make him understand the danger he faces in the forest?" Song Flower knelt down and picked up Bonnet.

Jajeff closed his eyes and quickly found Bonnet while he reached out and scratched the cat behind the ear with his hand. He remembered a fox he had once seen killing a rabbit and a hawk he had seen taking a squirrel from a tree limb. He remembered how close he had once come to being bit by Brother Snake, and he let Bonnet sense his fear, so that the cat would understand that this was a dangerous place for a creature of the city.

"These things can be your fate," he tried to say, and Bonnet meowed loudly, and stared first at Jajeff and then at the nearby trees and the open sky.

Song Flower laughed, delighted with Bonnet's reaction.

"What did you do? Poor Bonnet looks scared to death."

"I just remembered a few of my experiences. Hopefully, he will understand and stay close. Bonnet will be a great treat to my people. Except for dogs given us by the Frenchmen, they only have the wild things we have made friends with. They have never seen a tamed cat."

Something caught Jajeff's attention, and he moved toward the place held by the parking lot in the Dim World. Song Flower followed with Bonnet close behind.

"What is it?"

"The pack I left on the center stone when I came into your world," he told Song Flower in a subdued voice.

There, at the edge of the trees, three poles were tied together as a tripod, forming a cradle that held his leather pack suspended above the ground. He could see that his things were still in the pack just as he had left them. An eagle and an owl feather were hung from a long leather cord tied to one of its straps.

Jajeff lifted the pack from the tripod and looked closely at the feathers.

"They have placed this here, in case I return. And these," he indicated the feathers to Song Flower. "The eagle feather is to offer me courage, and the owl feather is to give me wisdom. They have wished me a good journey, and because they have placed this here, they hope that I will return to use it again. I am honored."

"Interesting," Song Flower said, tentative, not sure she could see how Jajeff came to this understanding from two feathers.

"Interesting?" Jajeff said grinning. "You will see many symbols like this in your new world. It is our way of communicating without words."

"Will you teach me these things?"

"Yes, I have already begun." Jajeff held Song Flower close to his side and gently kissed her on her forehead.

"Will they be surprised by your return?" Song Flower asked, turning to hold him with both arms, Bonnet held between them.

"No, I do not think so, only happy, as if I have returned from a journey to the ocean or some other distant place."

"Will they be surprised by your return with me?" She had asked this question many times, each time, waiting for Jajeff's answer with baited breath.

"Ho, yes! You will surprise everyone in this world, but you will also delight them and make them happy, once they have grown to know you. You will see."

Jajeff kissed Song Flower again and nudged her with one of the packs, indicating that she should move toward a well-traveled trail. They had had such conversations many times, while

their friends in the Dim World prepared Song Flower to be one of their people, discussing how she would be received, describing life in a village so that she would know what to expect. Jajeff knew that only the actual experience of his people accepting her would settle the question. Until then, she would have to live with her worry.

Jajeff lead Song Flower to a flat place just beyond the fire pits at the edge of the sacred clearing, to a place that overlooked the narrow valley and his village.

"We will stay here tonight, where you can enjoy one of the better views given by these mountains. Look there, you can see smoke from my village." Jajeff pointed down the valley to a place where the river came close to the trees for some distance, before it cut back into the grass-land.

Song Flower looked intently toward his village for a long moment before responding.

"I can understand why you are so much against the dam my people put across this valley. This is so beautiful."

Her attention abruptly shifted to the nearby trees, her hand reaching for Jajeff's arm.

"What is that?" Her urgent voice warning Jajeff of eminent disaster.

Song Flower pointed toward the trees that grew on the flank of the mountain, just below the level place they stood on. A large bear and her two cubs were only paces from them, where they had just walked out of a thicket of berry bushes.

Seeing them, the mother bear snorted loudly and eyed first Song flower and then Jajeff, producing a menacing growl from deep within her bulk.

"It is only Brother, or should I say Sister Bear and her cubs," Jajeff said with a laugh.

Song Flower stepped closer to Jajeff and whispered to Bonnet to come to her.

"What should we do? Shouldn't we run?" Her voice was edged with a growing hysteria.

"By the Father, do not run! She does not know us as food, as do the bears in your world, but she will chase you, if you act like a frightened deer. She respects our place in the forest as do we hers, because we are equal to her. We can enjoy seeing her and her playful cubs, but from a distance, as she does us. See, she is taking her cubs to the stream below us for water. She will not bother us."

Jajeff casually turned from the bears and began unpacking their packs to make camp. Song Flower watched the bears, until she was sure they were safely away from her and Bonnet. Then she turned her attention to the world around her.

"The air smells so good, and it is so clear. I have never been able to see so far, before." She walked around the level place to get a better look at the valley below. "Your village is the only one in this valley, isn't it."

"Yes, there can't be more than a hundred and fifty people living there," Jajeff answered, as he spread two new sleeping bags on the ground on top of a bright blue plastic tarp.

Song Flower sat on a fallen log and watched a hawk float in the air currents that lifted from the valley floor. She let her mind relax and absorbed all that she could see and smell and hear and feel. She felt more alive than she could ever remember being, and she was very happy to be there.

Once the camp was prepared, Jajeff piled pine needles against a log to form a mat, and lit a small fire, to warm water for tea.

"Come, sit beside me," he offered, as he settled down in the mat, his back resting comfortably against the log.

Song Flower sat beside him and snuggled close to his side, enjoying the warmth of his body, since the afternoon air was becoming cool.

"See that mountain just to the right of the wall?" Jajeff pointed past Song Flower toward a granite-capped peak directly across the valley. "We know it as Hawk Mountain. It is the home of our Guardian Spirit."

Song Flower twisted around in Jajeff's arms, so that she could see him better.

"Tell me how your people named it. Do hawks live there?"

"Yes, of course, but that is not why it is Hawk Mountain. It was Hawk Mountain when my people first came to this valley, as it has been ever since. You see, my people believe that this valley is protected by Brother Hawk and that it is Hawk who watches over the land and protects its inhabitants from harm. That is why we are the Hawk People."

"Then why are you the Northern Hawk People? Is there a Southern Hawk People?"

Jajeff stifled a laugh and held Song Flower close to him.

"We are the Northern Hawk people because the hawk that protects this valley is a white hawk from the north. It is a very powerful hawk, who received its power from the Maker, himself, when this world was first formed."

"And how do you know this?" Song Flower asked, enjoying asking questions almost as much as listening to Jajeff's answers.

Jajeff did not answer right away, trying to find a way to describe a fundamental belief of his people in a way that a person from the Dim World would understand. It was important to him that Song Flower understood his people, but he knew she would need time to adjust her world view to that of his.

His people taught their world view to their children with stories that both entertained and instructed them in values and about why the values were important. It was from stories and role models that the children came to understand how to interpret their experiences in the world, and how to know Father Spirit in all things around them.

"Let me tell you the story of how Hawk came to this land, and you will see why my people believe Spirit lives here."

Song Flower relaxed into Jajeff's arms and took a deep breath.

"Okay, but no dancing, I don't want to move. The view is too perfect to watch you spinning around in the dust." She said dreamily, and pulled his arms closer to her.

"No, no dancing. Only a story." He laughed and began the creation story of the world.

"When the oldest man in our village was a child, he was told this by the oldest man in the village, as had that man been told when he was only a child. Thus, is the custom of my people to remember the source of our power."

"Many years before my people came to this land, it was very different here. There was only ice and rock here then, a great river of ice that stretched across the land and flowed all the way to the ocean. Only the highest portion of the mountains could be seen reaching above the river of ice, and there was no life anywhere, because of the ice."

"Your people know about the glaciers that covered this land?" Song Flower asked, surprised.

"Yes, we know of these things from our Spirit Masters, who have been told by their helpers. Now let me continue."

"It was at this time that Father Spirit gave the Maker special permission to come here and drive away the ice to make the world suitable for Father Spirit's people. He did this because he was lonely and wanted company in this world, and the land could not support life as it was."

"The Maker first asked Sun to shine brighter on the ice to melt it, but when Sun did, the ice changed into River and filled the land and kept it from bearing life. With the warmth of Sun came Storm, who fought with River and hid much of Sun's light, making this place unfit

for life, because of the terrible battle they fought to control the world. The Maker saw this and was saddened, because there was still no life here, so he asked Mother Earth to help him."

"Mother Earth agreed and said that she would bring the forest to cover the land and she would bring the brothers of the forest, who are the animals, to fill the forest and the people of the valley, who are the humans, to live in the land and make it a happy place, just as Father Spirit wished. She would do this if the Maker would promise to give her the land, when she had finished. He agreed to this, because he knew she would make the land beautiful, and Mother Earth did as she said she would, causing the trees to grow on the mountains and down the slopes close to River."

Jajeff pointed to the river flowing through the valley, on the far side, away from his village and the little stream that provided water to his people.

"There, you can see the trees and how they stop at the water's edge."

"Well of course, that is because they cannot grow in water." Song flower insisted.

"Yes, this is true. Mother Earth wanted it that way," Jajeff answered in a serious voice.

"Oooh," Song Flower cooed, enjoying teasing Jajeff.

Jajeff realized that she was teasing him and tickled her until she surrendered.

"Okay, okay! I will be good." She managed to say between gasps.

"Very well, I will continue."

"When they saw the trees growing on the mountains, Storm and River, who were still fighting a good fight, became angry and turned on Mother Nature, both trying to keep the land for themselves. It was no use though, because the trees were already growing and had tamed the land in the mountains, making it hard for River to keep the rocks, barren. But the trees still could not grow in the valley, because River was very strong there, so Mother Earth asked the Maker for help, so that she could protect her young forest from the fierce battle raging between Storm and River."

"The Maker agreed to help, but not before he had made Mother Earth agree to share the land when she was finished. She accepted this, and the Maker turned to Storm and River and said that they could have the land some of the time, if they would agree to stop fighting and let Mother Earth make the land beautiful, as she had promised."

"Storm agreed, as long as the Maker promised that Storm could have all of the land in the winter, and the Maker agreed to this, but River was not easily satisfied and insisted on making the valley his own, forever. The Maker did not want River to have the valley to himself and called upon Sun to help him again."

"Again Sun agreed to help, but seeing that the Maker had given some of the land to Mother Earth and to Storm, Sun insisted that he should have some of the land for himself, as he did in the desert far to the south. The Maker was concerned that the land could not belong to so many and refused Sun's request, thinking he could find a different way. But still, River would not give up the valley, forcing the Maker to ask for help from Father Spirit.

"How am I to satisfy everyone who makes claim to this land, he asked Father Spirit, but Father Spirit would not answer, and instead, sent a hawk from the north, where Father Spirit sometimes lives. He did this, because Hawk is his favorite brother of the forest, even over Coyote, and Father Spirit knew that Hawk could find a way for the Maker to make everyone happy."

"As you have given Storm the winter, give Sun the summer, so that I can play in the sky, and all of the people can be warmed by Sun's light,' Hawk said to the Maker. 'Sun will help Storm to know when it is time to give up the land and will make River do as you ask of him, that which he would not otherwise do while Storm is in the world.'"

"The Maker liked Hawk's idea and told Sun, who agreed and returned to warm the land, making Storm relinquish his hold, where he and River were still doing battle."

"As Storm retreated from Sun, River found that he had no one to fight with and settled into the bottom of the valley, where he would wait for the next winter and for renewed battles with Storm. Mother Earth saw this and quickly brought trees to the river's edge, but when the next winter came and Sun let Storm return, River rose up from the valley floor and washed the new trees to the ocean. This happened again and again, until Mother Earth complained to the Maker that River would still not let the trees grow in the valley."

"Once again, the Maker turned to Hawk for advice. This time, Hawk said that Mother Earth should let River have the valley floor in the winter and the spring and only bring grass and willows to River's edge. These grow much faster than trees and will better survive River's annual battles with Storm. The Maker told this to Mother Earth who agreed and said that with this agreement, she could claim the land as her own, while sharing it with River, Sun, and Storm. Even though these three Spirits would do battle over who would control the land, she would still be the final power, outside of Father Spirit, that is, for she could simply let the land sleep while Storm controlled the world, and she could quickly reclaim the valley floor, when River returned to his banks. The Maker saw that this was good, as did all of the plants and the brothers of the forest, and the people of the valley who welcomed Sun's warmth, so long as Sun did not become too hot."

Again, Jajeff pointed to the valley floor.

"See, there are few trees growing between the stream and the river. Mother Earth only asks willow and grass and other fast growing plants to grow there, keeping the trees above where River can reach in the winter."

Song Flower looked and saw that everything Jajeff was saying made sense.

"Did that bring peace to the world?" she wanted to know.

"Yes, after that, all was peaceful in the land, and the Maker felt sure his task was finished. The world was even more beautiful than he had thought possible, and the brothers of the forest and the people of the valley were happy, filling the forest and the grassland with their life."

"Then the Maker remembered Hawk's wisdom and how Hawk had helped him in his task and he called Hawk to his side. 'You are the wisest of Mother Earth's children and should be rewarded for your fine help,' he said to Hawk. 'I am making you the Guardian Spirit for the people, so that they will always have your wisdom to help them live at peace in the world. I will give you a home in the tallest mountain, where you can watch over the people and guide them to live well, as Father Spirit wishes.'"

"So it is that Hawk Mountain became the home of Brother Hawk, and how Hawk came to be our Guardian Spirit. This, my people believe, is how the world came to be as it is today."

Song Flower said nothing at first, choosing instead, to visualize mighty spirits doing battle over the land. Jajeff said nothing more, waiting for her to tell him what she thought of his story. After a while, she spoke in a dreamy voice.

"If I let my mind believe in River and Storm as people jealously fighting over something very valuable, I can begin to see how your story does explain the creation of this part of your world. Thinking of it in this way, your story makes as much sense as the one a scientist might tell."

"Yes, only the scientist's story would not make sense to a people who did not know about your science. This one is much better for my people to understand because it tells why the world is the way it is."

"And why is that?" Song Flower ask because she could not see the reason why.

"Because the scientists would not tell of Father Spirit. Their story would not say that Father Spirit wants the world to be as it is." There was a reverence in Jajeff's voice that was infectious.

Song Flower thought about this, and was quiet as she looked over the land, seeing for the first time, that there might be a creator that willed the world to be as it is, a Father Spirit that wanted there to be people, and plants and animals, all living in harmony. She began to think as Jajeff's people thought, with a new reverence for her world.



## Song Flower of the Northern Hawk People

Song Flower awoke in little steps, first opening her eyes to see that Jajeff was already up and tending a small fire he had set under a pot of water. She noticed that the sky was barely illuminated by the sun, which was still hidden behind the mountain, and the air over the valley glowed with a transparent pink, so clean and clear that she could not imagine that there was any air at all, to mar her vision. She saw that Hawk Mountain was ablaze in the morning sun, its base still dark in shadows, as was the valley floor. As she lay in her warm bed, she heard a bird call, then another, and in moments, the morning air was filled with the sound of hundreds of birds calling to the sky, bright sounds that matched the clear air in purity. She sat up, trying to suppress tears that threatened to well up in her eyes from some primal memory of how her world could have been, but could no longer be, because of the sound of machinery spewing tons of aerosols into the air.

"Why do the birds sing so loudly? Is there trouble," she asked Jajeff, suppressing her urge to cry, sniffing loudly despite her efforts.

"Well, good morning my love," Jajeff greeted her, and looked around at the forest. "It is the Dawn Chorus, that you are hearing. Our feathered brothers of the forest must sing to the sun, or else it might not rise."

"It is so beautiful." She stood, modestly holding the sleeping bag over her shoulders.

"Turn around," she insisted.

Jajeff grinned at her but turned as she requested. In moments, Song Flower stepped to Jajeff's side and hugged him warmly. Then, she walked to the edge of the flat place where they were camped, and looked over the forest and the valley below.

"The morning is so bright and crisp. Everything seems brighter, bigger, healthier than I could imagine things being in my world," she said, and turned to Jajeff. "Did it rain during the night?"

"No, it is the morning dew. Wait until the sun shines on it. It will look as if the world has been draped in tiny diamonds. Now come and eat so that we can be on the trail before the sun reaches this side of the valley. I would like to be in our village before the sun peaks.

After they had eaten and Jajeff had repacked their things, they set out on the trail that led to the valley, Jajeff leading the way, Song Flower following close behind, carrying Bonnet in a pack, that Jajeff had fashioned especially for that purpose. High overhead, a lone crow signaled the presence of people in the forest, telling the other animals that Jajeff and Song Flower were coming, as was its duty.

This was the time of returning for Jajeff that he had dreamed of, but it was also the time of arrival for Song Flower, and she wondered what she would say and do, and if her command of the language was sufficient to make herself understood without committing a social blunder. She remembered the movies she had seen of Indians fighting with settlers and how they had been portrayed as murdering, scalping heathens, who stole women and children and killed the men. More modern movies had reassured her that this was not the case and that the Native Americans were as civilized as the white man, but knowing how effective propaganda could be for both sides of an issue, she wondered if there wasn't some of truth in both versions. Thinking this did not help her sense of well-being, nor did Jajeff's transformation into an outdoors man, as he did before her eyes at the camp, by making fire from wood and stone and eating leaves directly from the bushes as if they were fruit.

She realized that she really did not know what she was getting into, and these thoughts competed with the wonder of the forest for her attention, as they walked mostly in silence, listening to the forest and savoring the beauty of the land. They walked for nearly an hour in this way, Jajeff occasionally stopping to point out something interesting near the trail, once to watch two deer pass near them, once to let a bear do the same.

"This is the stream that passes by my village. It is small here, but grows larger by the time it is at the village, and empties into River." Jajeff stopped so that Song Flower could admire a small waterfall.

It was an hour or better after they had reached the stream that Song Flower first heard the flute. The sound floated in the air, seemingly from everywhere, making her want to hum along, as if she should know words to go with the music.

"Do you hear that? What is it." Song Flower stopped and listened to the air, like a wild thing sensing the world, trying to decide if she should be frightened.

"It is a flute. We are getting close to the village, and there is a favorite swimming place nearby. Come, we will see." Excited, Jajeff took Song Flower's hand and lead her down the path.

The sound hung in the air, almost tangibly caressing her ears, encouraging her to close her eyes, so that she could try to imagine what the person must be saying with the music. The sound was not mournful, although it seemed to evoke memories of a lonely, windswept morning on the South Jetty. It was not happy either, for it sometimes brought tears to her eyes, as she let it flow through her mind. It made a full-bodied sound that filled her with a sense of wonder for the primeval forest and a deep happiness for being there.

"How strange," she mused to herself, "that a simple flute can bring so many feeling with so few notes." It seemed to her that the gods were making music to guide her entry into her new world, and she was almost disappointed when they rounded a turn in the trail and saw a young man sitting on a log, his back to a tree, a small wooden flute to his lips.

"Ho, Beaver, you make fine music this morning." Jajeff held his hand in the air to salute his friend.

"You are still alive, Jajeff!" was Beaver's excited reply as he put his flute away and stood to greet his visitors. "And you have brought Song flower!"

Song Flower was startled to hear her name and looked to Jajeff for an explanation. He did not see her concern.

"Yes, this is the wonderful woman I have gone to the Dim World to bring home. Song Flower, this is Beaver, One Who Makes Water. He is the one who uses the beaver dams to bring water to our plants in the summer."

Song flower could not find the right words to answer and so only smiled at Beaver.

"I am happy to be the first to greet you and welcome you to our village." He made a show of looking down the trail toward the village. "Even though you are still many paces from there." He laughed good-naturedly.

Jajeff watched Song Flower for a moment with interest and decided it would be best if she had time to find her new language without prodding.

"Let us join you while we have something to eat. We have done little but walk the trail from Stone Mountain."

"You come from the sacred place where we found your pack? Tell me about it." Beaver was clearly excited, as he began to realize the magnitude of Jajeff's adventure.

"Yes, I will. It will give me a chance to make my story better for Chief Shield Hand." Jajeff sat his packs down near the log and waved to Song Flower to join him, as he relaxed to tell their story.

"In a moment, My Love," She said apologetically. "I wish to see the swimming place before I join you." She could not let Jajeff see that she was having an attack of anxiety over meeting his people and thought being by herself for a few moments would help.

The stream was hidden by small bushes, and it took Song Flower a moment to find her way past them, but soon she stood by a small pool of water, well hidden from the men by the same bushes. Grateful to be alone, she sat on a rock and held her knees close to her chest, while she took several deep breaths, her eyes tightly closed to shut out the reality around her, tears wetting her cheek.

"Do you cry for happiness, or do you fear the men you run from?" A wonderfully melodious voice wafted to Song Flower from the pool of water in front of her.

"Oh!" Song Flower was startled by the voice, and she could not see at first, who spoke to her.

"It is okay. Please, forgive me for frightening you," the voice said earnestly. "I will not hurt you, Song Flower."

Song Flower finally located the woman floating in the water near the rocks on the other side of the pool, only her head above water, her long hair floating like a wreath around her.

"It seems everyone knows my name." Song Flower found her voice in the anger she felt at her own timidity. "Who are you?"

"Ho, that is better, You can be strong too." The woman moved toward Song Flower, waving her arms and legs almost imperceptibly in the clear water.

"I am One Who Knows, Beaver's woman, but sometimes he calls me Fish, because I so dearly love to come here to bathe. He plays for me to keep the spirits happy, so that I can bathe in peace." She reached the edge of the pool near Song Flower and climbed from the water.

"Oh, you have no swimming suit." Song Flower spoke involuntarily, startled by One Who Knows' simple nudity. She had to use her words for "swimming suit," because she knew of no such words in One Who Knows' language.

One Who Knows laughed, delighted at Song Flower's dismay, and took a soft leather garment from a tree limb and adeptly wrapped it around her thin body, forming a comfortable dress. Her eyes twinkled her amusement, as she sat beside Song Flower with a single, fluid motion, mesmerizing Song Flower with her grace.

"See, I have clothes too." She put her hand on Song Flower's arm, softly, as if a breeze had touched her there, and closed her eyes for a moment before speaking.

Song Flower could only sit and stare, her arm tingling from the soft touch.

"You are a happy person, but overwhelmed with concern that you will embarrass Jajeff. Let me talk with you, and show you that his are good people who will judge only what you give them to judge, not what you imagine they might judge."

Song Flower felt tears crowd out from her eyes, an uncomfortable quiver pulling at her chin. For all of the time spent with Jajeff's friends in her world and all of the time spent with him, she had not been able to talk openly about her concerns, her fear that she would not do well in his world. By One Who Knows' display of simple kindness and unmasked honesty, she recognized someone safe, whom she could talk with about her fears. She let her relief overwhelm her self-control and cried openly, happy to be able to do so in front of someone who might listen. One Who Knows waited patiently for her storm to pass.

After Song Flower's tears subsided, One Who Knows touched Song Flower on her arm again.

"Surely Jajeff has explained our culture to you and explained how we treat one another."

"Yes he has, but hearing him tell it is not the same as experiencing it. I lived in a large village that is close to other, even larger villages. There were always many people around me, and so we had different rules governing how to behave." Song Flower indicated One Who Knows' garment. "For instance, we would never swim without clothes. It simply is not done, except in very private places."

One Who Knows laughed happily, her eyes twinkling in the sunlight.

"This is a very private place . . . before you and Jajeff came, that is."

"I'm sorry. You are right. We did intrude."

"No, not intrude. I only mean to say that, in our way, we are also private people. I prefer to swim here, because I can do so in private. I am not ashamed of my body, I do not hide it, but I also do not show it to every young man who would stare at me. I am Beaver's woman," she added proudly. "No, I think you will find us very much like your people, but with different ways of being the same."

"When are you two going to come and join us?" Sensing that there was woman talk underway, Jajeff cautiously leaned around a bush to look at Song Flower and One Who Knows, careful not to seem to intrude.

"Oh, hello Jajeff. Welcome back. Now go away. We are still talking." One Who Knows fluttered her eyes at Jajeff, sarcastically mimicking a flirting girl. Then she giggled, her voice like a wind chime dancing in a breeze.

Jajeff sighed and disappeared from view, and Song Flower laughed.

"Will your people accept me as you have?" Song Flower asked, her voice tentative, showing her deep concern.

"It will take time, but yes, they will accept you. At first, you will be a curiosity to them. Jajeff has told them much about the Dim World . . . I mean your world, and we all feel that we already know you, but as you know, actually seeing you is quite a different thing."

"It is okay to call my world dim. Especially after being here, I understand why Jajeff calls my world the Dim World. It is dim compared to here."

One Who Knows smiled, but otherwise declined to pursue any subject that might make Song Flower uncomfortable.

"Jajeff tells me that everyone in his village has a duty that helps the people survive. What do you do?" Song Flower had been working around to ask One Who Knows what she did for a living, since she had first heard her name.

"I do many things. Soon I will bear Beaver a child, and so, I will be a mother and join the other mothers taking care of the children, but today I tend the crops and prepare the food for Beaver and me to eat now, and in the winter. Sometimes I talk with others, as I do now with you. It is this I do to earn my name, for by touching you, I can know what is in your heart."

"How wonderful to have such a gift. Jajeff with his Eyes of the Forest and the gift of seeing I understand Mother Lily has and the others . . . . Your people must be very special in this world."

"Not really, many people have such gifts. Surely your people have such gifts as well."

"Some, I have heard of, but nothing as common as in this world. Can I ask you another personal question?"

"Yes."

Song Flower looked at One Who Knows' waist.

"You are so thin. How can you be pregnant?"

One Who Knows grinned and looked down at her body.

"It is only a cycle ago that Beaver succeeded in proving his manhood for me. You wait and see, in three more cycles, I will be as big as Mother Lily." She had a dreamy look in her eyes, anticipating her child.

"Now, do you feel up to being the center of attention?" One Who Knows asked playfully. "We really should join the men."

She bounded to her feet and held a hand out for Song Flower.

"Yes, I feel much better now," Song flower answered, happy to realize that she really did.

The two women joined Beaver and Jajeff, and the four followed the trail to their village, talking and sharing stories as they did, Song Flower nearly forgetting her fears.

Near the village, they met a man who was responsible for watching the trail to assure the people were not surprised by unwelcome visitors. He greeted Jajeff and the others warmly and was delighted to meet Song Flower.

"May I tell the village you are coming? Shield Hand would be upset, if I let you surprise him."

"Yes, tell them of our arrival, so that they can properly welcome Song Flower," Jajeff agreed, putting his arm around Song Flower.

The man stepped over to a dead tree that leaned against a still live one, and hit it hard with a rock. Three times he hit it to tell those that could hear the sound that they should gather in front of the council lodge, and then he turned and ran down the trail and quickly out of sight.

"There. Now when we arrive, there will be friends to greet us," Jajeff explained, with a grin of pride. "We should walk slowly to give them time to prepare."

"And we should walk fast, so that you do not have to share the center of attention with us," One Who Knows said, as she poked Beaver in his side and steered him down the trail, giggling at how he jumped when she had poked him in the behind.

After a few minutes, but what seemed like an eternity to Song Flower, they came into view of the village, where they could see the people hurrying to gather in front of a large building. Jajeff had described the village to Song Flower, but nothing he had said, prepared her for the reality before her. It seemed to her that a whole community of buildings had been neatly merged with the forest. Everywhere she looked were wood and clay buildings mingled with trees, as if they had grown where they stood, rather than being built there. Trails and small open areas were edged with bushes and paved with stones and pine needles. The stream bound one side of the village and a small hill, the other, further enhancing the appearance of the village blending into the forest. On the other side of the stream were small fields cut from the meadow land, the ground dotted with rows of freshly cultivated mounds of dirt. A herd of goats were fenced beyond the fields where utility buildings formed protection for them and a place to store foods. Beyond all of this was evidence of River, where it cut deep into the valley floor.

"This is beautiful. Why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" Song Flower pushed her shoulder against Jajeff playfully, secretly thanking One Who Knows for helping her understand her fear.

"It is, isn't it. I was not sure I would see it again." Jajeff stopped and turned to Song Flower, holding her by her arms in front of him.

She could see tears in his eyes, tears that fell from eyes full of happiness and delight that he was home again. She pushed her forehead at his and kissed him warmly, wanting to feel the wonder he felt, to share his homecoming as he knew it.

"My Love, thank you so very much for coming with me," he said, almost breathlessly. "Thank you for being here. I do love you." He hugged her to him for a long moment before they turned and entered the village.

"Don't forget what you just said, when I say something stupid to your people that embarrasses you," Song Flower cautioned him mischievously.

"Oh, I am sure you will say many things that will embarrass me, but that is part of learning new ways. It will probably be those silly things that will delight my people and make them your people. This is going to be fun, so have fun."

Song Flower looked at Jajeff to see how he intended his words and saw that he had a big grin on his face and was clearly having fun.

"Yes, it will be fun," She agreed and held firmly to his arm, as they walked into the gathering place of the village.

When they arrived, they found Chief Shield Hand standing in front of the council lodge with the people arrayed behind him and to his sides. As nearly as Jajeff could tell, the entire village was there, smiling and itching to run to them and greet them. However, since the chief had the authority to turn strangers away, it was custom that Jajeff would first present himself, and the stranger that accompanied him to the chief, before such displays could be permitted.

When they reached the center of the gathering place and stood facing the council lodge, Jajeff indicated to Song Flower that she should remain where she stood, as he set his pack on the ground and removed a pair of binoculars from it. Holding them in front of him, he stepped forward to stand before Shield Hand. Song Flower looked around at the gathered people, growing more nervous as she did, until she found One Who Knows and Beaver standing near the chief. One Who Knows smiled at her, seeming to tell her that she was safe there.

A rather large woman stood near Two Hand's right side, grinning broadly first at Jajeff and then at Song Flower, and Song Flower knew with certainty that the woman was Mother Lily, for it was only she in the crowd who showed the pride of a mother for Jajeff's success.

"Chief Shield Hand." Jajeff bowed his head slightly to his chief. "The people in the Dim World who helped me learn the Dim World ways, have asked me to give you this fine gift as a token of their friendship." He handed Shield Hand the binoculars.

Shield Hand accepted them and examined them, while Jajeff explained how they worked. The chief was truly impressed and proudly handed them to Beaver to look at and to show the others.

Then Shield Hand embraced Jajeff, and holding him by his shoulders, shook him in a manly gesture of friendship.

"Welcome, Young Jajeff. Welcome home."

"I have returned from the Dim World, as I said I would, and as I said I would, I have returned with Song Flower. With your permission, she will live amongst the people, and with your blessings, she will be my woman." Jajeff turned slightly and put his hand out for Song Flower to join him.

Jajeff recited the words that Song Flower knew would open the door for entrance into Hawk People society. She knew Shield Hand would permit her to stay, but her stature in the village would depend a great deal on how he greeted her. As Jajeff explained, if Shield Hand only greeted her, then she would have much work to do to win the hearts of the people, but if he took her to the council lodge to introduce her to the elders, then she could easily join the inner circle of village life.

"Either way, you and I will have our work ahead of us to help the people get used to having you around, so do not take how he greets you too seriously." Jajeff had warned her.

Song Flower stepped beside Jajeff and smiled politely at the old man who stood before her, remembering that Jajeff had also warned her that the man before her would know much of what she was thinking.

She chose her words carefully, being sure to use ones she knew the meaning of.

"I am honored to be before you, Chief Shield Hand."

A murmur of excitement wafted around the gathered Hawk People, when they heard Song Flower speak their language in her strong voice. This demonstration of her determination to be accepted by them, pleased them, and made them want Shield Hand to welcome her into the council lodge.

"It is we who are honored, my child. You are welcome to our village. Come, let our people greet you." With that, Shield Hand stepped aside to permit the people to surround Jajeff and Song Flower.

It seemed that everyone started talking at once, as they gathered around, touching Jajeff and Song Flower, holding their hands and trying to ask them about their adventures.

Stunned, Jajeff ignored them for a moment and stared at Shield Hand, who only shrugged and retreated to the council lodge. Then Jajeff looked to Mother Lily for assistance, but she also shrugged and followed the chief into the lodge. Song Flower watched this and felt her fears return like thunder in her head.

She fainted.

Jajeff moved swiftly to catch her before she reached the ground. He lifting her into his arms and stood for a moment to assess the reaction of his people, before starting toward Mother Lily's lodge.

"Ho, my friends," Jajeff said over Song Flower's limp form. "Song Flower has been very tense about how you would receive her, and I do believe your overwhelming acceptance of her has been too much for her to take all at once. I will take her to Mother Lily's lodge, so that she can rest and become used to the idea of being here."

Song Flower woke up while Jajeff carried her across the gathering place, but was too embarrassed to open her eyes.

"Are we alone," she asked Jajeff, when the sound of the crowd subsided.

"Yes, my love. Are you okay?" Even though he tried to be nonchalant about what had happened, Jajeff's voice betrayed his concern for her.

"Yes," she answered in a weak voice.

"How embarrassing!" She complained. "'Put me down. I can walk."

"Yes, you can walk, but I would rather carry you. We will go to Mother Lily's lodge where you can lay down and rest for a while."

Song Flower continued to protest, but did as Jajeff asked, and in a short while, she was fast asleep, Jajeff sitting beside her on the sleeping pad, holding her hand and telling her a long, boring story about how Brother Goat was given its name.

Hours later, Song Flower awoke to a dream that she was being chased by a little, fat man holding a long spear over his head and yelling at her, demanding that she return to her world. He poked at her with the spear, and she nearly screamed, as she opened her eyes. She remained still, trying to remember where she was, listening to voices coming from beyond a nearby partition.

"I tell you there is no excuse for the way Shield Hand treated Song Flower."

Song Flower heard Jajeff's voice come to her, muffled and angry. She was lying on a pile of firs in a small room, a slight breeze drifting in from a window to cool her face.

"Yes, he was being a slug, but he is our chief, and you have to put up with it. I talked to him afterwards. He wouldn't come right out and say why he is being so stubborn, because he

knows I'm on your side, but I think he is put off by how different she is from us. She just isn't one of the people, and he doesn't want to mix our blood with someone from a different world."

"That voice must be Mother Lily's," Song Flower thought, her face growing hot with anger from the words she heard.

"She isn't one of those little people the story tellers are always scaring the children with. She is just like you and I, only white. She will bring much to our people," Jajeff insisted, his voice still laden with anger.

Song Flower stood, hitting her head against a basket full of roots that hung from the wall, making enough noise for Jajeff and Mother Lily to hear that she was up. She made her way into the main room of the lodge, walking slowly, so that she would not stumble over something in the dimly lit room.

"My dear, did we wake you with our arguing?" Mother Lily stood and moved to help her find a place to sit.

"It is okay. I have had more sleep than I care for. What happened to me, Jajeff?"

"Do you remember fainting? You nearly hit the ground before I caught you." Jajeff explained, a worried look on his face, as he brushed hair from Song Flower's forehead.

"Yes, I remember, and I remember talking to you afterwards, but it is all a blur."

"I am Mother Lily, child, and I know a thing or two about fainting people. You have been apprehensive about meeting us, haven't you." Her kindly smile reassured Song Flower that she was a friend.

"Yes, I guess I have. I thought I had my fear under control, but when Chief Shield Hand did not invite me into the lodge, it all came back to me. Then the people gathering around me . . . ." Her anxiety crowded back into her mind, and a fearful look came to her face, as she reached for Jajeff's hand for comfort.

"Yes, I can understand your reaction." Mother Lily handed her a cup of tea. "Here, drink this. It will help you regain your composure. You drink your tea too, Jajeff. You need it more than she does."

Mother Lily abruptly changed the subject, asking Song Flower questions about her world and telling her things she might like to know about her new home. Later, One Who Knows came in, and soon after that, the three women drove Jajeff away, so that they could talk more comfortably.

"It is late, and you still must find a place to sleep," Mother Lily told Jajeff, as she pushed him out the door. "Song Flower will sleep here for tonight, and if she likes, until you can get Shield Hand to bless your joining. Now go and make peace with Shield Hand or something. And Jajeff," She added. "Welcome home, my friend. You did good."

Mother Lily and Jajeff shared a moment of private friendship, as they looked into each other's eyes. Then, Jajeff promised Song Flower that all would look better in the morning and retreated from Mother Lily's lodge.

Days later, Shield Hand had still not changed his mind, and Song flower remained Mother Lily's guest. As they had done the previous days, after they had finished the daily chores, Mother Lily, One Who Knows, and Song Flower sat together on Mother Lily's favorite rock by the stream. The light was nearly gone, and Song Flower knew that she would have to endure yet another night listening to Mother Lily's terrible snoring, and once again became angry with Shield Hand.

The laws of Jajeff's people were not overly strict about lovers sharing a lodge together, but there was a code of good judgment that said they would not until blessed by the chief. This blessing and a ceremony soliciting the good favor of Father Spirit, conducted where all

in the village could join in, was the Hawk People's equivalent of a marriage ceremony, a ceremony that provided a fine excuse for a feast.

Jajeff had warned Song Flower of the danger that they might not gain the chief's blessings right away, but he assured her that they would in time. He was confident that his good standing with the chief gave him sufficient authority to have his way. However, thus far, Song Flower had seen no such authority, and she was beginning to worry that the blessing might never come. Meanwhile, she stayed near Mother Lily and sometimes, One Who Knows, learning more of their culture as she looked for a way to fit in.

Jajeff was spending most of his time rushing about, trying to train his people in the new way of planting he had learned in the Dim World, trying to tell them of better irrigation methods, and better ways of feeding the plants. But still confident that Shield Hand would relent, Jajeff also staked out a place by the stream and had begun work on the lodge he hoped to bring Song Flower to, when she gained acceptance.

"Mother Lily, what am I going to do? It has been three days since Jajeff and I arrived and Shield Hand still will not accept me."

"I have grown to know you rather well, these few days, and I feel you are fitting in very nicely." Mother Lily offered, while she patted Song Flower on her arm reassuringly. "The only thing I can think of for you to do, my friend, is to continue as you are. You will eventually show Shield Hand that he was wrong about you, and in doing so, you will gain his acceptance. I know of no other way."

"I will be an old woman by then." Song Flower exaggerated a pouting face to show her displeasure.

"There is another way, if you are brave enough to take it." One Who Knows' melodious voice drifted amongst the woman.

"What is it? I will do anything."

"Shield Hand cannot deny Father Spirit, so if Father Spirit accepts you, so must Shield Hand."

"Yes, you are correct, One Who Knows," Mother Lily agreed. "But there may be great risk for Song Flower in seeking Father Spirit's blessings, if it is a quest you are suggesting."

"No, not just a quest to commune with Father Spirit. She must seek her Guardian Spirit as many of us have done."

Mother Lily put her hand on Song Flower's shoulder.

"Of course. The last thing Shield Hand said before he had refused to discuss the subject any longer, was that you are not of the people. If one of the brothers of the forest accepts you and becomes your Guardian, he would have to admit that you have become one of the people." Mother Lily was quiet for a moment. "But will Father Spirit let the brother of the forest accept you?"

"That is the danger, for if Song Flower embarks on a quest to find her Guardian Spirit and fails, then there would be little hope of Shield Hand ever accepting her. In fact, he may feel that he must drive her from the village, rejecting her as did Father Spirit." One Who Knows' voice had an ominous tone to it.

"You are wise for your age, One Who Knows. It is a good thought, but I do not believe it is worth the risk." Mother Lily began to stand up.

"Hold it! Don't I have something to say about this? What is the quest, anyway?"

"I will tell you in my lodge. The little pests are beginning to bite, and they will drain all of my blood if we do not go inside."

They retreated from the stream, leaving it to the swarms of mosquitoes just coming out for the evening.

Jajeff met them in front of the lodge and joined them inside.

"What have you been doing today?" he asked Song Flower, his happy voice masking his concern for how she was managing.

She answered him and then excitedly added that she was going to go find a Guardian Spirit, whatever that was.

"Not on your life!" Jajeff barked, giving One Who Knows and Mother Lily a stern look.

Surprised and intrigued by his reaction, Song Flower grew stubborn and insisted she would do as she wished.

"I am going and that is final," she said with a dramatic stamp of her foot for emphasis. "The only thing is, I still don't know what a quest is."

One Who Knows laughed and looked to Jajeff for permission to explain. Jajeff raised his hands in the air in surrender, and moved to Mother Lily's fire pit to start a fire.

"Part of the initiation for young men, who are old enough to take their place amongst the adults, is a time spent by themselves in the forest. There, they commune with Father Spirit, alone and without food, until they are visited by one of the brothers of the forest, who talks to them and tells them that it will be their Guardian Spirit. Only then can the young man return a warrior. As he is given his Guardian by Father Spirit, he is also given a gift that is associated with that animal, and that he can use to benefit himself and the village. "Sometimes we women also undertake the quest, but we are not often give a Guardian Spirit," One Who Knows concluded, the tone of her voice telling Song Flower that she accepted the inevitable difference in treatment between men and women.

The room was silent for a long moment, as if her words still hung in the air. Then Jajeff broke the spell woven by One Who Knows' voice.

"So you can see, my love. Young men only undertake the quest after years of preparation. Sometimes even men fail to gain a Guardian, setting their place in the village for life, unless they find another way to show that they have a gift."

"Did you go on a quest?" Song Flower wanted to know of Jajeff.

"Yes, many, in fact. The last one was when I discovered how to enter your world. The first time was hard, and I nearly starved myself before giving up and returning to the village without a Guardian. It took me two quests before one came to me."

"How did you know when you had a Guardian?"

"Father Spirit sent Hawk to me, to tell me that I would be one who would guide the people. That is supposed to be my power, although I have yet to find it."

"Ha, young fool," Mother Lily scorned Jajeff. "You have used it many times already, and you know it. Even now, in your youth, all of the people look to you for inspiration, as if you are an Elder." She muttered something about overly modest men.

Embarrassed, Jajeff tried to change the subject.

"Surely you can see the danger of going on a quest without a thorough understanding of the forest."

"How do others know you didn't just make up your conversation with a hawk, so that you could come home?" Song Flower was determined to understand the quest.

One Who Knows grinned at her from across the room, and waited for Jajeff to answer.

"That is a good question, because after three or four days without food, it is very tempting to invent a Guardian to tell of. There is great danger in doing so, though. First, Father Spirit may never favor you in the future, and a lifetime without help from Father Spirit is a hard thing to look forward to. Then there is the probability that you will trip yourself up in some way that will show others you really do not have a Guardian Spirit. But the real reason you persist, until you succeed or give up and admit that you have not gained a Guardian, is that

you are taught to understand that you are an important part of the whole, and can contribute with or without the power given by a Guardian Spirit. There is no shame in not having one, only benefit to the people that you can also provide in other ways."

"No shame, that is, unless you are an outsider," Song Flower added bitterly.

"No, that is not true, my friend," Mother Lily returned. The quest is only a way that we have discussed. It is not the only way to make Shield Hand accept you. We will find another." Mother Lily's words were full of wisdom, intended to reassure Song Flower that all would be well.

But, Song Flower's status did not improve, and she spent the following weeks working in the garden beside Jajeff, trying to apply what she knew of plants, hoping to show her new friends that she was worthy of their acceptance. She also took every opportunity to learn more about the Hawk People and the world they lived in, and the more she learned, the more she understood that they respected a willingness to open oneself to guidance from Father Spirit above all else, recognizing that willingness as a true sign of power. Seeing this, she determined that she had no choice but to undertake a quest for a Guardian Spirit.

"I am going to do it," she announced to One Who Knows, when she joined her in the field.

"Do What?" One Who Knows wanted to know, a perplexed look on her face.

"Go on a quest. I have thought about it a great deal and see no other way. Now you must help me."

"Jajeff will hate me forever if I help you. Please don't do this." Her voice was full of concern.

"I must." Song Flower plucked yet another weed from the row of cucumber sprouts she had started from seeds she had carried from her world. "There is no other way, and you know it. It has been three weeks, and there is no sign that Shield Hand will relent."

One Who Knows looked around to see if others could hear. They were alone in the farthest field, near the bluff, where they could see River laying placidly in its banks. A slight breeze pulled at her braided hair, drawing her eyes to a line of clouds that hung motionless between the lines of mountains bounding the valley, a buzzard drifting toward the far side of River looking for work and a meal.

A decision formed in her mind and she raised her hands, palms toward the sky, a look of resignation on her face.

"What do you want me to do?"

"You have already prepared me for the quest by telling me everything you can about your ways. All I have to do is walk into the woods and be left alone long enough to have a decent encounter with a spirit. When Jajeff comes to you looking for me, can you tell him that you thought I might have gone back to the sacred place, where we came into this world? That will put him off of the trail long enough for me to get lost in the forest in another direction."

One Who Knows grinned at the thought of fooling Jajeff.

"You have such strange ways of showing your understanding of our customs, Song Flower." She thought for a moment. "It is my fear that you will get lost and become dinner for Brother Bear. If you did, I would forever carry the shame for letting this happen to you."

"If I did, then at least I will have died trying to be with my man. There are worse ways to die, such as from shame for not trying. Will you help me?"

"Very well, but only if Jajeff asks. If he asks, I will tell him to look on Stone Mountain. In turn, you must tell me where you will be."

"I will be on Hawk Mountain. If Hawk is chief spirit in this valley, I will take my problem directly to him." Song Flower's expression made it clear to One Who Knows that there would be no talking her out of her decision.

"Tell Jajeff I love him," Song Flower said, and hugged One Who Knows before casually wandering over the bluff as if going on an afternoon stroll, hoping to avoid alerting anyone who might be watching her from a distance.

Song Flower had been a cross-country runner both in high school and in college, and she found the many trails easy for running and made good progress reaching the foothills of Hawk Mountain by nightfall. That night was hard for her, since she had not realized just how cold it could be at night, especially when the dew formed on her clothes. She had not thought to carry material to make a fire but would dare not, even if she had, because she knew it would give her location away to Jajeff.

"Jajeff," she thought with a moment of yearning to be with him, knowing that he was probably already at the sacred site on Stone Mountain looking for her. Guilt pulled at her attention, giving her a hollow feeling and a sense of impending doom. She realized that she was defying him, and wondered if he would trust her in the future, wondered if she would win acceptance from Shield Hand only to lose it from the man she loved? Her guilt was only exceeded by her sudden concern, when she heard a baby crying only paces from where she had chosen for the night. The sound of the baby crying grew louder, and in the twilight, she could just make out a large cat moving toward her from cover of a nearby bush.

She had been sitting at the base of a large tree, and stood when she recognized the danger she was in, pressing herself against the tree, frantically looking for a way to escape. But before she could react, she heard a "zzzz--thud" as a small shaft suddenly appeared in the ground next to the mountain lion, startling it, and giving it ample reason to run away.

"By the Spirits, Song Flower, how can you run so fast? I nearly did not get here in time to save your skinny hind-end. What am I to do with you?" Still panting, One Who Knows, came up the trail to stand in front of her, a second arrow ready in her bow.

"Oh, One Who Knows. I thought I was its dinner. Thank you, thank you." Song Flower put her arms around One Who Knows and gave her a huge hug until her shaking subsided.

After she had recovered her nerve, Song Flower stepped back and looked at her rescuer suspiciously.

"Why did you follow me?"

"Silly question. I had hoped to follow from a distance, so that you would believe you were on your own, but now I guess you will have to share your vision with me. I will be your witness."

"Will that work?" she asked, doubtfully.

"I don't know, really, but I refuse to go back without you, so it will just have to work."

Song Flower said nothing, her expression betraying her doubt, so One Who Knows tried to make her point again.

"Song Flower, I would never forgive myself, if you were hurt out here."

"Very well. Of course you are right," Song Flower agreed, her expression brightening as she accepted that she would not need to be in the forest alone.

The two women walked aimlessly around the base of Hawk Mountain for three days without hint of a spiritual visitation. Song Flower refused to eat the food found and offered by One Who Knows, but insisted that One Who Knows did eat, so that she would be in good condition to take care of them. Song flower had long since stopped feeling her stomach and had come to terms with her frequent bouts of dizziness, being careful to stay on level ground as much as possible.

"Besides," Song Flower reminded One Who Cares, "You have a baby to feed."

On the morning of the fourth day and just before dawn, when One Who Knows was still sleeping, Song Flower left her bed of pine needles and went to a nearby stream to wash her

face. When she returned, she saw a large, nearly snow white hawk standing on the ground between her and One Who Knows, a piece of vine with a small melon attached to it, hanging from its beak.

Song Flower stopped, not wanting to disturb such a magnificent bird, afraid she was about to have another bout of dizziness.

"Was this an illusion," she wondered, having never seen such a white hawk before.

"One Who Knows," she whispered, urgently trying to wake One Who Knows so that she could offer a second opinion.

One Who Knows stirred, and instinctively reached for her bow, but when she saw the hawk, she stopped moving and waited to see what the bird would do.

"What are you doing here, Brother Hawk? It is not natural for you to stand on the ground as people do," Song Flower asked in a lilting voice, believing her thinking was growing fuzzy.

The hawk continued to gaze at her, stepping from one foot to the other, slightly rocking back and forth as it did.

"Do you need help?" Song Flower tried again.

One Who Knows still did not move. The hawk continued to rock from foot to foot.

"Are you my Guardian Spirit?"

The big bird bent its head and placed the vine on the ground in a fluid motion. Then, it stood tall and gazed at Song Flower for a long, meaningful moment, its eyes flashing in the morning light. Apparently satisfied that it had fulfilled its purpose, the hawk screeched loudly, its call echoing from the surrounding trees, as it spread its wings to their fullest extend, reminding Song Flower of totems she had seen. With a single motion, it pulled a feather from a wing and then leaped into the air with a thunder of dust and feathers, the feather that it had pulled from its wing, lying on the ground beside the vine.

The two women watched open mouthed, as the white hawk soared over the valley and out of sight.

"Did you see that?" Song Flower nearly yelled to One Who Knows. She was so excited.

"Yes," One Who Knows said with wonder in her voice. "Never have I seen such a magnificent hawk, nor have I known of one to stand on the ground in the middle of a camp. It actually pulled one of its feathers for you. Truly, your Guardian Spirit is Hawk."

She thought for a moment.

"White Hawk," she corrected and looked at Song Flower with new respect, and went to her, embracing her with great happiness.

Song Flower was numb from the experience and did not know what to think. For her Dim World mind, such a display of mystery was almost too much to comprehend.

"What do you suppose it was trying to say with this prickly melon and its feather?" she asked, sitting on the ground near the two objects, afraid to touch them.

"It is his way of saying that you and he are now linked, as you are with this melon." One Who Knows picked up the gifts and held them for Song Flower to examine. "He apparently intends to give you the power to grow food."

Song flower accepted the gifts, as if they were precious stones and held them to her chest, her eyes closed in thanks to God for his help--and to Father Spirit for accepting her.

"Come, first you must eat, and then we will return to the village. We have much to tell our people." One Who Knows set about building their first fire.

Late that afternoon, when they were near the village, One Who Knows ran ahead to tell Jajeff of their arrival and to tell Chief Shield Hand of the hawk and the melon, and how Song Flower was truly one of the people, because Hawk had chosen to be her Guardian Spirit. Two

of the lookouts saw One Who Knows running toward the village as soon as she left the trees on the far side of the river. They sounded the alarm, summoning Jajeff and the others who were making plans in the council lodge for yet another search. By the time she reached the river and found a way to cross, Jajeff and the other men were waiting for her on the other side.

"Jajeff! Jajeff!" One Who Knows shouted, nearly unable to speak, she was so out of breath from running. Beaver ran into the water and put his arm around her to help her stand.

"You must be careful to protect our child," he hissed at her, concerned that she might overextend her good health by running so hard.

One Who Knows grinned at him and hugged him wildly, as he tried to concentrate on bringing her to shore. Once on shore, she looked at each of the men to see who was there. When she spotted Shield Hand still running and puffing up the trail to join them, she jumped up and down and yelled at him.

"Hurry Chief. This concerns you most of all." She waited, hugging Beaver and reassuring him that their child was well and telling Jajeff to be patient, that Song Flower was safe on the trail behind her.

Jajeff was considering yelling at One Who Knows to make her tell him about Song Flower's quest, when Shield Hand finally joined the group, and she delivered her message.

"Song Flower is just beyond the trees where she returns from Hawk Mountain. Even though she has taken up her quest for a Guardian Spirit on her own, I have been with her and have witnessed her success. When she comes to you, you must know her as Song Flower of the Northern Hawk People and know that she is Hawk Woman, because she has gained the protection of White Hawk."

For a moment, everyone there remained silent, too stunned to react to her words. Jajeff's blank expression turned to understanding first, and then One Who Knows saw that Shield Hand also understood the meaning of her words. When she could see that he understood, she poked an accusing finger toward Shield Hand, as she continued.

"You have refused Song Flower, because she is not one of us, because she is not one of the Hawk People, only a white woman who does not know our ways. Now you must reconsider, because she has learned our ways and has accepted them as her own. She knew that she put her life in danger when she ventured into the forest alone, because she did not know the ways of the forest, yet she did as she felt she must. Can't you see? By this, she is saying that your acceptance of her is more important to her than is life?" One Who Knows said her words as emphatically as she could, hoping to convince Shield Hand of her sincerity.

"Tell me how it is that you think she has earned my respect." Shield Hand was not impressed.

One Who Knows held her hand out to Shield Hand. Hawk's white wing feather glistened in the sunlight on her palm, the piece of vine dangling between her fingers. When the old chief saw these things, he could no longer deny what One Who Knows was telling her.

"Well . . . perhaps it is the will of Father Spirit," Shield Hand began, and then shrugged, and turned toward the village. "If even Hawk tells me I am wrong, then I must be wrong," he mumbled, and stopping, turned to look at Jajeff. "We will celebrate a new member of the Hawk People, this night." He turned again, and still mumbling to himself, returned to the village.

Jajeff let out a "Whoop" of delight, and ran to join Song Flower and to escort her the rest of the way to the village. He found her walking confidently on the trail, obviously enjoying the success of her quest. He knew this, because he first heard her singing and then found her picking flowers that grew along the trail, smelling each one as she did.

"Have you no concern for your safety, being here alone?" he asked, trying hard to look stern.

"Oh, Jajeff," she laughed and ran to him, dropping her flowers as she did, so that she could hold him.

"I am sorry if I worried you, but I had to do this by myself," she said, after they had finished their embrace. "No one would believe my success, if you were with me. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see. I would have never permitted it if I had known what you intended to do, yet I am proud of you beyond words, and even though the old grouch refuses to admit it, so is Shield Hand. When One Who Knows showed him your feather, he almost fell down, he was so amazed. Never have we seen such a white hawk feather."

"Then he believed her? He didn't think we had just found it lying on the trail?"

"He will always wonder if you did, but he trusts One Who Knows and does not think she would deceive him. No, you have impressed him more than anything we could have said. Thanks to your daring, I am sure he will bless our joining."

Song Flower wiped tears from her eyes and kissed Jajeff, thanking him for being so understanding.

"What do we do now?" she asked when she had regained her composure.

"We should hurry back to the village. They are preparing a welcome for you, and we should not keep them waiting."

"Jajeff, there is one other thing," she said, her voice tentative.

"What is that?"

"There was a prickly melon in Hawk's beak. I think it has special meaning, but I am not sure. Hawk made a point of giving it to me before flying away."

He grinned at her and reminded her of the degree she had worked so hard for in the Dim World.

"As you know, the prickly melon is one of our best vegetables. I believe Hawk may be telling you and our people that the power it will give you is the power to grow good food. Remember, you have prepared many years for this gift in your world, as if you intended all along to bring new foods to our table." Jajeff hugged her again and led her toward the village. "Come, we must not keep our chief waiting."

Even before they reached the village, they could see that nearly everyone had gathered in front of the council lodge. Mother Lily met them first, at the edge of the village by the stream, her great body jiggling with each step, as she hurried to intercept them.

"My dear, you have worried us so," she said, as she smothered Song Flower with her hug. "I am so happy to see that you are safe."

"Yes, Mother Lily. I am safe, thanks to One Who Knows. It was she who frightened off a mountain lion on my first night." She turned to face Jajeff. "Oh Jajeff, the cat was going to attack me, but One Who Knows came just then and shot an arrow at it. You must tell the chief that she was much braver than me and saved my life."

"Yes, we will tell him. Now come. He waits for you at the council lodge," Mother Lily told her, and led them into the village to stand before Chief Shield Hand.

When they arrived, it took much hand-waving and yelling for Shield Hand to get everyone to stop trying to talk to Song Flower at the same time, and his face was red from the exertion, when he finally had everyone's attention, he began the ceremony.

"Song Flower, tell all of us about your quest. What have you discovered?" Shield Hand formally asked.

Song flower stepped over to One Who Knows' side and lead her into the center of the circle beside Jajeff. Once there, she recited their story, beginning with her request that One Who Knows tell Jajeff the wrong information, so that he would look on the wrong mountain, and the people made approving sounds at her wisdom by such a deception. She told of how One Who Knows found her just in the moment that she might have died, and of how One Who Knows remained to protect her and witness her quest. There were many admiring sounds from the people, complementing One Who Knows' dedication. When she had finished, she hugged first One Who Knows and then Jajeff, and everyone cheered for them.

When it was quiet again, Shield Hand continued.

"Song Flower, we thank you for the story of your quest and of how the great white hawk came to you and gave you its power." He held the feather and melon in the air between them, now tied together with a leather thong, so that it could be hung as a sign for others to know her power.

"By the success of your quest, you have shown me, and all the people, that you are sincere in your desire to be one of us. I love Jajeff as a son but could not accept his selection of you for his woman without first knowing this." Shield Hand gave the feather and melon to Song Flower.

"We are your people now, and we will know you as Song Flower of the Northern Hawk People, and we will know that as a Hawk Woman, your power is to assist Mother Earth to bring life to the land. Hang this by the entrance to the fine lodge Jajeff has made for you." He held his hands out for Song Flower and Jajeff to take and brought their hands together in a single clasp.

"Does this mean you bless our joining?" Song Flower asked through her tears.

"You have my blessings to be joined. It will be a good ceremony that Father Spirit will also bless."

Everyone yelled their congratulations to the new couple in unison. Then Shield Hand put his arm around Song Flower, separating her from Jajeff so that he could lead her into the council lodge.

"Come, Song Flower, let us talk with the elders about your new gift."

Jajeff grinned and watched the one he loved enter the council lodge with Shield Hand, his pride in Song Flower clear on his face. Then he turned from the gathering place and returned to the field Song Flower had planted and where he could be alone. There he cast his awareness to a great white hawk perched on the high rocks of Hawk Mountain, where it overlooked its domain.

"Thank you, Brother Hawk. Your assistance has been very helpful to me and my love." Jajeff let his thoughts of appreciation mingle with the alert awareness of the hawk, feeling its response as the memory of a warm sun on a winter's day.

Then Jajeff raised his hands to the sky and sang his thanks to Father Spirit, loudly, so that even the Dim World could hear.