

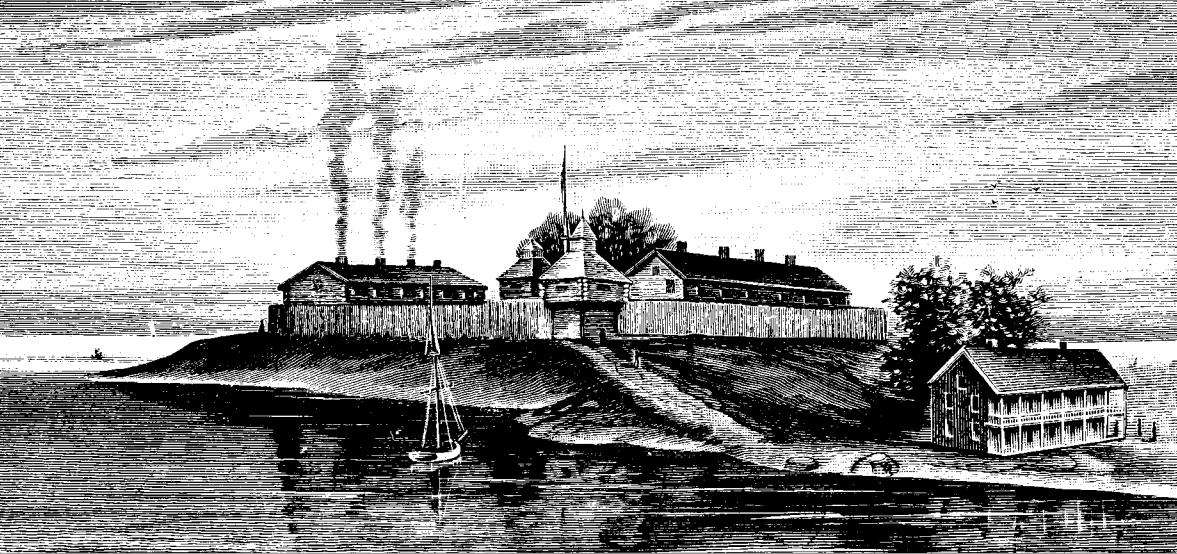
A Novel  
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# Fort Dearborn

Jerry Crimmins

Foreword by Gerald A. Danzer

*Fort Dearborn*



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A NOVEL

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*To my daughter, Kelly Naughton, and her husband,  
Kevin Naughton, my favorite teachers of history*



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## *Foreword*

Gerald A. Danzer

This is a book that speaks softly but carries a big stick. Read it and then pause. Be prepared to reflect on what it tells us about the Chicago experience and, finally, what it suggests about human nature and the striving for a just and fulfilling society that we call civilization.

Today several traces are all that remain of Fort Dearborn. There are the brass markers outlining the approximate location of the fort's walls at the foot of the Michigan Avenue Bridge and a few artifacts at the Chicago History Museum. A plan for the fort is also archived in Washington. Artists, it is true, have brought the scene to life over the years, usually using the log stronghold as a symbol for pioneer Chicago, the acorn from which a great city would sprout. The destruction of the fort and its people thus became a classic disaster which laid down a challenge to the urban spirit. The blood of the martyrs became, in the traditional story, the seed for a great city. An "I will" resolve soon rebuilt the fort, developed a port, and laid out a town.

In this telling of the story, Jerry Crimmins asks us to take another look. He reminds us that the struggle over Fort Dearborn marked the beginning of the end for the Indians here. He also points to the other great issue at stake in 1812: Would the western Great Lakes grow into a series of American states, as outlined in the Northwest Ordinance a quarter of a century earlier, or would the region become part of British North America? If British, would the Native American sovereignty have been honored in ways envisioned by leaders such as the great Tecumseh?

After all, when the soldiers raised the Stars and Stripes at the site of Fort Dearborn in 1803 one would be hard-pressed to find another U.S. flag flying in the continental quadrant north and west of the mouth of

the Chicago River. Although a good portion of this land was claimed as U.S. territory on the maps, the situation on the ground was much different. Various Indian peoples were in the process of adjusting to new ways of life brought by the fur traders, and everyone was operating within a system controlled by the British.

To help us envision the Chicago story of 1803 to 1812 in a new light, Mr. Crimmins uses two well-crafted tools: a detailed list of sources and a novel. These instruments, fact and fiction, are not often found between the covers of a single volume. A word on how they fit together might help readers appreciate the nature and extent of his contribution.

Each source is a fragment, but they coalesce into a legion of notes supporting a historical novel. Strung together, they become an unparalleled guide to the Fort Dearborn period of Chicago history.

The narrative is much more tidy, centering on the lives of two boys: Jimmy Wheeler, who lived inside the fort, and Strong Pike from the Potawatomi village a bit down the trail to the east. Both are fictional characters. Jimmy's life story provides the plot: he came to Chicago at age eight with his family; soon lost his mother to a bilious fever of the swampy site; came of age living with his father, a soldier; and then became one of the two members of the civilian militia to survive the destruction of the fort and its people in 1812. Strong Pike also matured in his adolescence, but in a society and culture that was being transformed, decimated, and pushed out by the advancing pressures of pioneer America.

As readers come to know Strong Pike and his people, they will see things from another perspective, maybe even perceive additional entries on the chart of gains and losses that sums up the significance of the period.

Mr. Crimmins as a novelist is reaching for a broad audience. He is not alone in using fictional devices to make a serious study more complete, fill in gaps in the historical record, make opposing viewpoints in the sources more understandable, or suggest possible connections between documents that would not normally go together. He has gone through great pains to construct a narrative close to the documents, buttressing his tale with wide-ranging references to primary and secondary sources.

In short, this is a unique book—or maybe two books in one cover.

It is a striking piece of synthesis, bringing together a wide variety of sources that inform this decade of Chicago's past. The author uses the fictional format to good advantage, moving the Native American experience to a central part of the story. Freed from the strict rules of documentation, Crimmins is able to combine a variety of sources to make the general reader clearly see Fort Dearborn's story as part of the displacement of the Indians. The general reader is sure to get this point, one that is often not very clear in the popular understanding of the city's origins or in many historical studies.

The breadth of the research effort makes the notes in Crimmins's book the best place to start any additional research on this period. To do research means "to search again," to look a second time, and maybe even to take up a second vantage point. In this sense, even a reader caught up in the tale will become a serious student, meeting Fort Dearborn's Indian neighbors both in dramatic construction and in historical records long forgotten or neglected. The story leads us to see the battle over Fort Dearborn as part of a much larger struggle that had been going on for a century in mid-America. General readers, students, tourists marveling at the splendor of the modern metropolis, and citizens wanting to explore another facet of their city's history will all profit from Mr. Crimmins's diligent efforts.

The people living here two centuries ago sound familiar, like you and me. When we recognize ourselves in the people of the fort and of the prairie, we will realize the objectives of both the novelist and the historian.

Welcome to Chicago; you need to start at Fort Dearborn.



## *Acknowledgments*

The help of John McInnes, a superb research librarian for the Mount Prospect Public Library, was vital in the research for this book. John helped me locate dozens of sources when I could not figure out how to get at them.

My friends Leonard Aronson and John Bernbom read the manuscript in its earliest stage and gave me great suggestions and encouragement. Jerry W. Lewis, also known as Mswemakek, a Chicago-area Potawatomi and former tribal historical researcher, also read parts of the manuscript and gave me important advice.

The late Steve Neal of the *Chicago Sun-Times* gave me a helping hand when I really needed it. Charles Osgood of the *Chicago Tribune*, my friend since the City News Bureau in 1969, helped me out when I was up a creek. David C. Jahntz of the *Tribune* did the same at the next creek.

Bernie Judge's encouragement and suggestions helped this project to completion. Thanks also to Mandel Goodkin and Gene Davis.

At the end, Nicholas Paredes and Dave Jahntz came to my rescue again.

Sean O'Brien and Walt Dubbeld of the First U.S. Light Artillery of Fort Wayne, reenactors of the War of 1812, helped me understand the interior of Fort Dearborn.

Ulrich Danckers and Jane Meredith, coauthors of *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, helped me with answers to many questions and with important corrections and directed me to the fine drawings of architect and historian Donald Schlickan of Fort Dearborn and environs. Their book also pointed the way to new sources.

Thanks to my wife, Dottie, and my children, Kelly, Jerry, and Mike, and to Kelly's husband, Kevin, for their assistance.

Finally, the librarians and libraries of the Chicago area made this book possible. The sources listed here are not collected in any one place.

The principal libraries that I relied heavily on are as follows:

Chicago Historical Society Library

Newberry Library

Harold Washington Main Branch of the Chicago Public Library

University of Chicago Library

Lake Forest College Library

University of Illinois at Chicago Library

Eisenhower Public Library in Harwood Heights, Illinois

Park Ridge Public Library

Other libraries that contain significant materials for this book are the library of the Illinois Benedictine University in Lisle and public libraries in River Forest, Riverside, Maywood, Bellwood, Elmhurst, Melrose Park, Oak Park, Lake Forest, and Niles. God bless librarians.

*Fort Dearborn*





## *Prologue*

In the rise and fall of nations, a once-small Indian tribe called the Potawatomies rose to become by the start of the nineteenth century one of the most powerful tribes in the eastern half of North America.

The Potawatomies had been hounded out of their homeland in southwestern Michigan more than 150 years earlier by the Iroquois Indians from the East. This crisis had been part of a massive dislocation of Indians in the seventeenth century. The Iroquois confederation had driven all other Indian tribes out of the vast areas that are today called Ohio, Indiana, the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, and parts of Illinois. By emptying these regions of people, the Iroquois sought to monopolize hunting and the lucrative trade in which Indians exchanged animal furs for goods from the Europeans.

The Potawatomies led a last-ditch stand of five tribes in 1653 near Green Bay, Wisconsin, and finally stopped the Iroquois expansion. This Potawatomi victory combined with a useful trade alliance with New France and, later, reversals in war suffered by the Iroquois enabled the Potawatomi people to rebuild and multiply.

Decade by decade the Potawatomies expanded south along the eastern and western borders of Lake Michigan. They took over parts of what is today Wisconsin, northeastern Illinois, part of central Illinois, northwest Indiana, and southwestern Michigan. As the Potawatomies expanded, the tribe called the Illinois, whose name would later be applied to the land it once roamed, was being decimated. The Illinois tribe lost almost all its territory as the result of decades of brutal warfare with other tribes and as the result of liquor and disease, both of which were acquired from the relatively small number of French Canadian and American traders and settlers.

The Shawnee, the Miami, the Delaware, and other Indian tribes moved in from several directions to retake the lost territory of Ohio and Indiana and to thrive again as Iroquois power fell.

Human history never stands still. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century a new tribe expanded rapidly and again threatened to dislocate all other tribes in eastern North America. This tribe was the Americans.

The Iroquois, Shawnees, Miamis, Delawares, and other Indians allied themselves with the British against the Americans during the American Revolution. Long after the American Revolution ended, vicious warfare continued pitting the Indian tribes west of the Appalachian Mountains against the Americans who were expanding into what is today Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. In struggles that devastated both sides, the Americans slowly, at great cost, pushed these tribes out of many hunting grounds and villages.

Farther west, the Potawatomes were nearly untouched and continued to thrive.

Fearless traders during these two centuries traveled far into Indian Country to buy furs from the Indians and to sell them manufactured goods. One such adventurer was Jean Baptiste Point de Sable, a black man who was part French. Point de Sable married a Potawatomi woman, which was acceptable to the Indians, and in the 1780s they allowed him to construct a trade outpost in Potawatomi territory.

Point de Sable chose his spot brilliantly. Although it was far from the settled towns and farms of the East, it served as a link for water travel between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, between the North Atlantic Ocean and New Orleans. Part of this link was a short walk on dry land, and part was a small river. Wild onions and garlic grew in profusion along the river, so the Indians called the river Chicago, meaning "Wild Onion." From that name the junction of the river and Lake Michigan also came to be called Chicago.

Point de Sable was a visionary who planned for the time when a fort would be built at Chicago and white settlers would come. To prepare for this and to ship produce to the already settled village of Detroit, Point de Sable started a farm with fields of grain, a flock of chickens, herds of cattle, and hogs. He built a barn, a stable, a flour mill, a bake house, a chicken house, and a smokehouse to preserve meat. He built a large log home for his family and furnished it with

mirrors and artwork on the walls, a feather bed, and a fancy French walnut china cabinet with glass doors. After he had built his dream outpost in the wilderness on the north bank of the Chicago River, Point de Sable mysteriously sold it in 1800 perhaps because he had become injured or infirm. He moved away never to return. His principal creditor acquired his outpost.

On August 17, 1803, only a little while later than Point de Sable had expected, United States soldiers arrived and built a fort across the Chicago River from Point de Sable's log mansion, fewer than two hundred yards west of Lake Michigan. (In 1803 the shoreline of Lake Michigan was very close to Point de Sable's home and the site of the fort. Today the shoreline is three-fourths of a mile farther east, and the sites of the mansion and fort are inland.) Captain John Whistler, the commander of this company of soldiers, named the fort after the secretary of war at the time, Henry Dearborn.





## Chapter 1

### FUTURE SITE OF MICHIGAN AVENUE AND WACKER DRIVE, CHICAGO

*June 1807*

The racket of the frogs at night was overpowering: BREEP-BREEK, BREEP-BREEK, BREEP-BREEK, BREEP-BREEK.

As the boy stood in the dreamy time of darkness on the south bank of the Chicago River outside Fort Dearborn, an unseen phantom passed by. All the frogs stopped.

Silence.

But not silence. In the woods a quarter mile to the north, the frogs whose calls had been drowned out by the river frogs could suddenly be heard: *breep-breek, breep-breek, breep-breek*, a neighbor choir.

Phantoms continued to pass by in the dark. One phantom caused both the frog chorus in the woods and the frog chorus on the riverbanks to stop in an instant. The tremendous silence seemed like a cry.

When this shock passed, the boy discovered it was an incomplete silence. Six hundred yards southwest a third frog chorus sounded in the rushes and pussy willows of Frog Creek, a tributary of the river. Between the beats of this third frog chorus, a fourth chorus sang farther upriver. Those two took turns: *breep-breek, breep-breek, breep-breek, breep-breek*.

As the child studied the air with his ears, he could detect more choruses in the west, toward the forks of the Chicago River, farther

north across the river and deeper into the woods, and behind him on the wet prairie.

Separating these frog choruses with his ears, the child decided they sounded like: BREEP-BREEK, breep-breek, *breep-breek*, BREEP-BREEK, breep-breek, *breep-breek*, BREEP-BREEK.

Then he could separate the bass notes of the bullfrogs underneath. After that he could separate the *eeeeeeedy eeeeeedy* of the toads. And he could separate from all that racket the click-clicking of the crickets.

Then they all stopped—until the boy could hear faintly in the great distance more frog music. The child decided that frog choruses went around the world.

“Aieee, yack, yack, yack, awww! I told you! I told you!” Barking coyotes jumped in when the urge moved them. They sounded like quarreling old ladies.

“Oowwwwooooo,” the wolves howled in their choruses.

And a panther screamed, almost, but not quite, like the scream of a woman.

While eating supper in their canvas tent just outside the fort, from out of nowhere the boy once asked his father: “Why does the panther scream and stop?”

“What?”

“Why does the panther scream and stop?”

“He’ll scream agin later.”

“Yeah, but then he stops. The rest keep going.”

The boy knew the cry of the panther because his father had named that sound.

“How do you explain that, Jim?” his mother asked his father, Sergeant James Wheeler from Kentucky.

“Huh? Not sure what the boy was asking,” the father said. “Why do ye think the rest of those critters do what they do?”

“They’re singing, Dad.”

“Of course,” said his mother.

“Oh, they’re singin’! Eat your beans. We aire very lucky to hev those beans. Not all soldiers do. Well then . . .” Sergeant Wheeler scratched his chin. “It seems the panther cain’t sing. Ah’ve ne’er heered ’em sing. Maybe they do when they take a bath.”

They laughed at that.

The father continued: "But maybe if the panther cain't sing, he can shout *yahoo!*"

The mother whispered to the father with love, "That is wonderful."

"There's the blarney, Sergeant," said a sentry who was eavesdropping on his rounds.

"Hie to your business, Private Daugherty!"

The next time the boy stood under the black dome of the sky filled with diamonds and directed the choir of the animals, he used his arms and hands. He cued the near frogs and the farther frogs and the farthest frogs. He cued the coyotes and the wolves. His cues were always a little behind the animals. He cued the night birds and the crickets just as he had seen a man direct a choir in a church when he had lived in New York City.

Then, because the boy could not always count on the panthers, he himself added, "Yahoo!"

The boy, James Dodge Wheeler, who would grow up at Fort Dearborn until the awful catastrophe, had come to the fort with his parents in the autumn of 1806 on a long journey from New York. When they were approaching in a schooner on Lake Michigan, Fort Dearborn looked to the boy like a pinhead on the earth or perhaps a thimble in the middle of a vast landscape that seemed fated to remain empty forever.

Up close, Jimmy had found that he could walk around the entire fort quickly. Its interior fence was only forty yards long and forty yards wide. The buildings were all placed around the perimeter, and his father told him their back walls served as part of the defensive walls of the fort. The odd-looking residences had no windows facing the outside of the fort but instead had little shooting holes. The appearance was not pleasant. Jimmy discovered it was crowded with more than sixty soldiers, eight women sixteen years and up, and thirteen children fifteen years and younger. Three of the eight women were pregnant.

He quickly learned that the few enlisted men who had wives and children were allowed in mild weather to sleep and eat with their families in tents outside the walls for a modicum of privacy. The tents



gave the fort an even less artful appearance. High above the fort, from a pole in the exact center, flew the American flag.

James Dodge Wheeler found himself in this situation after his father had come to New York to pick up the boy and his mother during the privilege of an extended leave from the army. Sergeant Wheeler had been determined to unite his family once and for all despite the risks. He had accomplished this after a bad quarrel with the boy's wealthy grandparents.

The marriage of Sergeant Wheeler and Katie Dodge had never been accepted. The grandparents, the parents of Jimmy's mother, said very reasonably that a woman and a child should not live in the farthest reaches of nothing among savages and wild beasts. This was fine for the father, who was a half-wild Indian himself, the boy's grandfather said in a contemptuous figure of speech, but their daughter was a cultured New York woman who was not designed to face the dangers of the West.

As if to prove her father right, Katie took sick in the fall of 1807 at Fort Dearborn with what was called the bilious fever, which also sickened some soldiers. They attributed the fever to the marshy ground around the fort, the night mists over the marsh and the prairie and "miasmas" in the damp air. The fever killed the mother. They buried her on the north side of the river between the big log house built by Point de Sable and the very near shore of Lake Michigan in what became the first soldier's cemetery. The father and the boy went on, changed forever.

Over time, Jimmy came to admire Fort Dearborn because it was his father's and his father was proud of it. But Jimmy still felt very different from the rest of the residents. Even at age six he could read a little, and by age nine—by 1808—having been helped by his father and mother, he could read and write well. Enlisted soldiers were often illiterate in addition to being desperately poor. The handful of careworn enlisted men's wives at Fort Dearborn was glad to do the soldiers' laundry in return for rations and straw to sleep on.

Jimmy had the normal human wish to fit in, but having been raised as a mama's boy and spoiled and privileged, at least in the beginning of his life, he was sometimes a law unto himself.

One day he sat on the riverbank temporarily alone to think and imagine. He pushed away an unpleasant memory. He fiercely refused

to talk or think about the death of his mother nine months earlier. He considered that refusal his protection from the pain. He quickly substituted thoughts of doing a daring deed. If caught, he might get a beating from his father. Jimmy figured he would not get caught. He decided tomorrow would be the day.



## Chapter 2

### QUARREL ON THE PRAIRIE

*Sunday Morning, June 1808*

The atmosphere the next day around the isolated outpost was unusually calm. This was perhaps one of the reasons for the boy's plotting.

Captain John Whistler, the commander of Fort Dearborn, sat on a homemade chair on the grass in a straight line 165 yards south of the fort's main gate which faced south. The captain always enjoyed a break from the beehive inside the stockade.

Whistler was a stocky, middle-aged man turning fleshy, his body a combination of wounds, injuries, ailments, and stamina. He had a bigger than normal head that was covered with white hair. Born and raised in Ulster, the northernmost province of Ireland, the captain spoke with a guttural accent and a rolling of his r's.

On another homemade chair was Sergeant James Wheeler, Jimmy's father. The two men sat alongside the commanding officer's vegetable garden. At the captain's orders, beans, corn, and vegetables had been planted to supplement the standard rations of beef, pork, bread, and whiskey for the captain, his family, and the other officers.

Sergeant Wheeler was thin and hard, with a sharp chin, blue eyes, extremely black hair, and heavy whiskers. Unlike some other soldiers, he shaved every day. He was hatless and had his hands clasped on the back of his head with his elbows sticking out. He appeared at ease

with the world, but he was ready to snap to at the captain's first hint that this was wanted. The sergeant also knew the captain sometimes just wanted to talk.

The captain and the thirty-four-year-old sergeant had known each other for fifteen years.

"Heerre we sit, Jim," mused the captain, "by the forsaken Shee-kag Rriver on the parraria . . ."

"Clever fellas like us, we could be in Detroit or New York er who knows."

This caused Whistler to look sideways at his sergeant. Captain Whistler referred to the Chicago River in writing as the Cheykag or the Cheykago. In his speech it came out as the Shee-kag. The captain referred to the ocean of tall grass and wildflowers to the south and to the west of the fort as the puh-RAIR-ee-uh. Most people called it the prairie.

"I am gettin' to somethin'. But do you believe," the captain asked, "some of our people still say this parraria floats on an ocean? A man could fall through?"

"Walk along and whup! Heh, heh. It appears to me it would've happened afore this, Cap'n. This prairie's jest wet like a hog waller."

On the well-drained high ground where the captain and the sergeant sat, the grass had been cut short by soldiers with scythes to preserve the unbroken line of sight as much as possible on all sides of the fort. The short grass around them was green and fresh. The vegetables planted in the recently turned garden were just beginning to pop up in regular lines. Most mosquitoes had not yet hatched. The sky was brilliant blue with cotton ball clouds.

"As I was sayin', heerre we sit by the Shee-kag Rriver, protectin' these United States," the captain said, fanning himself with an old felt hat, "and we ain't been paid a farr-thing in nine months. How can a man mind his affairs and pay his debts?"

"Captain, sir, excuse me," Jimmy interrupted in a little boy's high voice from his standing imitation of a soldier. "The United States are two weeks' march to our rear."

"Private!" His father corrected him.

Jimmy had been ordered by his father to stand by the captain and the sergeant to fetch things. The boy stood ten feet away in his notion of a stance of attention.

"Such a smarrrt bye," said Captain Whistler, who meant *boy*. Whistler made a false smile that suggested a smart bye was not always a useful bye. "I clearrry said we also prrotect the territ'ries of these United States in this, the farthest outpost. And we ain't been paid a Spanish nickel in nine months. That seems to me, Sergeant, a hill of a way to run a counrry."

"Once went more'n two years without gettin' paid."

Whistler rolled his eyes at this truth.

The sergeant added with a grin: "A common soldier might complain about thet." The sergeant crossed his left leg over his right. The captain's right leg was crossed over his left, so the two men, who sat at right angles, made a symmetrical pair.

"Has anyone ever known me to complain?"

"When Blue Jacket and Little Turtle tried to cleave your skull, did you complain then?"

"I don't remember." The captain fanned himself.

A small, friendly, and, to the men, contented silence ensued on a gorgeous Sunday morning.

"Excuse me, sir," Jimmy interrupted. "May I be permitted to ask—"

"Private," his father growled.

"Perrhaps you need to polish your fatherr's round hat, son, and his kit. What did you ask?"

Jimmy had longish brown hair in the fashion of British boys, blue eyes, and a small nose that got into many things. He came out of his imitated stance of a soldier at attention and turned to the captain. "Sir, when did Blue Jacket and Little Turtle try to cleave your skull?"

The captain sighed and looked at Sergeant Wheeler. But when the sergeant moved to silence the boy, the captain raised his hand to indicate "Wait." "That was what the red men call the Battle of the Thousand Dead," the captain said finally. "That was before your fatherr enlisted, son—1791."

"What do we call that battle, sir?"

The captain glanced again at the sergeant.

"We don't call it anything," the father answered. "Thet was mostly our people killed. Thet's enough."

Jimmy resumed his proper stance and waited for orders to fetch tobacco, water, or anything else. In Jimmy's view, Captain Whistler

was as old as the hills, more than fifty years old. The boy knew the captain had gotten a tomahawk wound in some ancient battle where an American army was defeated by the Indians, and the battle involved somebody named St. Clair. To Jimmy this was all very far away.

"Ah don't imagine, Captain," the sergeant said pleasantly, "that our penniless situation is enough to make a soldier want to move back to Ahreland."

"Many's the day I thought of it in a wondering way." The captain appeared a bit dreamy. "Did you ever want to settle in Kentooock?"

"Ah hev a bitter taste from the land swindles and the crooked lawyers. But Kentucky is a finer place to see than this."

"If I returned to Ireland, they would be after me for jinin' the Amerrican army after I had been trained in the Brrritish army." He laughed. "'We shall clap you in irons for treachery, sir!' Yet I have served both armies honorably."

"Most likely you're too old to go back to Ahreland, and you have eleven children."

"Very soon twelve. What is it you call my bride, Jim? The duke's daughterr." Whistler smiled a real smile. "Ann's father was only a baronet. You did the same, you know, stole the duke's daughterr."

The sergeant dropped his eyes. Captain Whistler suddenly jumped in his chair and leaned forward to touch his friend's arm. "Oh, I'm sorry."

"True is true," said Sergeant Wheeler with resignation. "Katie's still among us. Hey, boy."

Jimmy Wheeler had abruptly started to walk away.

"About-face there." The boy reluctantly turned back. "The captain gave a compliment to your mother. We cain't always be so touchy."

"May I be permitted to leave?" Jimmy lifted up his nose.

"A moment ago Ah would'a let you. Not now. When your duty is completed, Master Wheeler," ordered his parent.

Jimmy returned to his spot. He sat down on the ground and looked straight ahead like a statue.

"Your father told you to *stand* guarrrd," the captain reminded him gently.

The boy stood up and turned to the west, away from both men, purposely obtuse.

Sergeant Wheeler's face grew red with an effort at self-control.

"I did not mean to upset anyone." The captain spoke to the boy's back. "We all loved your mother, Jimmy. Now hide your troubles like a soldier."

Jimmy whirled. "I am not a soldier, sir! I do not get my seven dollars a month!"

"Watch who yer talkin' to." Sergeant Wheeler leaned forward, his eyes ablaze. "No one in this garrison has been paid."

"Then quit," persisted his son. "The money is a pittance anyway."

"Hell now!" The sergeant half rose. He raised his right hand to do violence to the boy, then changed the hand to a gesture and pointed at his son. But his hand shook with unaccustomed effort at control.

"Let him go!" the captain cut in. "Go! Your father will talk to you later. Remember that."

Captain Whistler fingered the belt that held up his pants and nodded his suggestion to his sergeant with a grim expression. "Later."

Jimmy marched off wondering why he had done it. He realized no one had harmed him or said anything improper, but Jimmy also knew he never, ever listened to talk about the death of his mother. He did anything possible to avoid that topic. He walked stiffly up the beaten path, north, toward the main gate of the fort, and imagined eyes at his back. He finally turned around to look, but his father and the captain ignored him.

The boy turned again to face the way he walked. Then he recklessly decided to carry out his secret plan. He was in trouble already and figured he probably couldn't get in much deeper.

Instead of entering the fort, Jimmy angled left and strolled around the southwest corner of the outer fence, turned again, and headed north toward the dock by the river.

The soldiers had built Fort Dearborn on a small rise 80 feet from the south bank of the Chicago River and fewer than 200 yards west of Lake Michigan. The fort was on a slightly elevated section of land near where the river met the lake. The high ground forced the eastward-flowing Chicago River to make a bend, first to the northeast for 350 yards, and then east again. Once past the high ground, the river wanted to empty itself into Lake Michigan, but the lake always churned up a sandbar that blocked the river's mouth.

The sandbar forced the Chicago River to turn south so that the last part of the river ran between the sandbar on the east and the high

ground on the west. Flowing south for its last half mile, the Chicago River entered the lake south of the fort. Thus the fort, erected inside this large curve of the river, was surrounded by water on three sides.

The high ground where the fort sat was only nine feet above the river and the lake. The elevation fell off quickly inland so that past Frog Creek all the land was only two or three feet above the river and was swampy part of the year. The area was so low and flat that winter storms on occasion drove the lake waves into the woods on the north side of the river and into the low ground surrounding the fort on the south side. Occasionally in a spring flood the Chicago River topped its banks and inundated some of the land around the fort again. Yet the human residents persisted.

Jimmy pushed off the public canoe from the dock at the riverbank, jumped in and paddled himself across to the north bank toward the six-room, log mansion that Point de Sable had erected in the wilderness. The mansion was occupied by its latest owner, the wealthy trader, John Kinzie. Along the north bank of the Chicago River, another stretch of slightly higher ground made it possible for Kinzie and a few other families to maintain permanent dwellings.

Kinzie, whom some would later call “the father of Chicago,” was on this Sunday forty-four years old. Beside him on his front porch sat his wife, Eleanor, thirty-seven, once a rare beauty with raven hair and still a handsome woman. Widowed years earlier, Kinzie was her second husband. The two watched their children, ages four, three, and one, play in their front yard. Kinzie and his wife both sat on hardwood rocking chairs made by eastern craftsmen and transported to Chicago by schooner. Most things were available for those who could pay.

Jimmy liked Eleanor because she was genuinely kind and cheerful. Adults called her Nelly. She also mellowed the sting of Kinzie who could be either charming and generous—or very tough and crabby.

“Hello, ma’am. Mr. Kinzie, sir, do any of your horses need exercise?”

“Not today.”

“Not even a work horse, sir?”

“I don’t want to send someone to get a horse and saddle out. Not today.”

“I’ll do it.”



“No. It’s Sunday. Let the horses rest, too.”

Kinzie was a large, intimidating man, muscular from work and well padded from good living and a lot of meat and whiskey. He was vigorous rather than fat. Kinzie’s red hair had turned copper. He had a small chin beard of the same color and a face which in its expression sometimes looked wolfish.

“Ohhh,” Jimmy whined. Jimmy needed a horse.

“Can’t you ride one of the garrison horses?” Eleanor spoke with a lilt.

“I’ve worn out my welcome, Ma’am. I was disrespectful to my father and the captain.”

She made a humorous grimace.

Young Wheeler would have been content to ride a work horse, and when he found a dry stretch of prairie, let the horse rip. Animals who walked in circles to operate Kinzie’s grist mill or packhorses that Kinzie hired out to help traders carry their wares across the portage heading for distant Indian villages did not know this was the limit of their destiny.

Jimmy turned and walked west on the riverbank with a sense of dejection.

The north bank of the river, in addition to the mansion and out-buildings of the Kinzie estate, was occupied by only four other log cabins over a stretch of the river three-fourths of a mile long from east to west. Interspersing the cabins were rail-fence enclosures for the occupants’ livestock, a small number of cattle, oxen, hogs, and goats, and a few horses necessary for travel. Kinzie had extra horses for his business—more cattle than anybody except the garrison—and two mules.

Two hundreds yards north of the river a dark forest began, checkered with impenetrable underbrush and soggy for many months of the year. To children the forest was haunting and contained enchanting odds and ends such as an ancient broken musket and a rusty chain. In the dead of winter Jimmy and Harriet Whistler, daughter of the captain, had found a deer carcass with the guts missing but the head, antlers, bones, and part of the flesh remaining. The buck had frozen rock solid before the wolves who killed it and scavenger coyotes could eat it all. Jimmy and Harriet had agreed they would someday find a dead man in that forest.

Jimmy walked aimlessly west along the riverbank and pouted. His plan was to ride a horse in the neighborhood, as he often did, and then, while no one paid attention, sneak off to find the Indian village from which many of the local Indians came to trade. It was miles away.

Failing that, Jimmy knew he could join the big mob of the Ouilmette family forty yards to the west of the Kinzies—the father, Antoine, mother, and eight children. Most of the children were boys grown to men, a rowdy gang. Jimmy could clearly hear from behind the Ouilmettes' cabin the screams of a pig at the point of being slaughtered, the shouts of a young man, and the squeals of the younger Ouilmette girls.

Thinking of the Ouilmettes, Jimmy tried to keep the tiny social scene straight as he had learned it in his short time in Chicago. He also waited for a big snake to emerge that he had seen slither into a hole. He planned to grab it and give it to a Ouilmette girl or throw it into the river.

"Mr. Ouilmette works for Mr. Kinzie. Kinzie lives in that big house that used to belong to a Negro named Mr. de Sable. De Sable sold it to some man with a lot of money. Mr. Lalime, who now lives in a little hut up the river, thinks that Kinzie's big house is his house. Yeah, that'll be the day."

Jimmy had heard the Ouilmette girls say that after de Sable left, Mr. Lalime lived in the de Sable mansion for a long time and ran the former de Sable farm as the top hand for a big trader ninety miles to the east. The girls had said that after Kinzie bought the de Sable place, Kinzie threw out Lalime. The Ouilmette girls insisted that even though Lalime seemed friendly, he was really angry at Kinzie.

Jimmy shrugged. The disagreements of adults were not very important. Jimmy never remotely guessed that the bad blood between Lalime and Kinzie would lead one man to kill the other.

What was far more curious to Jimmy was that Mr. Lalime was married to a Potawatomi woman, as were Mr. Ouilmette, Mr. Le May, and Mr. Pettell, the last of whom lived three quarters of a mile up the river where the Chicago River forked into two branches. Nobody back east whom Jimmy knew was married to an Indian.

The stupid snake didn't emerge. Jimmy jammed a stick inside the hole, wandered to the public canoe he had left on the riverbank, and paddled back to the Fort Dearborn side.

It was 8:30 in the morning. Unless he found a horse or figured out some other plan, he had the prospect of a dull day. He could look up Harriet Whistler. She was a tomboy. Harriet was almost two years older than Jimmy and was the captain's daughter. She could be very bossy. Georgie Whistler, age eight, was ready to play, but his mother wouldn't let him wander. Jimmy knew his own father allowed him to wander because his father didn't know what to do with him.

Jimmy chewed on his lip. How was he going to get a horse?

He banked the canoe and then walked along the west side of the fort and hung his head. As he turned left at the southwest corner, he looked up to see Doc Smith lead a bay mare out of the main gate by the bridle. Doc Smith would be mounted if he were going to ride. The doc was walking toward the stables. Jimmy ran.

"Doc. . . . Doc Smith, where're you going?"

"I *was* going to ride on this beautiful day, but Mrs. Whistler is near her time and says she is feeling poorly."

The fort's surgeon was a man about thirty with a big Adam's apple and seemed harmless. Yet Jimmy knew the doc was always in trouble with Captain Whistler for mysterious reasons that rumor said had to do with the captain's daughter. So the doc had to tend to the captain's wife.

"Mrs. Whistler isn't as strong as you might think for a woman who's had so many children," Dr. Smith said. The doctor took a good look at the boy. "Or maybe you wouldn't think about that at your age. How old are you again? You're awfully big for Little Jimmy."

"I'm ten next month, sir. Everybody says I'm big for my age."

"My. Only ten." Dr. Smith craned his long neck at Jimmy. Despite his relative youth, Doc Smith's teeth were yellow. He had big eye teeth like a dog. The doc said, "Would you happen to know a responsible lad who might give this fine creature a workout and not fall out of the saddle?"

"I do. I mean, I-I-I am. I am that fellow."

"You would have to cool her down when you're finished and give her a brush. Can you handle a fast horse?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Her name is Turtle."

Turtle got one's attention. Her reddish brown body was accented by a mane, tail, and points that were deep black. Of moderate height,

Turtle had large eyes, one of which stared at Jimmy. She had small ears and a stocky frame, and carried her head high on a gracefully curved neck. She was elegant yet practical.

Jimmy knew Doc Smith lent her to work crews to drag logs, pull stumps, and pull wagons. When the soldiers wanted to race, Turtle was not the fastest, but Doc Smith and Turtle won many races one-on-one. Jimmy's eyes widened.

"I bought this beauty from a fellow named Justin Morgan in Vermont while I was on a furlough four years ago," Doc Smith said, and it was approximately the tenth time Jimmy had heard this. "If I survive this army, I mean to thank Morgan when I get back there. This is a horse for the West." Doc Smith shook his finger. "You take care. She can have a mind of her own." The doc handed over the reins.

Jimmy could not believe it. He led the horse past the outbuildings that lined the bend in the river and would shield him from the eyes of his father and the captain in the garden. He walked past a government-operated trading post for Indians called the U.S. Factory; ensconced in a large two-story log building, it was a separate trading enterprise from Kinzie's. Jimmy passed another two-story log structure, the Indian Agency, where the Indian bands received their annual payments of cash and trade goods from the U.S. government for Indian lands the government had purchased on the installment plan. He passed two stables for garrison horses.

Jimmy then adjusted the stirrups on Turtle and mounted the horse. He felt the hair rise on the back of his neck for what he was about to do and let the horse trot south. The prairie ahead of him became a gentle waving sea of new green grass already up to five feet high. The green sea was topped by a brown fringe, the remains of last year's taller full-grown grass that was dead. When he got into that sea of grass, the brown stalks of last year's dead wildflowers extended even higher, over the head of Jimmy's horse. The green and brown sea was interwoven with new purple and gold wildflowers. The horse parted the sea like a ship, and the grass rose again behind when the horse and rider passed.

The greater prairie was to the west, beyond the branches of the river. The Chicago River forked like the letter T three-fourths of a mile west of the fort, with one branch going north and the other south. The Main Branch was behind Jimmy as he rode away from

the fort. To his right were the narrow river woods along the South branch. To his left, the east, and much closer was Lake Michigan. In between the lake and the river woods of the South branch was a half-mile-wide prairie belt where nobody sensible could get lost.

The boy found the horse path on dry ground that led straight south. The horse path followed an almost imperceptible small ridge across the prairie that dried up first. Jimmy had been down this trail before. The American flag atop the seventy-five-foot-tall flagpole at Fort Dearborn always led him back. He had also explored for miles up and down the beach, which also led straight back to Fort Dearborn. He trotted the horse down the trail and then kicked it. Turtle took off, as smooth as silk and so fast that it was scary. Jimmy's heart pounded.

About a mile and a half from the fort, the South branch of the river curved away and went off to the southwest. One of Jimmy's boundary markers was thus gone, and the great prairie opened up to his right. The trail, too, forked a mile and a half from the fort. Jimmy kept the horse on the fork nearest Lake Michigan.

Four miles from home Jimmy slowed the horse and worked up his nerve. Here the trail forked for the second time. He took the right fork for the first time ever. The right fork, which Jimmy knew the adults called the Vincennes Trail, led out onto the great prairie to the southwest. It was supposed to lead to Vincennes, the capital of the giant Indiana Territory which in 1808 included the Illinois country and Fort Dearborn. But Jimmy had also heard this trail went near the Indian village that he was determined to see.

At the gallop, the boy rode hunkered down and raced into the south wind, heedless of danger. He tried to pretend he did not know what he planned to do. Maybe, he told himself, he would soon turn around and go back.

In occasional tree groves on the prairie, Turtle tried to run under low tree branches to knock off the pesky rider. But Jimmy had been riding since he was three years old, even in New York City. Jimmy alternately galloped Turtle, let her trot, and let her walk so as not to wear her out.

After a long ride the Vincennes Trail went up and onto the top of a moderately tall ridgeline that pointed south-southwest, angling away from Lake Michigan and heading farther out onto the prairie. Jimmy

wondered if this ridgeline was what the men who came back from wolf hunts called the “long ridge.”

He shouted. “Are you the long ridge?”

He could not tell anymore whether the blue far to his left was Lake Michigan. It might be the sky come down to the ground, the eastern horizon. To his right the prairie spread out forever. He thought, “You could really get lost.”

From the ridge he saw a bear to his right that loped in sight and then out of sight through the tall grass. Whether it was a cub fifty yards away or a massive adult bear a third of a mile off, Jimmy could not tell. The prairie lacked perspective. A man who walked near could look like a goliath a mile off.

Jimmy and Turtle scared up foxes and small herds of deer and elk that bounded off at the sound and sight of the pounding horse. The white tails of the deer jumped in the air. The boy and the horse occasionally surprised coyotes that zipped away like shadows. The trail completely disappeared up ahead into the tall waving grass. Jimmy convinced himself that the trail would be there when he got there.

He imagined that if he turned around and saw how far he had come, he’d lose his nerve. After he again let the horse walk for a while, he spurred Turtle into a new gallop and felt a thrill and the sweat of fear of the unknown trickle down his spine.

Jimmy knew an Indian boy named Strong Pike; he was two years older and came from the south with his family to make purchases at John Kinzie’s and at the separate government trading store. Jimmy and Strong Pike were first acquaintances and then friends. Strong Pike’s village, according to the men at the fort, was by a river and a lake to the south that the soldiers called the Calamick or Calumet. Strong Pike called it the Kenomokouk. This Indian village was the spot Jimmy aimed to go for the first time. But he wasn’t sure if he was fool enough to stick it out or, on the other hand, if he would get lost and never find his way back.



## Chapter 3

### INDIANS

In 1808, when young Wheeler rode down the Vincennes Trail, Indians and Americans on the northwest frontier had been under a truce for thirteen years, since the Indian Confederation signed the Treaty of Greenville, Ohio, with the United States in 1795. That treaty followed the Battle of Fallen Timbers where a U.S. army under General “Mad” Anthony Wayne defeated the combined Indian tribes. The Battle of Fallen Timbers had in turn followed the larger battle in 1791 where the Indian Confederation had totally defeated an American army near what later became Fort Recovery, Ohio. This was what the Indians called the Battle of the Thousand Dead. More than eight hundred Big Knives<sup>1</sup> had been killed there, including some women and children who accompanied the American army.

The long Indian wars had killed two thousand American settlers in what is today Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and, to a lesser extent, Illinois. The Indian Wars also killed hundreds of Indians and resulted in scores of captives on both sides.

The long truce was imperfect. Some Potawatomi warriors under their war chiefs, Main Poc from the Kankakee River and Turkey Foot from the Tippecanoe River, continued to raid the farms of isolated white settlers in the southern part of Illinois and across the Mississippi

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1. Americans

in the new Louisiana Territory. But Main Poc and other Potawatomi warriors were of even more danger to other Indian tribes during the long truce because they raided, killed, and took captives from them.

Around Fort Dearborn the Indians stayed generally quiet and peaceful in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Military preparedness at the fort grew lackadaisical. This peaceful coexistence was the only form of Indian relations young Wheeler had ever known. He thought the world was safer than it was.

Jimmy was about to give up his search for Lake Kenomokouk and the Indian village when the land to the east started to show signs of a marsh. He was an hour and a half from Fort Dearborn. On his fast horse he had traveled more than ten miles. The marsh promised a body of water ahead. Then the trail forked again. He took the south-east fork because it stayed closer to the marshy ground.

He had never been this far from the fort, even along the beach. He slowed the horse to a walk, and after the animal was breathing easy again, he pushed the horse for one last gallop and made it race again. "I've gotta find that village or quit," he thought. Jimmy considered that if he were lucky, no one would ever know he had gone so far. His mouth became dry with fear, and his lips stuck to his teeth.

Finally, he got ready to quit and turn around. At almost the same moment he saw people ahead, the first humans he had seen since he left the fort. They were in front of a tree line. He had found a forest. He reined in the horse to a trot.

As he approached, the people became more distinct and turned out to be three Indian girls, two his age and a third older. The girls moved off to the east side of the trail, and Jimmy moved off to the other side. The Indian girls wore three-quarter-length cloth tunics gathered at the waist and extending past their hips. One tunic was bright yellow, one blue, and one red. All three girls also wore black cloth skirts and black leggings to the foot. The girl in the blue tunic carried a baby on her back in a leather baby carrier tied to a cradle board. The baby carrier was hooded and decorated with brightly colored pictures of the sun, with the sun's rays shown by a circle of small triangles. The girls appeared startled to see the white boy.

"Hello. Who are you?" the leader and the tallest girl said in the Potawatomi language. The others giggled and gawked at him.



“*Bozho. Nije na gin?*”<sup>2</sup> responded Jimmy when he came abreast of them. Stopping near them, he could see they wore their good moccasins decorated with flower designs and dyed porcupine quills.

The Indian girls laughed.

“Strong Pike?” asked Jimmy in Potawatomi.

The girls laughed more and repeated the name Strong Pike, pointing at Jimmy, not believing that he was named Strong Pike.

Ten yards behind the girls Jimmy saw an old man with a musket keeping watch over them. The old man had a flowered red turban wrapped around his head. The tail of the turban hung by his left shoulder. Under that the old man wore a red tunic and gray leggings. This style of Indian dress was not shown in the picture books that Jimmy had seen in New York, but around Fort Dearborn most Indian men wore turbans and tunics.

“I am looking for Strong Pike,” Jimmy said as clearly as he could in Potawatomi, addressing both the girls and the old man. The tallest girl repeated what Jimmy had said, mimicking his accent, and the girls laughed again.

The old man frowned. He had a wrinkled dried-up face and looked miserable.

“Who you?” said the girl spokesperson in English.

“Jimmy Wheeler . . . from Fort Dearborn.” Then in Indian Jimmy said, “Do you know Spotted Trout or Duck Hen Splashes?” These were Strong Pike’s parents.

The girls laughed again but looked at one another in a way that suggested they knew what he was talking about.

“Okay, Jimmywheeler,” said the tall girl. She spoke rapidly. He could not follow her Indian words but could follow her gestures. They seemed to say: down this trail where we came from, then turn east.

“How far?”

She answered, but seeing a lack of understanding in the boy’s face—his Potawatomi had many blank spots—the girl repeated her answer in gestures. She indicated that it was not far, that he was almost there. Then she looked at her companions and shook her head to indicate: How dumb can a boy be? They giggled.

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2. Hello. How are you?

As Jimmy walked his horse past the girls and then the old man, he said, "*Bozho*," to the old man.

"*Bozho*." The old man frowned so that his mouth was wrinkled like a prune. He made a small reluctant wave and looked beyond Jimmy to see if any more white people were coming.

Jimmy quickly came to a cross trail that led east and west. He guided Turtle up the east trail and came to a savanna with short grass dotted here and there by a few trees. He soon came in sight of a large lake to the southeast. This excited him. He knew this had to be the Calumet, the lake associated with two rivers of the same name, the Grand Calumet and the Little Calumet.

Jimmy walked his horse for more than a mile. He knew Turtle needed to settle down. On their left the savanna became a woods.

The end of the journey did not work out at all as Jimmy had planned. He heard violent shouts and screams. Something was terribly wrong. The screams were ahead and to the left of the trail, which had turned northeast. He turned the horse off the trail and straight into damp and boggy woods.

He advanced a few dozen yards through the woods when he caught glimpses of what lay ahead. Blood rushed to his head. Scores of Indians were fighting in a large clearing. The girls back on the trail could not have known about this. Dead bodies were lying here and there, and one Indian man tried to crawl away at the edge of the battle.

"Yahh, yahh!" Jimmy yanked his horse's neck to the right to get away. The Indians swung war clubs, and Jimmy knew they could bash his brains in. As he retreated, something stuck in his mind, out of place. He kept going while tree branches slapped and scratched his face. When he was fifty yards away, he stopped. He could feel the sweat of fear and his rapid breathing. He was far from home and had to think of a way out. All the Indian men were naked except for loincloths. All had ferocious painted faces and war clubs. Yet in this frozen memory picture he could see Indian women standing in a straight line. This hadn't registered at first, yet they were in the memory picture. Why did they stand there? Everyone should run. But the women were watching.

Puzzled to the point of paralysis, he listened for a few minutes. In the midst of the terrible screams, yelps, and howls that caused him to tremble was the fairly definite sound of human cheers. He damned

his curiosity, dismounted, and led Turtle back by the reins so he could peek. It was the most violent scene he had ever encountered, and the hair stood up on the back of his neck again. Men attacked each other with full force, tumbling over each other, tripping each other, throwing each other bodily; they were rushing in mobs and stumbling out to the sides of the mobs with their mouths open and their faces wracked with pain. Most of the men ran in one of two swarms marked by clubs shaking in the air. The clubs were about four feet long and thin. Individual men ran headlong into groups of other men at full speed to knock them down or knock them out.

But the dead were not dead. They began to move. Even as he watched, two men ran into each other so hard that both were stunned, fell, and sprawled on the ground motionless. Soon they began to writhe with pain, then got up and walked in a shaky manner.

Jimmy led his horse thirty yards back into the trees, tied the reins to a branch, and returned, finally crawling in pine needles on the ground under a tree with a large apron.

The main swarm of Indians had turned and run off seventy-five yards away. Something flew through the air. Jimmy was afraid it might be a head. The swarm suddenly turned again while a fleet young fellow came from the side and deftly scooped up the object with his club as soon as it touched the ground. His club seemed to have a pocket at the end or a small net instead of a rock for head bashing. The fleet-footed Indian waved his stick deftly and cradled the object on the end, a small brown thing, not a head. It was apparently a ball, from the way the young man carried it at the end of his stick. He dodged two men ahead of him and was about to be mangled by four more men bearing down for a frontal collision when the young man leaped in the air, flipped the ball well forward, and landed on two of his adversaries. These two had tried to turn but fell in a heap when the speedy fellow landed on them. Jimmy tried to follow where the ball went but lost it as a second swarm from the near end of the field overwhelmed the place where the ball had been thrown.

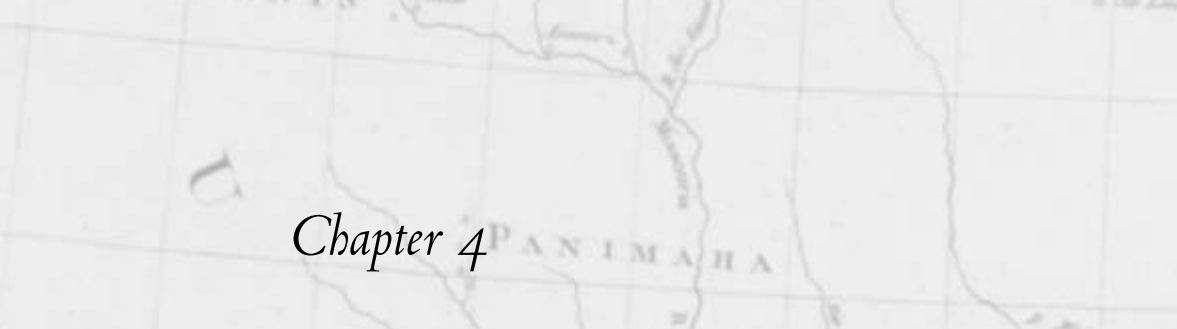
Wounded Indians occasionally limped off to the sides. Other men ran onto the field as if new or refreshed. At least sixty men appeared to be involved.

Indian women, wearing colorful tunics, skirts, leggings, and bright silk scarves like sashes, stood well to the side in a line. Some were

extraordinarily well dressed and wore a good deal of silver jewelry. Jimmy saw a similar line of women far off on the other side. The women closest to him cheered and shrieked, groaned and held hands over mouths or eyes, and cheered some more. Small children, excited to a frenzy, ran and jumped up and down outside the boundaries of the battle.

Jimmy saw one woman from the near line of women step on the belly of a man lying on the ground with one foot and then pull the man's leg simultaneously. The man tried to give her directions. This was obviously a treatment for an injury, and it made Jimmy wince.

Jimmy rested under the tree for a long while, fascinated. Eventually a small Indian dog that was overexcited and dashing in all directions discovered him many yards from the people. The dog's barking alerted several children. Jimmy decided to stay where he was. This mayhem was an adult game, he decided, one that Jimmy had never seen or heard of but clearly a game. The little children ran over and captured him. He came out from under the tree and stood up. The children pulled on his clothes. The dog barked and circled. Jimmy followed where the children led, back to the women. He had ridden two and a half hours and sixteen miles to see the Indian village, and he was going to see it even if the village was stranger than he had expected. What had he gotten into?



## Chapter 4

### BOYS AND TROUBLE

“*Bonjour, maman!*” Jimmy shouted over the din.

Some women looked at him with surprise as he approached, a white boy all alone, and they poked each other, then quickly returned their attention to the game. One woman, however, grew wide-eyed, left the spectators, and walked toward Jimmy.

“*Bozho, Jimmy, bozho!*” It was the mother of Strong Pike, Jimmy’s Indian friend. Every time Jimmy and this Potawatomi mother saw each other, she always tried to get Jimmy to speak Potawatomi, just as she also urged her son to learn English. To be contrary, Jimmy spoke to her sometimes in French. Many Potawatomes and Jimmy himself spoke French from being around the French people who lived and traveled in the Northwest Territory.

“Jimmy, *nije na gin?*” added the woman, Duck Hen Splashes in the River, as she touched his head.

“*Nmno bmades. Gin je?*”<sup>3</sup>

She laughed to hear him speak correctly. Then she said, “You very far.” Hen Splashes was twenty-nine years old, and her face was flushed with excitement. She had long black hair parted in the middle, swept behind her ears, and tied behind her head with a silk ribbon. In this typical style for Potawatomi women, their full face was completely displayed without any tricks of hair or bonnets. For Hen Splashes,

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3. I’m getting along, and you?

who had the glow of youth, soft cheekbones, and slim symmetrical features, the effect was advantageous.

"Yeah, I know." Jimmy grinned and then said, "Yeow! Golllee!" as two men nearby who had dropped their clubs started beating each other with fists, giving each other bloody noses.

Meanwhile, a mob formed around the ball in midfield. All the men bent over and beat each other's shins and smacked clubs in an effort to control the ball. They made a circle of men's behinds. Jimmy heard the clacking of clubs and shouts and grunts as they struggled.

Hen Splashes turned back to the game and shouted encouragement. Jimmy saw that she was dressed as if for a special occasion, wearing silver earrings, beaded necklaces, a black scarf around her neck over a sky blue tunic, a black skirt, and pink leggings. After a while she turned toward him again and said in Potawatomi, "Come, come," and quickly led him away from the mayhem.

Just then another Indian boy hurried up herky-jerky. He spoke to Jimmy in both Potawatomi and English in garbled sounds accompanied by spittle, enthusiasm, and extremely awkward gestures: "*Bozho*, Jimmy. 'Lo, *Jimmymy*, *ish*, *ook*, 'Lo, *Jimmy*, *huhhgh*." This was Strong Pike's brother, Little Bass, who was not like other children because his movements were always extremely jerky and spasmodic. His legs did not move properly when he walked or tried to run, and he spoke funny and dribbled when he talked, but he was extraordinarily affectionate toward people who treated him well. To Jimmy he seemed somehow very smart behind his physical problems.

Jimmy hugged Little Bass across the shoulders and said, "*Bozho*, *bozho*, *bozho*." Hen Splashes smiled at both boys and rubbed Jimmy's cheek while making pleasant noises. "Strong Pike is over there," she said in Indian and pointed away from the men's game. Jimmy saw a thin stand of trees with medium-sized Indians on the other side. Hen Splashes pushed him in that direction, pointed again, and spoke rapidly to Little Bass. Little Bass began to drag Jimmy where his mother had pointed.

Strong Pike, Jimmy, and Little Bass had known each other off and on for almost two years—a long time in the lives of little boys. They had met outside John Kinzie's trading store while Strong Pike's parents were inside to make their trades. Indian families traded in a

careful and leisurely manner, and sometimes their visits to the neighborhood of Fort Dearborn took days.

Strong Pike's aunt, his mother's sister, lived in a small Indian camp just over a thousand yards southwest of the fort, on Frog Creek. When Strong Pike's father went off on long trips to see the much-talked-about Shawnee Prophet—Jimmy thought this must be some kind of Indian preacher—Hen Splashes stayed with her sister for weeks. Thus, the Indian boy and the American boy became well acquainted.

When Jimmy first met Strong Pike, they began their acquaintance by silently throwing knives at one of Mr. Kinzie's poplar trees, a sapling that was not easy to hit. Mr. Kinzie had a line of poplar saplings in front of his house that was as straight as an arrow. The contest required no explanation or conversation. Mostly the two boys missed.

Kinzie's wife soon shagged them. "Boys! Shoo! Shoo! Mr. Kinzie planted those with his own hands! My heavens! What are you doing?" The boys ran away together, scared but laughing, but then had to return for Little Bass, who was a year younger than Jimmy and who was Strong Pike's responsibility.

In the autumn just past, when the boys were eleven, nine, and eight, Mr. Kinzie lent them a light steel trap to start them in the business of fur harvesting. This was the business that supported the Kinzie family.

Jimmy and Strong Pike hoped to catch a mink, an otter, a beaver, or a lowly muskrat, something with fur to sell, and they should have set the trap on the bank of the Chicago River. Instead they set it near the edge of the woods along the South branch of the river, a mile from the fort. The fur-bearing animals of the Chicago River were almost trapped out, and the boys caught a dilemma. The jaws of the trap snapped at night on a possum at the precise moment the possum was caught by an owl, and the trap also snagged one of the owl's talons. A possum looked like a rat but was good eating, and Jimmy did not mind getting ready with a big stick to kill it. But neither Strong Pike nor Jimmy wished to kill the beautiful owl. It had a five-foot wingspan, and they knew there was nothing to eat in an owl. They wanted to set it free.

No matter how they tried to free it, the owl fought back with his

wings, his free talon, and his dangerous beak to keep them away. It could not be saved. Strong Pike finally prepared to dispatch the owl with his bow and arrows.

"Let me," said Jimmy.

Strong Pike gave Jimmy the bow and arrows to try. No glory came from shooting a trapped bird.

"My father's and my grandfather's," said Strong Pike in English, holding out the bow.

"Yeah?" Jimmy Wheeler studied it curiously. The bow was white, but it did not appear to be painted or made of wood. It seemed to be polished ivory with animal sinews glued to the back to control its spring. The arrow shafts clearly were wood. The bow was three feet long, and the arrows more than two feet long and hard to get used to. It took Jimmy, a beginner, three arrows just to mortally wound the owl. Strong Pike ended the business with a fourth arrow, this one well aimed. Jimmy was impressed by the great power of life in the owl. It did not want to die.

The next time the boys visited the Kinzie trading post, Jimmy asked, "Mr. Kinzie, what kind of wood is this?" and pointed to Strong Pike's unusual bow.

Kinzie squinted at the bow, took it in his hands, and then whistled. "Wheewww! This is powerful medicine."

"Yes." Strong Pike agreed.

"This bow is not wood at all," said Kinzie. "This is made from a whale bone, from the biggest fish in the world."

"Like in the Atlantic Ocean?" said Jimmy. "I know whales."

"I would say the Pacific Ocean," answered Kinzie. "This bow is cut short like the bows of the red men who hunt on horseback far across the Mississippi River. This bow has traveled here through one Indian trading it to another when he fell on hard times. No Indian liked to give up this bow." Kinzie repeated what he said in Potawatomi, and Strong Pike beamed and stuck out his chest.

"I'll bet that whale was bigger than my house," said Kinzie, who demonstrated with his arms. The boys all got the point and ran out of the store shouting, "Yaaaaaa!"

One day that white bow would become vitally important in the lives of all three boys.



## *Back at Fort Dearborn*

The lookout in the southeast blockhouse of Fort Dearborn said, "Two riders coming from the south along the beach, a mile off."

The sergeant with the telescope looked to confirm. When he found them, he announced, "One of them's a soldier." The sergeant gave an order. "Private Kennison, tell Lieutenant Billy that a soldier and a second man, probably a spy, are coming up the beach from the south, and the captain will want to know, too. I repeat, that's a soldier and a spy up the beach from the south."

An elderly private who had just come out of his daydream arose in a creaky manner from a barrel where he sat.

"Heaton, I kin hear you. Just 'cause I cain't see a mile like that young fella . . . 'Tell Lieutenant Billy that a soldier and a second man, probably a spy, come up the beach from the south. The captain will want to know.' I'm on my way." Kennison opened a trapdoor and began to slowly and gingerly climb down a ladder to the first floor, placing each foot with care.

When Kennison was gone, the other private asked, "Why do you jab the old goat, Sarge? He says he was in the Boston Tea Party."

The sergeant ignored the question. "Any sign of the Wheeler kid?"

"He's been out of sight a couple of hours."

Lieutenant Billy, or Lieutenant William Whistler, the twenty-four-year-old son of the commander of the fort, was six feet two inches tall. He met the two horsemen at the front gate.

The scout or "spy" of the arriving pair of riders was a short man with red hair, freckles, and, despite his maturity, a baby face. He wore a smoke-tanned buckskin hunting shirt with long fringes and fringed leggings, and he carried a tomahawk and knife in his waistband. Leather straps that hung across his shoulders crisscrossed his chest. From the strap on his right side hung a powder horn, and on his left was an ammunition pouch. He rode a magnificent Kentucky thoroughbred that people called a two-story horse, seventeen hands high.

The soldier was in a gaudy uniform and rode a nondescript gray horse.

As the two dismounted, Lieutenant Whistler saluted the spy.

"Captain Wells, our pleasure. Been a long time."

"Good to see you, too, Lieutenant Whistler. This is Lieutenant Robert Pettibone from the War Department."

"Are we at war?" Reports and rumors of war with Great Britain were frequent on the frontier.

"I must talk to the captain first," Pettibone responded. Wells smiled at his charge's lofty attitude.

Lieutenant Whistler maintained polite poise. With his finger he motioned to one of the privates at the front gate. "Captain Wells, Lieutenant Pettibone, let's get your horses tended to. The captain would like you to be fed and watered first, and then he's called a meeting."

Pettibone looked to his right. "Your lake is one of the glories of creation."

### *At the Indian Village*

Little Bass led Jimmy through the small stand of trees to a gathering of boys getting ready to play a game. Several mothers watched over the boys plus two old men and a woman more ancient than all. The boys had the same sticks with small pockets on the end that the men had; the men's sticks were too big for some of the boys, so they had shorter ones. Jimmy could see up close that the "clubs" were made from straight tree branches with the growth end turned back toward the branch and tied with a rawhide strip to make a circle six inches across on the end. The circle was crisscrossed with slack rawhide strings to make a net to carry the ball in and throw it.

The boys wore red or blue face paint, just as the sporting men had. Across the meadow Jimmy saw girls in headbands in which red or blue predominated. The girls were using blunt L-shaped clubs to whack a ball on the ground.

"Jimmy?"

Jimmy turned.

"*Bozho*." Strong Pike emerged from the boys. He was dark-eyed and had more prominent cheekbones than his mother, a strong nose like his father, and wide-set eyes. Strong Pike's greeting was sincere. His face was doubtful. Some Indian boys turned to look at Jimmy with open-mouthed astonishment, others with hostility, and others with obvious ideas of mischief.

Jimmy said, "*Bozho*. I'll watch. Go ahead." Jimmy waved for Strong Pike to return to the group, hoping everyone's attention would be deflected. Strong Pike frowned and asked, "Why are you here?"

Jimmy shrugged. He was not sure. Partly he had run away from something, from any mention of the death of his mother, and partly he wanted to do a daring deed. But now he felt out of place. He said in Indian, "I watch." Strong Pike nodded uncertainly and returned to the boys' preliminary fooling around. Strong Pike looked back once in a while as if to make sure trouble for his friend did not arise.

Jimmy, although younger, was a little taller than Strong Pike. Strong Pike possessed a better physique from playing organized sports for longer hours and with more variety than the children around the fort. When it came to Strong Pike, Jimmy, and Little Bass, Strong Pike was the obvious leader. Strong Pike also knew more English and French than Jimmy knew Potawatomi.

Jimmy did not know how to play this Indian game even if he had been asked. Moreover, he knew this would be boys violence, and his clothes would be torn to tatters. The Indian boys in the game were naked except for loincloths tucked up tight.

Before Jimmy realized that Little Bass was gone, the little brother hurried awkwardly back from the tall dome-shaped village wigwams waving a loincloth. "Oh, no." Jimmy cringed. He waved at Little Bass to take it away.

Then Jimmy was stunned by what he had forgotten! He turned and started back rapidly toward the woods, prevented from running only by all the people he knew were watching. Jimmy had forgotten to care for his horse. Little Bass followed and tugged on his arm. Jimmy pantomimed riding a horse and then pointed to the woods to indicate his horse was there. Jimmy pantomimed with his tongue, a horse lapping water, and then with his fingers, a horse eating grass. Jimmy searched for words to say: "Little Bass, my horse is tired and needs water and grass." But Little Bass already got it. He stopped Jimmy, pointed to his own chest, and indicated enthusiastically that he would care for the animal. He held out the loincloth to Jimmy, who ignored it and kept on toward the woods.

"Heyyyyy!" The voices of watching boys erupted. When he turned toward the noise, some of the boys challenged Jimmy with words and

gestures that needed no translation. They challenged him to play the game.

“Dang!” Jimmy had no desire to strip naked and play a dangerous game he did not know with strangers. He was of a mind to cut short this whole trip and go back to Fort Dearborn where he belonged. But he knew that the horse, Turtle, had to rest, drink, and graze. Jimmy was stranded. Little Bass shoved the loincloth into Jimmy’s hands and awkwardly pushed him toward the game. The small Indian boy pointed to his own chest, said, “Horse,” and started off in the right direction. Despite his handicap, Little Bass was the most reliable person that Jimmy knew. If Little Bass said he would find and care for the horse, he would.

“Little Bass!”

The small boy turned.

Jimmy again pantomimed a horse lapping water. Then Jimmy puffed out his stomach and puffed out his cheeks to mimic a horse bloated from drinking too fast. This must be prevented. Jimmy shook his head to warn the younger boy. Little Bass smiled and nodded, hobbled back, and patted Jimmy several times with his open palm to convey “Trust me.” Not for the first time, Jimmy felt that the younger boy could be remarkably trustworthy. As Jimmy turned around to face the other Indian boys, their voices rose in challenge anew.

Jimmy gritted his teeth and closed his eyes. He couldn’t back out—not in front of all these boys who would mock him if he did. He looked at a nearby old man, this one with a friendly face, and held the loincloth aloft with his right hand. He put his left hand on his crotch to show he was ashamed to strip. He hoped to be told where to go in private. Instead, the old Indian man with long, stringy gray hair stood directly in front of Jimmy, his back to him, and made all the boys move away as they razzed him. Jimmy turned his back to them all, stripped off his linen hunter’s shirt and old linen soldier’s pantaloons cut shorter and restitched in the waist, and put the loincloth between his legs. He then realized he did not know how to tie a loincloth.

The old man turned around, grumbled, made a face, and indicated the old lady would have to move in. All the boys laughed raucously. The old lady who was missing several teeth tied the loincloth while Jimmy looked at the horizon and became far redder than any Indian in the entire village. The game began without him.

“*Skishéug*,” said the old man in charge and pointed to the north. The boys with blue face paint ran to the north and faced south. “*Gishgo*,” said the old man, and the red-painted boys took the south and faced north. The old man put the ball in play, and the game began with even more disorder than in the men’s game. Most of the boys formed one swarm. The men at least had two mixed swarms very roughly opposite each other with outriders on the flanks. The single boys’ swarm was so thick that little could be accomplished, and the boys moved up and down the field in a disorganized manner while the adults shouted directions from the sidelines. The point of the game, Jimmy gradually grasped, was to put the ball between two tall poles planted about six feet apart with a crossbar over the top higher than a man could reach. One set of poles was at the north end and one at the south end, separated by about one hundred yards, much smaller than the men’s field.

As the swarm passed Jimmy, some of the boys at the fringe shouted to the adult supervisors, “(Something) *kitchimokemon*. (Something) *kitchimokemon*.” Jimmy knew this meant Big Knife or American, namely himself. Jimmy suspected the boys intended mischief, but he was not going to back off. He had become determined.

A little boy with blue face paint staggered out of the game, holding a stick far too big for him and crying. The second old man, who stayed on the sides (while the first stayed with the swarm), comforted the child and asked if they could borrow his stick. This old man gave the stick to Jimmy, smeared blue paint on Jimmy’s forehead and cheeks—three simple swipes from one of two tiny paint pots in the old man’s hand—and said, “*Skishéug*.” Jimmy stepped gingerly onto the field and walked toward the swarm. He could hear adults behind him and felt certain they told him to get going.

Jimmy had no idea where the ball was. He trotted into the fringe of the swarm and held his stick high. Abruptly, he was run over from behind and nearly trampled by three boys who laughed. His knee and one elbow were skinned and dirtied. He jumped up, ran back to the swarm, and pushed inside to protect himself through anonymity. He also wanted to try this game. In a few moments boys around him discovered he was there and started to chatter about him. Jimmy shouted in Potawatomi, “Where is it? Where is it?” Some boys pointed. Jimmy pushed himself toward the ball, tripped over the many feet, and fell

again. He was half trampled, but this time just like any other boy. He started to feel the chase. The crowd was getting away.

He rose to pursue, and the ball suddenly flew out of the swarm back toward him. High-pitched shrieks came from the swarm and from the sidelines. Jimmy ran up to the ball to lift it with his stick. He couldn't. He bent over to grab the ball with his left hand and got bowled over before he could touch it. A blue-painted teammate ran by as Jimmy lay on his back and made it clear with sign language that to touch the ball with hands was wrong. Jimmy rose, got his bearings, and started to run toward the swarm again.

Suddenly, he noticed the swarm reverse, and all the boys turned to look at him. Shouts became intense. Jimmy stopped. He looked around. The ball was three feet in front of him. He thought, "Not again." He pushed the ball with the net end of his stick against a clump of weeds, and it fell into his net. Shouts erupted. Jimmy ran away from the pack to avoid being trampled a fourth time. He saw two blue faces run up alongside, then a red face, whom the blue faces shoved. Jimmy offered the ball at the end of his stick to the nearest blue face running alongside, but the boy pointed downfield. Jimmy and the other blue faces ran. The nearest face marked blue mimicked throwing the ball. Jimmy instead inexpertly flipped the ball underhanded toward the blue face to his left. He had to get rid of it because in front of Jimmy a new red face had abruptly appeared on a collision course. His blood hot with mayhem, Jimmy put his stick crossways in front of his body and ran right over the red-faced boy. Jimmy saw the boy fall hard and hit the back of his head.

Jimmy heard roars. He looked over his shoulder, saw the mixed blue and red crowd behind him, and was suddenly run over by a boy from behind who jammed a stick hard into Jimmy's back. Jimmy slid hard and scraped his skin on the dirt and meadow grass. He ate dust.

He felt pain but was used to this and expected the game to move on. Surprisingly, he heard boys stop over him and shout in an angry way. He rolled onto his back. Above him were many red-painted faces, his opponents. They shouted and waved sticks at him. Boys with blue marks on their faces started to appear and shout back at the red faces and push them away.

*"Kitchimokemon mjumnito!"*

Jimmy heard that clearly and saw above his head the smaller fellow he had run over whose expression was very unhappy.

*"Kitchimokemon mjunmuito!"* the smaller boy said again.

*Mjunmuito* meant devil. The boy had called Jimmy a white devil.

*"Mjunmuito yourself!"* Jimmy shouted. "You are a yellow devil!" In frontier slang Jimmy had heard Americans refer to male Indians as "yellow boys" or "yaller." Jimmy rose to confront his antagonist, and the crowd parted. "Yellow devil!" Jimmy shouted again and pointed at the other fellow.

*"Kitchimokemon mjunmuito!"* said his antagonist, pointing back. A few other members of the red team took up the chant: *"Kitchimokemon mjunmuito!"*

The old on-field supervisor broke up the fray, pulled the groups apart, and shouted firm orders too fast and furious for Jimmy to understand. Jimmy's blue team walked away to the north. The red team walked away to the south. Jimmy went to the north with his team. The old referee continued to lecture the players on both sides in an angry voice.

The game resumed. Nobody ran into Jimmy or knocked him down anymore. Wherever he ran, all the players created a wide space around him. The boys pushed and shoved and knocked each other down, ran like mad, and continued to play, but no one would shove Jimmy or challenge him. It appeared all the boys were leery of him due to the scolding. Jimmy began to feel he was no longer in the game. He could not imagine picking up the ball.

After some minutes of trying to run with the swarm while everyone avoided him, Jimmy said aloud, "Bull feathers!" He stalked away from the action and gave his stick to the on-field referee. The referee shrugged a giant shrug and said, *"Kitchimokemon, no Neshnabe."* The Indian supervisor shrugged again and gave Jimmy's stick to another boy.

Jimmy felt ashamed, yet he also felt he had done nothing wrong. Along the sidelines he saw a tall, distinguished-looking Indian in a loincloth, a player from the adult game. This tall Indian stood out alongside the boys' game; he had his arms folded and was scowling at Strong Pike. Jimmy then recognized Strong Pike's father, Spotted Trout, and realized that Strong Pike was getting scolded, too. The soldier's son thought he had probably caused that also.

Jimmy turned away and searched frantically for his clothes. He

felt more and more self-conscious, as if he were naked in church on Sunday in New York. Could it be that boy fifty yards off had run away with his pantaloons? Jimmy groaned and looked at the sky. He decided he had to get out of this Indian village and get back to where he belonged. He wandered back and forth looking for his clothes, desperately hoping he was mistaken that someone took them. He was afraid to glance at anyone and searched for half an hour.

Strong Pike eventually caught up with him and addressed him in a subdued voice. "*Excusez-moi, Jimmy. Tu's haut.*"<sup>4</sup> They think you are older, and you knocked down a small boy." In their conversations the boys mixed three languages, French, English, and Potawatomi.

"Where are my clothes!" Jimmy gestured wildly with his hands over his body to show what he needed.

Strong Pike held out a small skin bag tied with a rawhide string.

"Take this," said Strong Pike. "Don't come here anymore."

"What's that?" Jimmy looked in the bag, saw it was a small quantity of parched corn, and was exasperated.

"Don't come here, *mon ami*."

"*Certainement*," responded Jimmy.

"My father is angry," Strong Pike continued. "You should move away. Your fort bad medicine. Our chiefs not like it."

"The fort? I live there."

"Many Neshnabek talk against your fort now. My father is one."

"Ehhhhh." Jimmy had more serious problems. "Where are my clothes?"

Strong Pike began to laugh. "*C'est une blague.*"<sup>5</sup>

"Oh, yeah. What will my father say?"

Strong Pike told Jimmy to stay put, not to follow, and he ran off. Jimmy tried to come up with a solution. Without his clothes his whole escapade would be exposed to his father and everyone at the fort. Strong Pike returned after many minutes carrying Jimmy's old linen pantaloons, but instead of Jimmy's hunting shirt he had a calico Indian tunic. He was accompanied by his mother who held a long scarf. Hen Splashes put her hand in front of her mouth and seemed to work hard to avoid laughing at the nearly naked Jimmy.

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4. You're tall.

5. It's a joke.



"Here." Strong Pike indicated the tunic. "Now you must leave. No come back." Strong Pike shook his head. "I gave you something to eat."

"Don't worry. No come." Jimmy put on his pantaloons, which were like pants but were cut narrow to almost cling to the leg. He tried to push away the three-quarter-length tunic, but Hen Splashes forced him to wear it. He also refused the bright pink scarf, saying, "Oh, please, no!" but she ignored him and tied a turban around his head in the style of the male Potawatomi. She pointed to the sun and said sternly in the Indian language that the sun was very hot. Jimmy could feel that the sun had burned his skin already. Moreover, his hat had been stolen along with his hunting shirt. He felt helpless to resist. He was mortified.

He held up the small bag of parched corn. "Thanks," he said. He knew there could not be much left in the village by June, and there would not be any new corn for months. Jimmy was suddenly hungry.

"*Pama kowabtemIn mine*," said Strong Pike, meaning "After a while we will see each other again" or "See you later." Strong Pike added, "Maybe I will see you at Kinzie's."

"Yeah, I guess."

Little Bass led Jimmy to the horse, Turtle, which seemed at ease and much recovered. Jimmy pointed the horse northeast, up the trail that led past the village instead of back the way he had come. He prayed it was a shortcut. He did not want to repeat anything he had done this day.

The trail led instead through the fringe of a scary swamp. When Jimmy approached a cross trail that led north and had a river beyond it, the horse began to snort and shy. Then Jimmy spotted a tree festooned with poisonous snakes, water moccasins, five or six feet in length!

Jimmy screamed, lost his composure, and panicked. He kicked Turtle into a gallop north up the cross trail.

Finally, seven miles from the Indian village, he saw Lake Michigan, blue and clear to the horizon. The boy and horse struck the beach. Turtle knew the beach led home and required no further guidance. Despite his frights, or perhaps because of them, Jimmy fell asleep in the saddle. Turtle carried Jimmy home.



## Chapter 5

### AT FORT DEARBORN

“Come in, gentlemen,” Captain Whistler said to those who entered his office, the leading men. “We are not at warr. But we seem headed for it. Bill, spread the worrd.” This last was addressed to his son. The captain’s son did an about-face and went out to spread the word to the garrison.

“We’ll do the formel introductions as we go along. Lieutenant Pettibone brings us vital information. You’ll be glad to know,” Captain Whistler continued as he leaned back in his chair, “that because of outrages against arrr people and ships, the president has acted, with Congress’s approval, to morre than dooble the size of the army.”

“Hear! Hear!” the men declared.

Lieutenant Robert Pettibone from the War Department and the scout, William Wells, were already present. They sat with the captain at a rough oak table in the meeting room on the first floor of the commanding officer’s quarters. Pettibone had briefed the captain first.

Pettibone and Wells stood to greet the others. The captain remained seated.

“Pettibone, you have already met the tall, good-looking officer whom I sent back out, my eldest son, Lieutenant William Whistler. The skinny fellow first in line here is Lieutenant Thompson. The hairy fellow is Ensign Hamilton. The tall, distinguished one behind him is Mr. Jouett, our Indian agent, followed by Mr. Varnum, our fine

government factor, and Sergeant Wheeler. Captain Wells, I believe you know everybody.”

They all shook hands. “Hello.” “How do?”

Wells, five feet six, the redheaded former army spy turned government Indian agent, was no longer in the army but was still referred to as “captain.” Wells saved his biggest greeting for the last man to enter, Sergeant Wheeler.

“Big Jim!” Wells gripped the sergeant’s hand with both of his.

“Long time,” responded the sergeant, who beamed.

Lieutenant Pettibone appeared to wonder why a sergeant mattered.

“Sergeant Wheeler and Cap’n Wells knew each other in the old days of the Indian warrs, Lieutenant Pettibone,” the commanding officer explained.

It was late afternoon. A soldier aide had been lent to Pettibone to clean up his uniform and polish his boots. Among these young officers in their new and sleek uniforms, Captain Whistler’s neck and belt strained in his own best uniform, several years old. He carried extra pounds and was sweating.

Pettibone looked like a peacock in a blue coat with short tails and a high, stiff choker collar up to his ears. The collar, cuffs, lapels, and lining of the coat, where the lining was turned out for effect, were red. Three rows of gold buttons, gold epaulets, and a red sash completed the coat. The lieutenant’s legs were encased in skin-tight white breeches and black knee boots. All this was the standard new uniform of a light artillery officer.

Every officer present wore the high-collared coat, tight breeches, and boots, but the infantry officers assigned to Fort Dearborn had silver epaulets and silver buttons.

“Sit down, please, gentlemen,” the captain ordered. “Pettibone, you have arrr attention.”

“The threat of an immediate British invasion,” Pettibone launched into his speech, “seems to have passed.”

The men visibly relaxed.

Hardwood logs, hewn square and laid horizontally, made up almost all the buildings in the fort, including this room. They were seamed with whitish mortar to keep out the wind. The effect was symmetrical, but the hardwood was dark, so the room was dark.

Pinkish bricks that made up the fireplace were the only light touch. The oak table was made of planks an inch thick.

"We seem headed for hostilities, nevertheless," Pettibone added. Captain Whistler sat at the far end of the table with his back to the cold fireplace, and Pettibone was on Captain Whistler's right. Pettibone seemed to love the stage and almost licked his lips. His mission was to tour the forts, and that meant he delivered these little talks to officers, many of whom were his seniors, and they all had to listen. Thin, with hair between blond and brown, he was sunburned because he had not yet completely acclimated to living outdoors. He was twenty-five years old.

All present knew the outlines. The British had attacked an American warship, the *Chesapeake*, the previous year. Then the British had stationed a fleet off the coast of Virginia as if to invade, but in the end did not.

"The British still brazenly seize our sailors for their navy and seize our commercial ships on allegations of supplying Napoleon," Pettibone went on. "The French also seize some of our ships for their purposes.

"To deal with this, President Jefferson's Embargo Act has just about stopped American sea traffic to and from Europe. We have entirely removed our ships and sailors as targets."

Captain Whistler closed one eye and said with suspicion, "I suppose that's good."

"There are ramifications," Pettibone continued. "Most of our sailors are out of work because of the Embargo Act and our refusal to let them sail. The eastern seaboard has been, well, temporarily devastated, and businesses are closing. The poor in New York City are going to the almshouses by the thousands. New York, Philadelphia, and other ports are grim. But we have a national emergency. The president has acted."

"We are afraid to go on the ocean?" asked Varnum, the very youthful trader with the Indians on behalf of the government, known as the factor. "Isn't this . . . humiliating?"

"Thank you for your report, Lieutenant Pettibone." The captain cut off Varnum. "It sounds like t'ings are a bit difficult."

"The president has the problems well in hand."

“Certainly he does.”

“Secretary of War Henry Dearborn sends his greetings to all of you. Fort Dearborn was an excellent choice of name.”

Every man but one laughed.

The office was on the ground floor of the commanding officer’s quarters, a building that formed part of the east wall of the fort. Sunlight from across the parade ground slanted almost directly through the open windows of the room, making each man hot on one side of his body, and they all began to sweat. The temperature was about eighty. The civilians, Jouett and Varnum, wore frock coats and white shirts with linen scarves at the throat.

“Fort Dearborn *is* an excellent name,” the captain insisted.

“As I was saying,” Pettibone said with a smile, “Secretary of War Dearborn also sends the heartfelt greetings of President Jefferson.”

The men reacted with mild cheers and grins.

“Tell the president that we t’ink about him all the time,” Captain Whistler said, “especially about when the men will get their back pay.”

“I will make that point to the secretary again.” Pettibone made a note with a quill pen to show his sincerity. “It’s a unanimous complaint.” He looked around. “You are all obviously eating.”

“Lieutenant Thompson, explain that.” Captain Whistler pointed to a short, spare, sallow-faced officer, physically unimpressive except for the determined set of his jaw.

“We grow some of our own food,” Thompson related. “We do get some government supplies from Detroit, but we also buy on credit. We almost ran out of meat last winter, and the captain himself had to scrounge for victuals throughout the region of Fort Wayne.”

“I had to depend on the good name of the government,” Captain Whistler said, “to make quick contracts with no money. I wrote the secretary about that.”

Thompson continued: “One of our sergeants has started a farm. The captain has encouraged this as a necessary matter although not exactly military.”

“The secretary understands,” Pettibone nodded. “The men must eat.”

“The pay situation,” Captain Whistler repeated. He looked as if he had sucked a lemon. “I wasn’t going to mention this again, but every

one of my men has parsonal bills. And I do meself. I realize it's not your responsibility."

"Yes, Captain. Thank you for that." Pettibone organized the materials in front of him, his papers and his traveler's writing kit, a flat wooden box that opened like a miniature desk top but fit in his saddlebag. He moved the kit slightly away from his headgear—a high, black-glazed hat, very shiny, nicknamed a "tar bucket," topped by a white pompon tipped with red—that also rested on the table.

"Now for my news," Pettibone said, changing the subject. "You'll be interested to know we're going to establish two new forts out here."

The other men came alive.

"When?"

"Where?"

Captain Whistler dropped the pay issue with a shake of his head.

"One new fort," Pettibone related, "will be on the west bank of the Mississippi, nine miles above Rapide des Moines—above the mouth of the Des Moines River. That's about two hundred miles from here, so it will be your new neighbor. The other new fort will be way out west, two hundred miles west of St. Louis on the Missouri River."

"What's out there?" Ensign Hamilton asked. He was a young man with such a gift of black curly hair that his hairline was down to his eyebrows. He had won the captain's daughter and was his son-in-law.

"Osage Indian country," Pettibone answered. "The fur trade is extending far west. Both forts will be started this year. The president wants more visible American presence in the Louisiana Purchase to discourage British traders and Spanish traders."

"We ought to put a fort at Prairie du Chien," thrust in Charles Jouett, a Virginian turned Kentuckian. "The English believe they own that place." Jouett, the Fort Dearborn Indian agent, referred to the busy trading post at the mouth of the Wisconsin River. "Prairie du Chien is Indian territory under our gov'ment, but Prairie du Chien and Fort Malden in Canada across from Detroit are where the English allus stir up the Indians against us."

Jouett was six feet three and had long black hair swept straight back and a proud demeanor. He was a lawyer from a prominent family with friends in the national government, yet he was sometimes broke and forced to flee his debts, a not unusual type in the West.

"We are aware of war talk among the Dakota Sioux to the northwest," Pettibone answered, "and also among the Sacs and Foxes to the west of here, and also talk of starting a new Indian Confederation. The secretary believes these two new forts will show our strength to the savages."

"Don't overlook the Kickapoos to the south," interposed Captain Whistler. "They arre plottin' harrm, too. And you're awarrre, Lieutenant, that British agents told the tribes along Lake Michigan they may expect to wade in blood against the Americans, blood up to their ankles."

"Yes. I guess you are surrounded," Pettibone answered. "But the secretary has confidence in Fort Dearborn."

"What about that Shawnee Prophet?" Jouett asked. "He is under British influence. Indians traipse by here all the time, goin' to see the Shawnee Prophet."

"Amidst our many concerns, gentlemen, I'm happy to say you have nothing to fear from the Shawnee Prophet."

The silent Wells, who had ignored the rest, suddenly sat up straight as if stuck with a pin.

Pettibone ignored Wells. "Governor Kirker of Ohio sent a committee to investigate the Prophet. The Shakers sent a religious mission to the Prophet's people. So we are aware of everything he does. The Prophet wants the Indians to live separate from us and discard all clothes, tools, and customs introduced by whites and return to their primitive life. He wants them to take better care of their old, their young, and their women; he wants them to take only one wife—unless they already have several."

The men laughed. "He wants them to swear off whiskey forever. The Prophet preaches against lying and dishonesty," Pettibone continued. "He tells young men to get married instead of chasing girls. He tells them all to confess to the Great Spirit in a loud voice all the sins of their whole life. He tells all Indians to pray each morning and evening to the fire and the sun, to pray to the earth to be fruitful, to the fish to be plenty. It's enough to make anyone want to reform."

"He burns his opponents alive, calls them witches." Wells offered this coolly.

"Captain Wells is overwrought on this subject and has asked that

the militia be sent against the Prophet's village. There is no cause. Those are the facts."

"May I add some facts?"

"If you must." The War Department messenger smiled an insincere smile at Wells.

Despite his boyish appearance, Wells was a man of vast experience. And despite his attempt at coolness, he seemed filled with intense nervous energy. "I don't want to offend the people in Washington City or lose my temper. I'm getting too old for that. I'm thirty-eight. But I consider it a duty I owe to my country to warn my government—"

Pettibone looked at the ceiling.

"—that the Shawnee Prophet and his insolent band are the principal danger. The Prophet tells red men far and wide that the Great Spirit will destroy every white man in America. Under the influence of the Prophet, the Indians are forming a dangerous combination. You all remember how the Indian Confederation destroyed the army of General St. Clair." Wells started to glance at each man.

"That would be when you yourself were a red Indian, Wells," Pettibone said sarcastically, "and you fought against the United States."

The men emitted a loud, disapproving *ohhhh!* Pettibone seemed taken aback.

"Arr good friend Cap'n Wells was captured by the Indians as a child and then fought bravely for them," Captain Whistler explained. "He eventually returned to us and helped make the Amerrican victory over the Indian Confederation possible in 1794. That is all that counts today. The men groaned because they have all heard of Cap'n Wells's bravery and value to us. By the by, I was with General St. Clair's army the terrible morning of St. Clair's defeat."

"We are aware of your noble service, Captain."

"Then you should be aware that I myself was once on the other side."

Lieutenant Pettibone stuck his head out with incredulity. "*You* were an Indian?"

The men guffawed. They took this as a signal to stretch their legs, and they laughed some more. Captain Whistler laughed so much that he cried. Sergeant Wheeler, who stood in the corner, laughed. The table was too small for the ninth man. Even Wells, who had fought as



one of the Indians and might have met Captain Whistler on that field of battle, laughed.

Finally, Captain Whistler, his cheeks shaking with chuckles, stated, "In 1776 I was in the British army at Saratoga. Benedict Arnold and the Americans defeated us there. The Americans captured the entire British army to which I belonged. After a few further adventures, a trip across the ocean to choose me bride, and a return trip across the ocean, I joined the American army. And here I am."

Pettibone blushed. "My briefing did not include your British service, Captain."

"Don't worry. 'Twas thirty-two years ago. 'Twas a good joke about me Indian life. Now, sir, we have heard of some of the depredations of the Sacs and Foxes across the Mississippi and the Potawatomes to the south and west. Governor Harrison's purchase of the Sacs' and Foxes' territory was perhaps premature and has stirred t'ings up. We also hear from many sarces that the Indians, including some of our Potawatomes, are opposed to the existence of Fort Dearborn. That, I suppose, is to be expected."

Pettibone was puzzled. "Why do you say Governor Harrison's purchase of the Sacs and Foxes territory was premature? It is a great accomplishment. The governor passed out a few bribes, got a few Indians drunk, and in return for small payments spread over many years, he acquired twenty-three thousand square miles for the United States."

"Surely," Captain Whistler said. "And surely all the land between the Illinois and the Mississippi Riverrrs, which the governor purchased from the Sacs and Foxes, is arr destiny. But any man can see this Illinois country is quite empty. What settlers we do have are hundrreds of miles south along the Wabash and Ohio Rrivers or in the old French towns on the Mississippi. The land purchased from the Sacs and Foxes won't be needed for a long, long time. No offense. The governor and I were young lieutenants together in the First Regiment of General Wayne's legion. We've known each other for fifteen years. I tink Governor Harrison's doing a superb job."

Harrison had purchased the Sacs and Foxes territory in his role as governor of the Indiana Territory, which then included the Illinois country and Fort Dearborn.

"I envy you your experience, Captain Whistler," Pettibone said

with obvious sincerity. "Until now my experience as a soldier has been behind a desk. I learned things primarily from books and reports. But I have learned. Consider, gentlemen." Pettibone leaned back in his chair and pushed his shiny helmet aside.

"In the thirty-three years that Americans have crossed the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky, going back to 1775, how many people do you think trekked over those mountains into the wilderness?"

"Fifty thousand" guessed the captain.

"A hundred thousand," said the government factor, Mr. Varnum. "We'll be extravagant."

"It was more than two hundred thousand and perhaps as many as three hundred thousand."

The men lifted their eyebrows. Pettibone went on: "Scores of thousands more came down the Ohio River into the west, even in the years of terrible Indian attacks. Twenty thousand came down the Ohio in one year! And still they come. Before the revolution there were no Americans to speak of even in Kentucky. Our best estimate now is that in only thirty-three years there are well over half a million of us out here."

Jouett stirred. "We reckon that's whah we aire buyin' up all this land from the Indins. Our destiny. Is our plan to push all the Indins west of the Mississippi? That it?"

Pettibone almost preened. "Not exactly. The president, gentlemen—I have this on good authority—believes the Indians can't continue to roam thousands upon thousands of miles of this continent merely hunting and warring on each other. Civilization is here. But it is not our government's wish to exterminate the Indians."

The men nodded at this humanitarian position.

"Our government and some of our religious leaders would like the Indians to settle down. They must settle on permanent farms of ordinary size, raise livestock, become civilized, and adopt our way of life. The Indian men as well as the women must become farmers. We are moving toward this transformation in Ohio. We have given the Indians farm tools and teachers. The president feels that as the Indians become more civilized, they will seek more and more comforts of civilization. To get money to buy more manufactured goods, the president believes the Indians will sell their uncultivated wilds."

Pettibone lifted his hands to emphasize a conclusion. "Then their

lands will peacefully become part of the United States. The Indians will give up their way of life and become just like us!"

The men blinked. Then they looked at one another. This fanciful notion seemed utterly incredible to these men who dealt with the free Indians of the West. Finally, Jouett turned to Wells.

"Wells, aire the British givin' guns to thet Prophet?"

Wells nodded. "The Shawnee impostor has received at least three shipments of guns and ammunition from the British agent at Malden."

"Just a minute," Pettibone objected. "President Jefferson is convinced the Shawnee Prophet is harmless. The Prophet and his brother have asked for Wells to be removed as Indian agent. That has colored Mr. Wells's views."

"Oooo, we're gettin' hot," said Captain Whistler. "I'm taking my coat off." The captain removed his uniform coat and draped it over the back of his chair. The others followed, even Pettibone.

"Now," said Captain Whistler, "the Prophet is Shonnee. The Shonnees were the principal instigatorrs of the old Indian Confederation. They will never forrgive Cap'n Wells for leavin' the Indians, returnin' to us, and helpin' us defeat the confederation. That's perhaps why they want him removed as the Indian agent."

"Some Indians feel that he improperly favors the Miamis," Pettibone responded. "Mr. Wells's father-in-law is the principal chief of the Miamis."

"Little Turtle is my former father-in-law. I told you that Sweet Breeze died. I have helped all the Indians, and I asked our government for more help."

"You have been reprimanded twice," Pettibone told Wells, "for providing too generously for the savages. Those Indians who fail to provide for themselves," Pettibone glanced around at the other men, "ought to suffer for it. My understanding is that Indian men limit themselves to hunting, fishing, gambling, and making weapons."

"The men also do their politickin' and their games," Jouett offered. "Thet's the Indin way of life."

"We cannot encourage idleness." Pettibone looked to Captain Whistler for approval. The commander's face was expressionless.

Pettibone straightened his neck. "Interesting debate, I suppose, about the ways of Indians. At any rate, four Indian chiefs speaking for this Prophet made a very fine impression recently on the residents of

Chillicothe, Ohio. Blue Jacket was one, Roundhead of the Wyandots, the Shawnee Panther, and the Prophet's brother. What's the brother's name again?" He looked at Wells.

"Tecumseh. Tecumseh is not a chief, but he is a leader. Watch him closely."

"More of your suspicions. The president is convinced"—Pettibone raised his voice—"that the Prophet is a mere visionary who seeks to bring his people back to their primitive habits and their golden age. As such, he is harmless. Now, on to other business. You're getting a new post surgeon, a Dr. Cooper. He should arrive any day. Dr. Smith will be leaving you. Also, your factor, Mr. Varnum, is transferring to Fort Mackinac."

"*Captain!*" A soldier snapped to attention in the doorway. "I caught an Indian sneaking around the stables with one of our horses."

"Excellent." Captain Whistler nodded. "Find the interpreter, Mr. Lalime. Tell him to lecture the Indian and threaten consequences."

"The Indian speaks English. He wants to see Sergeant Wheeler."

The commander glanced at Wheeler, who indicated ignorance.

"Here he is." The private hauled in the Indian, just short of ten years old, wearing a calico tunic, blue face paint, and a turban.

"Oho!" said the men.

"Waal, now!" said Jouett.

"He sure is a red one, ain't he?" said Lieutenant Thompson. "Except for the paint."

The Indian was blushing deeply.

"Sergeant Wheeler!" the commander scowled. "Do you know this Indian?"

"Ah believe Ah do." Sergeant Wheeler leaned over to squint at the boy in a pretense of checking.

"What's your name, boy?" Mr. Varnum asked.

"Jimmy Wheeler." The Indian spoke in a soft voice, chagrined. "Mr. Varnum, you know my name."

In his discombobulation at getting caught, Jimmy had forgotten to remove the turban. He remembered now and took it off.

"This is obviously a white child." Pettibone was confused.

"Thet is my son, Lieutenant," Sergeant Wheeler stated. "My only son."

"Was he . . . captured?"

“Ehhh, no,” Jimmy said. “They took my shirt and hat.”

Captain Whistler took control. “Sergeant, I will require a full explanation. For now, you may catch up on old times with Cap’n Wells. We’ll discoos this later.”

“Yes, sir.” Sergeant Wheeler glowered at his son.

“I’ve given orders to put on a good dinner here for the officers. After dinner we have some fine singers among the men.” The captain rose. “I have to attend to some business. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Pettibone, would you like to examine the fort?”

Pettibone and the other men rose. “I’ve heard it said that this is the best wooden fort in the United States. Tell me what you think of this idea, sir,” Pettibone added. “Maybe this Indian boy could give me a special tour. I’ll bet he knows all the nooks and crannies.”

“You arrre his good fortune.” Captain Whistler glanced sideways at Jimmy Wheeler. “If you want him as your escort, then Sergeant Wheeler will be your aide and correct any outright lies.”

Sergeant Wheeler snapped to attention.

“Perrhaps,” said the captain, “the Indian can rredeem himself slightly.”



## Chapter 6

### THE FORT

“How, big chief! I’m Lieutenant Pettibone from the War Department.”

Jimmy eyed this lieutenant with mild suspicion.

Lieutenant William Whistler chuckled. “What the heck happened to you?” Varnum and Jouett also came up and stood over the boy. Lieutenant Thompson and Captain Whistler left the room.

At the far side of the room, away from the others, Captain Wells stood alongside Sergeant Wheeler.

“I’m sorry about the passin’ of Wahmangopath,” Sergeant Wheeler said, referring to Wells’s wife, Sweet Breeze, by her Indian name.

“Heard you lost your wife, too. Sorry for you, Jim.”

“Thank you kindly.”

Wells closed his eyes, squeezed his forehead with his right hand, and whispered, “One of my boys died in March.”

“Oh! That’s too hard.” The sergeant looked at his own son.

“I’ve asked for a leave to go to Kentucky to see my daughters.”

“Good choice. Go home for a whaal.”

“Home?” Wells spoke a little loudly. “Where’s home for me?”

Sergeant Wheeler put his right hand on Wells’s shoulder, looked him in the eye, and spoke softly: “It’s here anytime . . . specially if there’s trouble. And your brothers and your sister are always happy to have you in Kentucky.”

“I know, but . . . Thanks.” Wells shook his head as if it was not

possible for people to understand his life as one hundred percent white American when as a teenager and a young man he had been an Indian warrior and still in his dreams sometimes saw himself as an Indian.

“Listen, here’s the truth, Jim, though nobody in Washington City wants to hear it. The Prophet says the Great and Good Spirit hates Americans because Americans are unjust and have taken Indian lands. He says the Great Spirit will destroy the whites. The greatest Indian warrior in the west, Main Poc—who could become a dangerous enemy for us—spent two months in the Prophet’s village.”

“Don’t tell me Main Poc quit drinkin’.” The sergeant grunted.

“Main Poc got drunk in the Prophet’s village whenever he felt like it. The Prophet and his brother are putting together a confederation for war against the United States.”

“Ah figured.”

“I’m going to try to take Main Poc and five or six chiefs to Washington City,” Wells continued softly. “They need to see the population of the United States and the seat of the American government. It might be a cure for the sweet talk of the Shawnee Prophet. Can you get someone to take this lieutenant to St. Louis?”

“Most likely.”

“The Quakers did set up model farms near Fort Wayne, you know, to show the Indian men how to farm, but the Indian men would only sit and watch. One Quaker gave up. The Prophet’s people drove the other Quaker away.”

“We’ll get someone to take Pettibone to St. Louis.”

Sensing that someone talked about him, Pettibone turned. “Sergeant? Your son seems to know everybody here, including the native population. I can dispense with your assistance if you don’t mind.”

“My orders are to accompany you, Lieutenant, if *you* don’t mind.”

“If you accompany me from a distance, you may converse with Captain Wells, who I see is your old friend. I would find that an excellent solution. Your son and I will get along.”

“Yes, sir, as you request.” The sergeant turned to his son and silently shook an index finger as a warning.

"Boy, am I in trouble." Jimmy spoke aloud to no one as he stepped out into the full light of the sun on the parade ground. The sun was high in the West on one of the long June days, and everyone who left the captain's office and walked west out the door had to squint and shade his eyes. The sky above was a brilliant light blue with streaky clouds stretching for long distances.

Many soldiers passed to and fro on the parade ground, most in their simple fatigue dress of white linen shirts with flowing sleeves and white linen pantaloons. Those on duty wore the colorful U.S. Army uniform of red, white, and blue. The uniform coats, cutaways with tails, were blue with broad red trim. Their pantaloons, tight-fitted pants, were blue with a red stripe down the side. Their vests were white. A pair of crossed belts made a big white X on the chest of each man. Each wore a round black leather hat crowned by a bear-skin crest that ran from front to back. The round hat was highlighted by a tall white plume on the left side. Almost all the uniforms were faded and sweat-stained.

The soldiers in fatigues or in uniform kept to the perimeter to avoid the man from Washington City.

One middle-aged soldier in fatigues, Private Tom Burns, who had a fuzzy brown beard salted with gray, teased Jimmy from afar. With one eye and a raised corner of his mouth, Burns made a silly face and pointed his thumb at the fancy Pettibone. Jimmy laughed.

"Yes?" said Pettibone.

"Oh, nothing, sir. I guess I was just laughing at those two soldiers over there rubbing bricks together." Two soldiers who looked morose knelt over two wooden buckets on the south end of the parade ground. Each man rubbed two bricks together, and each tried not to rub his fingertips off. Brick dust was created from the friction, and each soldier tried to catch the brick dust in his bucket.

"Punishment detail?" asked Pettibone.

"Yes, sir." Jimmy smiled at the sorry sight. "They save that brick dust, and the soldiers mix it with oil to polish their muskets. But gee whiz." Jimmy abruptly turned all the way around and began his tour. "Now that building we just left, Lieutenant Pettibone, is the commanding officer's quarters."

"Of course it is."

"Captain Whistler and his family mostly live on the top floor."



Jimmy pointed back to the two-story building made of square-hewn logs that looked the same on the outside as on the inside. The roof of the building was wood-shingled for rain runoff. "The backs of all these buildings," Young Wheeler indicated them with a wave all around, "are also part of the walls of the fort. You can shoot out of the second floors at the enemy, hey?"

"Very practical."

"And those," said Jimmy, raising his voice, "are two of Captain Whistler's children right there!" He pointed to Georgie and Harriet, ages eight and eleven, who rocked in rocking chairs flanking the door of the commanding officer's quarters. They had obviously brought the chairs down from the family rooms for this demonstration.

"You're a red-skinned aborigine, Jimmy," said young Georgie.

Harriet had her hands over her eyes. She said, "Your face looks silly, Wheeler."

"That is Beauregard on the left, Mr. Pettibone," said Jimmy, giving them false names, "and Beulah on the right."

At that moment William Wells and Sergeant Wheeler came out the door of the commanding officer's building between Georgie and Harriet. Wells heard the children's banter on the way out.

"Life goes on," Wells said. He smiled with sad eyes.

"Beulah" stuck out her tongue and made a raspberry.

"Beauregard and Beulah, how do you *do*?" Pettibone said and bowed. Then he approached and shook each one's hand. "What a pleasure to meet the captain's children."

Jimmy looked up and shouted, "Hey, Mrs. Whistler, this is a guy from the War Department in Washington City!" The captain's wife stood near the railing on the second floor gallery and held a little girl by the hand who tugged and tugged.

Mrs. Whistler smiled down pleasantly. "My, Lieutenant, you are like a visitor from the moon! Please excuse me. I will see you at dinner."

Pettibone bowed. "I will be honored, ma'am."

"And what have you been up to, Master Wheeler?" The captain's wife arched an eyebrow. An imposing but weary-looking forty-four-year-old woman with gray hair showing under her cloth bonnet, Mrs. Whistler did not wait for an answer but turned toward the indoors.

"That's Caroline with her," said Jimmy. "She's five. She wants to come down here, but Mrs. Whistler won't let her. She's just a little girl."

Jimmy then turned 180 degrees to look to the west. "Those are the officers' quarters over there." He pointed to a similar but wider building on the other side of the parade ground, directly opposite the commander's quarters. Then Jimmy turned to the left, the south. "And on both sides of the front gate are some of the soldiers' barracks. The one on the left is where I live with my dad." The front gate was in the south wall of the fort, flanked by soldiers' barracks on either side. The front gate was only ten feet tall, and the passage to the front gate had a room built over it. In effect, anyone who entered the main gate had to come into the fort through a covered passageway between two barracks buildings; the passage was only wide enough for two men to walk abreast. The gate and the passage were easily defended. All the structures that the boy had so far pointed out were two-story log buildings with shingled roofs and open galleries or balconies on the second floor.

"How do you find the barracks?" Pettibone spoke to Jimmy but glanced at Sergeant Wheeler.

"You mean how do I like them? I had my own room back east, but I got used to this place. My ma missed her piano when we moved here, and she cried." Jimmy stopped. He had surprised himself. His face was immobile. "Uh, we lived in a tent in the summer, but my dad knocked the tent down and chopped holes in it with an axe and sliced it up with a knife after my ma . . . well . . . left. Now we live in the sergeant's room on the second floor of the south barracks. It's warmer in the winter. Right, Dad?"

"Yes." Sergeant Wheeler cleared his throat.

Lieutenant Pettibone looked with a question on his face at the sergeant, as if wondering about the mother who "left." Sergeant Wheeler ignored it.

Then Pettibone bent down and spoke softly, "Just for my information, Jimmy, is Mrs. Whistler pregnant?"

"Near having the baby, I think." Jimmy answered too loudly. "This will be Mrs. Whistler's eleventh or twelfth. She had some other ones, too, who died."

"Oh, I see."

"Some of the Whistlers are old married children and don't live here. Some of 'em are in their twenties."

"Imagine."

“Older than you’ll ever get, Jimmy,” wisecracked Georgie from his rocking chair. Jimmy made a face at him.

“The brick building is the magazine, correct?” Pettibone had turned around to face toward the north, and he pointed to the only structure around that wasn’t made out of wood. The magazine, which held the ammunition and gunpowder, was one of three buildings along the north wall.

“Yep, and that’s the sutler’s store next to it to the right. The sutler’s a civilian who runs the general store on an army post, but you probably know that, eh, Lieutenant? Mr. Kinzie’s our sutler as well as the biggest Indian trader anywhere near here. He runs a lot of things. His store for Indians and civilians—what few civilians there are—and for traders passing by is on the other side of the river. In that same building with Mr. Kinzie’s store there are the north barracks, sir. To the right of that building, in the northeast corner near where the walls meet, is a secret. It’s underground.”

“What might that secret be?”

“Don’t know if I can tell you.”

“Ahh.”

“Then those really little houses in that corner”—Jimmy pointed to the northeast—“and that corner”—He pointed back to the southwest.

“I understand.”

“Those are the privies.”

“I deduced that.”

“Could I get out of these Indian clothes and put on one of my own shirts, Lieutenant Pettibone? Won’t take a minute.”

“I will reintroduce myself to Beauregard and Beulah.”

Jimmy ran at top speed across the parade ground, disappeared, then returned the same way, but this time wearing a white silk shirt with a ruffled collar and what were originally very long sleeves with ruffled cuffs, fit for formal dinner wear. The sleeves were no longer big enough for him, the torso was too tight, and the shirt was wrinkled. It had been too big for him when his mother had brought it along from New York City, but he had grown out of it. He had wiped away most of the blue face paint.

“From a painted savage to a sailing ship in full rig,” said Georgie. “Ha ha.”

"What a precious blouse, Wheeler." Harriet was impressed. The younger Whistler children, including Georgie of the many curls and straight-haired Harriet, were notorious for wearing hand-me-down clothes with patches and ragged hems. They owned nothing fancy.

"It turns out that my two new friends insist on different names," said Pettibone to young Wheeler. "But they both speak with utter fondness of you."

"Tell it to your horse," said Georgie.

"Show me the strongest Fort Dearborn defenses, my little man. Let's do that blockhouse first."

Jimmy led the lieutenant at a brisk walk across the parade ground and into the first floor of the blockhouse at the northwest corner of the fort. Stepping through the narrow door, they went from bright sunlight into dark brown shadows on the dim first floor of the blockhouse. Inside, boxes and tools were stacked or hung neatly, but the first floor was dusty and not lived in. Jimmy turned to the left, climbed up a ladder, and went through an open trapdoor to the second floor. Pettibone followed. Sergeant Wheeler and Captain Wells remained below on the parade ground.

"You're out of uniform, Wheeler," shouted a gruff, hearty voice on the second floor of the blockhouse.

"Hey, this is Corporal Hayes," Jimmy said after popping completely out of the trapdoor. "He's a good friend of my dad."

The corporal came to attention and saluted the officer as he came up through the opening. When Pettibone had clambered up the ladder and got his feet under him, he returned the salute.

"Sir! Welcome to our humble abode." The striking Corporal Hayes was a little taller than William Wells, but he had enormously wide and thick shoulders, a barrel chest, biceps like gunpowder kegs, muscular, knotty hands, and a broken and slightly crooked nose. He had hung his fancy uniform hat on a peg on the wall and was very bald.

The second floor of the blockhouse was roomy, taller and wider on all sides than the first floor. It was somewhat better lit because it had more windows. On the other hand, the windows were small for defensive purposes, so on the whole the second floor of the blockhouse was about as well lit as an outhouse that had a small window. The mood was brownish inside. The soldiers were constantly working on

the place to give it more military features, so it had a distinct fresh woody smell.

"You can see in here now, but it's tough at night," Jimmy explained.

"Do you have anything to eat, Hazy?"

"Yeah, we're flush since the supply ship from Detroit came." Hayes reached in his pocket and pulled out a fresh biscuit.

"That's the Shee-kag River," Jimmy said before gobbling down the biscuit. He pointed to the north slit window. Each side of the blockhouse had horizontal slit windows three to five inches high, wide and narrow, and set at a height to allow standing men to aim and fire muskets.

"That's Lake Michigan," Jimmy added, pointing to the slit windows to the east. "And that's the prairie." He pointed to the slit windows to the west. "These windows are narrow to keep you from getting shot. Those big holes with the doors on them . . ." Jimmy pointed to very large square holes low down on each of the four walls, covered by enormously heavy swinging doors.

"Gun ports," said Lieutenant Pettibone.

"Yeah, well, we call 'em portholes," said Jimmy, "for the cannon. You poke the cannon out any way you want."

"Ingenious."

"Look out the slit windows." Jimmy motioned to the lieutenant. "You'll see there's two fences, all around the fort, called pickets. If the enemy climbs over the short fence, they still got to climb the big fence. They can't get in the back walls of the buildings because there's no window big enough to get in, just shooting holes."

"Indeed," said the lieutenant. As he walked to each inner wall of the blockhouse, peering through the slit windows one after another, Pettibone could see that the outer fence of the fort was about four feet tall, made of cut saplings sharpened to points at the top. The inner fence was twelve feet high and made of thick, rough-hewn oak logs, and all the gaps between the logs were filled with mortar. The top of the massive inner fence was surmounted by sharp iron crow's feet.

"Mmm, nasty," Pettibone said.

"See those holes under your feet?"

Pettibone looked down at a series of small holes in the floor, each

four inches square, that were all around the perimeter of the floor as if to let water out.

"Those are murder holes," explained Jimmy.

"Really?"

"If the enemy sneaks up under the blockhouse, you can shoot down at them through the murder holes. They have no place to hide."

"How long did it take the men to build this magnificent place, Corporal? Or were you here for that?"

"Been here from the first day, since two o'clock in the afternoon, August 17, 1803, when we first arrived at this here river," said Hayes. "Took many months to build this place, Lieutenant. I must have sawed three hundred oak trees, and the other fellas the same. Then me and the rest of the boys had to get in the harness to drag the logs. Didn't have hardly any animals. Ever drag an oak tree, sir?"

"Can't say as I have."

"Still, Captain Whistler is a genius." Hayes extended his arms wide. "This place is a masterpiece."

"You know how they make the mortar for the chinks?" Jimmy asked.

"Why don't you tell me."

"Okay. You take straw and clay, and you mix it all together." Jimmy made a mixing motion in an imaginary pot in his hand. "Then you add a real good dose of horse manure. Mix that in good. Then to make sure it's right, you taste it."

Hayes roared with laughter.

"He's right about the horse shit in the mortar, sir, but we don't taste it."

"I understand I'm being teased."

Studying the views, Pettibone could see that the blockhouses, although connected to the fort, were mostly outside the fort, so soldiers in the blockhouses could direct small-arms fire and cannon fire along the *outside* of the fences to shoot down anyone who attempted to storm the outer pickets. If anyone managed to climb the outer pickets, the blockhouses also commanded, at point-blank range, every inch of the no-man's-land between the outer pickets and the inner pickets. An attempt to storm Fort Dearborn would be extremely painful.

"We have three light field cannons," Hayes contributed. "We usually

keep these two here.” Hayes patted one and pointed at the other. “We keep the third one at the southwest blockhouse, but we can trundle them back and forth.” Hayes looked as if he could carry a cannon under each arm.

“Yo!” shouted Jimmy. He looked out the south slit window. Barks from a distance were growing louder.

“What do you see, boy?” Hayes asked.

“The dogs are back. They’re in a chase.”

Pettibone also peered out to the south and watched as three white-tailed deer bounded across the low ground west of the fort, chased by four dogs in full cry.

“Those three deer are heading for the river, Corporal, chased by your dogs.”

Corporal Hayes shouted out the north slit window in a voice that could carry over a battlefield, “Noles, watch out! Stampede! Your way!” Then he explained: “One of our men is fishing in the river in a canoe.”

“I gotta watch!” Jimmy knelt down and stuck his head and neck out the west porthole. The swinging door made of oak four inches thick was held in the up position by a leather strap for light and ventilation.

“Isn’t that dangerous?” Pettibone suggested to Hayes. The swinging door weighed about a hundred pounds. If it came loose, it could kill Jimmy.

Hayes shrugged and made a face as if it was not his habit to correct the child. Instead he said, “Whaddya see, Wheeler?”

“I see Private Noles fishing in the river and the deer running right at him! Whooee!”

The deer now raced toward the riverbank between the fort and the government factory building to the west. Noles in his canoe was directly in the path.

“Wisht I had a gun!” shouted Noles so loudly he could be heard in the blockhouse.

The barking became a general clamor. The deer bounded into the river followed by the dogs, making a total of seven splashes. Impulsively, as one deer swam by, Noles dove in and grabbed it by the head.

“Goll, look at that!” Hayes watched out the north slit window.

“Good heavens.” Pettibone was looking out the west slit window.

“Ho, boy!” Jimmy had his head out the porthole.

Noles held the deer’s head under water while the deer thrashed. The fight in deep water was powerful. The four dogs harried the other two deer all the way across the river.

“Can you hold him, Noles?” Hayes shouted.

Noles’s water-wrestling match left him unable to answer. As the men in the blockhouse shouted, another soldier ran out the small wicket gate or sally port south of the blockhouse to see what the commotion was.

On the far side of the river, after a good swim, the first deer, a stag, climbed up the bank and escaped, its hind legs churning to reach the level ground. The dogs got the last deer as it also tried to mount the opposite bank and brought it down.

“Whoo! What a fight!” said Jimmy.

“Is your man in the river going to be able to handle that beast?” Pettibone asked, turning to Hayes. “What would possess him to try that?”

“It’s a deer, Lieutenant. It’s reasonable eatin’, and you can sell the hide or use it.”

“I think he’s about drowned it,” Jimmy observed.

“That deer’s hooves could have maimed him,” said Pettibone, “or the dogs could have had him.”

“Well, sir, you’re absolutely right. Noles!” shouted Corporal Hayes out the north window. “What in the hell are you doin’?”

Noles had released the now dead deer. He struggled to swim to the near riverbank, climbed up, and then lay on his back, water draining off him. The drowned deer floated in the river. The soldier who had exited the wicket gate ran to the riverbank and seemed to inquire after Noles’s well-being. Noles appeared to attempt an answer.

Soon the standing soldier turned and shouted back to the blockhouse: “He said he got caught up in the chase.”

Pettibone drew his head away and seemed a bit awed. “Young Master Wheeler, where did those dogs come from?”

“Boy, that was strange.” Jimmy left the porthole and stood up. “Hmmm. Lieutenant Whistler has two hunting dogs, sir. The third big hound was Mr. Varnum’s. The fourth dog is Doc Smith’s, I think. Hazy says every once in a while all the dogs get a hair up their ass, and they take off together for a few days. They always come back.”



"Is that what Corporal Hayes tells you—the dogs get a hair up their ass?"

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant Pettibone."

"Well, not exactly that," Corporal Hayes offered.

"I don't imagine you talked that way, Jimmy, when your mother was here," continued Pettibone.

Jimmy turned away, stepped to the east window, and peered out toward the lake. Corporal Hayes indicated with a silent gesture that Pettibone should drop that subject. The corporal brought his muscular hands together in an attitude of prayer, then pointed up to indicate Mrs. Wheeler had gone to heaven. Pettibone made a face, showing he regretted the question.

"What did your dad say about anybody capturing this fort, Jimmy?" asked Hayes.

Jimmy didn't answer at first, then turned around and acted as if nothing had happened. "My dad says Fort Dearborn can't be taken except by big cannons or a long siege."

"I believe it." Pettibone stepped to a south window and looked out at the parade ground of the fort. "Mmm hmmm. So far from civilization, yet who are those lovely wenches?"

Hayes peered. "Gee, uh, I just see Captain Whistler's daughter, Eliza, and his daughter-in-law, Julia, crossing the parade ground."

"Heavens. Protect me here, Corporal."

"Julia, the wife of the Lieutenant Whistler, is pretty fine looking. You almost never see her without her two kids," Hayes added. "Eliza's sixteen if you're goin' a-courtin'."

"Jimmy, lead me away. Show me that secret you spoke about and keep me out of trouble as your father commanded."

"Should I show him what's underground over in the northeast corner, Hazy?"

"Do you think we can trust him?"

"I promise not to reveal the secret," Pettibone said and saluted.

"I'm going to show you a dark, deep tunnel." Jimmy spoke in a mock scary tone. "It leads down to the river. And deep inside the tunnel . . . is a well to get water in a siege."

Said Hayes, "Fort Dearborn is a work of art."



## Chapter 7

### SPOTTED TROUT'S DREAM

After the sun had dropped below the trees to the west and left a soft blue light in the sky but dark shadows on the earth, Hen Splashes, wife of Spotted Trout and mother of Jimmy Wheeler's friend Strong Pike, sat with her husband, three children, one of her brothers, and one of her husband's brothers and their wives and children outside Hen Splashes' wigwam around a small fire.

The camaraderie of the games still cast its aura over the family group of sixteen people. The three men were skinned and bruised on faces, arms, and legs, and had deep body bruises and muscular aches. Each moaned with good humor and pain every time he moved. Their children and wives laughed. Yet outside the family, and especially in front of strangers, these three men would have tried not to acknowledge pain.

Spotted Trout lifted his head to look at the sky. "This is a very fine day."

"Because you are here," said Hen Splashes.

Spotted Trout had just returned from a long absence during which he had stayed at the Shawnee Prophet's village one hundred miles to the southeast, located where two rivers met, the Wabash and the Tippecanoe. Spotted Trout had become a follower of the Shawnee Prophet. Upon his return home he worried his wife by telling her he might go on other trips to spread the Prophet's teachings.

The children around the fire were proud of their fathers who had

fought so well in an extremely dangerous sport contest. The fathers had played on the same victorious team, Skishéug, or senior, the team that each of them had belonged to since birth. All Potawatomies were alternately divided at birth into senior or junior. Hen Splashes was herself junior, or Gishgo. She had rooted both for her husband and her husband's team and for her own team, but secretly she wished her husband's team would win. It was better for the whole family that the husband and father be content.

Hen Splashes and Spotted Trout sat on a log nearest the doorway of the wigwam. The husband and wife, who had missed each other, pushed together so that their hips and flanks touched. They drew contentment and strength from touching each other. He squeezed her leg with his right hand, and she placed her left hand over his. An infant niece watched the moving flames of the small fire while being held in an older child's arms. The rest of the children relived the games in their chatter as the adults sat back and watched them.

Hen Splashes' brother and brother-in-law and their wives sat on the opposite side of the fire. The children sat on the flanks of the fire between the adults on either end. Fireflies began to appear all around.

Suddenly amid the chatter Brown Sparrow broke the mood: "Father, when the Great Spirit renews the land, will we still go to Mr. Kinzie's? I like to buy his cocoa powder. It is so tasty." The eyes of Hen Splashes' six-year-old daughter grew wide thinking of the taste of cocoa.

Hen Splashes frowned. "Oh! Let's talk about the games, children." Shadows began to obscure the drying racks that held drying fish on one side of the wigwam and venison on the other. The venison was cut into long, thin strips and was being smoked over a slow fire and thus preserved in a process that the Americans had learned to imitate. Americans called the result *jerky*.

"Someday we will not have to go to Mr. Kinzie's anymore," Spotted Trout replied to his daughter. "When the Great Spirit renews the land for all the red men, we will make everything ourselves just as our fathers once did."

Hen Splashes bit her lip. She sensed that a wonderful peaceful moment had slipped away too soon. Whenever she heard the talk turn to the teachings of the Shawnee Prophet, her spirit drooped because

the Prophet drew her husband away for weeks at a time and left her lonely.

“Perhaps Mr. Kinzie will come to us once in a great while to show his wares,” Spotted Trout continued, “but Kinzie will have to come from a very, very long distance.”

“Will we move far away?”

“No, Sparrow,” Strong Pike objected in a big brother tone, annoyed with his sister’s lack of understanding. “Mr. Kinzie will move far away. When the Great Spirit renews the land for the Indians, the *Kitchimokemon* will be gone.”

“Really?”

Strong Pike got his name from a small Northern Pike that another member of the village had caught the day the boy was born. Because the fish was too skinny to eat—it was so thin that it looked like a snake—and because it bit the fisherman when he removed the hook, the man who caught it tossed the pike behind him on a riverbank. When the man came across the pike an hour later, it was still alive. He put it back in the river, and it swam away. This seemed a good omen, a fish so strong it could live an hour on land, so the parents gave the name to their son.

“Will the earth look the same as this, Father?” asked Sparrow.

Hen Splashes sighed.

“Like this but richer for the Neshnabe. The white men call us Potawatomi, and we do ourselves sometimes. But our real name, children, is Neshnabe, the True People.” Spotted Trout expanded his chest.

“Neshnabe!” repeated the children in unison.

Spotted Trout smiled. Then he stood up and suppressed a wince from his aches and pains. His wife winced for him.

“Uh-oh, here it comes, a speech.” Brother-in-law Loud Crow rolled his eyes.

Erect, Spotted Trout was five feet eleven inches, but he seemed taller because he stood very straight. He was broad-shouldered yet slim. His head was nearly bald because he had plucked his hair except for strands left in a topknot. He had a strong Roman nose, high cheekbones, and a muscular, spare torso and legs. His torso and legs were bare. Instead of the cloth attire that most Potawatomi men bought from the traders, Spotted Trout wore only a loincloth. His

brother and brother-in-law wore the fashion of the time, cloth tunics and cloth leggings, and on this warm summer night they had removed their turbans. Both these men also had long black hair.

“When the Great Spirit renews the land,” repeated Spotted Trout, who raised his right hand and looked at the sky, “the brown minks and the black minks will return, and we will see almost as many minks as squirrels. The otters and the beavers will return to our rivers.” Spotted Trout’s eyes sparkled in the firelight. “In the winter, the coats of the otter and the beaver will be long and oily. And great herds of buffalo will come back.”

“Maybe tomorrow morning,” Loud Crow said, cackling.

Hen Splashes scowled at her brother. Then she gazed up at her husband and touched his leg. He was so obviously happy to talk of this and showed the intoxication of his dream that she was pleased for him, even if the subject of the Prophet and the Prophet’s teachings alarmed her. Her husband turned at her touch, and when he saw her smile up at his eyes, he grew a bit taller.

“Someday, children, I will show you the many buffalo bones along the Kankakee Sepe. When the Great Spirit renews the land, we will see the buffalo again all around us or as far as we would have to travel. It would be down the Sheshikmaoshike Sepe,<sup>6</sup> to what the Kitchimokemon call Mount Juliett,<sup>7</sup> and look out over the vast herds and take only the animals we need.”

“The Weem-tee-gosh<sup>8</sup> call our Wakesha Sepe<sup>9</sup> the Riviere Boeuf, or river of the buffalo, don’t they, Father?” Strong Pike offered. He repeated what his father had told him. “So there must have been many buffalo here when the Weem-tee-gosh came with the black-robed priests and the story of Jesus.”

“That is very true.”

“Did the Kitchimokemon drive the buffalo away?” Strong Pike asked.

“The Big Knives killed too many buffalo. The Shawnees tell us that when the Big Knives first came over the mountains from the East,

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6. Des Plaines River

7. Joliet

8. the French

9. Fox River

they killed all the buffalo in the Shawnees' finest hunting ground in only a few years. One time, white men slaughtered a whole herd of buffalo to take only the animals' tongues!"

Hen Splashes gasped. Two of the women said, "Ohhhhh!" at this terrible waste.

"These white men left the rest of the carcasses to rot, so that soon a man could go across a field bigger than this village walking only on buffalo bones. Those dead buffalo were probably the same ones who used to pass here and cause this land to tremble. Buffalo herds travel very far, like the geese from the North. To kill the great buffalo for their tongues was stupid and an offense to the Master of Life."

"Why would the Kitchimokemon take only the buffaloes' tongues if they had hungry families?" Sparrow asked.

"If they had hungry families, they ate almost the whole animal, like anyone. But we ourselves angered the Master of Life, Sparrow. The Prophet says we destroyed too many animals ourselves to sell their skins to the white traders and left the animals' bodies to rot, and now we kill the deer and the bear when they are too young. The Great Spirit is displeased. The Great Spirit has taken the animals back inside the earth, and he has threatened to destroy the earth."

Hen Splashes reached up and pulled gently on Spotted Trout's hand, so Spotted Trout sat down again.

The children, except for the boy Strong Pike who had heard all this before, were amazed. "Destroy the world?" Sparrow asked.

Hen Splashes put her breast against her husband's back and her arm around his waist for his reward as a good husband and to indicate to him, as he well knew, that he should not scare the children. Hen Splashes was completely clothed from neck to ankles in the modest manner of Potawatomi women. She had her long hair gathered in the back. Despite the innocence of her affectionate movements, her brother, Loud Crow, cackled again.

"It is not too late, children. The Prophet tells us the Great Spirit will bring all the animals back from inside the earth after we return to the old ways of our ancestors. Men must again pluck out the hair on their heads and leave only scalp knots and wear an eagle feather and *never* wear white men's hats and never shake their hands. When the weather is warm, our men must go naked in only the loincloth, as I do."

"We are supposed to throw away our clothes, Crayfish." Loud Crow said this as an aside to Spotted Trout's brother, Crayfish, who was busy in the back letting his wife run her fingers through his hair. Crayfish ignored this talk of politics and religion.

"When we wear clothes, we must wear skins again as our ancestors did," Spotted Trout continued, undaunted. Then he thought of something else. "Oh, yes!" He jumped up, pulled aside the cloth door of his wigwam, and stepped inside to get it.

The wigwam was a tall dome, seven and a half feet in the center—as tall as Spotted Trout and his wife could comfortably reach to make it—and twelve feet in diameter, large enough to house parents and children. The wigwam was made of a light frame of cut saplings sunk in the ground on the perimeter, bent toward the center, and covered on the sides with hanging mats woven from river reeds, grass, and pussy willows. The top was covered with sheets of bark to shed rainwater. A smoke hole was in the top center. For the moment the smoke hole let in the last of the dying twilight, just enough to find what Spotted Trout wanted.

He returned with a wicked war club in his right hand and a lacrosse stick in his left. "We men must dance naked with our bodies painted and the *poigamangum* in our hands." He waved his war club. "And we must carry *pakatocianaes* with us," he said, waving his lacrosse stick, "and amuse ourselves often with the Indian game"—his voice rose—"just as we all did today!"

The children cheered.

"That is why I suggested to the Wkamek that we play the Indian ball games, and the Wkamek agreed with me!" Spotted Trout, who had remained on his feet after returning to the wigwam, seemed momentarily stunned and looked at everyone. "They agreed with me!"

Hen Splashes applauded. She more than anyone understood how much this small achievement in persuading the council of elders to arrange the big lacrosse game meant to her husband.

Spotted Trout, who was thirty-one years old, was driven by his own ideas and by the Prophet's ideas. He was continually frustrated that the people did not accept the Prophet's teachings quickly enough.

When he regained his composure from the emotion of finally winning a debate in his own village, Spotted Trout went on: "The Great

Spirit tells us, 'I am your Father. I am the Father of the English, of the French, of the Spaniards, and of the Indians. I created the first man who was the common father of all these people. But the Americans—'" Spotted Trout lowered his voice to a deep rumble—"I did not make. They are not my children but the children of the evil spirit. The Americans grew from the scum of the great water. And this frothy scum was driven off the great water into the woods—driven off the ocean into our land—by a strong east wind.' The Kitchimokemon have become numerous, but the Great Spirit hates them. They are unjust and have taken away our lands that were not made for them. So says the Prophet."

Hen Splashes kept her thoughts to herself. She believed their children would have to learn how to get along with the whites, even the Americans. They seemed unlikely to go away.

"Tell us what the Prophet looks like," Sparrow requested.

"He has only one eye, the left one."

"Oooo," the children said.

"His right eye is gone." Spotted Trout bent down toward the children for effect. "He has a strong nose with a silver nose bob, as many of our people do, and big eyebrows that frown darkly. He wears long silver earrings and also puts little arrows through his ears. When the Prophet looks at you, his left eye can freeze you. He has a little mustache—"

"A mustache?" Strong Pike had not heard this before.

"Yes. He is very eloquent and can be encouraging or very angry. The Prophet is the first man ever created. The Great Spirit has brought him back again to save us."

"The Prophet is the first man ever created?" one of the wives asked.

Spotted Trout sat down. "The Prophet says we must hunt as in the old days with bows and arrows. I will teach your mothers to make fire our old way with a strong stick spun rapidly by a bow against wood until the tip gets so hot it makes sparks."

"Hah!" Loud Crow blurted this out almost involuntarily. His wife poked him, and the brother-in-law stifled further laughter. Loud Crow was a dark-eyed, square-jawed fellow, more squat than tall, with a good sense of humor. "Oh, I'm sure," he said pretending to agree, "that it is a good idea to make fire by spinning a stick."



The girls in the family giggled and looked at their uncle, then at their mothers. Hen Splashes would not contradict her husband in this. She decided she would at least try to make fire the ancient way instead of using flint and steel.

"Didn't the Prophet say," asked Loud Crow, "that we must throw away our medicine bags? But you don't." He referred to the small bags of personal sacred objects and good luck charms that all Indians carried and revered. Loud Crow held up his own, made from fine otter fur and decorated with painted porcupine quills and silk.

"I do not understand everything the Prophet says," admitted Spotted Trout, who also wore a medicine bag on his hip, hung from a leather thong across his shoulder. "What is more important is that the Prophet says this land belongs to all the Indians together. We all have one pot for the red men to eat out of with one spoon, and no Indian nation or a few foolish chiefs may sell anything from our pot unless all the Indian nations agree."

Suddenly from behind his brother-in-law, Crayfish joined in: "I think we must go to war to get the land back from the Big Knives."

"Such a beautiful night," Hen Splashes interrupted. "We are all so happy. Must we talk of war? Didn't we have enough fighting today?"

"If we do everything the Prophet says," Spotted Trout insisted, "the Great Spirit himself will overturn the land. The Big Knives will all be buried!"

"What?" the children exclaimed.

"The Indians then will inhabit all this great island again from ocean to ocean," Spotted Trout proclaimed, "and we will allow only a few French, English, and Spanish to visit."

"None of that will happen," Crayfish answered, "unless we ourselves become the arm of the Great Spirit to bury the Kitchimoke-mon."

"Will Jimmy Wheeler be buried?" Sparrow asked difficult questions. Spotted Trout ignored this one.

"The Prophet has disciples among every nation of Indians, from the far north to across the Mississippi to the Missouri Sepe, and also to the east. When I was in the Prophet's village," Spotted Trout continued, "I saw Chief Main Poc, the fiercest warrior of our people. I know Main Poc personally."

"Oh, now. I am the only man here who has ridden with Main Poc," Crayfish said, coming out of his reclined position. He sat up and leaned forward. "I rode with Main Poc against the Osage. We took many Osage captives, and then we stole horses from the Americans. What days! Main Poc has been our leader since before this Shawnee Prophet. Main Poc is a Neshnabe, one of us, yet not born of woman. He was got by the Great Spirit and sprung right up out of the ground."

Strong Pike grinned from ear to ear. He loved these stories of the Prophet as the first man ever created and Main Poc born out of the dirt. Strong Pike sometimes thought like his mother and doubted if any man could have really sprung out of the ground without still being attached to the ground, like a plant. But even so, Strong Pike enjoyed a beautiful story.

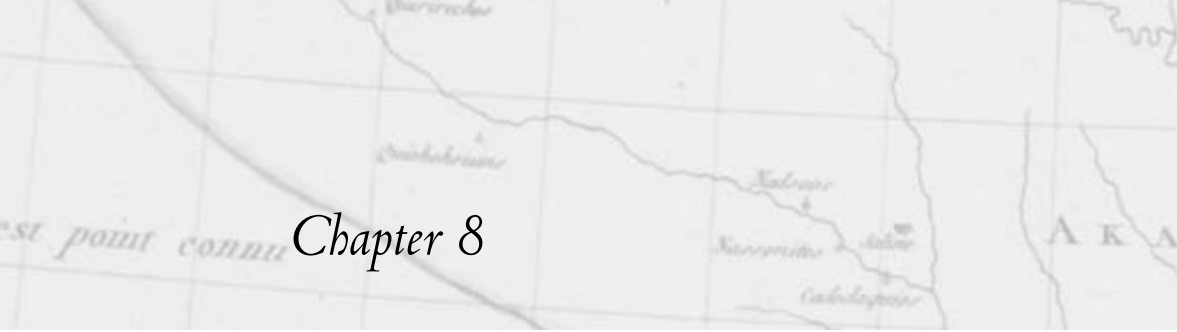
"Main Poc drinks too much," Hen Splashes said quietly. "I have seen him roll around on the ground naked, out of his mind with whiskey." Hen Splashes' husband nudged her, but she continued quietly and sat up very straight as she spoke. "When he drinks too much, Main Poc is cruel to those around him, even his relatives and friends. I hear that to those who oppose him, he slips poison. He is not a man for Neshnabe boys to imitate."

"Well . . . he is still a leader and fierce warrior," Spotted Trout countered.

"Maybe I heard wrong about the poison." Hen Splashes said this to smooth over her contradiction of what the men said. "Children, your fathers and your uncles are great and wise hunters. We have no war here now."

"If a man does not practice war, it comes to him anyway," said Loud Crow, the humorous one, turning serious. "War returns like hunger and thirst. If a man is not ready, he is defeated. And your husband"—Loud Crow addressed his sister—"our great dreamer, will surprise you when war comes."

"No, he won't." Hen Splashes touched the back of her husband's head. "I know my husband will be the bravest of all."



## Chapter 8

### SERGEANT AND SON

Sergeant Wheeler and his son sat on their bed with a straw mattress in their fourteen-by-sixteen-foot room which they shared with Corporal Hayes who was already asleep and snoring comfortably on his own straw bed. In addition to the two beds, the room held an all-purpose table with a wash bowl on it, two chairs, and a box for Jimmy to sit on. The fireplace was on the south side of the room, but the cook fire was out. The residents' clothes, uniforms, and equipment hung on wooden pegs on the walls. Smaller items, keepsakes, razors, and extra gun tools were stored in army knapsacks that sat on a small shelf which extended from the end of each bed.

Sergeant Wheeler massaged his left foot. Stars filled the sky outside their window that faced north. Their bed was only two feet from the combined window/door that led to the second-floor gallery, and the window/door was left open on this warm, still night. Despite the stars, the room would have been almost completely black except that the sergeant had chosen to light his ration candle inside a lantern. The boy knew this meant his father was not going to bed immediately and was probably going to talk.

Jimmy yawned and his eyes were heavy. Despite his youth, his arms and shoulders, his lower back, and his legs hurt from his long ride; this was on top of the aches and pains from being trampled in the lacrosse game. "Oh, boy," he exclaimed, feeling all his parts. He

laughed at so much confused and contradictory sensation. Then he blurted, "Why did Mr. Wells ask you where his home was?"

"You heard him?"

"He said it pretty loud. 'Where is my home?'" Jimmy yawned again.

"He said, 'Whar is home for *me*?' Bill Wells was raised first as a Kentuckian, then later as an Indin, and he married an Indin and fought for them, and then he became an American again. He sometimes wonders which is home. He's what people call a white Indin. Bill is a brave fella, even among Kentuckians who git crazy with bravery."

"Is Mr. Wells the bravest man you ever heard of?"

Sergeant Wheeler smiled at this. "Nobody is the bravest. Old Daniel Boone's a good man, although some wouldn't like me to say that. Simon Kenton. Whew, there's a strong one. Ye won't see men like that."

"Not you?" Jimmy forced his eyes to stay open. He sat partly on his hands and peered at his father in the candlelit darkness. At the opposite end of the room, to the left of the fireplace in the flickering shadows, a stairwell led down to the first floor. To the right of the fireplace an open doorway led to a tiny bit larger barracks room, sixteen by sixteen. At that time it had eight bunks in four bunk beds, intended for precisely sixteen privates, two to a bed. They were rarely all in bed at the same time due to the duty rotations, but sometimes it was that crowded. From the enlisted men's room emanated low laughter and quiet talk by weary soldiers getting ready to go to sleep. That sixteen-by-sixteen-foot room also held two wives and two children in the winter. The enlisted men's wives and children slept on the floor if no place else was available.

"I'm jest a soldier," responded Sergeant Wheeler. "Boone and Kenton're big men. But they all seem to fall on hard times by and by. Let's go out on the gallery." The father left his lantern behind. They closed the swinging window/door behind them and sat cross-legged on the gallery floor. Privacy was hard to come by at Fort Dearborn.

"Move up against the wall. We'll sit together."

The father and son sat side by side as far from the window/door as possible.

"Mr. Wells doesn't look anything like an Indian, Dad."

"He got captured as a boy. He was in the woods with other boys when the Miamis ketched him and raised him as an Indin. His brothers found him years later and persuaded him to come back. Took a long whaal to convince him." Sergeant Wheeler began to massage his right foot. "Mrs. Eleanor Kinzie was raised an Indin, too. The Senecas captured her, which is the Iroquois."

"Everybody knows that. She tells about it."

"Ah don't know if Ah should tell you this, but Kinzie's first wife was captured by Indins as a child, too, and held for years. She was captured by the Shawnees. This can be dangerous country. You should remember thet."

"His first wife?" Jimmy asked. "Aw. Did she die?"

"No. She left Kinzie. Took their children, too."

"She did what?"

"Keep your voice down. It's not our business. Maybe thet was a mistake to tell you. Keep it to yourself, and don't hold it against Kinzie since you don't understand it—and Ah don't necessarily, either."

"Why did you tell me?"

"To give you a healthy fear of the Indins. It seems peaceful around here. It ain't necessarily. You're old enough to learn now." The sergeant squinted at his son in the starlight. "You aire becomin' too familiar with the savages, Jim. They are not like us and vice versa. Tell me what you're gonna do with Indin boys before you do it. Ye got to know 'em to live out here, but knowin' 'em's as far as it goes."

Jimmy was relieved that his father had brought up the boy's debacle in what appeared to be a restrained manner. Big Jim Wheeler could also get very angry and noisy and sometimes violent. Jimmy said, "Eh, I was dumb."

"Ah don't want you to be too afraid to move about. You may be a man in this country someday. But don't go alone so much." The sergeant stroked his chin whiskers. "Maybe Ah hev an idea fer you."

"Teach me how to shoot?"

"Hmm hmm." The sergeant chuckled. "Very soon. First Ah think you need to learn how to work."

Jimmy made a scrunched-up face. "Work?"

"You hev seen me take mah turn with the spade and the axe and the saw and the cleanin'. A man has to work." The sergeant straight-

ened and put his shoulders back, as if feeling his own health within. "I got to work. It's in me. Ah give orders, too."

"Why do you run with Bill Whistler? That's not work."

"To be as good as the next fella. When the Indins get in their Indin trot, they can go for miles. If you cain't do it, they hev the advantage on you. I don't want Indins to hev advantages on me. Now . . . I didn't shame you in public today fer what you did, but if your ma was alive, I'da whupped you good. It does not suit me to be a ma, too."

"Tell me how you met momma again."

"Hah. Tryin' to change the subject." Jimmy leaned up against his father, and the sergeant put his hand on the boy's head. "Okay. After the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 which ended the terrible Indian wars, General Wayne sent a small group of soldiers to visit the president when the president lived in Philadelphia. This was a few of us fellas who fought at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 where we finally defeated the Indin Confederation. It was like an honor to be sent to see the president. While Ah was in Philadelphia, they ordered me transferred to New York to help build Fort Jay on Governor's Island in New York Harbor."

"Why did General Wayne send you to see the president?"

"Oh, heck, Ah guess General Wayne liked us 'cause"—the sergeant then made up a fictitious reason—"we were all hell-raisers like he was. From Governor's Island we could see New York City, and it was a temptin' thing. New York used to be the capital of these United States. On our days off we sometimes got a ride on one of the boats to New York."

"Did the president go with you?"

"No, the president wasn't at Governor's Island. One day we went swimmin' naked by the Battery at the tip of Manhattan Island. Young bloods swim there. Your ma walked by with her dad and saw me, and Ah saw her for the first time."

Sergeant Wheeler continued the often-told story until Jimmy's eyes closed. But the sergeant was not through.

"Hey, Jim."

"Huh?" Jimmy jumped.

"Lemme ask you, what's the reason you always run away when ye hear of the death of yer mother?"

Jimmy got a shock and woke up completely.

"I still see her sometimes." The boy turned his face toward his father.

"Ye do?"

"When I come around a corner of the fort or when I'm walking across the parade ground, or by the river when the women do the laundry."

"Thet's not—"

"She's there for a second, then she's not there, but she was."

"Ah see her thet way, too. Thet's yer mind playin' tricks on you. Thet's not flesh and blood."

"How do you know?"

"Yer mother is with the Lord, Jim."

Jimmy struggled to stand up, yawned again, and said, "I'm going to the privy."

The sergeant got up, too. He said, "Then let's both go downstairs and take a very quiet walk."

Jimmy, as it turned out, did not have to go to the privy. The sergeant made a terse explanation to a sentry at the farther end of the fort and led his son out the wicket gate, the small door at the northwest corner of the fort, big enough for only one man. It was a convenient but easily defended passage that made it unnecessary to continually open the main gate at the south end.

The moon was nearly full and approached the height of its travel this night of June 5, 1808. Other than moonlight and starlight, total darkness had fallen more than an hour before. It was after 9 P.M.

"Let's paddle the canoe down by the dock," the sergeant said.

"No!"

"Yep."

They walked down to the riverbank and got into the canoe that always sat by the river. Jimmy's father ordered him into the canoe. The boy would not paddle. The father paddled for both of them toward the north bank.

"I don't want to do this," said Jimmy.

"Won't hurt."

When they were almost all the way across, Jimmy jumped into the river. The father stowed the paddle on the bottom of the canoe,

jumped in the river, and caught his son going by. The boy was a good swimmer.

"Nooo! *Blurble*." Jimmy started to fight his father.

Sergeant Wheeler also tried to push the canoe toward shore. "Jim. *Bloop*. Come on now, dammit!"

"Nooooo!"

With strong force Sergeant Wheeler swam and dragged his son to the shallows along the north bank and got the canoe to shore, too, swallowing water in the process. Then the sergeant picked the boy up, coughed, and hauled himself and his son out of the river. The boy started to weep and scream and beat his father with his hands. A sentry shouted from the opposite bank. Then another voice, much closer, shouted a harsh order.

"Stop! *Arretez! Arretez!*" The same voice repeated this command in an Indian language.

"Speak English, Kinzie," said Sergeant Wheeler. "Assume it's you." Sergeant Wheeler turned and saw the man in the moonlight. "Don't shoot, neither. Shut up, Jim."

Jimmy quieted and began to sob.

"What the hell are you doing!?" Kinzie's hulking form came up. He still pointed his rifle. "What's the matter with that child?"

"It's Sergeant Wheeler. Ah'm carryin' mah boy to his mother's grave. Sorry to disturb yer rest, sir. It's late. The boy won't go otherwise."

"It's the middle of the night. What the hell?" Kinzie lowered his rifle barrel. "Are you drunk, sergeant?"

"No. Ah hev to do this."

Jimmy began to cry aloud again.

"Quiet, child," said Kinzie. "I hope you know what you're doing."

"Damned if Ah do know. Ah'm tryin'."

"Oh. Oh. Yeah. Okay." Kinzie then shouted, obviously for the sentry across the way, "It's all right!!" The river was about fifty yards wide in this season. "It's all right! It's John Kinzie. It's *all right!* I got it!" Kinzie reached out and touched the boy's head. "Jimmy. You're going to wake up my whole family. Be quiet. Go with your father."

"No."



“Look. You’re all wet. Your father is too, son. It’s late. Shhh. Do you want me to go with you, Sergeant?”

“No need.”

“All right. God bless you. See if you can keep it quiet.” Kinzie had reverted to a whisper in the dark.

The father and son visited Katie Wheeler’s grave without further shouting. Jimmy became like a wet piece of paper or wet rag in his father’s arms. After the father laid him on the ground for a while at the marker, the boy gradually stopped his heavy crying and sobbing. He became quiet. Then he sat up and took a few deep, trembling breaths. Finally, he stood up on his own. The father and son, in a halting manner, both a bit shaken, went back to the river to find the canoe in the moonlight.



## Chapter 9

### MAIN POC

The war chief whom William Wells called “the greatest warrior in the West,” the fearsome Main Poc, rode to challenge Fort Dearborn three weeks later with two hundred warriors.

Jimmy Wheeler did not see the Indians coming and got caught by surprise for the second time that day. He was outside because his father had given him a small garden to plant to learn how to work.

The day after they visited his mother’s grave, Jimmy was naturally aloof and quiet. His father did not try to make him talk but instead led him out to a spot southeast of the fort where the father turned over much of the soil. Jimmy also dug as much as he was capable. Then the father showed Jimmy how to plant seeds and directed him to plant five rows of corn, each ten feet long, with one hundred seeds from the garrison. His father told him he would have to share the corn and left the boy to his task. His plot was along the last leg of the Chicago River where it flowed south until it entered Lake Michigan, but it was not too close because too close was sandy. The solitary work suited the boy’s mood.

As days went on, some of Jimmy’s plants came up bunched together, crowding each other, while large stretches of his plot were bare. Every day he waited expectantly for the other corn plants to come up, but they did not. The boy’s plot was not as good as others he had seen, and nowhere near as good as the commanding officer’s garden nearby tended by the enlisted men.

One overcast day as Jimmy puzzled over his half-empty garden with the weeds starting to come in, a man's voice startled him. "Master Wheeler, what do we have here?"

The dignified tone and the address, "Master Wheeler," surprised Jimmy. He turned around. "Oh." Jimmy found himself confronted by an Indian. The cast of the man's face looked somewhat like an Indian, but Jimmy also knew the man from a distance and that he was an Indian. "You're Billy, right?"

The Indian, in his late twenties, wore a gentleman's frock coat and a tall beaver hat, similar to a derby, popular with western men. His hair was cut in a gentleman's style, so it came down only just below his ears. He had big black eyebrows and a prominent nose, and he worked his mouth into the expression of a man who pondered philosophy. Otherwise, he had an Indian's cheekbones and an Indian's skin. He stood erect like a straight tree. He turned his head slightly in the affected manner of a young gentleman.

"Correct, my young sir. I am Billy Caldwell." The Indian doffed his hat with his left hand and put out his right hand. "Pleased to be your most obedient servant, etcetera, etcetera." Billy projected his baritone voice with authority. "I think you are going to have a truly exceptional garden."

In the commanding officer's large garden a few yards to the west, enlisted men on their knees pulled weeds and bantered. Some soldiers lay on their sides and lazily pulled weeds. The scene all around was prairie grass tramped down by the soldiers or kept short. The wooden eminence of the log fort was two hundred yards to the north. Yet this Indian introduced himself, it seemed to Jimmy, as if they were in a formal dining room.

Jimmy's forehead furrowed, and a small smile grew on his face. "How do you do, Mr. Caldwell. I am James Dodge Wheeler. *Enchanté de faire votre connaissance.*" Jimmy shook hands and bowed slightly. "You, sir, are a clerk for Mr. Kinzie. *N'est-ce pas?*"

"*Oui, monsieur.* I am, in fact, the firm's chief clerk. I am also an emissary for Mr. Kinzie and his half brother, Mr. Forsyth, to the Indian nations for commercial adventures. The firm of Kinzie-Forsyth is establishing a number of outlying houses."

"That's why you never stay here long."

"The demands of my position, which is one of great responsibility,

are such that I travel frequently. I have just a moment to admire the improvements the garrison has made here. I particularly noticed your garden. I see you're about to transplant."

"Oh . . . I suppose." Jimmy did not wish to admit he did not know what Billy meant. "Well, nice to meet you, Mr. Caldwell." Jimmy started to turn away. He was perplexed by the Indian's manner and didn't know what to make of it.

Billy replied in French, then added in English, "How is your transplanting coming?"

Jimmy turned back again. "Excuse me, sir? What are you talking about?"

"I see that you are about to move those plants that are crowding other plants and transplant them to the bare spots and thus fill up your entire corn plot. You have chosen a good day for it."

"I did? I am? How would I do that?" Jimmy looked at Caldwell with some slight suspicion that this might be a trick, but also with new interest. Then Jimmy looked back at the plot. "How am I supposed to move plants? Which ones do I move?"

"It's up to you to choose." Caldwell placed a finger of his right hand to his lips to ponder. "I would like to do just one, if you don't mind, before I have to leave for the Rock River. I had some experience at this as a boy. We will see if my transplant does as well as all of yours."

"I didn't think Indian boys did farm work."

Billy suddenly drew his head back and changed his facial expression and his posture like an actor putting on a new personality. "Now, me bucko, don't you know I am a son of the auld sod. 'Tis Irish I am, born on Saint Patrick's Day."

"I thought you were an Indian."

"I am most decidedly an Indian as well." Billy then returned to his standard patter. "People call me Sauganash. It means Englishman in the Indian language. But my father is an Irishman, a native of County Fermanagh, now in the service of Great Britain. I myself was brought up in Canada by my French stepmother."

"Gee willikers. You are an English-speaking Irish Indian. And maybe a little French."

"*C'est moi.*" Caldwell spread out both his arms.

Jimmy laughed for the first time in several days. He immediately

noticed that Caldwell was very pleased, as if he needed to be appreciated.

"I've heard quite a lot about you, Master Wheeler. You and I are two gentlemen with much in common."

"In common? You and I?"

Caldwell seemed, just for a moment, to have wise, kindly eyes and a true sympathetic expression rather than an actor's. "We were both born in your state of New York. Our fathers are soldiers. You were removed from your first home at an early age, as was I, and taken to a strange and new place." Caldwell lowered his voice. "And, like you, I, too, lost the blessings of my natural mother at an early age. I believe my mother is still alive somewhere in the East, but . . ."

Jimmy was shocked. He did not run. He looked at Caldwell and wondered how a stranger could bring up such a thing and how Caldwell could do it so calmly. Yet Caldwell seemed to be without malice, part clown, part gentleman. It seemed to Jimmy that Caldwell-Sauganash was a different sort of man, an original character, trying to be liked and accepted.

Caldwell took off his coat, laid it on the grass, placed his hat on top of it, pushed up the sleeves of his shirt, which had a ruffled front, and got down on his knees. He showed Jimmy how to dig up a corn seedling gently, move it to a new spot, and plant it again. Billy dug the earth with his hands. Then Billy borrowed Jimmy's tin army canteen for the first transplant and watered it. "You must thoroughly water each transplant. Plant it just as nature would with the roots firmly in the ground"—Billy pushed the dirt together around the transplant—"and the stem and the green above." Then he pointed to the river to the east. "And you have all the water you need." Beyond the river, of course, was sky blue Lake Michigan to the horizon.

When he got up, he rubbed his hands rapidly to get off some of the soil, but it wouldn't all come off. "I'm afraid I must be about my business to retain the confidence of my employers. Please remember me to your father. I admire your father as a man of principle, like my father."

Caldwell reached out to shake Jimmy's hand. "So now, *adieu*."

"*Au revoir, monsieur. Merci beaucoup*." Then Jimmy stood and watched as Caldwell walked away. "Mr. Caldwell!"

Caldwell turned.

“Why did you come here?”

“Oh, your father mentioned the other day that I might look in on you.” Caldwell gave a gallant wave. “*Adieu*. I must go.” He went off.

A gnat flew in Jimmy’s mouth, and he noticed his mouth was wide open.

A few minutes later he heard: “Hey, whaddya think o’ Sauganash, Jim boy?” Private Tom Burns, the middle-aged soldier with the fuzzy beard who had teased him about Lieutenant Pettibone, shouted the question. Burns was pulling weeds in the commanding officer’s garden.

“I never—” Jimmy shouted back. He couldn’t find the words.

The soldiers all laughed. “He is a bull slinger. Whooee!” said Burns. “But he’s an all right fella when you get to know him.”

Working steadily, Jimmy was halfway through his transplants when “*boom!*”

The boy’s head snapped back and his eyes popped. He looked to the nearest blockhouse at the southeast corner of the fort and saw nothing unusual. Then he looked to the northwest blockhouse and saw smoke wafting away. He could just see, or thought he saw, a cannon barrel facing west out of a porthole.

“Let’s go. Let’s go,” shouted Burns. The four-soldiers’ gardening detail started to trot toward the main gate. “Come on, boy!”

“What’s the matter?”

“That’s a signal. Get inside!” said Burns. The slower Burns came in last in the line of soldiers who ran from the garden back to the fort.

Jimmy started to trot toward the main gate, and soon he could see the laundry women hurry around the southeast corner of the fort from the riverbank where they did the laundry in a secluded spot. Mrs. Corbin, wife of Private Fielding Corbin; Mrs. Needs, wife of Private John Needs; and the wife of Sergeant Heaton moved as fast as they could. They carried oval wicker baskets that were heavy with wet clothes. The women’s cheeks were rosy with exertion, and they had several urchins tagging along, four years old and younger.

Jimmy did not see his mother’s fleeting image. He almost wished he had and felt sadness. Then out of the blue it occurred to him that these other people of Fort Dearborn, like the women coming from the river, probably had the same feelings of sadness for their losses, for their children or close relatives who had died. And he realized all the

people of the fort were more like he was than he had thought. They became less different and more his people.

His father stopped him at the gate. "Go upstairs and look out to the south. They let us see 'em comin' from a long ways off, so this could jest be a show. If trouble starts, git away from the shootin' holes. Tom?"

"I got him, Sarge."

The father ran off to the southeast blockhouse, his usual place in such situations. Jimmy went up to the second floor of the south barracks where he lived, joined by many soldiers.

"Let Sergeant Wheeler's boy look out there," Burns instructed.

"Yeah, all right. Take my place," said a reluctant soldier, "and tell your father I let you." There was plenty of time for everybody to look.

In less than half an hour two hundred Indian warriors rushed past the stables at the far southwest end of the fort's grounds where the low boundary fence was not extended. About twenty warriors were on horses and the rest on foot. They approached within fifty yards of the fort's main gate but did not trample the gardens.

Some warriors were naked except for loincloths and moccasins. Others wore trade-cloth tunics. Some wore turbans; some had feathers in the top of their turbans. Others had uncovered heads and loose hair. A few had only scalp knots. All were garishly painted, waved muskets and rifles or an occasional bow or spear, and emitted screams that curdled the blood.

Jimmy looked sideways at the soldiers around him. The neighborhood had been peaceful for so long and Fort Dearborn seemed impregnable, yet he knew none of these soldiers except his dad and Captain Whistler had ever fought Indians. The men all had their muskets ready and loaded, yet it seemed as if no one really expected a fight. The soldiers who couldn't get a shooting hole to gaze out traded places with those who could.

"Look who's comin'."

Jimmy got another turn to peer out. He saw a chief ride up until he was not more than thirty yards away. The chief seemed to Jimmy a ferocious and wild giant. His upper body was bare. He had long black hair and a wide black band painted from ear to ear across his eyes and nose. The lower part of his face was painted red from ear

to ear. He wore a strange belt around his waist. The chief threw a musket on the ground and made rude gestures. Two of his men on horseback also threw down their muskets with contempt. The chief then dismounted and in the process made rattling sounds from the rattles around his ankles.

A soldier spoke up. "That monster has a girdle of human scalps all the way around his waist."

"And jest behind him is a horde of wild and cruel savages sech as ever disgraced human nature," said another soldier.

"Aw, come on, I gotta see this," a third soldier said who did not have a hole to get a close look.

The chief walked about with rapid strides, his forehead wrinkled with terrible frowns. He declaimed in his Indian language and breathed vengeance. He picked up his own musket off the ground, swung it like an axe with one hand, pounded it on the earth, and broke it. He picked up the pieces and threw them at the fort. Then he did the same with the other two discarded muskets and threw the pieces at the walls.

"What in the hell?" a soldier asked.

"Look at his left hand." This was Private Burns, who had a shooting hole next to Jimmy. "That's got to be Chief Main Poc from the Theakiki River."

"Main Poc!" men exclaimed.

Jimmy studied the chief again and saw that he had only one hand. Or, rather, the chief's left hand was a stump with no fingers. With his good hand, the chief drew his knife, leered at the fort, and mimed cutting his throat. Main Poc raved some more, then mounted up. All the warriors then turned and rode or ran off howling.

The soldiers laughed and breathed deeply with the release of tension. Their faces were red. Jimmy saw that they had been more afraid than they acted.

Jimmy asked, "What the heck was that?"

John Lalime, the fort's interpreter, soon made the rounds to inform everyone that the Indian chief indeed had been Main Poc from a river that Lalime called not the Theakiki but the Kankakee River. Lalime said the name Main Poc meant Crippled Hand. The rattles he had worn around his ankles were bear claws and the beaks of owls and hawks. Lalime also explained that Main Poc had come to denounce



the U.S. government because the government sold the Indians defective firearms.

“Haw, haw.” Burns laughed as other men guffawed.

“We shouldn’t sell him nothin’. Let that monster starve,” Fielding Corbin commented, the nervous-looking husband of the laundress Susannah.

The guns that the U.S. government sold to the Indians for hunting were known to be shoddy. But everyone was well aware that Main Poc used guns to attack people—mostly other Indian tribes. The men agreed that the government should not sell him as much as a rusty knife.

That winter, early in 1809, a Fort Dearborn express rider, Private Michael Lynch, returned one day with the mail from Fort Wayne. Lynch told everyone that William Wells had led a committee of Indian chiefs, including Main Poc, to Washington City to visit President Jefferson.

“The savage fiend was nairly allus drunk when he went to Washington City to see the president,” Lynch reported. “Main Poc threatened to kill all the other chiefs and then tried to kill his own wife.”

“Why’d he try to kill his own squaw?” a listener asked.

Lynch, who had been waiting for just that question, replied, “Said he was hungry and goin’ ta eat her.”



## Chapter 10

### LEIGH FARM

*Spring 1809*

Captain Whistler heard from a variety of sources that the Winnebagoes to the northwest plotted a surprise attack on Fort Dearborn and that the Sacs to the west also planned to raise the hatchet against the United States and had invited the Potawatomies to join them.

Sergeant Wheeler heard all this, too, but as a Kentuckian, Wheeler had heard of Indian trouble his entire life. He believed westerners must be out and about and “keep this country whilst we are in it.”

Yet the sergeant also believed that his son’s wild freedom had to be limited. The father got Jimmy Wheeler employed as a farmhand at the Leigh Farm four miles from Fort Dearborn on the south branch of the Chicago River.

“That’s the wrong rail.”

“You got the wrong one.”

“You do.”

“You do. I’m the boss.”

“Shut up, you two roosters! That’s an order!”

The sounds of axes, sledgehammers, and men’s grunts made a ragged woodsmen’s concert. Jimmy Wheeler and Johnny Leigh shut their mouths. Sergeant James Leigh, the proprietor of the Leigh Farm, was not to be disobeyed.

As a soldier, Leigh had started the farm on the far bank of the south branch by order of the captain to help feed the garrison. Leigh kept the farm going for the fort under contract after he mustered out of the army. The money supported the growing Leigh family.

Ex-sergeant Leigh, a short blond man with a florid complexion, and his top hand, Liberty White, who had long dark hair, a long neck, long arms, and long legs, dripped sweat as they used wedges, sledgehammers, and axes to split downed trees into rails. Two more farmhands continued to fell and strip trees in the distance.

Johnny Leigh, just turned thirteen, pointed to Jimmy Wheeler and then to a fence rail on the ground and silently mouthed, "This one, stupid!" Jimmy Wheeler, almost eleven, purposely dropped the end of the rail he had. The rail bounced so that Johnny had to dance to avoid it. Wheeler smirked and picked up the rail the older boy insisted on. They carried and dragged the eleven-foot rail out to the end of a strange-looking zigzag fence that was growing across the land.

"My father says Liberty can split two hundred rails in a day."

"Oh, no! Oh, awful! This is terrible," Jimmy moaned. "I don't want to hear that. I hate this." To Jimmy the hours and days of hard work before him into the far future were sinister and oppressive.

As they dragged another rail slowly along the ground this cloudy day, Jimmy asked his older partner, "If Liberty does two hundred, how many rails does your father make in a day? Three hundred?"

"Heck, no. My father is lucky to do a hundred fifty. He says Liberty is the rail-splitter."

Johnny's brown hair was extremely straight and cut short by his mother. His front teeth were a little crooked. He had big blue eyes, scattered tiny freckles, a wide mouth, narrow shoulders and hips, and a boyish bony frame. Jimmy considered him no genius, but Johnny was by age and position the leader. Johnny was also easy to get along with.

When they dropped the rail where the next section of fence was to be erected, Jimmy stopped to survey the fence line, not anxious to return for another rail, "You know, this fence is darn clever. I wouldn't mind if I watched you folks build it."

"As long as you didn't have to do it." Johnny Leigh decided to display his superior knowledge. "This is a worm fence, city boy, a

rick-rack, a snake fence. It looks like its name. This is how all farmers do. Just pile up them rails. No nails.”

“Who invented it?”

“George Washington.”

Jimmy snorted. “Oh, yeah.”

By this time Jimmy understood that the worm fence or rick-rack was made by placing rails on the ground in a zigzag pattern so that each section was at an angle to the next, like a spread-out V, and the ends of each section always overlapped. The workers piled up more horizontal rails in this same manner to the desired height. Each section of fence rails was then locked into place at the joints by two upright rails that crossed at the top in an X and formed two fingers to keep the horizontal rails in place. A heavy rail, or rider, which the grown men had to lift, was placed through the middle of the X to weight it down and hold it. The rider became the fence top.

The boys’ job was to haul as many of the rails as they were able working together, a job that gave them splinters and strong calluses.

Mr. Leigh had a few cattle that he allowed to roam on the other side of the river, but the cattle could swim the river and would sometimes get in among the crops. Thus, fences were needed for the plowed fields.

Late in the day Jimmy offered an idea. “I have been studying what you do here, Leigh. It looks to me like after you folks have cleared a new section of woods, you always plow and plant among the tree stumps, and you’re going to do it again here.”

“You’re a genius.”

“Why don’t you and your dad just farm out on the prairie? You could easily double your farm, and those tree stumps won’t be in the way.”

Johnny shook his head. “It’s not your fault. You just don’t know nothin’. The trees are the sign of farm land. The trees show where the good land is. Trees don’t grow much on the prairie, so maybe crops won’t neither. And my father says a plow can’t cut the prairie. The roots of the grass are too thick, like a girl’s hair all tangled.”

Jimmy pondered this. All farming was new to him.

When the boys got a break and sat off on their own after drinking water, Jimmy asked, “What’s it like having sisters?”

"It's all right." Johnny chewed on a long stem of grass. "I get to order 'em around sometimes. They can be awful whiney. Lillie is a hellion. Mary is little Miss Perfect, mother's helper. She helps take care of Stevie."

Jimmy knew Mary Leigh was eight years old, Lillie was six, and Johnny's baby brother, Stephen, was four. Jimmy said, "I would like to have sisters or brothers."

"Well, your dad's gotta find a wife again. I hope my ma's next one is a boy. I want more brothers."

"Your ma is—"

"Expectin'. Gonna drop that heifer in the fall."

"Oh, shut up." It seemed to Jimmy that Fort Dearborn women were always pregnant or had little ones.

Johnny asked, "You wanna eat at our place tonight and play cards? Me and Mary will teach you. She'll beat the pants off you. Eight years old. You can bring your little pipe over and play us some tunes."

"It's a fife, like the musicians in the garrison use. My dad bought it for me."

On the surface, things were peaceful in 1809 at the south end of Lake Michigan—until the Winnebagoes tried a surprise attack. There were 114 warriors—all but 18 on foot—accompanied by 6 women. They charged out of the woods in back of Kinzie's in a ragged line across the Chicago River on the sandbar until a cannon blast of blank powder showed they gained no surprise.

The Chicago River in late August was stopped up again by the sandbar that accumulated between the fort and Kinzie's place on the opposite bank. The Winnebagoes seemed to know all about it.

"They came in war array, but we were all fortified up," Sergeant Wheeler told his son later. "Jouett got the word jest in time. We couldn't warn you except by the cannon. As soon as the Winnebagoes were gone, Ah sent a boat for you boys, but you come home the land way."

Johnny Leigh and his family lived just south of the grounds of the fort. Only the bachelor farm laborers stayed at the Leigh Farm at night in a dirt-floored cabin. Having heard the warning cannon four miles away, Jimmy and Johnny had ridden home from the farm together on one horse.

"Did you shoot any Indians?"

“Nooo!” Sergeant Wheeler frowned at his son. “Ye never shoot an Indin or any man for no reason.”

“They tried to attack us.” Jimmy stood in the shallows of the Chicago River washing hay grit off his hair and skin.

“If they’d caught us by surprise, they would’ve attacked. But they’ll be comin’ back. If they cain’t kill us, they want gifts, and they want to buy from the traders. If we shoot one Indin, they hev to kill one of us. They’ll search all over and might find some peaceful soul thet don’t know what it’s about and kill him. Indins think that retaliation will put to rest the spirits of their dead.”

But on this trip the Winnebagoes from up northwest on the Rock River eventually discovered the Leigh Farm. These warriors would not forget the location of the farm and its handful of isolated workers.



## Chapter 11

### THE CHALLENGE

*September 1809*

“Do not bother the civilians wi’ what we discoos here.” Captain Whistler moved his head and one shoulder around as if he had a crick in his neck. Then he sat down with his three lieutenants and Indian agent Jouett at the oak table in the commander’s meeting room.

Captain Whistler wore no uniform coat, and his shirt was sweat-stained. “Tell ’em the story, Bill.”

Attention turned to the captain’s son, Lieutenant William.

“Forty-five years ago the Indians staged a lacrosse game outside the British Fort Michilmackinac. The British soldiers watched and left the gates of the fort open. One moment it was a game. The next moment the Indians got inside. They slaughtered the garrison.”

Everyone shuddered.

“Mr. Jouett, do you have a revelation?” Captain Whistler nodded at the Indian agent.

“Yesterday, two Potawatomes came to me with a challenge. They want our best man to go against their best man in a foot race outside the fort. They would bring a crowd to watch.”

“Then we just decline. That’s obvious,” said Lieutenant Hamilton, who had been promoted from ensign.

“No. We look ’em in the eye,” responded the captain. “We don’t back down from a challenge. So we must do this without jeopardizing

arr lives and the lives of arr women and childrren. When we arrived here six years ago, two thousand Indians came to gawk at the sailing schooner *Tracy*, the 'big canoe with wings.' If the Indians bring two thousand again, we have seventy-seven men, so we must plan carefully."

"You're not really going to do this!" Lieutenant Hamilton exclaimed.

"Pay attention. Now . . . who's yer best runner over a reasonable distance, say five miles?"

The other two lieutenants and Jouett turned again to look at Lt. Billy Whistler.

After the challenge was accepted, the plans, preparation, and practice took ten days. The Potawatomi champion arrived on the eleventh day, a young chief from a village on St. Joseph's River near Topenebe's Town. Topenebe was the big chief of all the Potawatomi villages in the area of St. Joseph's River in the Michigan Territory.

"We want a lighthearted atmosphere," Captain Whistler ordered. "No looks of panic. A day in the sun. Mr. Jouett, I assume the Potawatomies are bringing their women and children."

"Assume so."

"We want discipline and order. I don't want any women and children to leave the fort until a substantial number of Indian women and children are present." Lieutenant Hamilton was placed in charge of the women and children, including the captain's family.

The Indians brought only four hundred spectators from three related tribes known as the Three Fires: the Potawatomies, Ottawas, and Chippewas.

Lieutenant William Whistler in full uniform greeted the first of the arriving Indians a half mile south of the fort. Farther south this same trail branched off to go to Vincennes, Fort Wayne, and Detroit.

Behind Lieutenant Whistler stood Sergeant Wheeler in full uniform, the interpreter Lalime, Indian agent Jouett, a color guard of only five uniformed men who carried the American flag and polished muskets, the fort's band of two fifers and two drummers, and an open wagon escorted by three more soldiers. The wagon carried a capped barrel of water and food on trays, covered with cloths.

Two other soldiers led out privately owned horses for wagers. The rest of the garrison stayed by the fort.



With the little band tooting its fifes and beating its drums, the small military delegation led the Indians a quarter mile west on the prairie to a small grove of trees, the only trees for a long distance. There some tents had been set up, and the Indians were invited to mount their standards. The grove was just in back of the start and finish line that was marked by high posts topped with ribbons.

The official wager was Wolf Eye's horse and all its accoutrements against Lieutenant Whistler's horse and all its accoutrements.

Lieutenant Whistler's horse, a gelding named Alexander, was groomed for show. Its saddle, stirrups, saddlebags, bridle, and bit were polished. The saddle blanket was deep blue with a gold border. With Captain Whistler's permission, the saddle was government issue with the letters *U.S.* stamped prominently in the leather. Lieutenant Whistler believed an army saddle would be a more pleasing prize to the Indians.

The champion of the Potawatomies, a young chief named Wolf Eye, appeared to be about the same age as Lieutenant Whistler, twenty-five.

Wolf Eye's horse, a black stallion with magnificent lines but skittish, kept throwing its head and stamping due to the press of the crowd and finally had to be led off to the side. The horse's air of equine aristocracy made this apartness seem appropriate.

Jouett said to Sergeant Wheeler, "The beast has all the finery of an Ay-rab potentate."

A silver brooch on the forehead of Wolf Eye's horse was attached at one end to a silver chain around its ears and at the opposite end to the strap around the horse's nose, part of its head harness. The nose strap was decorated in bright red fringe. Ornamental straps, yellow and pink, and intricately decorated and fringed, circled the animal's chest. On the horse's back was a finely worked Spanish saddle atop two saddle blankets, red over green, and around the belly was a saddle girth of many colors. The animal's bit was silver plated, as were the saddle stirrups. The horse jingled from many tiny bells hung from the breast straps.

Wolf Eye himself was not quite six feet tall but looked taller because of the profusion of black ostrich plumes atop his red and white turban, purchased from British traders. The champion's upper body and hips were covered by a long red tunic with flowing sleeves, partly

constricted on the upper arms by two silver bands. Around his waist he had a highly decorated and fringed twelve-inch-wide cloth belt. His black leggings were decorated down the sides with multicolored silk appliqué. His moccasins were adorned with flowers made of colorfully dyed porcupine quills.

Wolf Eye's carriage was extraordinarily erect. He walked with a proper but not exaggerated swagger of a gifted athlete.

Sergeant Wheeler judged from the Indian's eyes that Wolf Eye was not satisfied. The Indian champion burned to win.

The most remarkable thing about Wolf Eye was not his appearance or his demeanor or his horse. It was his wife. When the wife of Wolf Eye arrived at the grove of trees and rode up next to her husband, the soldiers made obnoxious noises.

"Relax," said Sergeant Wheeler, "or else."

Astride a decorated mare, Wolf Eye's wife had brought two children, one in front of her and the older one behind. She lowered the toddler in front to her husband's arms, lifted the second little one off the back, and then dismounted herself. The children of Wolf Eye were a girl about four who looked like her mother and a boy about two who walked on his own.

The wife was taller than most Indian women and had large eyes in a strikingly beautiful face, high breasts, and fine young hips. Her jet black hair was parted down the middle, swept behind her ears, and tied at the back with silk ribbons. She had a modest walk that still hid nothing but was combined with confident knowledge of her looks. She appeared to have French blood from somewhere in the past but was clearly Indian, and she gave off a scent of danger because of her beauty.

"If she asks," whispered Jouett, "our boys'll drop and bark like dogs."

"Ah don't believe," said Wheeler, "that the Prophet's notion of wearin' animal skins is gettin' through to all the red people."

Wolf Eye's wife wore a pink tunic that was decorated with animals and flowers and had a large silk collar that reached to her shoulders. Over that she had a tan silk scarf. She also wore, Potawatomi style, several black beaded necklaces in different lengths, a black skirt that opened at the side to allow freedom of movement, and black leggings. Potawatomi women were modest. Eschewing the elaborate silver

ornaments that fortunate Potawatomi women wore, the wife of Wolf Eye wore only two silver rings and two silver ear bangles.

All the Americans and all the Indians at the starting line were men. The Indians had brought three dozen women and children, but they stayed in the tree grove fifty yards away. Strong Pike, age thirteen, was in the tree grove. He looked for Jimmy Wheeler, but no American children were in sight.

For side bets, Private Jim Corbin, twenty-five, and his brother, Fielding, twenty-four, began to solicit bets, first among the Indians nearest to the racecourse.

Jim Corbin had been in the army since he was seventeen and at Fort Dearborn since the first day, and he had come to know horses, blacksmithing, and Indians. Back home in Virginia, the Corbin brothers' parents had died when they were young, and they were raised by an uncle who worked them hard and beat the heck out of them. Each ran away to the army as soon as he could.

The Corbins patted the best-looking animals and pointed to six privately owned soldiers' mounts that were present to be used as bets over the outcome of the race. All the officers and a few soldiers owned private mounts.

"Wanna bet?" Jim Corbin said to the owners of the best-looking Indian horses. He also used sign language. "Horse for horse? No? Gonna lose, huh? How 'bout you, chief? Wanna bet?"

The Indians understood completely and inspected the American horses and equipment. One Indian grabbed Jim Corbin's uniform coat and then his pants and offered to place a bet against them. "Nope. Nope," said the soldier. Soon all the bets were consummated, involving only horses.

Wolf Eye, seeing Whistler strip off his uniform coat and hat, took off his own fancy Indian headwear, his silver arm bands, his waist belt, and his tunic. Then he walked off into the tall prairie grass with some of his men and reemerged wearing only a loincloth. He gave his garments to one of his men and changed into plain moccasins. To a crescent of short spiked hair from the top of his head to the back—the only hair he cared to keep—he attached two eagle feathers that dangled.

Lieutenant Whistler gestured to Wolf Eye, and the two men started to walk the course. Lalime also went along to interpret. A former

trader and former resident of the Kinzie mansion, Lalime was a skinny, high-strung fellow, five feet four, with nervous eyes and a narrow face. He was of English extraction and walked with a limp from a once-broken leg. He was quite jovial in public and was a favorite of the soldiers.

Detachments of soldiers had marched over the course on foot and with horses and wagons to make a path fifteen feet wide and wider on the corners through the tall prairie grass. A small streamlet had been filled in at two locations where it crossed. The waterways were at their lowest point at the end of summer.

The tops of the prairie grass were up to six feet high, so to see the runners' heads a spectator needed height.

Every Indian in the tree grove plus the three soldiers who served it first dug into the food offered by the Americans: watermelon, ears of buttered corn, and cooked sweet potatoes in bowls; and on trays there was sliced beef and a cooked sturgeon that had been fifty pounds when it was caught the day before in the lake at the river mouth. The food didn't last long. Then some Indian men and boys climbed up into the trees. Other Indians spread along the course. The women and small children settled on woven mats in the shade.

Five Indian ladies, including the wife of Wolf Eye, mounted horses and ponies and rode off northeast. Wolf Eye's children remained, watched over by another mother.

The five Indian women rode toward Fort Dearborn.

Near the fort a crowd of American women and children and civilian husbands, dressed for a special event, had seated themselves on a few chairs and benches or on the cut grass an eighth of a mile from the main gate, between the commanding officer's garden and the stables to the west. Lieutenant Whistler's wife, Julia, had the garrison's telescope. She also had her two children with her, the youngest a boy almost two who squirmed on her lap.

The outermost fence of Fort Dearborn was merely a psychological barrier to show the boundary of the fort's outer grounds. The fence was only three feet tall. Anyone could jump over it, and the boundary fence ended 120 yards to the west, near the stables to allow riders easy access to the prairie. On Captain Whistler's order the American women and children all stayed inside this boundary fence. Just

outside that fence stood a thin line of soldiers commanded by newly promoted Sergeant Otho Hayes who was bursting his uniform with pride and muscles. The runners were to race past this fence twice within easy speaking distance of the American crowd.

No one among the Americans needed a telescope to see the five Indian women approaching, two on horses and three on smaller Indian ponies. Captain Whistler had ordered that no Indians were to be allowed anywhere near the fort for this occasion—although on other occasions certain Indian chiefs and small delegations no bigger than four Indians had been allowed inside. From the over-polite but insistent manner in which Lalime and Jouett had pointed out in advance the spot a half mile distant where the Indians were to watch the race, the Indians understood that they were being treated differently this day.

The Indian women spread out. The two on horses stopped in front of the line of soldiers, and the three on ponies turned east and sauntered along the fence.

“Sergeant Hayes!” said Lieutenant Hamilton.

“Lynch and McCarty, after them!” Hayes barked. Two soldiers on the left ran after the three Indian women on ponies. During this distraction, the beautiful wife of Wolf Eye dismounted at the opposite flank of the soldiers’ line in front of the boundary fence. She smiled at the nearest soldier and handed him her reins. He took them by reflex, and before he could stop her, she put her hand on an upright and hopped over the three-foot-high fence onto the American side.

All the Indian ladies moved toward the fence from several directions. McCarty grabbed one by the arm outside. Two soldiers grabbed another who stayed balanced atop the fence. The other three Indian women got over.

“Oh, no. Oh, wait now!” A woman from the front row of the American civilians rose and stepped briskly toward the fence. She lifted her long dress. Two of the Whistler daughters, along with Julia, the daughter-in-law, immediately jumped up and tried to follow the leader. The leader was Ann Whistler, wife of the captain.

Julia shouted, “Liza!”

“I got him.” Eliza, a third one of Lieutenant Billy’s sisters, took the two-year-old from Julia’s arms. Julia ran to catch up with her mother-in-law.

The captain's wife intercepted the oldest Indian, an agile woman about forty. Mrs. Whistler gave her a firm handshake.

"How do you do? This can't be. You must stay outside. I'm Mrs. Whistler, the captain's wife. Thank you for coming. But you have to go back."

Mrs. Whistler pointed out on the prairie. Then the captain's wife had to turn hastily to greet another Indian woman, the wife of Wolf Eye. Mrs. Whistler said, "Pardon me. We have a place for you people."

Wolf Eye's wife ignored Mrs. Whistler and offered to shake the hand of a younger officer's wife who approached. "How do you do?" said the wife of Wolf Eye.

By coincidence the wife of one runner greeted the wife of the other runner, Julia Whistler, twenty-two.

"Oh! Oh. . . . Well, how do you do?" But the wife of Wolf Eye had exhausted her English.

Gradually, the captain's wife realized that the visit by the Indian women to the grounds of the fort was a stunt and no threat. She put her hands on her hips and grudgingly smiled.

Lieutenant Hamilton and Sergeant Hayes had hopped the fence back onto the American side.

"Lieutenant," said Mrs. Whistler, "say hello graciously to these women. Then you will send them back, and that will be that. Be a gentleman, but no more, and see to it."

"Absolutely, ma'am."

"Get that one off the fence before she falls," Mrs. Whistler added.

"Private Needs," said Lieutenant Hamilton. "Get her to come down on the far side." But she jumped down on the American side. Then this last Indian woman to come over the fence spoke: "*Bozho*, Jimmy."

Jimmy Wheeler, age eleven, rose from the crowd.

Hen Splashes, for it was she, pointed her open right hand palm up toward the racecourse and spoke in Potawatomi. She appeared nervous but determined.

"*Bonjour*," Jimmy answered. "My father wants me to sit here." He spoke in French because it enabled others to understand what he was saying.

“Jimmy, who is this woman?” Mrs. Whistler still had her hands on her hips.

“She asks if I would like to go and greet her son, Mrs. Whistler. This is Hen Splashes, mother of Strong Pike. I know them.”

“You can’t go out there.”

The wife of Wolf Eye abruptly sat down on the grass and gazed out over the prairie. With studied nonchalance she shaded her eyes with her hand as if to view the race from this distance. Her partners also sat.

Civilians Ouilmette and Pettell were married to Indian women, and their wives had sat from the beginning amid the American crowd. These two wives giggled. A third Indian wife in the American crowd, a woman who weighed over three hundred pounds, began to laugh louder. Her big body shook. She was Mrs. Buisson who had come to Chicago to visit her sister, Ouilmette’s wife.

Lieutenant Hamilton said to Mrs. Whistler, “Do you want me to remove these four Potawatomes?”

Mrs. Whistler gazed up toward the fort two hundred yards away, seemingly in consultation with the unseen captain. Finally she said, “Jimmy, take a soldier with you and go out and find your Indian friend. Take his mother with you if you can and these other women. Otherwise, we will have to see that they are escorted out even if I have to have them lifted. I certainly don’t want to do that. But we will if we must.”

Jimmy spoke to Hen Splashes in mixed Potawatomi and French. Hen Splashes looked at Wolf Eye’s wife, but they did not budge.

“I don’t think they’ll go,” Jimmy said.

“Private Burns,” Lieutenant Hamilton ordered, “accompany the Wheeler boy out toward the race to meet his Indian friend.”

Jimmy and Tom Burns started to walk toward the fence.

“Sergeant Hayes!” Lieutenant Hamilton gave a new order. “Assign two men to pick up each of these Indian women and deposit them gently—”

Unexpectedly, the four Indian women on the wrong side arose and began to walk toward the fence.

All in the crowd held their breath. They watched the four Indian women climb back to the other side. The wife of Wolf Eye made a harsh gesture that indicated the soldiers should release her last companion who had never gotten over. The demonstration had ended.

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When the two competitors in their warm-up jogged past the outer boundary fence and then past the soldier's line unaware of the confrontation, the Indian women sat astride on their mounts. The Americans cheered Lieutenant Whistler. The Indian women called out to Wolf Eye. The French-Indian families cheered both.

Ouilmette's wife, Archange, and Pettell's wife, both of them laughing and lighthearted, followed by their children, including some adult children, climbed over the fence and walked onto the prairie to join the other Indians.





“Okay.” Jouett cocked the pistol and handed it to the Indian. A soldier cleared his throat. Another soldier gave a low growl. Jouett said, “We’re gonna have a race.”

The Indian with the pistol spoke loudly. All the surrounding Indians began to howl; then the Indians in the grove began to howl. The Americans began to shout in competition: “All riiight, Billy! Hoo, hoooo! I mean, Lieutenant Billy! Get ’em, Billy! Yahoooooo! Show yer dust! Ah-woo! Ah-woo! Ah-woo!”

Lieutenant Whistler gazed at the ground. Wolf Eye looked straight ahead. The Indian lifted the pistol high.

*Pow!*

The start was anticlimactic. With five miles to go, each runner tried to control his feelings and his pace. But after twenty yards, Lieutenant Whistler was ahead by ten yards. Wolf Eye waited until Whistler’s acceleration leveled off, then he ran up and placed himself alongside Whistler on the right, exactly even again. Whistler looked over toward his opponent. Wolf Eye accelerated just a bit. Whistler caught up. Wolf Eye accelerated again. Whistler caught up.

Back at the start, Sergeant Wheeler said, “No.” The racers were beyond hearing.

Wolf Eye accelerated a third time and moved left in front of Whistler, showing his back. Whistler did not respond this time but kept his pace steady and ran behind the Indian.

“Yes!” said Sergeant Wheeler with loud approval amid the general shouting. “Don’t let him play you, Billy O.”

With Wolf Eye in front and Lieutenant Whistler five yards behind, the racers ran to the end of the first leg and turned the corner.

The first leg was originally a deer path. It extended to the woods along the south branch of the river. There the course turned south and followed the fringe of the woods to where the south branch made a brief jog toward the east. At that point the racecourse also turned east and headed back across the prairie, to the main trail leading to the fort. At the main trail the runners were to turn north and follow the trail to the outer boundary fence of the fort, then turn west and run along the fence past the American crowd. They would head southwest back to the starting point, repeat the course once, and finish where they began.

After the runners turned onto the south-bound leg along the river woods, the men at the starting line could no longer see them because of the prairie grass.

“Whadda we do now?” said Private William Prickett, one of the squad assigned to the starting point. Prickett held the American horses that had been wagered.

The Indians who had their own horses mounted up to try to see the heads of the runners far off.

Jim Corbin quickly mounted an American horse. Other soldiers did, too. Prickett was stuck holding the reins.

“Go to hell,” he said.

The rest of the Indian spectators moved along the course or toward the grove.

Strong Pike was high up in a tree with an excellent view. He shouted observations to his relatives and to Jimmy and Private Burns who had joined them.

“How is your father?” Strong Pike shouted suddenly.

“Very well!” said Jimmy. “How are your father and mother?”

“You saw my mother. They are well, and my grandparents, too.” This exchange was all in Potawatomi.

“Who’s winning?” asked Burns.

“He was telling me about his relatives.”

“Come on!”

“Soldier, they are much too far away now,” said Strong Pike in English. “No one can tell.”

“Where’d you learn to speak English?” Burns asked.

Inside Fort Dearborn, Captain Whistler watched from a second-floor room shaped like a tower and situated directly over the main gate. The runners were over a mile from the fort, and his eyes were fifty-three years old, so he could not see them at all. “Corporal Jones.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Get Lieutenant Thompson for me, on the dooble.”

“Yes, sir.” Corporal Rhodias Jones ran down the stairs.

Captain Whistler had been impressed by the crowd’s reaction and his own thrill when his son and Wolf Eye had merely jogged past two hundred yards away in their warm-up. Captain Whistler had seen many horse races between soldiers and civilians, between Indians

and civilians, soldiers and soldiers, and between soldiers and Indians. Some of the horse races involved his sons. This foot race made him more anxious. He could feel his heart beat, yet he could not even see anything.

Lieutenant Thompson clomped up the stairs. "Yes, sir."

"Report."

"There's no sign of trouble, sir. The Indians in view are exactly where we want them to be. There isn't much to see in the race, so we're keeping an honest lookout."

"In a very few minutes," Captain Whistler stated, "the runners are going to race by there"—he pointed—"by the garden fence where even I will be able to see them."

"We will be alert at every point of the compass."

"When the runners have passed by, Lieutenant, you'll have ten minutes to switch the men at the north end to the south end, and the men at the south end to the north." Captain Whistler turned for the first time to look at him. "Is that possible?"

"The fort's only one hundred twenty feet long, Captain. They can do it. Why, if I may ask?"

"The men in the blockhouses must not move and must maintain their lookouts in all directions. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir. The blockhouses keep a sharp lookout and do *not* move."

"Otherwise," Captain Whistler gazed to the south again. "I want every man to say he saw this."

"Yes, sir. . . . Sir, if you wish to walk out there to see your son—"

"No, I belong here." A moment of silence ensued. Then Captain Whistler laughed aloud.

"Hah! I belong here! Is this why I came to America, Lieutenant?"

"I don't know, Captain."

The captain smiled again at his own thought. Then he said, "Remember how the Winnebagoes charged across the river on the sandbar to surprise us. Make sure the lookouts are sharp even to the east, although heaven knows what they would see on the lake. They won't be able to see this. Nor you. But I want everybody else to see it."

"Yes, sir."

Sergeant Hayes was the first to realize that the runners were arriving up the north leg, the beaten trail.

Lieutenant Hamilton stood on the inner side of the fence next to his wife, Catherine Whistler Hamilton, and Julia Whistler. He looked through the telescope across the landscape.

Hayes, in the soldiers' line on the outside of the fence, turned to face the lieutenant and said, "They're coming."

"You can see them?"

Everyone began to squint, to focus his or her eyes as far out as possible, and to chatter, saying, "I don't see anything. Do you see anything?"

Hayes pointed south-southeast.

"Run your glass down toward the end of the sandbar, sir. They're south of the river mouth by the far end of the sandbar on the trail. All you can see for now is two heads." The runners were about three-eighths of a mile away as the crow flies, a little longer on the course they had to run.

"Ooop. Oh." Lieutenant Hamilton found them through his telescope. "The Indian is leading. Lieutenant Whistler is right on his heels. They look strong."

Billy Whistler's mother tried the glass, but her nerves made the telescope move, and at such a distance, a small movement meant the object was gone from the lens. She handed it back.

"What do we do?" Julia Whistler asked.

What they did was this. When the runners were still more than one hundred yards away, everyone started to cheer. When they were within fifty yards, the small crowd, including the line of soldiers, made such a cacophony of noise that no particular words stood out. The crowd's noise created more excitement. But Lieutenant Whistler had also made a push for the lead, and the noise intensified.

Lieutenant Whistler had to run outside because Wolf Eye had the inside. Whistler failed in his attempt to pass on the northerly leg, so he continued to push himself to try to pass the Indian as they went around the turn toward the west. Thus, Whistler had a longer way to run around the corner. It was obvious the lieutenant wanted to move in front before the American crowd.

"Come on, Billeeee!" said his wife. She bounced the two-year-old in her arms, who objected, "Maaa!"

"Daddy! Daddy!" the lieutenant's oldest girl shouted.

"Billy! Billy! Billy! Billy!" shouted his sister Harriet.

“Beat the damn savage. Run ’im ragged,” shouted Sergeant Hayes. His mother exclaimed, “Oh, Billy!”

Mrs. Leigh, the farmer’s wife, her hands to her cheeks, said, “Aaaaahhhhh.” Six-year-old Lillie said, “Whoeee!” Mary, age eight, slapped her mother repeatedly.

Johnny Leigh ran along the inside of the garden fence to meet the runners and then tried to run alongside them the other way, shouting.

Lieutenant Whistler appeared ready to risk all, and the Indian kept himself in control, so Whistler did pass Wolf Eye ten yards before they went by the American crowd. Whistler showed his back to the Indian. The lieutenant had nevertheless stretched his resources less than halfway into the race. The Indian and the soldier ran off toward the southwest with Wolf Eye appearing fresher.

“Whistler shouldn’t have done that,” observed Lieutenant Hamilton. “The Indian had the best position.”

“Billy did it perfectly,” Mrs. Whistler declared.

“Uh, yes, ma’am, he did!”

By the time the runners approached the starting line, which was a quarter mile from the American civilian crowd, Lieutenant Whistler showed the aftereffects of his push and fell twenty yards behind. The Indian spectators, seeing this, jumped up and down and shouted with abandon, and a few danced in circles. The soldiers’ response was more measured.

“You got the heart, sir. Don’t give up. You can get ’im, sir,” stated a soldier at the starting line.

“You’re fine, Bill!” shouted Sergeant Wheeler. “You can see ’im!”

After the runners passed, Fielding Corbin said to his brother, Jim, “Well?”

“I dunno. Sergeant Wheeler, who do you think is gonna win?”

“Bill Whistler!” the sergeant growled.

Jim Corbin made a broad shrug. “Then we open the box.”

The Corbins walked up to the tree grove where the largest group of Indians hooted and hollered. The two soldiers opened up a locked wooden box on the wagon and took out a sword, a scabbard, knives, coins, pewter cups, pewter plates, a book of poetry, two gold lockets, a jew’s harp, a fife, an ivory comb for a woman’s hair, and a timepiece.

"Taking more bets here," Jim Corbin announced. "Soldier's personal items." He waved some. "Savvy? Very valuable."

Indians removed small jewelry, silver ear bobs, and nose bobs. Some men took little moon-shaped silver decorations off their wives' dresses. To obtain the sword, a more traditionally dressed Indian took off an ornamental chest protector that seemed to be made of rows of bones. The Indian wanted the scabbard, too.

It was not that the soldier's personal items, offered last, were more valuable, but those who offered them had less in the world.

Yards away from these transactions, Little Bass, the brother of Strong Pike, showed Jimmy a small lizard.

"That's good," said Jimmy. "You found a lizard."

Little Bass started talking loudly in his gulping, spitting way, but Jimmy could not understand him.

"That's a nice lizard." Jimmy patted the other boy.

Little Bass spoke loudly again at some length.

"Can you hear him? What is he saying?" Jimmy asked Strong Pike in the tree.

"Pay no attention. He says things he does not understand."

"Euhhh, euhhh," grunted another Indian in the tree, cruelly mimicking Little Bass's tortured speech. "The little Prophet says there will be war soon with the Big Knives. Euhhh. Kitchimokemon." The mimicking Indian laughed.

"Is that what Little Bass said?" Jimmy asked.

"I can't hear him," Strong Pike answered.

Private Burns made a face. "Jim, how about if we go by your dad? It's a little unfriendly here."

"I have to go to see my father."

Strong Pike slipped his body off the branch he was standing on down to a lower branch, then a lower one, then hung by his hands and dropped to the ground.

"No shake hands. My father says no shake hands with Americans. Good to see you. Be well. You should move away."

Jimmy shook his own right hand as if Strong Pike had taken it, which the Indian boy had not. "You be well, too, and your brother and sister and your grandparents."

Back by the starting line, Sergeant Wheeler had climbed up on one of the horses and stood, balanced on the horse's back, shading his eyes.

"Sergeant, I have brought your son here," reported Private Burns.

"Why?" said the sergeant, who gazed way out.

"Hen Splashes wanted me to greet her son," Jimmy explained. "Mrs. Whistler ordered me to see him so the Indian women would leave."

"Did ya go see him?"

"Yeah. Haven't seen him in a year."

"Another Indian kid who talks funny, Sarge, said there's gonna be a war with the Big Knives," reported Private Burns.

"Thet so? Waal, today we're goin' to worry about this here."

Back by the fort a little while later, the American crowd mumbled.

"Sergeant Hayes, sing out as soon as you see anything," ordered Lieutenant Hamilton.

"Yes, sir. Just keep your eyes south of that spot I showed you. The grass is shorter near the lake where it's sandy."

Even as Hayes spoke, one head emerged far off, running on the trail. Hayes shouted, "Yo!"

Then in seconds another head emerged.

"I see them, Sergeant." Hamilton did not even use the telescope. "Is that the Indian in front?"

"I think so, sir."

"Can we pray?" Julia folded her hands.

The mother agreed. "He really needs it."

Far off, Whistler was about ten yards behind the Indian. He did not improve his position as the two came up the trail to the boundary fence, also known as the garden fence, and turned the corner to run west. On the west straightaway, which went past the garden fence and then past the Americans, Whistler still remained ten yards behind. Neither Whistler nor the Indian made the slightest glance at or acknowledgment of the shouting, screaming crowd. Both men appeared near their limits and showed strain.

When the runners turned southwest for the last quarter mile to the finish line, Whistler was still ten yards behind.

"Well, he has run a very fine race," his mother stated.

"Come on, Whistler!" Lieutenant Hamilton shouted to the backs of the runners. "Think of my horse. Think of your own horse!"



The crowd continued to shout encouragement, and Johnny Leigh jumped the fence. Sergeant Hayes grabbed him. "Sorry. No."

"Is something happening?" said Julia.

"What do you see?" the mother asked.

"Billy's lifting his arms more. He seems a little different."

"I believe he's striding out!" said Lieutenant Hamilton. "Go, Whistler! Go, damn you! Excuse me. Go, you big jackass."

"He's moving to the right," Julia observed.

"The Indian's pouring it on now, too, sir!" shouted Sergeant Hayes. The soldiers with Sergeant Hayes started to shout.

"Bill would only go to the right to pass," said Hamilton. "It's hard to tell from here."

"The Indian has moved to the right!" Sergeant Hayes noted.

"Bill, go to the left!" said Julia.

"There's people in their way," shouted Catherine. Some spectators by the tree grove had gone out onto the course in front of the runners to see the runners' approach.

"They absolutely must get out of the way!"

"Do you see this!" exclaimed Private Burns by the finish line.

"Ah see it. Ah see it. Ah told you. Ah told you!" Wheeler still stood on the back of a horse. He quickly lowered his hands to the horse so that he had all four limbs in touch with the animal's back and then jumped to the ground and ran up to the racecourse. "Go! Go! Go!" shouted the sergeant hoarsely. The ears of all the horses perked up, and their heads lifted high with alarm at the shouting.

"Whistler! Whistler! Whisaaaggh!" Jimmy got tongue-tied.

"Outta there!" the sergeant barked at the Indians and one soldier who had gone onto the course.

The soldier retreated.

Lalime shouted in Potawatomi. The Indians on the course backed off.

Whistler pounded for home, his knees lifting. He seemed to pass Wolf Eye on the left one hundred yards away

"Will his heart give out?" Lalime asked.

Whistler kept coming as if he got stronger by passing.

The soldiers began to jump up and down. The excited horses started to yank on their reins.

The Indians shouted at their champion who seemed to summon his last reserves. Wolf Eye gave everything he had. The Indian began to slow just a little when he was fifty yards away, as a man does when he has reached his capacity. He grimaced with the final effort but could go no faster.

Whistler pounded across the line to the shouts of the Americans and kept going three more yards before he began to slow. Wolf Eye ran steady across the line, then staggered. Whistler was bent over. Then, in a moment, Whistler turned and approached Wolf Eye.

"Great race!" gasped the lieutenant. He put his arm under the Indian's arm. Wolf Eye, bent over, spoke.

"I don't understand. No matter," said the lieutenant.

Wolf Eye touched Whistler with a finger in the belly as if to acknowledge Whistler as the victor.

"Yes. I didn't think I could," said the lieutenant. "Great race."

"Sixteen yards!" shouted Sergeant Wheeler. "Five miles and separated by sixteen yards."

The sky soon started to darken over the spectators. Birds became agitated in anticipation of a storm that Captain Whistler had feared. Indians and Americans looked up at the clouds and prepared to go their separate ways.



## Chapter 13

### THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

*Sunday, May 6, 1810*

The next spring, in the midst of a feud at Fort Dearborn that had ignited hatred in the adults for weeks, four young people who could barely get along themselves chose to try to canoe all the way to the Des Plaines River.

If it weren't for their mutual need to escape the scene at the fort, the four young people, including one girl, might never have attempted it.

During the spring flood, the flat Chicago portage briefly became a liquid highway instead of a short carrying place on land between rivers. At flood time, that temporary water connection smoothly linked the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River system. This water link and the short portage between the two water systems the rest of the year is what made Chicago a strategic location. Fort Dearborn was built to protect this link.

Traders who came from the Indians' winter camps to the south and west each year heavily laden with bundles of animal furs floated their boats in the spring's high water right over the prairie. They were bound for the fur companies' headquarters at Mackinac Island. But the traders also liked to stop at Kinzie's because they ran out of whiskey and tobacco over the winter and also needed dried fruit for their diets.

Traders sailed the annual flood from west to east, from the Des Plaines River across the prairie to the south branch of the Chicago River and then to Lake Michigan. The water connection between those two rivers, Mud Lake, navigable only at flood time, was a curiosity of nature.

The four young people had the crazy notion of canoeing the portage in the opposite direction, from east to west, from the Chicago River to the Des Plaines.

*"Pouse au large, mes gens!"*

Jimmy shouted the French voyageur's command to "shove off."

"Speak English," the irritable teenager Harriet Whistler complained yet again. She sat in the middle of the canoe.

"I believe I like to hear a little French once in a while," said Johnny Leigh. He sat in the bow.

"You're an ass," Harriet retorted. It was a large canoe with room for five. Little Georgie Whistler, Harriet, and Jimmy Wheeler made up the middle.

"Shaddup!" Sergeant Wheeler commanded. "Stroke. Stroke. Stroke." The sergeant had naturally learned about this expedition and for his own reasons had placed himself in charge. He was in the steering position in the stern.

They shoved off from the Leigh Farm on the south branch of the Chicago River, the branch dubbed by locals the Portage River.

Past the Leigh Farm the south branch was lined on either side by woods. Its muddy banks were marked by the wreckage of last year's rushes and pussy willows. Amid this confusion of broken dried-out stalks, new green rushes poked up. A few elongated rays of the rising sun shone through the woods behind these voyagers and stretched out onto the river in front of them.

Less than half a mile upstream from the Leigh Farm, Sergeant Wheeler in the stern and Johnny Leigh in the bow steered the canoe into the west fork, a narrow, crooked channel that left the woods and entered the prairie. The prairie became so flat that the river lost all visible banks.

After going three miles upstream from their start, the four youngsters were winded. They paddled out of the narrow main channel into the backwater to rest a second time. Sergeant Wheeler ordered Georgie to hold a branch of a stuck driftwood tree. The first new

green grass showed on occasional mud hummocks above the water. Sergeant Wheeler and Johnny Leigh lit their pipes and puffed.

"Listen to the critters," Sergeant Wheeler commanded as he exhaled smoke. It was just after dawn.

Hundreds of plovers and snipes flew overhead and made a discordant racket. Tiny frogs, called spring peepers, made a chorus like jingling bells. The booms of prairie chickens began to sound the morning here and there to either side. Bands of deer and elk could be seen plunging across the wet prairie.

Added to nature's variety of sounds was the voice of Harriet Whistler, who had carried the trouble from the fort with her.

"Now look," she said, "you all know we need an honest sutler. John Kinzie is not an American. He's a damned Canadian. Kinzie supplied our enemies in the old Indian Wars. Right, Sergeant? And Kinzie and his brother, Forsyth, are British sympathizers. The honest people at our fort are Doc Cooper and my brother, John. The dishonest people are Kinzie and all the malignant wretches that support him."

Johnny Leigh asked, "Are you referring to my family?"

"Leigh, say your piece, and then Ah'll throw both of you in the cold water." Sergeant Wheeler spoke calmly.

The background of these comments was that Captain Whistler, in the long afterglow of his triumph at facing the Indians' challenge in the great footrace combined with his son's victory, seemed to feel his orders were unassailable. The captain announced one day that John Kinzie was dismissed as the sutler for the garrison. As new sutler, a lucrative position, the captain had appointed Dr. Cooper, the new and very young post surgeon who had no experience but who stood in awe of the captain.

The tiny community split down the middle, to the captain's surprise. Opponents and supporters of the captain's action revealed long-hidden suspicions and envies. They openly accused each other of secret foul deeds. Permanent enemies were made. The family of farmer Leigh held back, but its members were heard to have offered a few mild comments of sympathy for John Kinzie. No one could guess, but the feud would have momentous consequences for Fort Dearborn.

"You know, Harriet, your dad is the government." Johnny Leigh held his pipe and spoke in a philosophical manner. "Your father gave

my father a great chance with our farm and a contract to supply the garrison. We will always back the captain. But you have to understand that after a man builds a business up with years of sweat and work, the government can't just grab a man's livelihood, like the sutler's store, and tell that man to go jump in the lake. It scares my mother and father."

Harriet wore a shabby gingham dress that was once blue and had turned gray; it was a hand-me-down from her sisters. She had a rawhide jacket over her dress that was a hand-me-down from her brothers. Both garments were patched. She wore ragged homemade moccasins.

The boys, including Georgie Whistler, were not much better off, wearing linen hunting shirts, linen pantaloons dyed butternut, and moccasins. Over their hunting shirts they had rawhide jackets decorated each in his own way.

Such poverty of clothes was harder on the girl. Harriet was thirteen, daughter of the head man of the community, and her family's poverty made her angry sometimes.

At this point Georgie Whistler, age ten, jumped in with childish insults about all his father's enemies.

The sergeant looked at the sky. "Ah cain't stand this. A waste of good tobacco." The sergeant knocked his pipe on the outside of the canoe so that the burning tobacco fell in the water. "Pick up your paddles. Let's go. Jimmy, *sing*, dammit!"

"*En roulant ma boule roulant!*" Jimmy shouted in a soprano voice that had not yet changed.

"*En roulant ma boule!*"<sup>10</sup> the others responded despite themselves, almost by reflex. Harriet sang with a snarl through clenched teeth.

The rhythmic song with endless verses about three ducks and a prince had its own effect. It gradually drew out the youngsters' shared youth and past friendship, and calmed them.

After they reentered the main channel of the west fork, they soon had to force their way through thicker grass that was heavily mixed with wild rice. Some of the stalks of wild rice had been bent over by the weight of the winter's snow, but other dead rice stalks, taller than a man, towered over their canoe, making the voyagers look smaller.

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10. A-rolling my ball, a-rolling my ball.

In clear spots they could see that the west fork had changed into a larger body of water.

“Mud Lake!” the sergeant shouted. “Keep singin’. Mud Lake!”

Wetland birds startled by the intruders clapped and fluttered by the thousands to escape. Yet thousands more arrived. Gulls with piercing screeches and squawking ducks wheeled above, including northern pintails with tails like hat pins. Red-winged blackbirds cried, “Konk-la-ree.” Black terns with extra-long needle beaks landed and took off in flocks.

The thick vegetation made the paddling harder. The voyagers who were mere visitors in the vastness of life around them started to fade again after more than two miles. Jimmy’s tongue hung out and he panted. Sergeant Wheeler steered the canoe into the shallows where the canoe touched bottom.

Near them, bank swallows came out of holes in mud hummocks. Sergeant Wheeler pointed out a bird with enormous spiked feet, six inches across, a bird that seemed to walk on the surface of the lake. The sergeant told them it was a moor hen whose feet with needle-like claws enabled it to walk on the water plants.

The sergeant also told them how in ordinary times of low water, traders who crossed Mud Lake had to get out and push their boats while standing up to their waists in mud.

“Sometimes the mud gits over their necks. They hang on to the boats to keep from drownin’ in mud. You fall in here, you’ll git all covered with bloodsuckers. That’s what happens to those traders who have to git out and push their boats through the mud.”

“Ohh, euuuhhh.” Harriet looked disgusted.

“Bloodsuckers?” Johnny cringed.

“They cain’t pull ’em off,” Sergeant Wheeler continued with relish. “They hev to use tobacco juice to make those bloodsuckers take their fangs out.”

A bird known as a Virginia rail strode nearby, through the reeds and across a bank of muck, followed by four black puffs of cotton—newly hatched chicks that walked behind their mother.

“And when a bunch of them bloodsuckers git you, your legs swell up and git red, and they hurt terrible for three days, so you think yer in hell. Then, of course, your private parts—”

“Yeeeeoww!” The boys screamed. Harriet screamed, too. A thousand birds screamed.

They paddled again into the middle of Mud Lake with new respect. After some long silent minutes while they all worked as hard they could, Johnny suddenly laughed very loud.

Their singing stopped.

“Whaddya laughin’ about up there?”

Johnny turned his upper body around. “The current changed, Sarge. We’re going downstream!”

“It’s about time,” the sergeant declared. “Rest your paddles. Let’s see.”

Sixty yards off to their right, a great blue heron stood like a statue on a tree stump. They were still in the middle of Mud Lake, but, indeed, the current had invisibly switched. The canoe passed the sphinxlike blue heron with no one paddling.

“Yahoo!” Jimmy declared.

“For those who ain’t been here, this here is the Continental Divide.”

“It’s what?”

The sergeant explained: “This, Georgie, is where God Almighty divides the waters between the Atlantic Ocean and the great Mississippi River.”

“There’s no ocean here.”

“It’s hard to see, but past here, Mud Lake and all the rivers flow down toward the mighty Mississippi and down to New Orleans. But if we go back a few yards, the current flows the other way, toward the Chicago River. Then the Chicago River runs into Lake Michigan, and all the Great Lakes flow down, down, down to the Saint Lawrence River and to the Atlantic Ocean. That’s why the Frenchies call this whole part of the country the *pays d’en haut*, the upper country.”

“Who’d’a believed this piece of crap is the Continental Divide?” Johnny Leigh exclaimed. To a farmer the Mud Lake swamp and wetland seemed useless. Nevertheless, Johnny yelled and lifted his arms. “The upper country!”

“Lotta birds,” said Georgie.

Jimmy began the song again, and they pitched in with new spirit.

It was just over three miles more to the main channel of the Des



Plaines River and the dangerous part of their trip, but it was downstream until they passed an island. The waters moved faster and faster, and they paddled faster to keep control.

When they got near the Des Plaines, they could see a tree line up ahead, directly across their path, the border of the Des Plaines River. But the current in the last section of Mud Lake pushed the canoe sideways toward an opening in the tree line to the southwest. They had to pull strongly to their right just to go straight.

"Dig! Dig! Dig!" the sergeant ordered. "Head for the trees. The open spot is the wrong way, and we cain't turn around!"

"Whew, this is good," the sergeant added, paddling hard. "Doodle-doo."

They paddled right through the tree line, right into the woods, which were flooded.

"This river's movin'!" shouted the sergeant. "Don't get in the main channel. We'll capsize. Hell! Turn upstream here."

"Can't we stop?" Jimmy shouted.

"We can't stop! There's no place to stand!"

The Des Plaines River, which ran north to south, was into the woods on both sides. The whole land was flooded.

They had to paddle like demons to make the tiniest headway up the Des Plaines through the trees alongside the main channel. Johnny paddled at his limit to keep the bow of the canoe from being pushed off course by the river and forced around. He also had to avoid snags and driftwood trees. He had no breath or energy left to speak or sing.

To their left, the fast main channel was so swollen that it seemed to bulge upward in the middle. The canoe began to lose way against the current, and the young people started to cry out.

"Pull to the right again," yelled the sergeant. They paddled farther into the backwaters on the east side of the Des Plaines River. Johnny grabbed onto a living tree standing partly under water to stop the canoe and to rest.

"Ain't this somethin'!" the sergeant shouted.

They all answered, "Nnnnnnggg. Ohhh."

But they had made it to the Des Plaines River.

Negotiations with the local Indians of Chief Co-wa-bee-mai's village of the Three Fires—the Potawatomes, Chippewas, and Ottawas—the

village just northeast of the juncture with the Des Plaines River, were as smooth as a baby's behind compared to that struggle, rumors of war notwithstanding. The sergeant told the Indians they would not hunt, only fish a little. The Indians answered that the fishing was no good because the water was too fast and muddy.

The bedraggled group then returned to their canoe, picked it up, and carried it a half mile upstream, both on dry land and through the shallows, until the land started to rise and formed a raised east bank.

They hiked up onto this higher ground and walked over a mile farther to a U bend in the river. Then they lay down on new grass in the warm sunshine to rest. The west and north banks of the U bend were high and dry and green.

Sergeant Wheeler noticed that the youngsters were all friends again, and he felt good for them and sad for them because he knew what was ahead.

In the late afternoon, when it was time to return home, Sergeant Wheeler took Jimmy aside as Harriet, Georgie, and Johnny Leigh walked downstream, still trying to catch a decent fish.

The sergeant scattered burned coals from their cook fire on the bare ground. Then he began to pick up the unburned ends of glowing sticks that stuck into the fire like spokes. He threw them one at a time into the river. Each hissed.

"This is very hard for me, what Ah'm goin' to tell you. This feud at home hurts the whole company of Fort Dearborn."

"Kinzie's just a sore loser," Jimmy said. "Whistler is the captain."

"Ah wish that's all it was. You cain't repeat this, Jim, but you will need to understand this. Captain John Whistler took the sutler's store for himself. Whistler will take the proceeds of the business. Doc Cooper will work the store. He's twenty-four years old and does what he's told."

"Why'd the captain do it?"

"Captain Whistler's deep in debt. He'll never, ever git out. He almost got arrested in Detroit, but the army held off his creditors. Most men, like the captain, want to pay their debts. . . . We'll sit down here till Johnny and the other two get back. The bottom of all this is the U.S. government pays soldiers a trifle and never pays on time. When a man like Captain Whistler has so many children, what's he to do?"

Jim sat on a log. "So?"

The sergeant got his face and body into contortions trying to express his unease. "This may be hard for you to understand, but Ah don't want to hev to buy tobacco or whiskey or paper or ink or a newspaper or chocolate or fish hooks from the captain. Ah don't want to give him mah money. Ain't right. It makes me . . ." He stood up and rubbed both hands on his shirt. "Ah take his orders, and all the men do, and thet's the way it should be in the military. Captain Whistler is mah good friend, too, and almost every man reenlists under him."

"You said he doesn't speak to you much anymore."

"He expected me to support him in this matter. Now Lieutenant Hamilton has punished one of the men for goin' across the river and buyin' from Kinzie. Thet is *not* right. A soldier does not give his money to his captain. Ah do not back Whistler in this. It is very painful." The sergeant shook his head.

"The army stinks, Dad. Can we go home now?"

"Didn't tell you the worst. The people opposed to the captain—not your dad—have sent letters to his superiors and asked for him to be court-martialed." Sergeant Wheeler made another face. "Captains sometimes get replaced by their superiors."

"What?"

"In fact, Ah think it's gonna happen."

"If the captain goes," Jimmy said with disbelief, "all the Whistlers would go."

"Yes."

"You said Fort Dearborn needs a captain who's a fighter now that the Indians are all riled up. Who would we get?"

"Ain't many sech captains left from the old Indian wars."

It was near twilight as they paddled down the south branch on the way home. A fantastic mountain range loomed ahead that was topped by volcanoes and monstrous chimneys. These spewed pink fire. Next to the flaming volcanoes and chimneys stood tree lines thousands of feet high.

Chicago had no mountains or volcanoes or thousand-foot-high tree lines or hills. So the dark mountain range toward which they paddled changed the whole land.

The mountain range was in reality an unbroken line of black and very dark gray clouds across the north and northwest horizon. Formed on the earth, this impenetrable mountain range, fringed with the fires of the sun, stretched one thousand and two thousand and five thousand feet up to the sky. All normal landmarks in this atmosphere were lost.

The young people chattered in wonder at the unknown world ahead.



## Chapter 14

### BLACK PARTRIDGE

*September 1810*

In the unfolding of history, the Leigh family and the Potawatomi chief Black Partridge were bound together with golden bloody strings.

The Leigh family would be devastated in the Fort Dearborn Massacre.

So also Black Partridge and all his village would be devastated in the war that followed the massacre. But the Leighs and Black Partridge were also bound together in fate far more deeply than that.

“Heavenly Father, make us thankful to thee and mindful of others as we recei—”

Farmer Leigh jumped out of his chair with a carving knife. His chair fell over. An Indian had appeared in the cabin with a rifle. Leigh came around the table, his knife at hip level.

“Dad!” warned Johnny. “It’s Muck-otey-pokee!”

The Indian raised his rifle to block Leigh and looked at Leigh with narrowed eyes. The two men gauged each other.

James Leigh slowly moved the knife from his right hand to his left hand. He put his left hand with the knife behind his back.

The Indian slowly lowered his rifle until the butt touched the puncheon floor.

"Muck-otey-pokee," Leigh croaked. "Aaaahhh. Ahem. I didn't recognize you. Welcome." Leigh reached out his right hand.

"*B'jou*," the Indian said, but he did not take the offered hand.

"Muck-otey-pokee," chirped the youngest girl, Lillie, with a quaver in her voice, "did you come for eggs?"

The Indian forced his face to smile at her.

Martha Leigh, behind her husband, held a wooden platter of corn. "My, what a surprise!" She swallowed. "Goodness. You're just in time for dinner."

Reports of murderous Indian attacks were starting to be heard in the Illinois country.

"Chief Black Partridge," Lillie announced cheerfully, for this was the Indian's name in English, "Grandpa Russell has gone to meet Uncle Charlie. Grandpa and Uncle Charlie are driving in cattle from Fort Wayne—and a new bull! You can sit in Grandpa's place." Eight-year-old Lillie made an instant adjustment in a child's way.

She was also oblivious to the fact that the Indian understood very little English. In her opinion, she and Black Partridge always understood each other. In this she was correct.

Black Partridge, tall and slim, smiled a true smile at Lillie. His eyes showed he was still cautious. He stood his rifle in a corner of the cabin.

The chief had a commanding appearance combined with the impression of good will. He was fifty years old with long black hair turning gray, a high forehead, and black eyes. He wore a gold nose ring and gold rings through his ears. People around Fort Dearborn referred to him as Muck-otey-pokee; in the Indian language his name was closer to Mkedepoke.

Black Partridge sat next to Lillie on a bench seat opposite the open door, swung his hip into her, and pushed her. She pushed him back the same way. "Lo, Chief."

Five-year-old Stephen picked up his fork and spoon and began a low-key whine: "Awwuhhheuhhgeee."

"Shut up!" Leigh was still frozen with the knife behind his back.

"Shush, Stevie." Martha Leigh gently took the knife from her husband's hand.

Johnny Leigh sat to the right of his father's place, on the other flank of Lillie. On the opposite side of the table, at the far end of the

other bench, sat Mary with baby Matthew on her lap. Mary had her finger in his mouth to pacify him. Next to her sat Stephen, and the empty place at the father's left hand was Martha's.

"Can we eeat?" said Stephen.

Mr. Leigh, heart racing, went back to the head of the table and sat. He took a deep breath and kept his hands in fists to control their shaking. "We will finish our prayer."

"Let me say it?" Johnny was eager.

"Add your prayer when I finish. Heavenly Father, make us thankful to thee and mindful of others as we receive these blessings in Jesus's name."

"Amen," the family said.

"Amen," said Black Partridge.

"Now?"

The father nodded. Johnny recited:

Some ha'e meat, and canna eat,  
And some would eat that want it;  
But we ha'e meat, and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thankit.

"*What* was that?" Mary asked.

"It's Scottish. We're Scottish, aye?"

"We recognize the Scottish," said his father. "It's the prayer we don't recognize."

"Mr. Cooper, the surgeon, says a Scottish poet wrote that a couple of years ago. It means some people have meat but can't eat. I guess they're sick or something. Some people would like to have meat, but don't. But we have meat and we can eat, too, so we thank the Lord. How's that?"

"A person from way back east like Dr. Cooper always brings something new," Martha observed. She sighed. "You can begin, Jim."

When Leigh picked up his knife again, his eyes widened as he remembered what he had almost done. Then he started to carve the chicken.

"Johnny, give Chief Partridge an ear of corn," Martha instructed.

"Give him a potato and some greens," the father added. "Give him two potatoes."

The ears of corn came from the well-watered garden outside the

Leigh house, located a quarter mile south of the main gate of Fort Dearborn. These ears were full. A drought had begun shortly after the canoe trip to the Des Plaines River, and corn harvested later suffered.

Muck-otey-pokee held up the corn and studied it appreciatively.

"Is it dry by your village?" Lillie asked. Muck-otey-pokee's band lived on the south side of the Illinois River, opposite the head of Lake Peoria.

"Dry," he said.

During the meal, Black Partridge and Lillie elbowed each other and stole food from each other's plates. He ate a small potato and gave the other one across the table to Mary.

Muck-otey-pokee also smiled widely and demonstratively at Mrs. Leigh.

"I told you."

"Good gracious. Jim, please."

Martha Leigh blushed deeply.

Muck-otey-pokee was in some ways an old-fashioned Indian. He wore no turban. But on his upper body he wore a calico hunting shirt. On his lower body he wore buckskin leggings and moccasins.

On his visits to Chicago, Muck-otey-pokee often came to the Leigh household to trade for a few chicken eggs. Martha Leigh, almost thirty, had five children and had performed a lifetime of hard work, yet she was one of those wonders of nature who remained quite comely. Over time it had appeared that the chief was smitten by her in a polite way and sometimes acted silly.

When the meal was over, Black Partridge touched Lillie's pigtailed with one finger and pointed to his own long and loose hair.

"You want me to braid your hair?" Lillie pantomimed excitedly.

Black Partridge nodded.

"Chief," Mr. Leigh asked, "is it safe here in this area for Americans to stay?" Johnny translated his father's question as best he could.

Martha and the difficult Stevie cleared the table.

Everybody knew Muck-otey-pokee had fought against the Americans in the Indian Wars of the '80s and '90s. On his chest hung his usual decoration, a medal engraved with a picture of George Washington and given to him by an American general when peace was declared.



"No." Black Partridge shook his head.

"But the trouble is all down south," Mr. Leigh persisted. "Tell him we know about the post rider and the four men in the Coles party in July. Those things were two hundred fifty miles away. It's peaceful all around here, isn't it?" Mr. Leigh was referring, without saying so in front of the little ones, to five white men who had been killed by Indians recently.

Johnny roughly translated.

"He says the young men want war. . . . Some chiefs, no. . . . Main Poc, yes. . . . Something about Tenskwatawa. That's the Prophet."

Black Partridge made a gesture with his thumb in the direction of the fort. "You talk Shaw-nee-aw-kee."

"He wants us to talk to Kinzie."

Shaw-nee-aw-kee referred to Kinzie's skill as a silversmith who made Indian jewelry. It meant Silver Man.

"I heard. Ask him if he is like Main Poc for war with the Americans or if he is like the other chiefs for peace."

"He's our guest."

"Ask him."

Johnny asked.

Muck-otey-pokee inhaled through his nose. Then in a grave way he folded his arms and answered.

"He said he must do what his people want."

"Okay," said Mr. Leigh. "Tell him we'll give him some eggs as a present. No trade. Ask him what he thinks is going to happen."

Johnny did.

With a wave, Black Partridge took in the Leigh family. He said, "No stay here."

"I can't accept that," said Leigh with a frown.

Three nights later, Martha and her husband sat out on a bench that her husband had built, under the stars. They looked toward the mouth of the Chicago River and toward the waters of Lake Michigan in the dark. The children were asleep in the loft at the top of the cabin. The baby slept in a cradle on the ground floor.

"It was a beautiful dance, like a harvest dance," said Martha of the community dance on the beach.

"You were the best-looking girl."

Martha chuckled and squeezed her husband's hand. "Just because the Whistler girls are gone. And Bill's wife, Julia. That's sad. I miss the whole Whistler family." Martha put her head on her husband's shoulder for a moment. "That whole ugly business was very hard on Captain Whistler's wife."

"I was surprised to see Sergeant Wheeler drinking. Some of the soldiers got very drunk and were falling in the lake. At least Wheeler didn't do that."

"Drinking does not suit him." Martha sat up straight. "What did Kinzie say about the future?"

A shooting star went by.

Leigh skipped that question. "Your dad and your brother, Charlie, want to bring in more cattle, fifteen or twenty head at a time across country, and build up the herd. Prices could go sky high if a war comes. If the government sends troops to garrison Prairie du Chien, or if our reinforcements move through here to Fort Madison on the Mississippi, we could sell a lot of beef."

"Pa's a big schemer. Always has been."

"Your dad would put up most of the money. We would have to call our farm the Russell and Leigh Farm."

"I'm a Russell," Martha said.

He took her hand again. "Maybe Black Partridge imagines his people are stronger than they are. There's no trouble anywhere around here. If there is, we would be safe in the fort. If we go back east, we'll lose this," Leigh continued, "and we'll never be able to be what we are here."

"What is best for the children?"

"You trust me?" James Leigh asked. "I think we have to stay."

"I have trusted you since I was fifteen," she answered. "So I guess we stay. There's another shooting star."

"The name of one of the Shawnee brothers means shooting star."

"What is shooting star in their language?"

"Tecumseh."



## Chapter 15

### THE MIDDLE GROUND UNRAVELS

A new batch of officers took charge of Fort Dearborn in 1810 and 1811 just as the long truce with the Indians in the Northwest Territory was breaking down. The army transferred Captain John Whistler to Detroit and also transferred his son and son-in-law to other posts.

The long truce, by the time it ended, had lasted sixteen years after the Treaty of Greenville of 1795.

Even before the new officers took control of Fort Dearborn, groups on all sides had been determined to wreck the Treaty of Greenville.

The British government, operating from Canada and parts of what was technically the U.S. Northwest Territories, wanted to push the newly arrived Americans back east and south of the Ohio River. The Americans, with some exceptions, had been across the Ohio for less than a man's childhood, so it seemed possible to reverse this.

Initially, the British hoped to control the interior of the continent for commercial advantage: to monopolize the purchase of valuable furs and hides from the Indians and sell the British-manufactured goods to the Indians.

The aim of Britain, whose military was mostly committed to the war with Napoleon, was to use their numerous Indian allies, supported by British units, to achieve their goals. The Indians had a very similar plan—to use the British as their allies to get rid of the Americans.

Some Indians dreamed of exterminating every white man in America, just as some Americans spoke of exterminating the Indians.

American leaders, for their part, dreamed that the American people would settle the continent from sea to sea, and some expected to take Canada, too.

The great Indian leader Tecumseh rallied Indians from Missouri to Florida and from Lake Superior to the Gulf of Mexico to get them to unite and save what they had and what they once had.

On each side the dreams and schemes were too big to accept the status quo of the Treaty of Greenville.

Individuals and small groups brought other pressures to bear, pressures that were cumulatively just as powerful.

Poor Americans yearned to be farmers on the only land they could afford because they didn't have to pay for it. That land was in the Indian Country. Big-time and small-time speculators wanted free land.

Bands of Indian men east of the Mississippi were still determined to live the warrior life. They traveled far and wide in Illinois and Indiana and across the Mississippi to attack other tribes for glory and booty. They sometimes attacked the Americans for glory and booty.

Indians and whites rarely resorted to the terms of the treaty to deal with such deadly matters. But while the Potawatomes and the Kickapoos on two occasions surrendered killers of whites to American officials for justice, the Americans never punished American killers of Indians or turned those killers over to the Indians.

In 1810 and 1811, small warrior bands of several tribes, primarily Potawatomes, began to strike more often at isolated white settlements.

In response, settlers in southern Illinois shot at Indians on the Mississippi River and started to build multifamily blockhouses for defense, as had been done in Kentucky during the Indian Wars. The settlers organized militia and sought guns. They wrote a letter to the president of the United States.

At a council with several tribes at Peoria, American officials threatened horrific consequences if the Indian raids did not stop and the killers were not surrendered. Otherwise, unable to prosecute roving warriors, American officials told the Indians that punishment—"storms and hurricanes and thunder and lightnings of heaven"—would have

to be general. The American envoy said Indian women and children would suffer, too. An Indian chief answered that the Americans should fear for their own women and children.

"If whites had kept on the other side of the water, these accidents could not have happened," Potawatomi chief Gomo declared. "We would not have crossed the wide waters to kill them there. But they have come here and turned the Indians in confusion. The Great Spirit, when he made and disposed of man, placed the red skins in this land and those who wear hats<sup>11</sup> on the other side of the big waters."

The American officer responded that Americans were now born here.

By June 1810, the governor of the Indiana Territory, William Henry Harrison, realized that William Wells had been right when he insisted the Prophet and his band were the real Indian threat. "The Prophet is organizing a most extensive combination against the United States," Harrison wrote.

Harrison also warned the government in Washington that Tecumseh, the Prophet's brother, was "one of those uncommon geniuses which spring up occasionally to produce revolutions and overturn the established order of things."

The new officers at Fort Dearborn, including the new captain, Nathan Heald, had never encountered any war in their adulthood. Heald was thirty-six by the time he settled in at Fort Dearborn. He found it "remote from the civilized part of the world." Heald had been in the army for twelve years, was an experienced post commander, and was well organized. The former commander, John Whistler, once told his superiors, "I am well aware of the deception and craftiness of Indians." Heald could never say this.

Illinois had acquired enough of a population by 1809 to formally earn the status of a U.S. Territory. The Illinois Territory included what is now known as Wisconsin and much of Minnesota.

And the universe continued to effervesce and to produce marvels.

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11. white people



## Chapter 16

### HEN SPLASHES

*September 1, 1811*

Hen Splashes, mother of Jimmy Wheeler's friends Strong Pike and Little Bass, and wife of Spotted Trout, the follower of the Prophet, stood by herself in the open and faced a startling sunset.

The light above the far horizon was white and clear, yet it shifted to yellow at the first clouds that seemed to cover all but the far horizon. Coming toward her from the sunset, the color of the clouds then changed to soft orange. In the nearer distance the clouds began to thicken and wrinkle and turn to deep orange. Closer, the clouds became fire red; then above her the sky became deep red, and finally the clouds, raving in turmoil, became dark like the color of black smoke.

She returned her eyes to the earth. She ground up dried corn in a stone bowl placed on a rawhide blanket to catch any crumbs. She had a long pestle to use standing up.

Her husband, Spotted Trout, had been busy all day moving about the Calumet River village sixteen miles south of Fort Dearborn. Spotted Trout accepted compliments for his role as kiktowenene<sup>12</sup> and answered people's fearful questions. The villagers had chosen Spotted Trout to attend a second major council between the Americans and the Three Fires—the Potawatomies, Chippewas, and Ottawas—and

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12. speaker

their neighbors, the Kickapoos, held near Lake Peoria again on the Illinois River. When he returned, people craved every scrap of real news.

Rumors stirred the village constantly from the many Indians—Iowas, Kickapoos, Sacs and Foxes, Winnebagoes, Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomes—who walked the Indian highway around the bottom of Lake Michigan near this village and then turned northeast toward the British Fort Malden in Canada or southwest toward Prophetstown, or returned.

Long after he had ended his speech to the villagers about the council between the Americans and the Three Fires at Lake Peoria, Spotted Trout came to his wife, at sunset.

“Here you are. Why are you doing that now?”

“We don’t have that much, I’m afraid”—Hen Splashes kept grinding corn—“despite our efforts. Too dry. But I want to do this.”

“How was I?”

“I was very proud of you.” Hen Splashes was bent over. “I have never seen you like that.”

Spotted Trout sat down on the ground. They were both silent for a while as Hen Splashes ground corn. Then they both spoke at once.

“You see—” he said.

“The children—” she said.

He stopped. She continued.

“The children are so proud of you.”

His wife was not looking at him. Spotted Trout frowned.

He said, “You see how things are more and more, and how we must forget all mixing with the Kitchimokemon who threaten to kill us. Our oldest son does not need to practice English. We must be separate from the whites.”

“The British are white.”

“The British support pushing the Americans far back across the Ohio River or farther. The British do not want our land.”

Hen Splashes ground corn.

Spotted Trout frowned again. “Why are you so quiet?”

“I’m working.”

“You can say something.”

“Everyone cannot win a war. Someone must lose. I am afraid.”

“The Americans want this war, not the Neshnabe.”

“Your friend Main Poc, what does he do if not make war? Main

Poc and his men and the Shawnee Prophet, they bring the trouble on everyone.”

“Main Poc is not my friend.” Spotted Trout hung his head. Then he tried to explain once more. “Main Poc is our greatest warrior chief with great spirit powers.”

He changed the subject. “You’re becoming thin.”

He saw the sudden flare in his wife’s eyes.

“I know,” he said, “I’ve been away a lot. This council. And I must travel to help build the new chain of friendship and unite all the red men. The warriors must take charge of the affairs of our nation, depose the useless village chiefs. The White Devil with his mouth wide open wants our lands by any means. What will be left for our children?”

“I need you.”

Spotted Trout became silent.

The neighborhood of the Calumet River village was peaceful. The trouble was all around in people’s talk and yet not visible here. The soldiers at Fort Dearborn were an offense to the pride of many young men, and he knew he could rouse the young men, but the soldiers didn’t stray far. No American settlers except one silly farmer threatened the Indian land here. Spotted Trout knew that for many of his fellow villagers, goods purchased in exchange for furs and skins from the trader John Kinzie and from the U.S. government factor at Fort Dearborn were hard to do without once you got used to them. Every day Spotted Trout tried to explain to people here and in other villages what was at stake between the Americans and the red men.

But he knew he was gone too much. His wife turned her back on him as she worked. After a while Spotted Trout stood up and said, “Can I help?”

He stood next to her and put his hands on the pestle along with hers, and he leaned his side fully against her. She was stiff and would not make room for him. They tried to crush the corn awkwardly. Then he said, “I will stay from now through all the months in our winter camp.”

“You will stay with me and the children?”

“Yes.”

He felt her loosen a little. He took one hand from the pestle and put that arm around her, and their heads came together.

She said, “What do you think will happen to us?”





## Chapter 17

### SIGNS AND WONDERS

“You sober, Wheeler?” Private Fielding Corbin’s wife, Susannah, a small woman with a drawn face and a ragged, homespun dress, stood in the doorway.

Susannah, or Sukey, openly fretted more than other women. She cried sometimes for reasons that were unknown to Jimmy. But Jimmy and his father had a special respect for her. She had once taken control of the sergeant in one of his worst drunks—by squeezing his upper arm with the vice grip of a laundry woman until it was black and blue—and kept the officers from seeing him.

Sergeant Wheeler had taken up serious drinking since the departure of the Whistlers.

“Yes, ma’am,” he said, meaning he was sober at this time.

“What will happen now? You’re the only man in this whole territory I can ask.” Sukey pushed her hair behind her ear.

“That comet cause this, Sarge?” Sukey’s husband poked his freckled and bearded face around her in the doorway. “Forty of our boys kilt in one fight? Thet’s almost all the men we got on this whole post.”

“Corbin, Ah do believe the comet was dead-set against us.”

Unseen men broke into nervous laughter behind the Corbins.

“Who wants to come in,” Wheeler said a little louder, “come in!”

With a banging of feet, people filed into the south end of the non-coms’ room by the fireplace, squeezing through the doorway from the

enlisted men's common room. There were at the moment ten enlisted men, one wife, and little Eddie Corbin, age three, who clung to his mother's skirt. Eddie had bright brown eyes, a scab on the side of his forehead where he had fallen against a bed support, and curly brown hair.

By late November 1811, the garrison of Fort Dearborn had shrunk to fifty-one. In the sixteen-by-sixteen-foot room next to the quarters where Sergeant Wheeler lived with Sergeant Hayes and Jimmy, a dozen of those fifty-one soldiers slept in bunk beds, two to a bed or four to a bunk bed. Susan Corbin and her son slept among the enlisted men, too. Of the twelve enlisted men who lived in that room, two were on duty, as was Sergeant Hayes.

Outside the barracks this night, the Great Comet bathed Fort Dearborn and the prairie in an eerie twilight. One of the greatest celestial comets in history, it had been visible in the night sky for many weeks. At its peak the comet's head was as white and bright as the moon. The tail was forked like two horns. People said the comet foretold great woes and the end of the world.

"The first report is forty-two of our boys dead and about one hundred forty wounded, and more yet to die."

The men stood silent.

"Lalime heard from a savage," Sergeant Wheeler continued, "that twenty-five Indians of six tribes were killed. The way Indins tell fibs, it was likely more, so Ah'll guess maybe a hundred Indins got wounded and kilt altogether. General William Henry Harrison says we wrecked Prophetstown after the battle and burned it." Sergeant Wheeler sat on a chair by the table where he had been eating, but he was finished anyway.

"Where's your boy?"

"He's with the Leigh family. He'll be by. The captain didn't want to hold a formation in the dark, so he'll read the full message in the morning."

"Did we just charge at Prophetstown in broad daylight?" This was Private Prestly Andrews, nineteen, a thick-bodied fellow who stepped forward and looked ready to fight but was too flabby yet in Wheeler's opinion.

Wheeler felt affection for these misfits. He liked to think that he himself was not a misfit of society and instead a career soldier and a

cut above the average. Lately he wondered if he had fooled himself for years. Yet when one of the other sergeants had shown him the dispatch, he had involuntarily memorized the facts. The nature of the message, and the background of Sergeant Wheeler's life, had made him burn the details into his brain.

"The report is that General Harrison finally marched the army toward Prophetstown," Wheeler explained. He would explain this five or six times if need be. "The Indins there came out and attacked us at night when the army was camped a little ways off. Maybe Harrison caught 'em unready a little. We kin hope so. But likely they caught us a little unready, too. You all heard the Prophet's grand plan was to attack all the forts at once—Detroit, Fort Wayne, St. Louis, Vincennes, here. Most probably General Harrison figgered why wait fer thet?"

"All those men killed and dying have wives and children." Mrs. Corbin rested her hand on her boy's head.

"Yes, Sukey."

Sergeant Wheeler, too, wanted to talk about life and death, the tragedy of youth cut off, the sorrow of relatives, and the profound mystery. But he believed his role was to act cold and worldly wise.

"The news came from Detroit by ship," Wheeler explained to the group of avid listeners. "Maybe with all the hostile Indins between here 'n' the Wabash, General Harrison was afraid to send an express rider this way."

"It's only just over a hundred miles to the southwest from here to Prophetstown," said Private Kilpatrick with a suspicious look.

"Yes, but angry savages stand in the way. Took three weeks for the dispatch to travel the roundabout route, probably back east to Fort Wayne first, then north from there to Detroit."

"When they gonna hit us?" Jim Corbin inquired.

"Why'd they kill more of us if we carried the day?" another soldier asked.

"Thet's the way it is sometimes when we fight Indins." The sergeant smiled although he didn't know why. "But if we get another leader like General Wayne in the last war, we'll whup 'em again. And Jim, as long as you and I don't let the warriors in the front gate, it's very late in the year for even the British regulars to start a siege here. Be December in three days."

"Let me out. Let me out here. I got a question!"

The soldiers turned toward a crackly voice trapped behind them against the wall. They parted to let the short man through.

"Well, okay, grandpa," Jim Corbin said.

An ancient gnome emerged. "I got a question, Wheeler. You said we'll whup 'em in the end. But at the rate of that battle, who's gonna live to see it?" Private David Kennison was seventy-five years old.

"Almost surely you will, Kennison." The men laughed more heartily than might have been expected.

Sergeant Wheeler waited, then added, "Another thing, you men heard the captain's wife is expectin' in the spring?"

"And Tom Burns's wife, too!" said an astonished soldier. "Forty-seven years old, he quits the army and marries the widow Cooper, and now he's gonna have a baby."

"That's what a comet'll do to ya," Kennison said with a cackle. The men laughed again, the necessary release of nerves. "But wait a second," Kennison added. "I got another question 'bout this Indian fight. . . ."

Thus the garrison of Fort Dearborn learned about the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Eighteen days later, on December 16, 1811, one of the biggest earthquakes in American history shook Chicago. It was centered four hundred miles away in what is today New Madrid, Missouri. At Fort Dearborn the quake merely woke up people and added to the general aura of strange times. Near its center, the earthquake knocked down forests, caused immense changes in the landscape, and temporarily made the Mississippi River flow backward.

The aftershocks were felt for weeks at Fort Dearborn and as far away as Canada.

Indians said the earthquake meant the Great Spirit was angry.



## Chapter 18

### JIMMY AND JOHNNY

*April 5 and 6, 1812*

It was raining a slow, steady rain, giving further hope that the drought was past, the land would become green again, and crops would be abundant.

Jimmy Wheeler and Johnny Leigh knelt on the dirt floor of the workers' cabin at the Russell and Leigh Farm, out of the rain. They used files to sharpen the blades of hoes for the coming season and sharpen hay forks to remove rust so that they penetrated the hay for easier throwing. They had already sharpened the axes. The older farmhands, led by the top hand, Liberty White, felled trees off in the distance in the light rain to clear more land for cultivation.

"I should be cutting trees. That's a man's work," said Johnny. "A kid can do this—like you, Jim."

"Oh, sure. So what's with you and Archange?"

"Nothin'. She don't want anything to do with me."

"That's not what I hear."

"Who told you?"

Archange was one of the younger daughters of Antoine and Archange Ouilmette. She lived with her parents on the north side of the river, near Kinzie's.

"I heard you two fell off a log behind Antoine's, back along the slough."

Johnny threw dirt at Jimmy. "We were just talkin'. Who told you that? She don't want anything to do with me—not completely any-way—'cause I'm too young. She thinks she should be married by now. She's sixteen."

"You're sixteen."

"I ain't gettin' married! Gollleee! What's with you and my sister, Mary? Huh? Huh?"

"Oh, nothing, just . . . You know I like her. But I never fell off a log with her." Jimmy was thirteen and a half.

"And you never will, neither." Then Johnny's face acquired a very wicked look. "You know who's *big* trouble?"

For a moment both boys were silent, then together they burst out in laughter with wide smiles. "Yeah!"

"You think the soldiers could moon and moan over her any more?" Johnny asked. "Even some people you know?"

Jimmy made a few passes with the file on the hoe he was sharpening, only on the outside edge and in one direction only. It was easy work. He had missed that hint of "some people you know." So he said, "Jim Corbin calls her Peggy and howls when she ain't around. 'Ooooo, my Peggy.'"

The older boy looked at the younger boy expectantly, but the younger boy still didn't get exactly what Johnny had meant by "even some people you know."

"Peggy" was Margaret Helm, the wife of Fort Dearborn's new second in command, Lieutenant Linai T. Helm, and stepdaughter of John Kinzie. She was seventeen, almost eighteen, a brunette with doe eyes, full lips, and many other attractive features accented on occasion by cosmetics that she had learned to use in school in Detroit before she moved to Fort Dearborn. She had an excellent figure and wore riding clothes such as no other woman at Fort Dearborn had ever put on. A small, potentially negative feature was the tiny downward curve at the end of her nose. But somehow this seemed to work well with her sensuous lips. Margaret Helm's cool attitude and overall effect was such that the men thought she had the best nose they had ever seen. The talk of the winter was the time the new captain's wife slipped to her knees while ice skating on the Chicago River, even though she was pregnant, and Margaret Helm bent all the way over to help her up. Margaret's cute bottom was in the air. Jim Corbin, who watched,

placed a hand on his heart and exclaimed almost loud enough for the women to hear, "Boys, look! Look! Oh! I feel an earthquake comin' on!"

During the winter, the Indian trouble had quieted down in the Northwest, at least as far as the inhabitants of Fort Dearborn could learn. Only recently they had discovered the quiet was an illusion.

"What'd our Peggy see in that lieutenant, her husband?" Johnny asked.

"That's what Ensign Ronan wants to know. You see him?"

Lieutenant Helm, Margaret's husband, was five feet six, thin, beetle-browed, with a black beard. He seemed to have nervous eyes and was too quick to give orders and too quick to think they were not followed. But the men had decided that despite his jitters, Helm was reasonably competent.

The other new officer, Ensign George Ronan, was a recent graduate of West Point with brash confidence. It was soon obvious that the square-jawed Ronan, who had dark curly hair and brown eyes and was clean-shaven, thought himself irresistible to females, including Mrs. Helm. Ronan was also insufferably opinionated. He was even younger and less experienced than Lieutenant Helm. Yet Ronan seemed to possess a wit and a foolish charm so that people liked him despite his flaws.

Both new subalterns were in their early twenties and had little or no frontier experience.

"Captain Heald's wife is sort of pretty," Jimmy mused. "She'd be a good farmer's wife." Captain Heald's wife, Rebekah, twenty-two, was a sturdy woman with short sandy hair who liked horses and shooting contests.

"She could do the huntin'," Johnny agreed. "She's a dead shot. But she's about eight months along now."

"Do I have to work twice as fast as you?"

"You do not." Johnny began to work harder on the upturned blade of the hoe before him. He switched from the rough end of the file to the smoother end to complete the job. Both boys' tools made a rasping, grinding sound.

"You heard of any more Indian predations?"

"Since they killed those two fellas at the Spanish mines?"

The word had gotten to Fort Dearborn in early March that fifty

Winnebagoes had attacked the U.S. government trading house at what was called Spanish lead mines on New Year's Day. The lead mines were 160 miles to the northwest of Fort Dearborn, on the east side of the Mississippi, 8 miles up from the mouth of the Galena River. The Winnebagoes spared a few Frenchmen and one man they thought was an Englishman, but killed two American workers. The report was that the Winnebagoes ate the Americans afterward.

"Yeah, since then." Johnny worked away but looked at Jimmy as he said, "I don't wanna get eaten by Indians."

"Eh, you won't. I don't know why it's so quiet around here, but I'm glad it is." Jimmy did not look up. He kept his eyes on his work.

Johnny wrinkled his brow. "What about that express rider that came real early this morning?"

"Oh, yeah. He was shivering so bad from swimming the river that his teeth were chattering. He couldn't talk at first."

"Well?"

"He should've taken the Indian ferry at Wolf Point," Jimmy went on inconsequentially, "or come across at Kinzie's in the canoe. He didn't know. Damn cold water this time of year."

"Inhuman cold," Johnny agreed. "Kill you. Hey, what did he have?"

Jimmy started to pick up the tools he had worked on. He took a deep breath through his nose, then blew it out through his lips. "He said the Indians killed ten people in one family named O'Neil." Jimmy winced. "It was across the Mississippi. I'm sorry."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was going to tell you. I don't like to talk about it all the time. Kickapoos did it, John."

Johnny started to pick up the other tools and act as if it didn't matter. "Well, that's a long ways off. So. Okay. Yeah. I think we're through with this. We better dig up the dirt here and get rid of these filings. . . . Shit. My dad thought things would be better after General Harrison defeated the Indians at Tippecanoe, but they got worse."

### *April 6*

The next morning, a cool morning, Sergeant Wheeler, despite his best efforts, could not answer the sound of the reveille drums. His son



became his nurse for the second time in a year. Excessive drinking of cheap whiskey had affected the sergeant's health.

The sergeant awoke soaked with sweat and then started to shiver. He got into his uniform, but he seemed to black out while leaving the room and hit his head on the doorjamb. Then he stood still for a minute and told his son he could not see. He sat on the bed and could not get up in several tries. Jimmy pushed him back under the covers because his father was too weak to resist.

Sergeant Wheeler had been a strong man, and normally, no matter how much he drank, he arose at reveille and put in a respectable day's work. But once before, the previous summer, the sergeant had had a severe attack of what had been diagnosed as the bilious fever and lay in bed for two weeks. People said the bilious fever was what had killed Lieutenant Thompson, the last of the previous Fort Dearborn officers, and had also killed Jimmy's mother.

Jimmy got the new post surgeon, Dr. Van Voorhis, who officially diagnosed the bilious fever and put Sergeant Wheeler on the sick report. The doctor told Jimmy unofficially that this condition was aggravated by drunkenness, which predisposed the body to weakness, but this part would not go on the report. "Your father does have a high fever."

Jimmy nodded. "Thank you."

Dr. Isaac Van Voorhis was barely out of his teens. Straight from New York, he had a poetic temperament and was shocked at what he found in the West. He had decided the Indians, whom he barely knew, were "credulous, deluded, and cannibal savages."

His opinion of the army was not much higher. He had learned that to miss roll call for drunkenness or a hangover could cause a soldier to be court-martialed and publicly whipped—even though the army served the soldiers whiskey every day. So Dr. Van Voorhis was cautious in his diagnoses.

As Jimmy sat and summed up the previous night's events in his mind, he decided that not even the newest soldier, Nate Hurtt, was dumb enough to report his father's drunken fiasco to the officers.

The rain had stopped before sundown. The night temperature had been cool, and the humidity had dropped. Jimmy slept so deeply that he didn't even dream. Then:

"Hey. Hey. Hey!"

"Hm. Huh?" Jimmy opened his eyes but could not see in the dark. He heard a soldier's voice say, "Your father's out."

Jimmy felt with his left hand for his father's legs. Jimmy and his father slept at opposite ends of the same bed. The father's side of the bed was empty.

"I'll get him." When drunk, Sergeant Wheeler sometimes wandered the barracks. Usually Jimmy caught him before he left the barracks, but not always. Jimmy sat up, reached with his right hand for the soldier in the dark. With his fingers he felt the soldier's woolen uniform coat, and his forearm brushed the soldier's hanging gear. So the soldier was on duty, Jimmy realized.

"I'll get him." Jimmy put his feet on the floor.

"Get up now. It's Daugherty."

"I am up. Why are you here?" The farthest his father usually got was down the stairs to the outdoor privy.

"He's out by the stables."

"*What?*" said the boy in a loud whisper. The room was in total darkness.

"Nate Hurtt let him out."

Hurtt was the greenest of the green, a young man who had been in the army fewer than six months. Jimmy grabbed Daugherty's coat to keep from bumping into him and leaped right by him. The boy got to the stair opening before he was ready, fell forward, and banged against the far wall in the dark. Then he recovered and slid on the wall for guidance and went down the stairs as fast as he could. He saw the shape of the open, first-floor doorway and hoped there was nothing in his way on the dark floor of the storeroom because he did not stop.

Out on the parade ground he turned in the starlight to see the shape of the sentry, Daugherty, following and carrying a musket.

"You're gonna be shot for leaving your post," the boy said.

"Sergeant Hayes's orders. He's sergeant of the guard." Sergeant Hayes was his father's best friend as well as the Wheelers' roommate. Jimmy ran across the parade ground to the wicket gate, the only possible way his father could have gotten out. Jimmy ran silently, but the sentry's hanging gear flapped and clacked.

A tall, scrawny young soldier by the wicket gate said in a voice that seemed extremely loud but was in fact a conversational tone, "Your

father ordered me, so I had to. He's drunk." It was too early in the year for the frogs to make their covering noise.

"Geez, be quiet!"

"Sergeant Hayes is down by the stables with Sergeant Wheeler," Hurtt said in a voice changed to a whisper. "You can't hear 'em now, but I thought I could hear 'em a minute ago."

"Open the gate!"

"I can't."

"Open the gate again, jackass, or you'll be court-martialed," said Daugherty.

Daugherty had no authority at all, but Hurtt said, "Gee willikers," and opened the gate.

Daugherty, an outside sentry, went out first and resumed his normal rounds. The night had no moon but an infinity of stars. The Milky Way filled the north horizon to Jimmy's right as he stepped out of the gate. He looked up and saw the Big Dipper almost overhead. He calculated it was near midnight. Jimmy turned left and walked as quickly as he could southwest. By the time he reached the stables, Jimmy's perceptions were adjusting, and he saw a silhouette.

"Otho."

"Good. You're here," said Sergeant Otho Hayes.

"Where is he?"

Hayes put one hand on Jimmy's shoulder as a caring gesture and grasped the shoulder. "Look down and ahead of you. Can you see him?"

Jimmy saw what he guessed was the silhouette of his father sitting, bent over, probably on a stump. The far larger silhouette of one of the stables was behind him.

"He was headin' out on the prairie when I caught him," said Sergeant Hayes. "I had to run."

"I know you do not like to run, Otho."

"I could follow him in the dark because he was talkin' to himself and weeping. I'll take a beatin' any time for your dad, so get him back inside. Can you handle him?"

"Yes. Thanks. What's the matter, do you know?"

"Oh, a lot of things. The new people"—Hayes meant the officers—"they don't think much of your dad. Your dad's older even than Captain Heald. They don't understand your dad."

"And now he drinks too much."

"Now don't laugh. There's another thing. Your dad's sweet on the lieutenant's wife. It's hard."

"My father! She's seventeen."

"He's hasn't done nothin' wrong. Do *not* tell him I told you," said Hayes sternly.

From the tone of his voice, new to his hearing, Jimmy realized Hayes had treated him as an equal.

"He's crazy."

"No, he's lonely," corrected Hayes. "I'm gonna court Josie La Framboise. She's fifteen."

The boy could not see Hayes's face. "You're too late. She's marryin' the trader, Jean Ba'tiste Beaubien."

"*Ow!*" Jimmy cried. Sergeant Hayes, stricken with this news, had squeezed Jimmy's shoulder with his huge hand.

"Dammit," Hayes growled. "I gotta go check on the sentries. Dammit!"

Jimmy massaged his shoulder while his mind whirled with worry about adults. Adults were so confused.

The boy and his father were a hundred yards southwest of the fort. Jimmy took his father's arm, got him off the tree stump, and got him to walk. His father mumbled. The boy walked his father twice around the stable, but when he tried to make his father go back to the fort, he met resistance.

"Ah rooned everythin'. Fucked it all up." The father spoke as if the boy was not even present. Sergeant Wheeler also wept and sniffled. "Ah rooned everythin', Katie. Oooooooo. Awwwww, geeez. Messed up yore life, too, Katie. Ah'm sorry. Ah miss you, Katie. Oooo. Oooo. Oooo."

After twice around the stable, Jimmy said, "It's cold! Can we go inside?" Jimmy was barefoot. He was wearing his nightshirt and pants because he wore them in bed.

The father stopped, yanked his arm out of the boy's grasp, and confronted him as if the boy had just appeared from heaven. "What aire you doin' here?"

"Just taking a walk, Dad. Can we go to bed now?"

"Sheee-it," said Sergeant Wheeler. "You go ta bed."

Jimmy was steely determined and finally got his father to go back to bed and stay there.

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At mid-morning, after Jimmy had watched over him for hours, Sergeant Wheeler awoke with a blanket and a bearskin robe up to his chin. He said, "Ah'm fixin' fer you to leave. Ah got yer money. Hev to dig it up."

"Sure."

The father went back to sleep.

The odd thing his father had said brought back a whole constellation of memories to the son.

*"What am I to tell people, that you have given yourself to a backwoods soldier, a halfwit in a uniform who can't even talk? If you intend to live with that . . . that Indian and take my grandchild, I will consider that you died."*

The meanness of the scene, the anger in his grandfather's words, and Jimmy's childish emotions all came back. His mother had said that her parents told people a false story about her marriage and that after his father had been transferred to Mackinac Island, she had become nearly a prisoner in his grandfather's house. Jimmy supposed this was his mother's punishment for marrying his father. Nevertheless, after the father reunited the family and they came west, Jimmy occasionally wrote to his grandmother. The grandmother occasionally wrote back. At first she included a sort of paper money, bank notes, which his mother kept.

Jimmy knew his father wrote his grandparents only one time, grimly, after his mother died. Grandma's money stopped a year or so after that, but Grandma still sent a few short letters and said she was sorry but "your grandfather's business has just about failed. And that fool Jefferson's Embargo Act impoverished every decent person." Jimmy had never given a thought to the money. Was some of the money still here? How much? Where?

Sergeant Wheeler slept most of the day except to rise to use the chamber pot and drink water and some beef broth that Dr. Van Voorhis ordered regularly for the weakest sick. Jimmy did not go to the farm. He wandered around the fort and checked his father regularly. The boy had already lost his mother. Life was fragile.

It was Jimmy's great good fortune that he did not go to the farm that day.



## Chapter 19

### RUSSELL AND LEIGH FARM

*April 6, 1812*

“Want some whiskey, Johnny?” asked Jean Baptiste Cardin, a gray-haired Frenchman with a bulbous nose and a twinkle in his eye.

“If you guys will,” Johnny Leigh answered.

“For the special occasion, but I don’t allow no drunkenness here,” said Liberty White, the top hand. “Pass the jug, and everybody take a swig and salute this boy.” The sun was low in the sky, and the work-day was done.

“Here’s to you, *sculpteur du bois*,” said Cardin. “Zee wood-carver.” Cardin took a long pull with his finger in the jug hook and the jug balanced on his right forearm. Then he slid the jug across the table to Johnny.

Johnny marveled at the toughness of these men and of his own father and mother. Within a day of the news arriving at the fort, everybody knew about the killing of the O’Neil family of ten across the Mississippi, but people kept working. Of course, those killings, which the express rider said were committed by the Kickapoos, were at least a hundred miles way, and they were two months ago. The news took long to travel in winter and the early spring. Maybe with the fort so close, Johnny thought, it was safe around Chicago. His coworkers didn’t act scared.

Johnny Leigh, just turned sixteen, had felled his first big tree in

the afternoon, a forty-foot basswood, big enough to kill them all if it went wrong. It had taken his mind off other things for a while.

Johnny's brown hair was matted to his head with sweat from the effort despite the chilly April day. His teeth had grown in a little more crooked, yet he had the handsomeness of youth. He was five feet nine, and his dad thought he might grow to six feet. Johnny took his swig sitting at the table, said, "Ahhh," and handed the jug to Kelso standing next to him.

"Never seen a fella do more fixin' just to chop a tree," said Kelso as his salute. Kelso was a husky, hairy fellow in his thirties with a square head, and his eyebrows made almost a straight line, like a hedge, on his forehead with no gap in the hedge between his eyes. Kelso took a swig and handed the jug across to Liberty, who stood at the far side of the table next to Cardin. Liberty and Cardin were farthest from the open door.

"That's how I taught him," said Liberty.

Johnny had taken almost half an hour to first trim the long, thin shoots that grow at the base of all basswood trees, shoots that the Indians used to make baskets. Johnny also cleared ten yards around the tree of brush in case he had to run. With an axe he made a V notch in the basswood eighteen inches above the ground and one-fourth of the diameter of the tree. Using a two-man saw, he and Kelso next made a saw cut on the opposite side, a little above the V notch and three-fourths through the tree. Kelso then moved off. Johnny inserted a felling wedge into the saw cut and pounded it home with a sledge to lift the trunk off balance. Johnny had quivered in his upper body as he pounded. He listened intently and expected the tree to go at any second. When the tree cracked, he dashed. The tree went *creeee-aaakk* and then fell with a tremendous smash of branches and bump on the earth.

Recalling it, Liberty said, "It was perf—" The jug was halfway to Liberty's lips. Liberty stopped, and his eyes ignited as he stared at the doorway. Cardin coughed.

Johnny turned to look at the door, left open for the last of the daylight. A fierce-looking Indian had walked into the cabin wearing a long blue gentlemen's overcoat with wide collars and a red waist belt, a tomahawk in the belt. The Indian carried a good rifle. His face was painted mostly red, and a black stripe ran from his hairline to his

jawbone through his left eye. Other Indians with wildly painted faces, wearing trade-cloth printed shirts, blankets, and leggings, followed the first one into the cabin.

Johnny turned cold. His eyes popped. His coworkers did not much react. Johnny thought maybe his coworkers understood what this was. He turned to look at Liberty. Liberty was stiff. Johnny looked at Cardin. Cardin's face had a scowl, but Cardin sat still and glared at the Indians.

The first three Indians, including the one in the overcoat, passed the table and walked directly to the farthest side of the room, behind Liberty. They stood by the fireplace. The next two Indians took up places on both sides of the room. Johnny turned around again, started to tremble, and saw two more Indians step through the door and stand behind him at the front of the room. Still two more Indians entered and sat on the dirt floor. They all had their short hair spiked, held up by cloth bands around their hair; the tips of their spiked hair were painted vermillion. Their faces were painted black and red. They were well armed.

Johnny's mouth was dry and his muscles tight. When he turned back to look at Liberty, he could see that Liberty had started to think. Johnny could not think.

The Indian in the overcoat who was near the fireplace began to walk and study things in the cabin.

"I do not like the appearance of these Indians," said Cardin in a conversational tone. "They are none of our folks. I know by their dress and paint that they are not Potawatomies."

Cardin no longer scowled, Johnny noticed. Cardin had put on a pleasant face. He looked as cool as a man getting ready for a meal, which they had been. Cardin was still seated with his belly up to the table and his legs underneath it; the table was between him and the door, and an Indian stood almost directly over him. Johnny could see Cardin was trapped. As Johnny watched, Cardin opened his eyes very wide on purpose and looked over to Johnny's left where Kelso should be near the door. Johnny followed Cardin's gaze to Kelso, and Johnny saw Kelso looking at Cardin, trying to read his silent expression. Cardin slid his eyes over to Johnny. Then Cardin slid his eyes back to Kelso. Cardin repeated this. Johnny thought, Is Cardin pointing at me with his eyes?



"If that is the case, that they are not our own folks," said Kelso in a conversational tone, "we had better get away from them if we can." Johnny turned abruptly again to look at Kelso's face. Kelso nodded to Johnny with a calm expression. "Say nothing," Kelso instructed. "Do as you see me do."

Kelso came to life and pointed out the door with his right arm. He jabbed several times, his arm slightly elevated, indicating he meant far away. Kelso looked at the Indians as he did so to demonstrate that he was making impromptu sign language for them.

Johnny realized that they did not know whether any of the Indians spoke English.

Johnny rose and also pointed out the door with his left arm, exactly imitating Kelso. The boy had no idea what he was doing and thought he was about to die. All eight Indians had somehow left the doorway free, but they were alert and two of them drew their tomahawks. One of the seated Indians jumped up abruptly. Johnny walked right by him to stand by the door.

Kelso mooed like a cow and then pantomimed shoveling. Johnny mooed like a cow and imitated. He saw the Indians frown in great puzzlement. Even Johnny himself did not know what was going on, but he thought it might be good that the Indians were puzzled. Kelso pantomimed crossing the river in a canoe. Then he pantomimed shoveling hay to cattle.

Oh, thought Johnny. The cattle and the haystacks were directly on the other side of the river, across from the cabin. The other side of the river!

Kelso with his sign language showed himself and Johnny returning back across the river to the cabin. Kelso finally pantomimed eating supper. A sweet-smelling stew was simmering in a pot hanging in the fireplace. Kelso abruptly walked out the door! The Indian in the overcoat who was next to Liberty said something harsh. Johnny walked out the door, afraid he was going to pee in his pants. The Indian he passed grabbed Johnny's shoulder.

"We'll come back," said Kelso outside, using his finger to demonstrate.

"Yeah, back. We'll be back," said Johnny. The boy twisted his shoulder out of the Indian's grasp and stepped out the door.

Kelso walked briskly to a canoe at the riverbank that had paddles

in it. Johnny walked briskly to another canoe that also had paddles in it, which was fortunate. Without thinking, each took a separate canoe, which meant they took all the canoes there were.

Johnny shoved off with a running start and jumped in his canoe. He had just seen three more Indians with long guns outside the cabin. He could hear Indians quarreling with each other in a completely unknown language.

Johnny and Kelso paddled across the narrow south branch. Johnny pictured rifles and muskets aimed at his back the entire time. He wondered for a second if he would even hear the shot. He thought for another instant about Liberty and Cardin left behind and had to drop that thought.

Johnny got to the other side of the river, jumped out, and pulled the canoe up on the bank as a reflex. Somehow, nothing had happened. Kelso had done the same. Johnny was shaking, and he saw that square-headed Kelso was shaking, too. Kelso walked to the nearest steers hanging around, waved ostentatiously to the animals to assemble, as if the cattle could understand. Johnny waved, too. Johnny assumed the Indians were watching and pointing their guns across the narrow river. Kelso stepped to a haystack, picked up a hay fork that was always there, pulled hay out of the stack, and spread it on the ground at the feet of some nearby steers. He waited on them personally. Johnny did the same with his hands.

"Don't look back," said Kelso. He moved to the side of the haystack for his second forkful. Johnny did, too. For his third forkful Kelso moved behind the stack. Kelso dropped the hay fork and said, "Run!"

They both ran away from the river, keeping the haystack between themselves and the cabin on the opposite bank. Johnny thought he heard yells. Kelso and Johnny sped into the woods behind the haystacks and turned northeast. They ran a quarter mile before Johnny heard a gunshot. Then he heard a second shot.

"Liberty and Cardin," Johnny said loudly. "They shot 'em!"

"Move," said Kelso.

They heard no more shots as they ran for their lives.

From the haystacks to Fort Dearborn on foot was about three and a half miles, and neither Kelso nor Johnny was a distance runner. Yet they ran without stopping. As they ran, the sun dropped below the

trees. The red afterglow in the sky persisted a little. They ran outside the eastern edge of the woods, staying near the woods despite the mud. In April the prairie was just as muddy as the woods or worse. But the interior of the woods was already dark. When it seemed to Johnny, based on his experience and dead reckoning, that they were about a half mile south of the main branch, Kelso turned right and ran straight east across the prairie. The two huffed and puffed. Lifting their legs was a burden. Johnny guessed Kelso wanted to skirt the swampy area south of the main branch of the Chicago River and west of Frog Creek. After a while, Kelso ran straight into the narrow upstream part of Frog Creek and splashed across. He turned north and ran up the eastern edge of the creek. Johnny followed. It occurred to him that they were going to live. They ran past the little Indian camp on Frog Creek, less than a half mile south of the main branch, and ignored those friendly Indians as if they were invisible.

When the two got to the mouth of Frog Creek, they were on the south side of the main branch. Johnny wondered why they hadn't run straight to the fort, and he soon found out. They came opposite the Burns house, which was on the north side of the Chicago River. In that cabin lived ex-private Tom Burns, the old bachelor soldier who had quit the army to marry a woman with five kids. Only two days earlier, Mrs. Cooper Burns had given birth to her sixth child, the first Burns child.

"Burns!" Kelso attempted to shout in an extremely hoarse voice from lack of breath. Kelso's voice could not carry over the river. Kelso stopped and put his hands to his mouth as a megaphone: "Burns, old man! At the Leigh place. Indians! Save yourselves!" But Kelso's voice was still weak.

In the dwindling light Johnny saw Mrs. Kinzie walking out of the Burns house.

"*Nelly!*" Johnny shouted. "*Nelly! Indians!*" The words came out of Johnny in a shriek.

"What?" Mrs. Kinzie seemed startled. She shouted across the forty-yard-wide Chicago River.

"*Indians!*" shrieked Johnny again. "*Killing! Killing! At our farm.*"

"Burns!" Kelso gasped and pointed.

Johnny saw Mrs. Kinzie pick up her skirts and start to dash toward her home. Then, abruptly, she turned and went back, "Catherine!

Children!" she shrieked. "Get to the fort! Indians!" She turned again and ran east.

"Go, go, go," muttered Kelso, who started to run again.

Johnny heard the sound of fiddle music as he ran up the south bank of the main river toward Fort Dearborn. He and Kelso sank in mud but kept up a slow form of running, their feet making sucking sounds. Kelso fell behind. They could see Eleanor Kinzie run toward her own home on the far side of the river where the ground was always drier. The fiddle music went on and on. Johnny could not understand why as he ran through the mud.

But John Kinzie was playing the fiddle at home to entertain his children.

### *Fort Dearborn*

Sergeant Wheeler woke up after sundown, kept his eyes open, breathed more normally, but looked very weak. Jimmy Wheeler had lit their ration candle, which they used only once in a while inside a candle lantern. Jimmy ignored the sound of shouting from the parade ground below. The window-door that looked out over the parade ground was closed.

"Hello, Otho," said Sergeant Wheeler to his roommate who had stopped in to check on him.

Sergeant Otho Hayes sat on his own bed in fatigues. Hayes's ears pricked up at the noise outside, and he glanced anxiously toward the closed window. He looked back at the sick man.

"You're a wreck, Wheeler," said Sergeant Hayes.

"Damn."

"Where's the money?" Jimmy demanded in a whisper right at his father's ear. During the long day he had decided to ask this because his father was buying more whiskey than his army pay could account for. The boy was determined to find the money and stop this. He trusted Sergeant Hayes completely. Sergeant Hayes pushed open the window to go out on the gallery and look.

Sergeant Wheeler, meanwhile, stared at the shapes that the candle-light made on the walls and ceiling, and pulled his blankets up to his chin. "Ohhh, it's all there, except for . . . It's almost all there."

*Boom!*

The blast of a cannon literally shook the building.

"Gotta go," Hayes said, then turned and sprinted for the stairs.

Sergeant Wheeler sat bolt upright. "Get my shoes!" Jimmy ran instead to get his father's clothes from the fireplace where he had hung them. In the next room, ten soldiers ran to their numbered pegs on the wall. Each man had hung on his individual peg his uniform coat and his leather cross belts that made an X on his chest when in uniform. Each man had also hung there his cartridge box and bayonet scabbard that attached to his cross belts, his powder horn, and his tin canteen. The enlisted men did not suit up. Each picked up his musket and ran with all these things. They all grabbed their round hats, too, and ran out their door, bumping into one another. They ran across the sergeants' room and down the stairs.

"What is it, Smitty?"

"I dunno. Nothin'. Maybe."

Jimmy's father was putting on his shoes.

"Here, put your pants on," Jimmy said.

The father took his shoes off again, got into his pants, then put on his overshirt and buttoned up his pants. The boy gave his father his uniform coat off the sergeant's peg on the wall. The boy held his father's hat, his sword belt, and his sword in one hand, and his other hanging gear in the other. The father, buttoning his shirt, said, "Go see what it is." Having been both drunk and sick, he obviously wanted to look like regulation to inspire instant respect.

Jimmy opened the window-door, stepped onto the gallery, and looked down at the parade ground. He could see more than the usual number of heads, but it was just about dark. When he shouted into the crowd from the window, no one answered.

"Go down there. I'll be right there." His father was tying his shoes.

"I'll help you."

"No. Go."

Jimmy put his father's gear on the bed, hesitated, then dashed down the stairs and out of the barracks onto the parade ground. A crowd had formed across the way near the captain's quarters, so Jimmy ran there. On the way he tripped over someone's feet in the gathering dark and fell. He pulled at the back of a woman's skirt from the ground as he started to get up.

"What happened?" he asked. The woman turned and looked down. It was Sarah Needs, a laundry woman and private's wife.

"The Indians! Killing and scalping," she said.

"Where?" he said as he stood up.

"At the Leigh place."

"The Leighs!" shouted Jimmy. This could mean the Leighs' house right behind the fort. Jimmy worked his way around the perimeter of the crowd that was facing the captain's quarters. He shouted into the crowd, "Who got hurt? What happened?"

"The Leigh Farm. They killed everyone," said a voice to his right.

"Noooo!" said Jimmy.

"Take your posts!" ordered a man who exited the captain's quarters where a light shone from a fireplace. "Take your posts!" It was Lieutenant Helm. "Take your posts. Sergeant Crozier, is that you? Open the magazine. Here are the keys. Distribute ammunition."

"Yes, sir."

"People, you're going to have to clear out!" said Helm.

"Oh, no, we aren't!" said someone.

"Well at least get out of the way. Light some torches."

Jimmy bulled his way through and got his head in between the crush of bodies near Helm, but not his torso. "How do we know it was the Leighs?"

"Their boy's in there telling his story now—and Kelso. Get your father, wherever he is. Ladies, report to the doctor."

"What about our children?"

"Of course, get your children first."

So Johnny was alive, and Kelso. "Who got killed?"

"We don't know yet!" said Helm, irritated. "Maybe two men. It's dark. I'm busy."

Had to be Liberty White and the French Canadian, Cardin. Liberty and Cardin killed? Liberty? But it sounded as if they were not sure. Jimmy extricated himself from the crowd, looked around for his father, but could not find him. He looked up at their window and saw from the faint glow that their candle was still lit. That was dangerous. Fire in the barracks. He ran up the stairs into their room. He discovered his father in their room on his hands and knees.

"What are you doing? . . . What are you doing?" Jimmy's first question was harsh. The second was gentle.

“Ah cain’t . . . Help me.”

Jimmy bent down and tried to lift his father, but couldn’t. He was dead weight. Jimmy then burrowed underneath him and said, “I’m going to stand up slowly. You stand up with me.”

“Yeah.”

They tried it twice, and the second time he got his father as far as seated on the bed. “Get me up straight,” said his father.

Jimmy crouched down, hugged his father around the midsection, and felt the astonishing heat from his father’s fever and his father’s sick fragility. The boy said, “Grab on. When I stand, you stand.” They did this.

“Open mah pants up and gimme the pot. Ah got to piss. Don’t want to wet mah pants.”

Jimmy was shocked. He did as asked, fumbling with the buttons on his father’s pants, then held the pot for his father who shook when he pissed, making a mess. Afterward, his father sat down heavily on the bed.

“Ah’m fallin’ apart,” said the father, chest heaving as if he had fought a great fight. “Ah cain’t even stand up.” He breathed heavily. “Dizzy. Ah hev to go, though.”

“Yeah,” said Jimmy. “Fix up your pants.”

Sergeant Wheeler stood up to fix his pants and abruptly fell hard onto his right knee; the bang was bone on wood. Then he fell over on his side as Jimmy grabbed for him in vain. “Nnnnnnn!!” the father whined, then growled. “Go away.”

“I’ll stay.”

“Please git out, son.” The father’s voice had resignation instead of force this time and was the scarier for it.

Jimmy left slowly as his father lay on the floor, wet with spilled piss, holding his pants where he had been trying to do them up. At the last second the father said, “Git me a report.”

Back on the parade ground, Jimmy met Mr. Leigh going toward the main gate from the captain’s quarters; he had a completely distracted look.

“Mr. Leigh, you’re all right.”

Leigh looked blindly at Jimmy, seemed not to recognize him, and passed by. Then Mr. Leigh stopped, turned, and said, “Jimmy. We’re

all right. But I don't know about everyone. I'm going to bring my family into the fort."

"Where's Johnny?"

Then Mr. Leigh pointed toward the captain's quarters. "The captain wants him to stay there for a while. He's fine. Some soldiers are missing and two of my men, Liberty and Jean Baptiste. That's all I know."

Mr. Leigh left for the main gate, which was half open.

The confusion became more dispersed across the parade ground as more people entered the fort. Lieutenant Helm shouted orders. Somebody was shouting from the northwest corner of the parade ground. The knot in front of the captain's quarters had eased, and Jimmy was surprised to find Johnny standing there alone.

"John!"

"I don't like this." Johnny spoke in a quiet voice.

"What happened?"

Lieutenant Helm shouted, "No livestock!"

"I think they killed Liberty and Cardin." Johnny Leigh's face was anguished and twisted.

"Where were you?"

"I was right there. I was gonna eat supper with them. Cardin warned us." Johnny started to get worked up again. "We went out the door, and the Indians grabbed me. They touched me! Liberty was one of my best friends. I left him."

"He wanted you to leave." Jimmy touched Johnny's shoulder.

Johnny began to cry. "What should I have done?" He looked at Jimmy, begging.

"I don't know. What you did." Tears formed in Jimmy's eyes.

"They sent the scow for Mrs. Burns," said Johnny, sobbing.

"Why?"

"The whole Burns family wouldn't leave her. She just had the baby yesterday. That guy Ronan took charge and went for the Burnses. He's a good officer."

The scow was a large flat-bottomed boat used for unloading supply ships on Lake Michigan beyond the sandbar. With soldiers to row, it could carry the whole Burns family across the river at once, even with the mother and newborn lying down.



“Do you know what they looked like?” Johnny asked.

“The Indians?”

“Like creatures from hell!”

“Listen, everybody!” It was Captain Heald in front of his quarters with Lieutenant Helm. “We can’t all stay here.”

“You can’t put us out!” shouted a woman with a French accent. It was Mrs. Pettell, who was Indian and French.

“We’re not putting you out! The Indian Agency house is empty.”

“That’s outside,” said Louis Pettell.

“We’re fortifying it. We’ll work all night,” said the captain. “It’s very large. You have to go there.”

The missing soldiers returned at eleven o’clock after a stealthy trip. They had been fishing two miles upriver from the Leigh place. They heard the cannon more than five miles away, doused their torches, paddled downstream, and stopped to warn the farm. In the dark a corporal stumbled in the yard of the farmhouse and touched the body of a man. When he examined the body with his fingers, he discovered the head was already scalped.

Chapter 20

## FEUD AGAIN

May 14, 1812

In a dark-of-night meeting in the U.S. factor's house, three men—the fort's Indian interpreter, John Lalime; Matt Irwin, the government factor; and Dr. Van Voorhis, the post surgeon, were in a secret talk by the light of a single candle.

Dr. Van Voorhis was about to be shocked yet again, this time by Fort Dearborn politics.

The young subalterns and John Kinzie, the private Indian trader who was once again also sutler to the fort, were too coarse and hard-drinking for Dr. Van Voorhis. He thus gravitated toward the two remaining officials, Irwin and Lalime. Both were learned men who kept up extensive correspondence. Lalime even wrote letters for illiterate soldiers, which made him a favorite of the common soldier.

But Irwin and Lalime also saw conspiracies.

“John, the traders you said would deliver the smuggled goods to Kinzie never came, or we never saw them,” Irwin stated. Irwin had a sharp nose and a thin face, and wore spectacles.

"They'll be here." The diminutive Lalime sat hunched over in his chair. "I'm positive Kinzie ordered a lot more supplies from the smugglers because he knew these Indian attacks were coming. You watch." Normally a jovial man, Lalime looked up with a nasty gleam in his eye. "We'll get him!" Lalime hammered the table.

"Explain to me again why you want to get Kinzie." Dr. Van Voorhis said, expressing his confusion. "Don't we have enough problems with the Indians?"

"Kinzie may be worse," Lalime said and launched into a tirade in a low voice. "Kinzie has turned the officers against me. He has them call me foul names." Lalime's face by candlelight had a gargoyle cast and looked full of hate. The tightness in his body made him seem smaller than he was. "That arrogant prig, Ensign Ronan, threatened to shoot me. I've lived here twelve years, worked for Fort Dearborn eight years, and lived on the frontier all my life. My dear wife is an Indian. That eastern Yankee Doodle Ronan just arrived, and he tries to tell *me* what to do about the Indians!"

"I have noticed that the officers have been rude to you lately." Dr. Van Voorhis tried to say something soothing. "They are to me also. We must rise above them and maintain our composure. Everyone here is fearful and out of sorts."

"Don't tell me about composure. That vulture Kinzie is the one who turned the officers against me."

"Why would he do that?"

Lalime ignored the doctor's question. "Kinzie is still living in my house. Kinzie has taken my business, the one I ran for Burnett. Don't you see? I built up that trading establishment. Then Kinzie got it, and Kinzie is now rich as Croesus. I'm the lowly interpreter. Little boy officers can wipe their feet on me. Don't tell me to relax."

"Let me explain the secret situation to you, Doctor." Irwin spoke in a sarcastic manner. "Kinzie seems in league with the British. Through manipulation of the officers, Captain Heald included, we believe Kinzie wants Fort Dearborn to be unprepared when the British and hostile tribes arrive in force. Do not be fooled by what Kinzie says around here. He has stopped his trading with the Indians here supposedly because he doesn't want to sell them gunpowder. But we believe Kinzie's subordinates are trading with the Indians at all his other houses, supplying them with all the means for war. Kinzie doesn't want me to trade with the Indians because he wants to keep the friendly Indians away who could keep us informed and prepared."

"This sounds . . . outlandish. You have proof of this?"

"That's where the smuggling comes in!" Irwin said with triumph. "If Kinzie is a smuggler of British goods as Lalime suspects, then

Kinzie is assuredly in league with the British and with those Indians who are our enemies. Kinzie's half brother, Tom Forsyth, who trades at Peoria, is a known British sympathizer and British agent."

Dr. Van Voorhis had to shake his head to clear it after that explanation. He sensed that the pressure of fear of Indian attacks, fierce disagreement among the men about the best course of action, and suspicion of conspiracies made it seem as if the walls in the isolated post were moving in on everyone.

The doctor was sure that if he could get out of the fort and take long walks, he could think clearly again and regain his optimism for the long view, even if the short view seemed difficult. He advised this walking therapy to many but found few takers. Captain Heald opposed it as too dangerous.

Dr. Van Voorhis said gently, "I think we are overwrought about Kinzie. The Indians and their horrible attacks are the danger. I agree with the officers thus far. If the officers want to keep all the Indians away from here, excellent. How can one tell a good Indian from an Indian who wants to kill us? Kinzie stopped his trade with the Indians. Perhaps you could stop your trade with the Indians for the time being, Matt, just as a trial?"

"We *can't*!" Lalime took his head in his hands. "And we must arrest Kinzie ourselves. Why is everyone so blind?"

The doctor and Irwin looked at each other with secret worry about the interpreter.

"It's difficult for a greenhorn such as you to understand," Irwin said, beginning his new lecture with a tone of condescension. "Many Indians from this locale and from farther away are quite friendly to us."

"Oh, I see."

"Some of our own Indians have asked Captain Heald to let them camp here to protect us from unfriendly bands. The captain *refused*. He drove them off, drove away our protection, our eyes and ears," Irwin continued.

"Those Indians could be lying."

"Matt" Lalime interrupted, "the Potawatomes in this quarter are for war. The doctor is right about that."

"I don't believe it."

"You don't speak the language." Lalime still held his head in both

hands. "I think they are for war. But we must talk to them, trade with them." Lalime wiped saliva from his mouth. "We . . . we . . . we . . . need their knowledge of who's coming and what's happening. We live here. My wife and son live here. That's how I have survived, by talking to the Indians."

"My, what a dangerous chess game." Dr. Van Voorhis folded his hands in front of his chest. "I think it would be much simpler to keep the Indians away. But I'm new here. Everybody suspects everybody here, and everybody quarrels—the Americans quarrel with the French, the officers with us, and the enlisted men with the officers. Murders are plotted. You, Matt, used to complain that Captain Heald was not prepared to fight Indians. Now that Heald and the officers are on guard, you contend the Indians are peaceful."

"What murders?" Irwin asked, squinting.

"Ohhh . . ." The doctor hesitated and then shrugged. "Your six Saukie Indian friends who hang about—soldiers and civilians have told me they intend to kill them tomorrow. Is everybody at Fort Dearborn stark mad?"



## Chapter 21

### PATROL

*May 15, 1812*

The prairie was muddy. Three horses plodded along off any semblance of a trail. Yet the terrain on the near side of the two branches of the Chicago River was not half as bad as across the river. The “nine-mile prairie,” as people called it, which sat between the Chicago River and the Des Plaines River, was a tub. Beneath the grass, the mud over there was knee deep.

The drought was over. The weather around Fort Dearborn was back to normal. All else had changed.

Johnny Leigh and Jimmy Wheeler rode side by side. Each kept watch to the front and to his open flank; each had a loaded musket across his saddle pointed outward. Joe Cooper, fifteen, stepson of the ex-soldier Tom Burns, rode behind them, also with his musket across his saddle. He had the more difficult task of keeping watch behind. Powder horns and ammo pouches hung around the boys’ necks and suspended from their sides. They had knives and hatchets in their belts.

The high, dead grass from the previous year was easier to see through, and the new grass had sprouted only a foot high. But if the Indians wanted to hide in the mud for an ambush, they could not be seen through the dead grass past thirty yards.

Cooper’s mount turned its head and tried to bite his leg. The horse

was annoyed because Cooper kept shifting his weight to look backward for Indians.

"Cain't trust the friggin' French," Cooper said when he faced forward.

"The problem is the La Framboise brothers are half Potawatomi," Jimmy responded. "Their French half is not the problem."

"You can't trust the Frenchies as a group," Cooper insisted.

"Cardin warned me and Kelso." Johnny said, turning toward Cooper. "That was a right Frenchman."

Jimmy looked at Johnny's face. He noticed that while Johnny again stared rigidly forward, his face started to break up from the memory of Cardin and Liberty. Then after a few minutes, Johnny seemed to turn this sorrow into anger.

Nobody spoke for an uncomfortable five minutes. The only sound was the hooves plopping, the scrit-scrit-scrit of the grass against the horses and the boys' legs, and against itself, plus the wind. The boys tried to stare through the tall, dead grass all around.

Johnny broke the spell. He turned and asked, "Why'd the La Framboise brothers leave their sister here?"

"'Cause they're low snakes. I know 'em," Cooper replied.

The La Framboise brothers (whose mother was a Potawatomi) and their French father, residents of the Fort Dearborn neighborhood, had disappeared one recent night, and the next morning the soldiers discovered twelve horses had been stolen from the fort's stables. Everyone naturally suspected the La Framboises of stealing them.

Cooper added, "I got my opinion about Frenchmen and their Indian squaws. A lot of soldiers think like I do. We should get rid of all the Frenchies."

"All right. Quiet!" Johnny barked. "Eyes sharp! When we get to the farm, we'll talk again."

For three weeks after the murders at the farm, Johnny Leigh had retreated to the bosom of his family among the other civilian families assembled in the Indian Agency house. Then when that place became flea-ridden and foul from crowding and lack of ownership, the civilians dispersed. Johnny stayed close to home for one more week. He reemerged stiff in demeanor. Yet he asserted himself anew as leader of the boys.

The Indians' small harassment attacks, including clashes with the sentries outside the fort at night, had lasted intermittently for a week. The day after the Leigh Farm murders, a patrol of soldiers from the fort and volunteer civilians led by Captain Heald recovered and buried the bodies of Liberty White and Jean Baptiste Cardin. White had been shot twice, stabbed ten times, and mutilated. The Indians had cut Liberty's throat from ear to ear, cut off his nose and lips, and whacked his head with a tomahawk. Cardin had merely been shot through the neck. Both men had been scalped. It was hard for Jimmy to describe, but Johnny insisted. It was hard for Johnny to take.

Jimmy also told Johnny that traders from the north had revealed it was the Winnebagoes who killed Liberty and Cardin, the same tribe that the boys had heard killed the two Americans at the Spanish mines. The traders who brought the report said they were quitting the Indian Country.

"Bad times, Jim. I-I-I'll never be the same. Indians ain't human, are they?"

"They're trying to drive us out," Jimmy answered through his teeth. "They want to make us leave."

"You think they're human?"

"I don't think a bear would do it!"

Captain Heald had asked for civilian volunteers to form a militia and originally got fifteen men and boys from the approximately forty civilians around Fort Dearborn. Fifteen was reduced to twelve when two of the La Framboise brothers and their father disappeared. Then twelve became thirteen when Johnny returned to public life.

They got to the river across from the abandoned Leigh Farm and dismounted. Cooper announced, "Fellas, I hate to say this."

The others waited for Cooper's unknown pronouncement.

"I don't think our elders know what they're doin'."

Jimmy looked at Johnny who looked at Jimmy. Jimmy was secretly convinced this was true.

"Nobody's in charge at the fort," Cooper went on. "Heald chased the Frog Creek Indians away and broke up their camp. Then Irwin, the government trader, opens up his store agin' and invites Indians to come from far and wide to trade their winter pelts. People want to strangle the son of a bitch."



"Maybe with the captain's baby born dead, he's not payin' proper attention," Johnny offered. "That must have been awful hard. Their first child and a boy."

"Dead baby or not"—Jimmy's eyes were steely—"somebody's got to be in charge around here."

Cooper whistled. "You're cold, Wheeler."

The day was beautiful as if to mock their fears and confusion. The temperature was in the sixties. The brilliant blue sky was decorated with enormous white clouds. On the way to the farm, the boys had watched the shadows of clouds sail across the earth like prairie ships.

"We're gonna have to swim our horses," Johnny suggested. "The river's gonna be cold."

"I'll watch the horses." Cooper said, raising his hand. "You two take the canoe."

Cooper was a clubfooted boy who walked with a pronounced limp. His status in the community had risen a bit since his stepfather, Tom Burns, had been appointed the sergeant in command of the Chicago militia. But Cooper was a bit of an outcast.

On the other side of the river, Jimmy looked around the interior of the cabin and found nothing unusual except rabbit bones, mice turds, dog turds, and a very old bloodstain on the table. His skin crawled. The black pot over the fireplace contained the merest scrapings of the last stew—all the dog had left—decorated with fuzzy green and gray mold.

Cardin's dog had refused to stay at the fort, had run away and then returned to hang around the farm cabin. Behind the cabin, Johnny Leigh fed the dog a piece of meat he had brought. When Jimmy emerged and came around behind the cabin, Johnny asked, "Can you tell me what that British spy was all about?"

"Yeah, sure. You know the soldiers grabbed this trader and two Chippewas who came down the Detroit trail and questioned them. They do that to everybody who travels past Chicago. This trader immediately crapped in his pants. He admitted he was from Fort Malden up in Canada and said he was supposed to carry a message around the bottom of Lake Michigan and up to Green Bay for a British guy named Redhead Dixon. The Indians were his guides."

"Redhead Dixon?"

They walked past the farmworkers' garden; it had not been turned over this year and was forlorn with disorderly weeds.

"The trader said Dixon controls all the Indians to the north and the Sioux west of the Mississippi," Jimmy explained. "That's what one of the other sergeants finally told my dad. The trader didn't know what his message said because he couldn't read or write. Then the captain ordered the Chippewas to wait for the trader outside the fort, and they ran away. One of the Indians had the message, too, on a piece of paper."

"Holy hell," Johnny exclaimed and looked at the sky. "Who could be so stupid?"

They heard Cooper yell, probably because they had been out of sight too long.

"Cooper'll get us killed."

"You'll discover Cooper's not afraid." Jimmy chuckled with tension. "But I am darned afraid. Let's get out of here. I don't see any Indian signs."

"What'd you fellas talk about over there?" Cooper asked when the two returned. "You took awful long."

"Tie the horses," Johnny ordered. "Everybody, keep a lookout in a different direction. Jimmy, go up in the tree. I gotta tell you guys something."

"I can climb." Cooper said and insisted on going up. Then he offered from above: "We need old Jouett, the Indian agent, but Jouett's gone back to Kentucky for good. I don't see nobody."

"Maybe it's not all as bad as we think," Johnny said. "This is what I got to tell you. My dad is talking about becoming an Indian trader."

"Whaaaaat!?" Both Jimmy and Joe exclaimed together. Both boys' mouths hung open. "No, you can't." Jimmy shook his head. "Not here." The amount of confusion the boys had seen in the adults in April and May had shaken them. This sounded like more adult floundering.

"We need the money." Johnny Leigh's face was in obvious distress.

"You got the farm," Cooper argued from up in the tree. "You got the cattle. You're rich!"

"We're deep in debt. Grandpa bought a lot of our cattle on credit. It looks like no cash crop this year to ship to Detroit. It's not safe to

farm. With the beef we sell to the fort, we can at best break even. Grandpa had hoped for more soldiers. My dad says we have to do *something*. Kinzie has quit the Indian trade. Kinzie's afraid of the Indians for now. So we're gonna take it up. My dad says he'll trade at our farm cabin across the way so the Indians don't have to go near the fort."

"You'd trade with the people who killed Liberty and Cardin?" Cooper blurted from above. "What would you sell? You don't have any Indian stuff."

Johnny bit his lip and then answered. "Somebody in the family will have to sail up to Mackinac Island to buy Indian stock—on credit again. Then we'll have even more debt, and we'll have to deal with the friggin' Indians."

"Tradin' is nuts," said Cooper. "I wanna kill some Indians."

"Trading's really dangerous," Jimmy said.

"My family has to try something. Everything and everybody is upside down."



## Chapter 22

### EXPRESS RIDER

*June 18, 1812*

By mid-June, Sergeant Wheeler looked like a new man with color in his skin and a sparkle in his eye. At this moment his face was covered with lather. He wore only his underdrawers while shaving on this sunny, warm evening. Pleased with the transformation, Jimmy Wheeler watched and suppressed a grin. The grin snuck out through his eyes and dimpled cheeks.

Jimmy thought it was the Indian trouble that gave his father new purpose. The only disquieting element Jimmy noticed was that his father was regularly restless and agitated. He often acted as if he were late for something. He didn't like to stay in the barracks.

"What aire you laughin' at, boy?"

"I blackened your shoes and shined them."

"So what's new?" the father asked. Sergeant Wheeler had been sick in bed for ten days, white-faced at first and seeming near death, at the time of the Leigh Farm murders. But once out of his bed, he immediately began to walk the outer perimeter of the fort, initially with effort but soon endless circular walks that became amusing to all. The reservoir of youthfulness at age thirty-seven in his strong constitution reasserted itself. Two weeks after he started his walks, he ran once around the fort. This was too much, and he had to lay off running for one day. The day after that he ran around the fort again. Soon he

did twice around. He gradually increased his runs until by the end of May he could do a continuous mile. In mid-May he also volunteered to be a spy, as scouts were known then, and he began to ride as well as walk and run. He was not supposed to go far. Captain Heald, a cautious man, had restricted most of the men to the grounds of the fort because of the Indian danger. But Sergeant Wheeler stretched his spy allowance to the limit, fifteen miles in several directions, and was usually outside the walls.

The activity had perked up the sergeant's spirits, but Jimmy still noticed his father was uncharacteristically nervous.

"The Indians are on the run," Jimmy declared. "The militia has cleared this entire territory of unfriendlies for four days' march."

"Won't bet any money on it. What aire the regulars doin'?"

"They are still restricted to the grounds of the fort."

Sergeant Wheeler laughed.

"Good news, though," Jimmy added. "Lieutenant Helm said today that a really big army of ours is on its way north through Ohio heading for Detroit. It will invade Canada just as soon as the war starts."

Sergeant Wheeler smiled again while he shaved.

"We hev been at war for months, Jim. This is how Indins make war, hit here and hit there. Do a lot of killin'. Pretty soon we will have lost as many people this year kilt by sech Indin predations as we did at that Tippecanoe battle. The Indins lost hardly any since." Sergeant Wheeler began to towel off his face and looked almost fit, except that his skin was tighter, having lost some of the suppleness of youth. "Who's in charge of this big army goin' to Detroit?"

"A fella from the Revolutionary War."

"No!"

"Yeah. The governor of the Michigan Territory, a fellow named Hull," Jimmy said. "I hear he's a real lion."

"Who said he's a lion?"

"Nobody. But he's our general."

Sergeant Wheeler took something unusual off the bed—deerskin trousers, like the deerskin leggings the Indians and some hunters wore. These came up to the waist instead of just the thighs. The sergeant began to put them on. "Sounds to me like a fright—another fat old general like St. Clair who misled so many men and women and got 'em chopped up by the Indins. Oooo. Oooo. Let's see those shoes."

"Why are you wearing those funny pants?" Jimmy handed him the shined shoes. The father examined them.

"Beautiful. But they stay here." Sergeant Wheeler slipped his feet into elk hide moccasins that he pulled out from under the bed. "What we should be doin' is sendin' expeditions of mounted riflemen to break up some Indin settlements. Take *them* by surprise. Gimme the huntin' shirt on Otho's bed." The father looked at Jimmy anxiously, as if a bit afraid. Jimmy thought it was more of his dad's nervousness.

Jimmy gave his father a long, blue flannel hunting shirt that the sergeant put on. It came down to above his knees. The father tied a red braided belt around his waist over the shirt, and he produced a large multicolored handkerchief that he tied on his head.

"What are you supposed to be, and what is this?"

"Ah looks like a Frenchman, *mais non*? Yes, sare, monsieur." The father slapped his deerskin thigh with a loud whap. "Putty goot, you theenk?"

"Your accent is terrible, Dad. There aren't enough horses for a mounted attack on any Indians here."

"Not enough people around here yet. But we got to retaliate for the Indins' works in some way or they'll pick us to death. We don't need fat generals with no war spirit. We need men with a bark on."

"Lieutenant Helm told us today that some militia killed two Indians near the Mississippi down by Portage des Sioux," the son reported. "They were Winnebagoes."

"Well, they probably deserved it." The sergeant picked up a leather belt off the bed that he also buckled around his waist. From the belt hung a sheath knife and a mink pouch that held the lead balls for his pistols and lead bullets for his rifle.

"How do we know—"

"The Indins won't make a big general attack with many bands together until their corn is ripe or awful close." The sergeant moved his belt to get his hanging gear in the right places. "How do we know what?"

"How do we know which Winnebagoes killed Liberty and Jean Cardin?"

"We don't know. Sorry to say, all the Winnebagoes have to pay in some way, all of 'em, or else give up them killers. One or the other."

"Oh."

"Eh, all right. Ah told you never shoot a man for no reason. Stick to it. Even Winnerbagoes. Cain't shoot jest anybody." The sergeant seemed jittery as he moved about, and his facial expressions kept changing. "Ah'm tellin' you these things 'bout Indin ways because Ah know. No one around here would listen to me anyway. Cain't be lecturin' people after mah behavior. Maybe when I git back, I'll be a credible man."

"So you're going someplace? Where are you going?"

The sergeant sat on the bed. "Sit next to me. What did you do today?"

Jimmy relaxed. "We brought the cattle up from the farm. Mr. Leigh and the Russells want to try to hold the cattle near the fort to keep the Indians away from them. We're moving the rail fences from the farm to here by the scow. Kelso, too. Kelso has reenlisted, you know."

"Too bad fer him. Another five years in durance vile."

Jimmy asked about something that puzzled him. "I've been watching the new sergeant, Griffith. How does a guy like this Griffith join the army and get to be a sergeant on his first day?"

The father jumped up again and shifted his hips in the uncomfortable hide trousers. He started to pace around the room. "Griffith's a busted-out trader. He speaks several Indin languages. He's the officers' favorite interpreter now. The army needs even broken-down traders." He kept pacing.

"Can't you stand still?"

"So you see it." The father sat down on the bed again next to his son. "Listen . . ."

Jimmy waited. He waited some more. "Well?"

"Ah haven't been a good father to you."

"Yes, you have."

"Ah'm tellin' you right now I ain't. Led your ma out here. Should've left you and her in New York. And now Ah'm leavin' you for a few weeks."

"You are? What? A few weeks?" Jimmy slapped his father's arm. "What are you talking about? What the heck?"

"Ah should remain here. Ah'm yer father. But if Ah do . . . Don't know what else to do. The whiskey got its hooks in me bad. Cain't sit still when I don't drink. Got to keep movin'. Hope to beat it in the long run, but Ah got to keep movin' fer now. 'Fraid if Ah don't, Ah'll

be a worse father and a drunk. So I hev volunteered to be an express rider."

"Express rider to where?"

Sergeant Wheeler told him very quietly.

"Noooo. Why don't you and me quit this stupid army and go back east?"

"It's wartime. Nobody quits. Ah could be back from this trip in three weeks with great luck, but it'll probably take longer. The horse could give out, or Ah might hev to leave the trails and go across country if the Indins misbehave. If the rivers are flooded, it could be a long nuisance. At the other end they may hold me to wait for dispatches. It could occupy five or six weeks or longer."

"Why can't you just run around on the prairie like you used to with Bill Whistler?"

"This is harder than that. Ah'm sorry. Keep on with Mr. Leigh. He's a good man if he gets over that foolish notion of bein' an Indin trader. In the event of trouble, I want you to take your orders from Sergeant Hayes. You got to promise me you'll obey Otho's orders. He and I hev talked. Ah need you to promise."

"No, I don't promise."

The father looked fragile and afraid at this response so that Jimmy couldn't sustain it. "Yes, sir, I promise."

"Now among the civilians there's one other man I want you to trust."

"Who?"

"Billy Caldwell."

"He's an Indian."

"He's a half-breed. Billy's father, Captain William Caldwell of the British army, is one of the worst enemies Kentucky and the *Younited* States ever had. Old Captain Caldwell killed many fine Kentucky boys at Blue Licks when I was eight years old. A long whahl later, that old man Caldwell fought alongside the Indins and against us at Fallen Timbers."

"Against you?"

"Against me and the whole of Anthony Wayne's legion. Yet I'm tellin' ya to trust Billy, the son of that devil. Billy Caldwell has friends everywhere, on all sides, and he is most resourceful."

"I think Billy is our enemy."



"Maybe so. An honorable enemy like Billy can be better than a lyin' friend. Now if Ah'm gone for a long time because Ah get lost—"

"You can't get lost."

"Or if Ah hev to take a very, very, very roundabout way or somethin' like that"—the father softened his voice with love and also for secrecy. He rubbed his son's head, leaned forward, and whispered into his ear—"then you know where the money is."

The father had buried the money outside the fort but had shown his son the spot.

"The brig *Adams* will come here, or the schooner *Mary* or the sloop *Friends Good Will*," the sergeant said in a normal tone. "Go back east to see your grandparents."

Jimmy whispered. "We could both leave. You know how to get us through."

Sergeant Wheeler smiled. "The men rely on me. Ye know, you're gonna build this country someday. You'll build it by each man relyin' on the other." The sergeant leaned on his son. "When we went to Kentucky, poor folks for free land, land thet had no Indins livin' in it, the Indins fought us so bad thet a Kentucky man hardly ever died of natural causes. The men were allus killed. Yet yer granddad and yer uncles didn't run. Yer grandma and the women didn't, either. Those women were dirty, wastin' away, wearin' rags. They all stayed and fought."

"Why'd the Indians fight if they didn't live there?"

"The Indins wanted to keep Kentucky as a huntin' ground."

The sergeant stood up and looked about him to gather the rest of his equipment. He lowered his voice again in the process. "Now, the captain here is not a bad man, but he is not General Mad Anthony Wayne or even John Whistler, so somethin' could go wrong." The sergeant went to the table, picked up a pair of pistols, and inserted them into his waist belt. Then he picked up a tomahawk and inserted that into his belt.

"This is man to man. Somethin' could go wrong. So if you happen to get mixed up with our Indin neighbors again, sort of like you did before, you know. Well, you know. . . ."

"That will never happen."

"I'll come for you sooner or later."

"Don't." Jimmy meant for his father to cease this subject.

"If Ah can come at all. It's best to be plain."

Jimmy stood up and reached in his pocket. "Stop," he said. He pulled out his little fife.

The father slung a strap over one shoulder with a large powder horn that held two pounds of powder. "You could learn a lot from the Indins."

Jimmy began to play a tune that Kinzie, who was of Scottish descent, had taught him, "Bonnie Doon." The shrill sound of the fife was wordless but fit this rhythm.

Ye banks and braes o' Bonnie Doon  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?  
How can ye chaunt, ye little birds,  
And I'm sae weary, fu' o' care?

Sergeant Wheeler smiled and slung the strap for his black leather army cartridge box over his other shoulder, the one item that did not fit his attire. "Read your Bible while Ah'm gone!"

"Will!" said the boy between notes. The boy turned away and continued to play.

Ye'll break my heart, ye warbling bird,  
That warbles on the flow'ry thorn.

The sergeant picked up his saddlebags.  
Jimmy kept playing.

Ye mind me o' departed joys,  
Departed never to return.

His father reached out and turned him around. The father was not deterred or ashamed of the tears in his son's eyes. "Remember, you're Big Jim Wheeler's son. You're from Kentucky."

"I'm from New York." Jimmy had finished the music. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand that held the fife.

"You want me to turn this job down? They'll send someone else."  
"No."

"You're from New York *and* Kentucky. You're your mother and me."

Jimmy handed his father a short-barreled rifle from the corner by the door. The father hefted it and appeared to like the feel. "If you happen to be down by Kentucky."

“Yes, sir, I know,” said Jimmy.

“You know who to look for.”

The dispatches and mail were in a flat tin box sealed with pine pitch to keep out water and covered with an untanned deer hide. This went in a saddlebag.

Outside the main gate, Sergeant Hayes brought up the mount already saddled with a blanket roll on the back. Said Hayes, “Our best nag.”

With a wave of his hat, a flick of his feet, and “Yahh,” Sergeant Wheeler spurred his horse down the trail to Detroit, Fort Wayne, and Vincennes as the sun began to sink on the horizon.

Jimmy knew, because his father had told him, that after sundown Sergeant Wheeler would double back inside the woods next to the south branch, swim his horse across the south branch, and head north along a trail that paralleled the north branch of the Chicago River on its western bank. Almost five miles north of Wolf Point he would turn onto a secondary portage trail that went west.

Before he bedded down for the night, Sergeant Wheeler would cross the Des Plaines River. In the morning he would work his way gradually southwest, well beyond any sight of Chief Co-wa-bee-mai’s village at the main portage. Then his father would strike out on the High Prairie trail or across the Great Prairie itself. He was headed for St. Louis, Louisiana Territory.



## Chapter 23

### LALIME AND KINZIE

*Still June 18*

The muscular Sergeant Hayes got in Jimmy's line of sight as his father shrank in the distance, and Hayes punched the boy with a left jab in the right shoulder. "C'mon," said Hayes.

"Get out of the way." Jimmy had difficulty seeing the last of his father with Sergeant Hayes in the way.

Hayes danced deftly to the side of the boy and slapped his head very lightly, then Hayes got behind and grabbed the boy's shoulders as the father got very small. He said in Jimmy's right ear, "Toughest guy here. He'll be back before you know it."

Jimmy's father was gone from sight.

Hayes shoved him. "You gonna fight or not?"

"No." Jimmy turned around.

Sergeant Hayes jabbed the boy in the body and lightly slapped his chin. Jimmy started to punch almost as hard as he could. All he could hit was the sergeant's moving hands and arms. The sergeant barely clipped Jimmy on the face once in a while. "We're going to have to give you a few lessons." Hayes tapped him one more time and said unexpectedly, "There's a beautiful lady come here to see you."

"Jimmy, how would you like to spend the night with us," said Mrs. Leigh. "Mary and Lillie and the little boys and Johnny would be delighted to have you. Oh, you, too, Sergeant," she teased.

"Haw, no, ma'am. Your house is too crowded with your own and now with this guy. Good night, ma'am. Good night, Wheeler."

"I'll bust your nose yet," said Jimmy.

"Someday."

The clouds to the west were painted pinkish red, and the pink was spreading eastward across the sky. The wind was calm, and the twilight was quiet. Mrs. Leigh and Jimmy looked at the sunset. "How beautiful," she said. South, down the trail, nothing could be seen.

They began to walk south toward the Leigh house. Behind them, from the far north end of the fort, they heard shouts. Then a gunshot.

Jimmy looked at Mrs. Leigh.

"That's from back there," said Mrs. Leigh, who turned and pointed. It was the opposite way from where Jimmy's father went.

"I wanna see." Jimmy took off at a run.

"Jimmy!"

The boy ran around the southwest corner of the fort and down the outside of the west wall. He did not see anything ahead, so he started to slow. Then a soldier passed by him on the run, so Jimmy sped up. It was only forty yards to the other end of the fort. Just past the wicket gate he ran by some clothes on the riverbank just where it began to slope downward toward the river. The soldier stopped. Jimmy kept going down the riverbank to see if there was anything to see.

"Hey! Hey!" the soldier shouted. Jimmy thought this shout was directed at him.

Then to Jimmy's left where the river curved to go around the height on which the fort stood, downhill by the boat dock, Jimmy saw a man shove off in a canoe in a big hurry. It was Mr. Kinzie. Something was wrong with Kinzie. People were screaming. The screaming took a while to penetrate Jimmy's mind. It was two girls somewhere screaming. Must have been some kind of a fight, Jimmy thought. The fight scared the girls.

Jimmy looked back up the riverbank toward the level of the fort and saw Lieutenant Helm run out of the wicket gate. Helm shouted, "John, you all right?" toward Kinzie. The girls kept screaming. Jimmy finally saw them between the north, outer fence of the fort and the river, standing and holding each other. Then the younger one broke away toward Lake Michigan, and the older one ran and caught her.

The soldier who had accompanied Jimmy in his run was on one

knee looking at the ground. He raised his head and shouted, “*Kinzie!* Get back here!”

Jimmy walked up the incline of the riverbank to see why the soldier was kneeling, and he saw that the clothes on the ground were worn by John Lalime, the interpreter, who lay on his back with his eyes open. Jimmy approached. Lalime looked very strange. The soldier swung his left arm and hit the boy very hard in his hip.

“Get outta here! Go over there!”

Jimmy could see that Mr. Lalime was knocked down or . . . The boy turned away.

As the girls came toward him, Jimmy recognized the daughters of the blacksmith, Monsieur Mirandeu, who, when he came to Chicago, sometimes lived with Antoine Ouilmette. Mirandeu came from Milwaukee and made regular visits to Chicago to do work for Indians, soldiers, and trappers. He fixed guns and traps, shoed horses, and made and fixed tools and kitchen utensils. The soldiers would no longer do the Indians’ blacksmith work.

“Madaline,” said Jimmy to the older Mirandeu girl, who was fifteen, “*Qu’est-ce qui lui est arrivé?*”<sup>13</sup> He pointed back at Lalime.

“Victoire?” Jimmy repeated the question to Victoire when Madaline did not answer. Behind him, Lieutenant Helm shouted an order to a soldier to fetch Dr. Van Voorhis.

“*Je ne sais pas,*” said Victoire. “I don’t know. I don’t understand. Monsieur Kinzie and Monsieur Lalime came out together. That man”—she pointed to the northwest blockhouse above—“he called out, ‘Mister John, watch out. He has a pistol.’”

“A pistol? Who?” said Jimmy.

“Lalime, I guess, had it,” said Victoire. “The short one.” Lalime was a head shorter than Kinzie. “We saw the two men come together. We heard the pistol.” She put her hands over her ears. “We saw the smoke, Jimmy. They fell down together.” Victoire screamed and cried again.

Jimmy could see soldiers pouring out of the wicket gate in ragged single file because that gate was narrow. Lieutenant Helm had already shouted “Close that gate” several times, but he was ignored. The gates were always closed at sundown, which was at hand.

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13. What happened to him?

"Where's Kinzie, little girl?" said a soldier who approached.

Victoire and Madaline both pointed across the river where Kinzie had fled. The Kinzie family had moved back into their home on the north side of the river after having lived in the fort during the worst of the Indian scare.

"Get the captain!" somebody shouted.

"There's no need for that," answered Helm.

"Get horses!" the same soldier shouted again. The soldier added, "We're gonna catch Kinzie."

"You'll do no such thing," said Helm.

"Victoire," said Jimmy. "Why did the men fall down?"

"I don't know. Monsieur Kinzie got up pretty quick. You saw him, Jimmy. He had . . ." Victoire tapped herself repeatedly on her left shoulder at the junction with her neck.

"What? What did he have?"

"Blood," said Victoire, making a face. "Blood was running from his shoulder where Lalime shot him." She pointed to that spot again.

"He had a hole in his shirt collar," Madaline piped up.

Victoire asked, "Why doesn't Monsieur Lalime get up?"

"I don't know," Jimmy said.

"Kinzie stabbed Lalime in the heart!" shouted a soldier.

"Shut up!" said a second soldier. "Where's the doctor?"

"He don't need a doctor anymore," said a third soldier's voice.

"Shut up! Shut up!"

"Did somebody stab Lalime?" said Jimmy to Victoire in French, although he said it quietly.

"I didn't see any knife." Victoire now spoke French. "I'm going home."

"Little girl, your name's Mirandeu, right? Did you see this?" It was the voice of Lieutenant Helm. Jimmy thought Lieutenant Helm had been drinking. He smelled of whiskey.

Victoire only stared at the lieutenant.

"*Oui*, but we go home," said Madaline.

"You're the blacksmith's children, *n'est-ce pas*?" said Helm. "What are your names?"

"I'm Madaline. This is Victoire. We go to Monsieur Ouilmette's."

Just then Jimmy noticed Matthew Irwin, the government factor,

standing yards away in the background. Irwin appeared almost invisible, as if he was watching but was not involved.

"How is the interpreter?" Lieutenant Helm said loudly to the crowd of soldiers around Lalime.

"You don't wanna know," said a voice.

"Get Kinzie. He done this."

"Let's git him," a second soldier agreed. "Damn the Englishman Kinzie, the cheatin' son of a bitch."

To curry favor with Captain Heald and strengthen his hold on his sutler's contract, Kinzie had begun charging the enlisted men higher prices and the officers, including the captain, lower prices. The soldiers, poor as stray dogs, were forced to subsidize the officers' lifestyles. And Captain Heald had given the order that the soldiers could purchase goods from no one but Kinzie. The enlisted soldiers' anger had no outlet until this moment.

"Get the money-grubbin' Englishman!" another soldier shouted.

"You stay right there," said Lieutenant Helm.

"The Englishman!" the others roared in anger. Their frustrations at their treatment by officers, by Kinzie, and by the Indians welled over.

"You'll all be put in the guardhouse!" Lieutenant Helm shouted.

"Get the boat! Kinzie's gonna get away. Get some guns!"

"We don't need guns. There's twenty of us right here. Let's hang him."





## Chapter 24

### ELEANOR KINZIE

*July 7, 1812*

Eleanor Kinzie no longer had outbreaks of coughing and stammering. Almost three weeks had passed since her husband appeared, covered in blood and in a panic, saying he had to escape. John Kinzie was a big, strong-willed man whom Eleanor had never seen panic. The sight was a shock, as was the sight of his wound. But Eleanor had lived through great violence as a child and had survived it.

When she saw the blood and saw her husband's fear in her forty-second year, she felt her own steel within and a deadly coldness. As Kinzie stumbled through the house from the front toward the back door, he leaned on a wall to say, "He shot me. I fought for my life. I stabbed him. He could be dead!"

"Who?" she said, astonished.

"Lalime."

"Oh, no." Lalime and Eleanor's husband had a bad history.

"They'll be after me. I have to run."

Eleanor hurried into the dining room and ripped the tablecloth off the dining room table, shattering the cream and sugar set that always sat in the middle. The evening meal was over, and the dishes had been put away. She ran after Kinzie and gave him the tablecloth for his bloody wound as he went out the back door of the house.

She ran back, shouted "Chandonnais!" and got a handful of her

best linen table napkins because they were in a top drawer in the kitchen. Chandonnais, a young man only twenty-three who had become indispensable to the Kinzie family, appeared from somewhere.

"Madame."

"Take charge. Protect the children. I have to go with Mr. Kinzie. Give me your knife."

"*Oui.*" He reached to the sheath at his waist and gave her his knife.

"Jim!" she shouted. "Watch the front door. Don't let anybody in."

"Yes, ma'am," said Black Jim, a slave.

Slavery was outlawed in the Northwest Territories, but Kinzie and his half brother, Tom Forsyth, who lived in Peoria, got around this by calling their slaves indentured servants.

Eleanor ran out the back door. Kinzie was headed toward the far north end of the long backyard, a distance of two hundred yards, to enter the woods. She lifted up her dress and pursued him on the run. She knew at forty-two that she was younger, slimmer, and faster than he was at almost fifty, but it was still a challenge. As Kinzie entered the tree line, he turned to gauge his pursuit and saw her, but he kept going. By the time she got just inside the woods herself, she was breathless. The scrub oaks and pines were far enough apart that men on horses often chased wolves through these woods. Eleanor knew the mud in the woods would soon soil her dress and give away where she had gone. Also, the sun was going down.

"John," she half-shouted and half-whispered.

He looked out from behind a wide tree in the twilight. "You'll bring them after me. Don't follow me!" His face was blood red from exertion, and he was near hysterical, totally unlike himself.

"You have nothing. Where will you go?"

"To the Indians."

There was no Indian village for miles. It would soon be pitch dark. Eleanor knew from a lifetime in the wilderness that her husband might break a leg or drown in the dark or faint from blood loss or shock while on foot, and the wolves would smell his blood. Wolves were everywhere on the prairie. He had no food.

"Let me bandage you and stop your bleeding," she said.

"I have no time!"

"You must."

"It doesn't seem terrible, just bleeds. Go back!"

She did not move.

"Go and get me a horse and some food," said Kinzie. He looked behind him to see where he might run and seemed to begin to regain his reason. "Come when it's safe, *but not if it's not*, Eleanor! Take this." He tried to give back the tablecloth.

She ran up to him with the linen napkins. "Keep the tablecloth for warmth. Where will you be?" She also gave him Chandonnais's knife. He recoiled. He had left his knife in Lalime or on the ground.

"To cut bandages."

He took the knife. "Uhhhhh . . ." Kinzie was shaking. His eyes were widened, and he breathed very heavily. "I'll be in the pine trees on the lake shore, uhhh, by the two boulders, uhhh, where the kids play. I'll be up in a tree." He pointed up. "Go!"

When she reentered the house, Eleanor was swallowing saliva and more breathless from running, and she was sweating. She met Chandonnais and Black Jim. She instantly called them out the back door again.

"The soldiers are arguin' 'mongst themselves, ma'am," said Jim. "But they'll cross over the river anytime."

"Bar the front door, Jim. Just a minute." She paused to catch her breath. "Chandonnais, take two horses from the stable, with saddles. Hide them in the woods where no one can find them." She took a deep breath. "But you must remember where they are . . . in the dark. God, please help me. And come back."

"*Oui*."

She entered the house.

The children waited with Josette, known as Josie, La Framboise, the nurse, age fifteen, who was engaged to be married to the trader Beaubien. Eleanor knew Beaubien had already decamped to Milwaukee with his children from his deceased first wife, decamped for the duration of the Indian troubles. Josie's father and brothers had decamped earlier, allegedly with twelve army horses. Yet Josie stayed on.

The oldest Kinzie boy, John Junior, almost nine, looked up at his mother with questioning eyes. He had been outside and ran home at the commotion. Of the other children gathered around Eleanor, Ellen Marion was six; Maria Indiana was four, and the baby, Robert, was

almost two-and-a-half. He squirmed in Josie's arms. She had to put the heavy child down, and he waddled to his mother.

"Your papa's fine, children. But he's gone." Eleanor was still catching her breath. "He's gone far away. He won't be back for a while."

"Can I help, Mother," young John asked. Eleanor smiled at him.

"What happened, Mommy?" Maria Indiana whined. Baby Robert clung to Eleanor's leg.

"It was a fight," Eleanor said.

"The soldiers are done arguin', ma'am. They're comin' over in a boat." It was Black Jim from the front parlor window.

"What happened, Mommy?" Maria Indiana whined again. Baby Robert began to whine, too, without words because he could sense the trouble.

"John Junior," said Eleanor, "find Jack!" Black Jack was another slave. "Go to the Indian store and fill two sacks with parched corn and flour. Put them in your father's saddlebags out back and remember where you hid them. Put them in the playhouse. Say nothing to anyone. It will be dark any minute." Black Jack was the stock man and knew where everything was. John Junior went out the back door.

"Jim," Eleanor ordered, "when they come, you answer the door. Everybody else sit down in the dining room and be quiet. Your father got on his horse and rode far away, children. He said good-bye."

"Whyyyy?" Maria Indiana asked.

"Because he did," said Ellen Marion to her younger sister. At six, Ellen Marion acted as if she were more grown-up. "The saddlebags are for . . . somebody else."

The soldiers soon pounded on the front door and shouted, "Kinzie! Open up! Kinzie!" The family rose and stood in the hallway, silent, even the children. The slave, Jim, by the door, did not move. He held up a hand to indicate to Eleanor, "Wait."

The pounding continued. Jim smiled. A man comfortable against other men, thought Eleanor amid it all. Jim rubbed Maria Indiana's head.

When the soldiers began to shout into the open parlor window and one threatened to climb in, Jim lifted the bar off the door, opened the door a little, and stepped out himself. He said, "What are y'all *doin'* here?" Jim closed the door behind him.

A soldier loudly announced that Kinzie had murdered the interpreter. Eleanor yanked the door open and said, "Lalime shot my husband! Watch what you say in front of my children."

"Lalime's dead and Kinzie ran," said a soldier.

Off to the side, Lieutenant Helm, who was Kinzie's son-in-law, shouted, "Listen, you men. I command all of you to leave here."

"Yeah!" some said, and they all looked at Helm contemptuously. Ensign Ronan, the junior officer, stood by and said nothing.

"We want Kinzie, ma'am. He has to answer for it," said a soldier who appeared to be a leader.

Black Jim proceeded to quarrel with them about manners.

Eleanor quarreled with them, too, and let the children fill the doorway. Eleanor stalled as long as possible. She glanced to the right, toward the western horizon. Only a few minutes until it was almost completely dark. Finally, Ensign Ronan spoke up. He persuaded Helm and Eleanor that the soldiers must search the house. To Eleanor it was obvious that Helm and Ronan, too, had been drinking. She had seen and smelled that her husband had been drinking, and she guessed that maybe even Lalime had been drinking. Drinking at the end of the day was routine for those men who had money, or, for Fort Dearborn officials, if her husband was in a generous mood with the whiskey. Mrs. Kinzie wondered if the drinking had something to do with the cause of the fight.

The soldiers searched the Kinzie house by candle lantern, which was very difficult. A search of the many outbuildings was proposed, but the soldiers got discouraged. They threatened to send a search party in the morning to enforce rough justice and then left.

Once it was fully dark, the blacksmith, Monsieur Mirandeu, came to the back door and volunteered to take Mr. Kinzie to Milwaukee if Kinzie was still around. Mirandeu, who was from Milwaukee, knew the Green Bay trail in the dark. "Your husband gives me good business. You have beautiful children."

Mirandeu and Kinzie, who was still hiding in the tree on the lake shore, left after midnight.

The next day Eleanor secretly sent Chandonnais to take word to her husband's half brother, Tom Forsyth, at Peoria.

Eleanor considered Chandonnais a wonder. Three-quarters Potawatomi and one-quarter French, he had French adoptive parents, yet he was also the nephew of the Potawatomi chief, Topenebe. Chandonnais was athletic and powerful, spoke several languages, and was extraordinarily trustworthy. She wondered what it was about her husband that Kinzie could find and win complete loyalty from such intelligent and solid men as Chandonnais and Billy Caldwell. Was it because Kinzie acknowledged the Indians' brains, gave them responsibilities few white men did, and paid them a decent wage? Yet at the same time her husband insisted on keeping blacks as slaves. This was a curious contradiction to Eleanor.

Nine days after Kinzie had fled, a Potawatomi brought news from Milwaukee that John Kinzie was safe. She paid the Indian well.

As the days passed, Eleanor came to the conclusion that she was no longer young. She was proud of the presence of mind she had shown the night her husband killed Lalime and fled, but since then she had had coughing fits and dropped things. She lay awake at night and had to nap in the middle of the day. She was startled by small noises and stammered a little.

Eleanor also decided that if she was going to be on her own again, as she had been after her first husband was killed, she needed more knowledge. She had to know many things—about money and where and how much there was; about deliveries of trade goods expected; about her husband's and her brother-in-law's plans.

After Eleanor's first husband had been killed fighting as part of the British Detroit militia against the advance of General Anthony Wayne in 1794, Eleanor was forced to engage in the Indian trade herself to survive. She had done well. But after marrying Kinzie, she concentrated on her children and left all business to Kinzie.

Eleanor was determined to know one thing. There were killings upon killings on the frontier—an Indian war already, a British-American-Canadian-Indian war coming. The world was falling apart. She needed to know where she stood.

Then Tom Forsyth arrived at the front door at nine o'clock at night when she was just about to go to bed.

"Oh, Tom, thank heavens," she said.

She let him go to the outhouse and then wash his face and hands in the kitchen. She asked if he wanted something to eat or drink.

"You must be very worried, Nelly. I can eat later."

A large man, becoming portly at age forty, Forsyth had a slightly chubby face and very large hands with big knuckles that dwarfed any writing instrument. Yet he was the intellectual of the family, a student of commerce and of the Indians, and a prolific writer of letters. He was shrewd, cold, and aloof; he was not as friendly to business contacts as Kinzie, yet he had the fire of ambition. Eleanor knew this big man could live in the saddle for weeks, conduct half of the extensive Kinzie-Forsyth business out of his hat, and simultaneously do many things that nobody knew. Forsyth was secretive, like her husband.

"Where would you like to talk?" he asked, "and whom do you trust absolutely?"

"The parlor, and Chandonnais."

Chandonnais had returned ahead of Forsyth.

Forsyth summoned him. "Jean Baptiste," Forsyth said using Chandonnais's Christian name, "keep the dining room, the hallway, the front porch, and the side of the house outside this room completely empty, please. Walk about. You may be outside. No one else."

"*Certainement*, boss."

The parlor window was already closed. Eleanor lit a full candelabra of candles there in addition to the candle she had carried to see her way through the house. Forsyth's eyes widened at the candle extravagance. Eleanor wanted light, knowledge, and an end to mystery.

She gave Forsyth the details of the killing of Lalime as best she knew it from the soldiers, from the Mirandau girls, from her son-in-law, Lieutenant Helm, and from her husband. Eleanor and Tom sat next to each other in parlor chairs so they could talk quietly.

Forsyth asked her whether, despite what the witnesses had said, she believed her husband had murdered Lalime. If so, why? Forsyth said he needed to know in case something came out later.

Eleanor said she didn't think her husband murdered Lalime, and she could think of no reason for him to do such a thing. She said she thought Kinzie killed Lalime in self-defense.

They discussed the fact that months earlier, before the troubles, Kinzie had tried to buy Lalime's loyalty in an attempt to shut down

the government trading store, and Lalime had angrily rejected the proposal. (Irwin, the government Indian trader, spoke no Indian languages and could not operate without Lalime.) To Forsyth this attempt to buy off Lalime was merely a business matter.

"How can John ever come back if the soldiers want to hang him?" Eleanor asked. She put a hand to her forehead and pushed her hair back. "We're settled here. Our whole business is here! Your business and ours. At least we have the sutler's store still open. The children John and I share were born here and have grown up here. What are we going to do?"

"He has to stay away for now," responded Forsyth.

"If there is going to be a war anyway, I don't know what will happen to us *all*!" Eleanor sounded hysterical and felt embarrassed. She looked intently at Forsyth, searching his face for an answer, and she hoped he understood. She said, "Do you know?"

Forsyth seemed to ignore the question. Instead, he spoke calmly and slowly about the original problem, the killing of Lalime. "What if, Nelly . . . hmmm . . . What if we have a trial? If John is acquitted, then he could probably come back."

"There is no court here."

"What if we had a trial before a board of officers," Forsyth proposed. "The officers respect John."

"I don't know. Do you really think . . ."

"It's a strong possibility. All the witnesses state it was self-defense," Forsyth observed. "If for some reason the officers convict him, of course he cannot return. You would have to move, perhaps back to Canada. You would survive, Nelly. Our business would, too, in some way."

"I always survive," Eleanor replied with bitter sarcasm.

"I'll talk to Captain Heald in the morning. To convict my brother would be an injustice. He was attacked and seriously wounded. The matter is obvious. Do you mind?" Forsyth produced a pipe with a long, thin stem of the sort French Canadians smoked. Eleanor rose to get him a pewter dish for ashes. He lit his pipe with one of the large candles, then sat down again.

While he had his pipe in his right hand, she seized his nearest wrist, the left one.

"I need an answer," Eleanor asserted. Forsyth tried to pull his arm



away casually. She leaned more toward him and grabbed his forearm with both her hands. "Tom, please."

"I am here to help." He looked at his forearm in her grasp. "How can I help?"

"What side are we on?"

He coughed. "Uhh, what does John tell you?"

"We talk like patriotic Americans. But my father was a Tory. My first husband was killed in the king's service. John, you know, supplied the British and Indians against the Americans in the Indian wars. American backwoodsmen burned his establishments twice in those days before I met him. Then John seemed to switch sides. Our soldiers here still call him the Englishman. Heaven knows what they call me."

"We're Scots." Forsyth was brusque.

"Of course. The servants tell me there's talk about John being linked to Redhead Dixon, the British trader up north," Eleanor continued. "Everybody says you are a British agent. I don't mind what we are, Tom, but somebody has to tell me something."

"Your husband—"

"John is too closemouthed about such things. He thinks somebody is going to hear his private affairs. It's his lifelong habit. I will die with your secret, Tom. You're not my husband, so you could tell me. Please." She squeezed her fingers into his arm. "What are we in this?"

Forsyth looked around the room at the mirrors that reflected the candle flames and the pictures in frames on the walls. He had examined the pictures, *The Musician* and *Love and Desire*, in good light on better days. They were not bad. The artists were not famous.

Eleanor sensed a chance and released his arm. "The paintings were here when we got here," she said. "Point de Sable sold them to Lalime—really to Burnett, who put up the money—along with the rest of the house and the business establishment."

Forsyth aimed his finger to the end of the room. "I've tried to get John to sell me that magnificent piece." He pointed at the eight-foot-tall French walnut cabinet with four glass doors. It contained her china.

"Extraordinary," she said. "Point de Sable's also. He must have been quite a fellow." She looked at Forsyth.

He said, "I am a secret government emissary."

"Oh." She exhaled deeply and put her hand to her breast. She took a deep breath. "I thought so. All right. My daughter, Margaret, John's stepdaughter, is married to an American officer here. You have to advise me on how we proceed."

Forsyth said, "I work for the government of the United States."

Eleanor blinked and looked away with her brow furrowed, then looked back again. "That can't be. Everyone says you are a British agent."

"That is necessary for my safety. I make myself acquainted with every detail of the Indians' doings, so the Indians suspect me. They are not sure. The Americans and the French are convinced I work for the British. They *must* continue to believe this. The fur trade is vicious, as you know. The French at Peoria are my rivals. If the French find out the truth about me, my life is gone." He snapped his fingers. "The French will give my head to the Indians."

"Then how—"

"I communicate only with men at the top, with Governor Edwards of the Illinois Territory, Governor Howard of the Louisiana Territory, and General William Clark at St. Louis. My letters are carried by a man who has my complete faith and I his. He is, oddly, a Frenchman. I won't say his name. My reports may be forwarded to Washington, but that is a risk I must take."

It was very confusing. Yet Eleanor thought it was still far better than what she had suffered in the dark. "When . . ."

"This began last fall," Forsyth added, "I warned St. Louis that the Sacs and Foxes were about to attack the frontiers of the Louisiana Territory. I believe my father, if he were alive, would have done the same."

Eleanor wondered if she could adjust. She decided instantly she could. She had been the child of a loyalist Tory in America during the American Revolution. Then she was kidnapped and became the adopted sister, by force, of an Iroquois war chief. Then she was freed and became a young Canadian lady. Then, after she and John had moved to Fort Dearborn, she acted as a patriotic citizen of the United States. She could adapt. Would she and John really become Americans at heart? It seemed fantastic. But life was.

"Why?" she said, feeling giddy with release.

Forsyth seemed to relax for a rare moment. He inhaled another toke on his pipe. "When I was a little boy—"

"It's impossible to imagine you as a little boy."

Forsyth ignored this. "My father was Scottish, as you know, like John's, but we have different fathers. My father fought alongside Wolfe at Quebec and was wounded there twice."

"Yes."

"My father was a brave and loyal British subject," Forsyth continued. "After the French and Indian War, my father became an innkeeper and a trader in Detroit where he had moved with our mother."

"Go on."

Forsyth tensed and took a deep breath as if opening an old, deep emotion.

"When the Americans rebelled against the British, my father and his friend, John Edgar, were outspoken in their opposition to the British prosecution of that war. Most especially they condemned the British practice of inciting Indians to slaughter Americans on the frontiers, a dastardly business. The British authorities in Detroit cast my father and Edgar into a dungeon for speaking out. Edgar escaped while being transferred and made his way to the Illinois Territory. But the British kept my father in the same dungeon for a long time. It damaged his health. He died in 1790."

Forsyth set his pipe on the pewter dish that rested on a doily on a small table. His face was grim.

"What was done to my father did not affect John the same."

"I see."

"John and my father, his stepfather, never got along. John ran away from home for several years as a boy."

"Yes. So you're working for the Americans as revenge on the English?"

Forsyth stretched his neck. "Ummm? As you say, Nelly, we have to settle somewhere. The people who move into this Illinois Territory—the lower part; no one is moving to this Chicago post—the people who move into the lower Illinois Territory are Americans. We must someday choose."

"What if we move west again? Or north?"

"Keep moving into the Indian country? We could. The Indians can't survive on their own as they used to. They need traders like John and

me. Chief Gomo of the Potawatomes told me he did not know what the Indians would do if the traders are withdrawn along with all the goods of civilization. He said he might abandon the Indians and live and die among the white people. He's not the only one."

Eleanor cleared her throat and asked, "Will the Americans be in a general war with the Indians?"

"That is what I am supposed to discover for certain. I am to examine the Indians up and down the Illinois River, and I have Billy Caldwell on the Wabash. Caldwell gives me credible information. Billy will go with the British, but he doesn't know my activities, nor does anyone else who works for me—except the one Frenchman. I have sent that excellent Frenchman and his son to tour the Indian villages for many days' ride from here."

"LeClair? Is that what he's up to?" she said. LeClair had passed through Chicago and stopped at the Kinzies' on his way north.

Forsyth played with his pipe, then looked back at her. "Don't mention LeClair's name. Of course, the United States government must pay me for all this."

Eleanor smiled. "Oh, absolutely!"

"I may or may not get off with my life. But it is not for the lucre of my salary that I serve my adopted country," Forsyth added.

"I might be good at such work," Eleanor responded. "Oh, yes, it is very noble how you carry on your father's stand."

"You said you might be good at this?"

"I speak several Indian languages," Eleanor explained.

"Remind me of your experience again."

"When I was a little girl, the Indians kidnapped my mother, two of my brothers, and me. They were Senecas. They killed my baby brother. Their war chief, Cornplanter, presented me to his own mother to replace a child who had been killed. They allowed my father to ransom my mother and my oldest brother, but not me. I was convinced that my father had abandoned me to the savages! Yet by the time I was thirteen, when Cornplanter voluntarily gave me back, I loved most of my Indian family. I despaired leaving them."

"If you don't mind, dear, what was your Indian name?" Forsyth collected all things Indian.

Eleanor laughed. "In English, Ship Under Full Sail."

"It's you, Nelly! You still. You would be very useful."

“I know. But I must really remain with my children.”

Forsyth sat back. Eleanor felt they had reached a sense of trust as brother-in-law and sister-in-law. She watched him. Then Forsyth said, “I wonder if I could use my influence at a high level to help John.”

“Oh, please,” she said.

“If I can convince the American authorities that John works with me and gives me vital information, they might overlook this Lalime incident, tragic as it is. John would have to give me strong evidence of his value to the United States.”

“You mean . . . you want John to spy for the Americans, too?”

Forsyth did not answer. He looked away. After a while, still saying nothing, he looked back at her.

She said, “All right. I understand. I think we must choose a home and a country for ourselves and for our children. But John’s up in Milwaukee now with the Indians and the British traders there.”

“Leave the details to me,” Forsyth said.



## Chapter 25

### THE CHOICE

*July 14, 1812*

Secret report of Antoine LeClair for Thomas Forsyth from a reconnaissance of many Indian villages:

On the 26th June on my way to Milwaakee I met 26 Falsovoine Indians from Green Bay going to Fort Malden to see their British father. They stated that they were sent by (Redhead) Mr. Dixon as their British father wishes much to see them, that on their return they expected to bring news of War being declared by the British against the U. States and all the Indians would join and that the Americans must fall.

On the 27th I arrived at Milwaakee. While I was at Milwaukee I was informed by the Flour an Indian chief of the Putowatomies that all the different nations of Indians had made an alliance to make war against the U. States, that the Indians was now only waiting for word from the British and that matters was so arranged that the Americans would be attacked at different places at one and the same time

On the 30th I left Milwaukee for Coshquonong and arrived there the next day. I found this Village much larger than ever it was, as all the Winebagoes from the different smaller Villages are all assembled here to live together. I was informed by a Putowatomie Indian that the Winibagoes were dancing to go to war against the Americans.

The Putowatomie Indians told the same news that Flour, the Chief at Milwaukee, told me, also that there was about 300 lodges of Sioux Indians on the Ouisconsin river amounting to about 400 or 500 Warriors, waiting the word from their British Father to attack the Americans.

On the 3d July I arrived at Kitchewaakeekee. At this place I understood that the Indians were much in want of Powder, that the young men are very anxious for war but are kept back until the day arrives.

On the 5th I arrived at the Great Woods on the Fox river (that empties itself into the Illinois). I understood by Indians whom I was formerly acquainted with that all their talk is war with the Americans, and were only waiting (and that with impatience) for the word from the British, and the first place they meant to attack was the Garrison at Chicago—that in the mean time they meant to steal all the horses from the Americans they could and when ready they meant to go to Chicago to drive the horned cattle some distance off from the Garrison which will answer their purpose for provisions and lay siege to that place.

Found a number of Indians from the lower parts of this river assending to hunt & fish, as the whole Indians are in a state of starvation & much in want of powder. Those Indians told me in substance what I had heard before and observed to me to keep out of the way, as the chain of friendship was so well brightened among all the red skins from North to South that it would be a war of extermination and would not stop while there was an American living.

Piorias 14th July 1812,

[signed] *Antoine LeClair*

John Kinzie cleared his throat and grimaced. He looked up from reading Antoine LeClair's letter with a sense of dread. Although Kinzie had just come by the same route as LeClair to reach the small, mostly French village of Peoria, and although Kinzie had heard the same things from the Indians and had recorded them in his own way in a letter like LeClair's, the Frenchman's letter was more frightening. With his fingers, Kinzie felt the skin at his throat, and also his whiskers there. He made a face again. "Ahem. Hmm." He spoke softly to his half brother, "I take it you're completely committed to the Americans."

Although Kinzie had thought he was there, Forsyth was not. Kinzie

turned to look for him. Then Kinzie laid LeClair's letter on top of other letters on the table of unfinished wood in front of Forsyth's log home and put a large rock on the letters as a paperweight. Kinzie looked behind again, then looked this way and that for his brother. It was one o'clock in the afternoon on a hot, humid, windless day. The sun burned overhead. Kinzie glanced at the sun through the tree branches and then looked about him at ground level. Nothing moved but butterflies in the garden, which had been lovingly created by Forsyth's wife, Keziah, and the grasshoppers in the long grass. Kinzie sat under a large maple tree that cast a comfortable shadow and gave the illusion of safety.

Forsyth's nearby trading store was open for white people and an occasional trusted Indian, but it had no customers, Indian or white, French or American. It was too hot. The next home was two hundred yards away, and no one there was visible, either. The nearest Indian villages were at least a mile away to the northeast and to the southwest on the Illinois River. Despite the heat, Forsyth had sent all his workers down to the riverbank to build a new pier to make loading and unloading easier. The assignment also had the effect of creating privacy at the house.

The rock on the table held down four letters; three of them were for Kinzie to examine. The third Kinzie had written himself. He used the rock although no breeze had blown for hours.

Forsyth exited the house. "Finished?" Kinzie nodded. Forsyth gathered up the letters swiftly and put them in a tin box similar to the box that Sergeant Wheeler had used to carry letters from Fort Dearborn.

"Can we talk a minute?"

"All right. We don't have much time," Kinzie's brother responded. Forsyth's tin box and those letters were secretly destined for the governor of the Illinois Territory, as Kinzie was well aware. Forsyth took the flat box in the house.

Kinzie had time off work by a force of circumstances. He was a fugitive. But he had watched his brother work like a mad beaver. Forsyth had been up and about, in the house, in the store, in the stable, out in back, and down by the new pier. Forsyth's log home was similar in construction to Kinzie's, though not as large or as well appointed. The younger brother had not been so fortunate as to buy a log mansion already built and furnished by Point de Sable



which Kinzie had done at Chicago. As the junior partner, Forsyth had arranged for construction of his own dwelling and trading house and the outbuildings. Forsyth's place at the southwest edge of Lake Peoria on the west bank of the Illinois River did not compare to Kinzie's, but lately Kinzie had begun to feel that his younger brother was becoming his equal in other ways.

"You're losing your hair," Kinzie said when Forsyth came out again.

"Yours is half gray."

Kinzie was forty-nine, almost a decade older. "Sit down, Tom."

Forsyth gave a sigh. "I have to leave for Vincennes this afternoon for the good of the family. It will take at least fifteen days. I just got back from Chicago. My correspondence is time consuming. Our business has to be run." Forsyth sat down on the bench at the opposite end from his brother.

"Push, push, push like good Scotsmen. We never stop, do we?"

Forsyth nodded. "That's the difference between us and the French. That's why the French are no longer in ascendancy in this territory."

Kinzie fingered Billy Caldwell's report on the Indians of the Wabash River under the rock. "Billy's letter is very short."

"He tells of their war fever," Forsyth responded, "but he has no idea why I asked or what I'm doing. Caldwell's family is in Canada. He must be kept ignorant."

"I guess you are completely committed to the Americans?"

Forsyth frowned at this being spoken aloud.

"I looked, and no one is here," Kinzie added.

"I had this conversation with Nelly," Forsyth spoke more softly. "I am an American. That die is cast. It's war now. Today the word came from Chicago. The United States declared war on Great Britain on June 18. Let's be careful what we say."

"What if the British win?" Kinzie's voice sounded strained. He had to clear his throat, and he became exasperated with himself.

"Yes. And what if the Americans win?" countered Forsyth softly. He shifted position, showing impatience.

"Well . . ." Kinzie rubbed his nose with his thumb and forefinger as if thinking hard. "I did send a letter to Captain Heald yesterday by one of our men. I warned him that the Indians all around are hostile and await only the declaration of war. It shows the officers my loyalty and good intentions."

“That was wise.”

“I gave you my own letter describing the British and Indian war council at Milwaukee, which I attended. I just happened to be there. Hah!” Kinzie laughed bitterly at his situation as a fugitive from a homicide. “Incredibly, our government factor at Chicago, when I left, insisted that the Indians want peace.” Kinzie shook his head. “A few Indians do, but not enough.”

Forsyth nodded. “He’s going to be shocked.”

Kinzie went on: “I included in my letter to you information about Redhead Dixon, about Cadot, Dice, and John Askin Jr., all our old Canadian friends.” Kinzie grimaced. “I told about the doings of the Potawatomes, the Folles Avoins, the Winnebagoes, the Sioux, the Chippewa. I imagine that letter—if you give it to Governor Edwards of this territory—could get me hanged at Quebec.”

“Your letter might prevent you from being hanged here,” Forsyth countered. “But I don’t want to force you. I know you’re innocent, John. This is a hell of a dangerous business I’m involved in. You have to be sure. We can destroy your letter if you wish.”

“No, send it.” Kinzie grimaced again. “Harrison is to blame for this war. That Tippecanoe battle set the Indians on fire.”

“Bah! The war between England and America has been coming for years.” Forsyth tried to lower his voice again. “The Prophet has been preparing the Indians for war on the Americans for years. Tippecanoe may have been a blessing if it disrupted those plans.”

“But things were peaceful, Tom.”

Forsyth leaned very close to his brother. “Maybe in little Chicago it was peaceful. The Potawatomes raided and murdered in the bottom part of this territory last year. People had to pack up and run. The governor had to call out the militia. Just in the last few days I learned that the same fellows who murdered the Coles in 1810 in the Loutre Settlement committed more murders near Vincennes a few months ago. What peace? Your letter says the Indian tribes won’t stage their all-out attack until next year. Do you still think so?”

“Obviously not,” Kinzie replied. “The British and Americans have declared war. But I wrote that letter to you a week ago. Send it as is. Make it my report to the Americans.” Kinzie turned and stared at the nearby garden. Forsyth got up to return to work.

“Why can’t they let this territory be?” Kinzie demanded. He tried

to hold his brother. "The Americans have plenty of land. We're doing great business here. Why does Harrison have to finagle so much land from foolish Indian chiefs?"

"If we're here," said Forsyth, "other people come." Forsyth remained standing. "What do you expect? The French were here already. The Canadians already own Prairie du Chien. You can bet they'll take more. The Spanish are across the Mississippi in Louisiana and down in Florida. The Irish are all over the West. The Swedes; the Germans are all over. They're bringing more black Africans across the Atlantic all the time. The prairie may be farm country for all we know, if a man can figure out how to do it. Then the miserable wretches will come—to scratch a farm and be free. You can't stop them by telling them it's an Indian hunting ground."

Forsyth put his hands behind his back. "Shall we tell them it's His Majesty's game preserves?"

"But everything moves so fast." Kinzie's face was perplexed. "Nothing stays the same. What must this do to our Indians? My own life is one war after another. The Maumee River, the Au Glaize River, now another new war. The Indians must feel as I do, pushed and pushed to insanity. And the death of John Lalime tears at me. I'm not a fighting man. I'm a businessman."

"I should pack."

"I may not be here when you return," said Kinzie.

With obvious reluctance Forsyth turned to his brother again.

"Soon it will be a month I'm gone from Nelly and the kids."

"They're fine."

"Tom's never here, either," said a female voice. Keziah Forsyth appeared from the doorway of the house with a pot of tea and two cups on a tray for them. She was a plain woman, a brunette with her hair tied in a bun at the back, but she had the glow of youth since she was only twenty-six, fourteen years younger than her husband. Keziah placed the tea on the table, then stood next to Forsyth and put her hand on his shoulder. "Now Tom's going away for two weeks again." Forsyth hugged her with his left arm around her waist affectionately.

"He's trying to save my skin, Keziah," said Kinzie, "so it doesn't end up like all our other hides."

"Will they give you a trial?"

"Maybe they already held the trial," Forsyth suggested. "We could hear any day that you've been acquitted and you can go back."

All of a sudden Kinzie felt inferior to his younger brother. He felt old, adrift without the decisiveness of his young manhood. He let his head hang, and he made faces while looking down that nobody could see. When he looked up, he saw Forsyth silently staring at Keziah as if wondering what to do with the weaker brother.

"All right. So be it." Kinzie stiffened. "As soon as we hear the verdict, if my name is clear, I'll go back to Chicago no matter what the Indians do. And assuming I go back there," Kinzie stood up, "we must stick together. We're brothers. So, then, you and I are Americans." Kinzie thrust out his right hand.

Forsyth took it and they shook. For a moment Forsyth appeared diffident now that his older, once superior brother had come over to his side.

"God bless us all," Keziah said, smiling in spite of the danger of the times or perhaps at the involuntary thrill of risk. She said, "And we three are Americans."



## Chapter 26

### AN ORDER ARRIVES

*August 9, 1812*

*Much of the world was in convulsion in those days. Napoleon's drive for world domination had stretched across oceans and into Africa. Napoleon's army had crossed into Russia on June 24. He controlled most of Europe from the Arctic to the Balkans. The numbers of dead in the Napoleonic wars staggered the imagination.*

*The British navy had kidnapped ten thousand Americans and forced them to work on British ships to fight France, and Napoleon. British navy officers had seized hundreds of U.S. ships to prevent them from doing business with Napoleon and even as a form of government-sanctioned piracy to enable Britain to control the seas. The French also seized several hundred U.S. ships—all this despite the fact that America was neutral.*

*Year after year the infant United States was humiliated and its sailor-citizens made captives by the English, sometimes within sight of American shores.*

*In the West, Indian bands and tribes launched their war against the Americans in scattered raids for reasons of Indian survival. Every westerner knew the Indians were encouraged and supplied by the English.*

*A group of young congressmen pressured Congress and the presi-*

*dent to declare war. Some people called it a Second War of Independence.*

The boys, along with Grandpa Russell, Charlie Russell, Private Kelso, and some other soldiers, had succeeded in transporting enough of the worm fence downriver by scow to Fort Dearborn and were able to reassemble it to make a good-sized cattle enclosure out on the prairie near the fort. The Indians had killed more than twenty of the cattle in small night raids, had stolen several horses from the fort's stables, and had stabbed and hacked with tomahawks four of the Leighs' sheep that had been brought up to the stables for safekeeping. John Kinzie, since his return from being a fugitive, had also warned the officers that the Indians would try to drive off the entire cattle herd at night.

The enclosure that the farmworkers, including Johnny Leigh and Jimmy Wheeler, were able to build southwest of the fort was too small to confine the cattle continually. They had to be let out in the daytime to graze and drink. The Russells and Kelso guarded the cattle at night, when it was more dangerous. Johnny and Jimmy rode herd on the cattle during the daytime. The cattle were a vital part of the garrison's food supply, not to mention the civilians' food supply if it came to a siege.

"Wheeler, you dumb horse's ass, get down here!" Johnny shouted for the third time that morning. It was six thirty A.M., and young Wheeler had not shown up for his duties. Johnny stood on the parade ground outside the south barracks, his musket by his leg.

"Take it easy," said a passing soldier. "He's crying about his father."

"I know," Johnny replied. "I know."

"You heard from *your* dad?"

"No, not yet."

"What ever possessed your dad, Leigh," the soldier asked, "to sail to Mackinac Island in these times?"

Johnny frowned. "He was gonna buy stock to set up a trading house for Indians. There's no Indian trader here. He went before war was declared."

"That sure was dumb," soldier Peter Miller persisted. "I thought your dad was one of the smart guys."

"We're not farming. My father thought Indian trading might work. A lot of people try it." Johnny stared up at Jimmy's window.

"Your dad's been gone . . ."

"A month."

"Wheeler's dad's gone seven weeks. Awful dangerous time to travel."

Johnny looked at Miller as if the soldier was an idiot.

Sergeant Wheeler had been gone more than a week past his own outside estimate for his trip. No word of any sort had been received at Fort Dearborn about the sergeant's fate. Old soldiers insisted that messengers sometimes were gone for months with the uncertainties of travel, sickness, and injury. On the other hand, only a few days earlier, Fort Dearborn residents had heard a report that Indians had killed twelve more Americans on the west side of the Mississippi in late May.

"Wheeler!"

"Hey! Shut up!" Jimmy said as he appeared on the gallery above.

"Shut up yourself! Get down here."

"Go jump in the lake! Ahh, bah dup a fud . . ." Jimmy began mumbling as he withdrew back into the barracks room.

"You got your hands full," Private Miller said, then moved off.

Jimmy could finally be heard descending the inside stairs, his boots and his musket banging on the stairs in an off rhythm. He walked straight to the privy in the southwest corner of the fort. Johnny waited. When Jimmy emerged, Johnny walked alongside him, and the two went through the dark passageway to the front gate in silence. Also without speaking, they went to the stables and got two horses, saddles, and bridles with no objection from the soldier guards who had come to know the routine. Not until the boys had saddled their horses and mounted up did either say a word.

"Did you let them out yet?" Jimmy still sounded crabby.

"Nope."

"Dumb." They both knew the cattle would be restless.

They tried to move a full set of rails from the enclosure to let the cattle out, but after they got the top rail off and the next, the cattle pushed over the next two rails and forced their way out, mooing, groaning, jumping, and shoving so that the boys had to leap out of the way or be crushed. Once he had avoided the stampede, Jimmy

stood and swore at the cattle using every swear word in existence. He knew many. Johnny mounted up.

“Stupid, dumb, imbecile, ignorant beasts,” Jimmy finished up, having exhausted his harsher words. He, too, then mounted his horse.

Mr. Russell had hung a cow bell on the neck of the steer that seemed to be the leader, and the herd generally followed this steer on its way out onto the prairie in the morning, down to the river to drink, and—when the boys drove the lead steer in the right direction—back to the new enclosure at night.

Riding herd on the cattle was not demanding work. The boys believed they could ignore the cattle for hours at a time and get approximately the same result. The goal was to keep the animals from wandering too far off and make it difficult for Indians to get them. The Indians had never bothered the cattle in the daytime. In fact, the Indians hadn’t tried any raids either day or night in the last month. The Indians were in fact lying low in the Fort Dearborn neighborhood.

“We’re going to have to build a gate,” Jimmy observed.

“We could do that today.”

“Not today.” Jimmy changed his mind. “Tomorrow. Or maybe today. Eh. I dunno. I don’t care.”

Johnny displayed patience.

Jimmy held up his canteen that was obviously empty. Johnny handed over his. Jimmy rode down to the lake south of the river mouth, took a deep drink, and filled up the canteens. For humans the Chicago River did not flow swiftly enough in late summer due to the buildup of sand at the sandbar, and the water got stagnant.

Jimmy and Johnny said nothing for almost the entire morning of slow riding around the herd. Eventually, Jimmy climbed up in a tree in the grove where the Indians had watched the great race. Johnny climbed into the same tree. They left their muskets on the ground propped against the tree but had their powder horns and ammunition pouches slung on their shoulders. Their eyes scanned the surroundings. Everyone knew that the frontier had become violent. On the other hand, nothing had happened around Fort Dearborn in a whole month, and it was a hot and lazy day.

Jimmy thought dark thoughts about the world. He ignored the birds and butterflies over the prairie and the occasional hawk. He



gazed this way and that, his mouth closed tight. Sometimes he played with a tiny branch, smaller than his little finger. Then he looked out a hundred miles for a long time. Johnny checked his young partner once in a while. The order of the day was patience.

About noon, Johnny said, "Do you wanna play us a song on that fife?"

Jimmy only shifted his posture in the tree.

Johnny asked, "What do you think of the Kinzie business?"

In Kinzie's absence, the officers of Fort Dearborn in the latter half of July had held a court of inquiry into the killing of Mr. Lalime. After taking testimony, they had acquitted Kinzie on the grounds that he acted in self-defense. The officers made the evidence in the Lalime case clear to the ordinary soldiers even if not all the ordinary soldiers believed it.

Much earlier, in a funeral ceremony that was attended by most of the people in the tiny community, the soldiers had buried Lalime on the north side of the river and placed a cross on his grave. The cross stood fewer than two hundred yards west of Kinzie's front door and was easily visible from Kinzie's front porch. Eleanor Kinzie paid several visits to Lalime's widow, Noke-no-quā, and young son, John. Noke-no-quā had become deeply withdrawn.

"I suppose," Johnny continued, "that Mrs. Kinzie is giving the Lalime family money since Lalime's salary is over."

Mrs. Kinzie had transplanted flowers from her own garden to Lalime's grave; she did this herself, instead of assigning slaves or servants, and tended the flowers. People generally agreed that Eleanor Kinzie was all right.

"Yeah." That was all Jimmy said.

John Kinzie had returned at the end of July and immediately asked permission to move his family, minus slaves, servants, and workers, back into the sutler's store inside the fort again due to the declaration of war and the great danger of Indian attacks. Heald granted permission.

"I said, 'What do you think of the Kinzie business?'" repeated Johnny.

"Where's your father?" Jimmy spoke abruptly. "Where's my father? Where's Matt Irwin? What's going on?"

"Irwin left for Mackinac, too," Johnny explained patiently, "to get

a new Indian interpreter to replace Lalime.” Irwin, the government Indian trader, spoke no Indian languages and was helpless without an interpreter. “I think Irwin’s up there with my dad waiting for a ship. You know.”

“Something’s fishy,” Jimmy said. “People who leave here don’t come back. Where are they?”

“They’ll all be back, Jim.”

“So it’s *maanoo* to you?” *Maanoo* meant “never mind” in Chipewewa. “Nothing worries you anymore, Leigh, even with your dad gone and everything messed up? I think Kinzie should lower his prices.”

“Oh, you do? What do you think about the verdict and Kinzie living in the fort and all?”

“Heh.” Jimmy spit on the ground below his tree branch. “I don’t care. He’s sort of not guilty. I think if they’re going to let Kinzie live in the fort,” Jimmy spoke in a very hostile manner, “he should charge all the soldiers the same prices.”

“You sound just like your father.”

Jimmy jerked his head to see if Johnny meant anything besides what he said. Johnny kept his face the same.

“Maybe I do . . . sound just like my father.” They were silent for a long while. Eventually, Jimmy said, “Wanna put the cattle in early and quit and do something?” His voice was unemotional.

“Nah, they won’t come in anyway. Gramps’ll get mad. What you wanna do?”

“I don’t know,” Jimmy said.

Johnny chewed on a long stem of grass. Five minutes later he said, “You know what I haven’t done in years?”

“No, what?”

“Gone in your secret tunnel.”

“You know where my money is?” Jimmy ignored Johnny’s mention of the tunnel.

“You got money?”

“Yeah, I got a little money from my grandparents.”

“Where is it?” Johnny asked.

“It’s in this tree grove. My dad gave me a map. I never dug it up. I might.”

“Really? Wanna dig up your treasure?”

“Nah.” Jimmy was silent again. Then he said, “Well, shit. You

wanna go in the tunnel? Won't take long. The stupid cattle'll be here when we get back."

The tunnel ran under the northeast corner of the fort down to an underground well near the riverbank; it could supply the garrison with water in the event of a siege. The tunnel was entered through a trapdoor in the floor of the captain's private office, the northernmost of three rooms on the first floor of the commander's quarters. The boys returned their horses to their stalls in the stable where a soldier looked at them curiously since everyone knew the cowboys' duties.

"We'll be back soon," Johnny said to the soldier. They left the horses saddled.

"How are we going to do this?"

"If the captain is in his office, we can't," said Jimmy. "We just go back to the herd. If he's not, I say we go right in the window just like when I was a kid—no hesitation. If we hang around outside, people will see us." The window that Jimmy spoke of was a side window, the captain's northern exposure. A few yards north of the captain's window, located in the northeast corner of the fort, was the garrison's largest privy, and beyond that was the north fence. The success of this stunt, the boys knew, would depend on three things: the somewhat secluded location of the captain's north window; the time of day, just after high noon when people avoided the hot sun and when the captain and his wife were most likely eating lunch; and whether anybody was entering or leaving the privy. In other words, a lot of luck was involved.

"How're we gonna see in there?" Johnny asked.

"I'll get my ration candle. Hasn't been used. Should burn for an hour. We won't be in there an hour."

"Won't be in there five minutes," said Johnny. "Maybe we should forget it. Do you really want to do this?"

"You know? Yeah, I think I do," Jimmy said.

Young Wheeler had to walk slowly across the parade ground at noontime carrying a burning candle in his hand, cupping the flame with his other hand to keep it from blowing out. Somebody was bound to notice this, and one soldier did, but it was an action of no significance or context. The soldier rolled his eyes and walked on. Johnny had gone ahead to go into the men's half of the privy. No one

was in it. He pounded twice on the wall separating the men's half from the women's half, and no one responded.

"I think nobody's in there," Johnny whispered when Jimmy arrived in the secluded corner of the fort.

They went through the open window into the captain's empty office with no hesitation, Johnny first. Jim had to hand him the candle before he entered. They opened the trapdoor and went into the tunnel. The sudden air exchange between the office and the tunnel blew out Jimmy's candle as he entered.

"Damn!" Jimmy started down the ladder and closed the trapdoor anyway.

"Hey, it's as black as pitch in here," his partner said. "Let's get out of here."

Jimmy touched Johnny. "Is that you?"

"Who do you think it is? Let's get out of here. We can't go to the end. There's a well there. We'll fall in and drown. This is worse than I thought." Johnny was whispering.

Jimmy held on to the permanent ladder for security. "Out?" They both noticed after the first few seconds that small slivers of light came through a knothole in the frame of the trapdoor and through a crack where the boards of the trapdoor were not joined exactly.

"Oh, gee, let's go halfway in, no more," said Johnny.

"Can't get lost." The tunnel went to the river and nowhere else.

The interior of the tunnel was dirt and clay supported by a wooden frame. They could walk upright but just barely. They felt grit falling on them and spider webs covering them, which they beat at with their hands. They could touch both walls simultaneously. They went slowly and covered a little more than ten feet.

Johnny, in the lead, said, "That's enough." He turned around, felt for Wheeler, and touched him. "Out."

"Good."

They started back and heard voices above.

"Oh no!"

"Shhh!" said Jimmy.

"Do you think this Indian is reliable?" It was the voice of Captain Heald.

"I don't know, sir." The voice of Lieutenant Helm.

"Have you read this order, Helm?"

"Yes, sir."

"It says Mackinac is being abandoned and asks us to evacuate this post. I'm pleased to do so, but is this a ruse of the British?"

"What?" Jimmy whispered into Johnny's ear. The older boy pushed the younger boy away.

"Captain, the name this Indian gives, Winne Mag, is familiar," said the voice of Lieutenant Helm.

"Winnemac is his name," Captain Heald corrected. "I saw him before at Fort Wayne. I see him out there now. To the best of my knowledge, Lieutenant, there are two Winnemacs. One is our enemy. Governor Harrison of Indiana trusts the other one, the fellow I see out there. I do not entirely trust him. Get Kinzie, and make sure the Indian is not allowed to get away."

"Yes, sir. Umm, the Indian already asked to see Mr. Kinzie," said Lieutenant Helm. "The men are suspicious of Kinzie. I declined to allow it." Helm had to give an appearance of independence from his father-in-law.

"Bring Kinzie here and the Indian, both. We'll keep their discussion out of sight."

In the tiny light under the trapdoor, Jimmy indicated with his thumb: "Out?" The captain was probably still up there sitting only a few feet from the trapdoor. They would get in trouble, but Jimmy no longer cared about such trivial things.

Johnny put his face in the light rays and pointed to his ear, indicating he wanted to listen. The older boy whispered into the younger boy's ear. The best Jimmy could hear was "farm" and "family." He guessed Johnny meant the fate of Fort Dearborn was the fate of the Russell and Leigh Farm.

If the fort was abandoned, the farm was lost. In the last few months, the whole world seemed to be crashing down. Jimmy reached out to get Johnny's attention, touched Johnny's cheek, and pointed upward with his thumb again. Jimmy noticed he had touched moisture on Johnny's cheek. After wondering about this, the younger boy realized that Johnny had tears on his face.

Above, Captain Heald had started to read aloud.

"Sir: It is with regret I order the evacuation of your post owing

to the want of provisions only a neglect of the commandant of . . .’ What commandant? Crossed out. Not I. . . . ‘You will therefore destroy all arms and ammunition, but the goods of the factory you may give to the friendly Indians who may be desirous of escorting you to Fort Wayne’—Fort Wayne! Thousands of dollars in goods! But it could be for the best—‘and to the poor and needy of your post. I am informed this day that Mackinac and the Island of St. Joseph will be evacuated’—Madness!—‘on account of the scarcity of provision, and I hope in my next message to give you an account of the surrender of the British at Malden’—Ahh, better—‘as I expect six hundred men here by the beginning of September. I am, sir, yours and etcetera, Brigadier General Hull, Sandwich, July 29th, 1812.’

“Sandwich. Hmm. Across the river from Detroit. Hull’s in Canada.”

Events moved very fast. Within seconds Kinzie arrived from his store only a few yards away, and Lieutenant Helm’s voice returned. Captain Heald told Kinzie to talk to the Indian in the outer office. The boys could not hear them. Meanwhile, Captain Heald asked Helm why such a military communication, if authentic, should be carried by an Indian. Helm had no idea.

“It’s a very serious matter,” said Kinzie when he returned.

Heald said, “Read this.”

Kinzie paused to read and then laid out the situation. He said that according to the Indian Winnemac, General Hull’s American army held Detroit and the small town of Sandwich on the Canadian side of the Detroit River. Indians of many nations had gathered to oppose the Americans. The Indians had raided in the countryside around Detroit and had defeated an American militia detachment. The Indians were led by the Prophet’s brother, Tecumseh, and also by Main Poc and several other chiefs. Kinzie was quoting Winnemac.

“I’m sorry to tell you also, Captain,” Kinzie stated, “that Winnemac reports the United States fort at Mackinac Island has fallen to the British and to allied Indian warriors.”

“No! Do you believe that?” Heald sounded shocked. “This order says Mackinac will be evacuated for want of provisions.”

“I think that’s a diplomatic lie, sir,” answered Kinzie. “Mackinac is the supply house for men going into the Indian country. They have far more than they need.”

"That could explain, Captain," Lieutenant Helm offered, "why there haven't been any ships lately—if the British control the lakes and took Mackinac."

Johnny poked Jimmy. This could be why Mr. Leigh and Mr. Irwin failed to return.

"That's impossible," Heald insisted. "Fort Mackinac is impregnable."

"Our circumstances may be worse yet, sir," said Kinzie. "Winnemac says General Hull sent him because the general believed an Indian would get through the Indian country while an American messenger might not. Winnemac advises, Captain, that it may no longer be practical to evacuate unless you leave now. Tomorrow morning at the latest."

"This Indian *advises*?" Heald sounded offended. "How does this Indian know what the message says? He does not read English."

"Winnemac told me what it said, sir, before you showed it to me," answered Kinzie. "If I may hazard speculation, Captain, this means that other Indians may also be aware of the content of the message. How this could have happened, I do not know. Winnemac may not tell me the truth on that. I agree with the Indian. I advise you *not* to leave here—unless you leave immediately. The Indian has traveled through the hinterland. He knows."

"Tomorrow is absurd." Captain Heald now sounded pompous. "If this is a proper order, my responsibility is to deliver the goods of the factory to friendly Indians and to the poor and needy of the post. This is what I intend to do."

Kinzie repeated in Potawatomi what Captain Heald had stated. Jimmy and Johnny understood enough to know that what Kinzie was saying was just a repetition. Winnemac responded in very rapid, agitated speech that was difficult for the boys to follow.

"What does he say?" Heald demanded.

"Winnemac says if you leave, you must leave in utmost haste and by a different route to Fort Wayne than usual." Kinzie's voice was intense. "The Potawatomes on the Wabash are deeply hostile, especially Monguago's several villages. If they learn of your march, they will try to stop you. Haste is imperative, Captain. Either stay and defend, or leave immediately. You must go tomorrow morning at the latest."

"I will not be panicked."

"Winnemac said there is a possibility that if you leave now you will meet some friendly Indians from Fort Wayne coming to meet you—if you leave now."

"How does he know *that*?" Heald's voice rose.

Kinzie spoke to Winnemac, who answered in Potawatomi.

"He says the American general sent an order to Fort Wayne to have some friendly Indians assist you."

"This is intolerable. Winnemac knows far too much. Nevertheless," continued Heald, "perhaps we can wait for the assistance from Fort Wayne to arrive."

"I would *not wait*, Captain," Kinzie advised loudly. "I would plan to stay here for good or go now. Leave before the Indians get ready to stop you."

"I have to think about this for a while. Keep Winnemac on hand. Lieutenant Helm—"

"Nathan," said Kinzie, using the captain's first name. "You know if you leave quickly, I must leave, too, and leave all my property. I will be ruined."

"That cannot be a consideration."

"I realize that. This Indian advises you to stay for our own good or leave instantly. I agree with him. He has nothing invested. Your new Sergeant Griffith claims to be an interpreter. There are Frenchmen here who speak Potawatomi. Verify what I say and do it now."

"My orders are to evacuate. We agree on that," said Captain Heald. "A fair distribution of all the goods to the savages will take some time. I think we can leave in several days."

"Captain!" Kinzie then spoke Potawatomi, repeating for Winnemac what Captain Heald had said—without, Jimmy noticed, asking Captain Heald's permission to do this. The Indian responded. Both Kinzie and the Indian spoke with great rapidity, as if in an extreme situation. Captain Heald did not.

"Winnemac says you should march out now and *leave* everything. Let the Indians divide it," insisted Kinzie. "That will occupy them. You may get away. I agree in the strongest terms. If you must go, go! I will go, too. Now."

"This is a military matter." Captain Heald's voice was calm. "I seem to have my orders. The execution of this order will take a few days. The Indian's opinion . . . I won't be moved by an Indian's opinion."



*“Stay as long as you please!”* Kinzie shouted.

The sound of a man stomping out could be heard. Winnemac could be heard grumbling roughly in Potawatomi, “What’s happening?” No one answered him.

“What is the matter with Kinzie?” said Captain Heald.

“Uhhh,” said Lieutenant Helm.

“I have to go upstairs for a moment,” Heald continued. “Get the Indian something to eat and drink, and think of a suitable reward for him. Do not let him go, Lieutenant. Stay with him. I don’t want a repeat of the Rheume incident when the Indians who accompanied the messenger from Canada slipped off.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Bring the Indian back in three quarters of an hour. At that time also send me Ensign Ronan. Don’t arouse the men. Do not say a word about Fort Mackinac captured.”

“Yes, sir. No, sir,” said Lieutenant Helm. “Of course not.” Helm walked out.

As soon as the boys could hear Captain Heald’s feet reach the second floor, they opened the trapdoor. Jimmy went up and right out the window without a thought. Johnny closed the trapdoor and then he, too, rolled out the window. Youthful Private Nate Hurtt saw them on the parade ground and said, “Hey!” but the boys did not pause. They ran right out the main gate and past the sentries. The sentries said something, but neither boy paused. They kept running until they reached the stable. En route, Jimmy said, “What do you think?”

“Nothing’s happened yet,” Johnny responded. “Except my dad might be captured by the British. Hell and damn.”

“Think we’ll stay here?”

When they got to the stable, they resumed silence. The soldiers guarding the stable watched them as they led their horses out again.

“Hot day, huh?” one of the soldiers said to the boys.

“It’ll get hotter,” Jimmy answered.

Riding back into the open country, Jimmy turned and looked back at the fort. “I don’t understand,” he said.

“Me, neither,” Johnny mused. “I wish I knew what was going on.”

“Why would a general read his orders to an Indian?”

“Maybe he didn’t.”

"Did the Indian go to school to learn to read?" Jimmy asked.

Johnny laughed, then turned serious. "Either they trust the Indian so much that they read it to him in case he had to destroy the order. Or else somebody else read it to this Winnemac. I'll bet on the second."

"Who would do that?"

"I'm thinking an American did not do it, Jim."

"Oh, no! Oh, hell," said Jim. "This is terrible."

"If it is well known that this Winnemac is a friend to Americans, then how does he ride through hostile Indians?"

"I dunno. What do you think?"

"He says," Johnny said, speculating, "'Look what I got' to whoever stops him. 'Let your British father read this, then let me pass so I can get paid, too.' He got the message through."

"And he sold us out," said Jimmy. "How'd you figure it?"

"I think different since Liberty and Cardin were killed. One of those killers touched me. I think like an animal now. Your dad and my dad can take care of themselves if anybody around here can. But I have to talk to my ma, my grandpa, and Uncle Charlie right away. Let's try to get the cattle in early."

The cattle were unwilling. The going was very slow. In the late afternoon, Jimmy climbed a tree to see if he could locate knots of cattle far off. Instead he noticed people coming up the Vincennes Trail from the south.

"Indians are coming," Jimmy announced.

Johnny fired his musket in the air to warn the fort and the neighbors.

The Indians far off stopped at the shot but did not retreat. Jimmy counted only about ten. As Jimmy watched from the tree, a detachment of soldiers came out on foot with a mounted officer to shag the Indians, but the Indians did not budge.

When Jimmy climbed the tree again a half hour later, the crowd of Indians on the trail had grown, and more were coming. Jimmy could see individual Indians start to go wide around the soldiers. The soldiers seemed to lose control and turned back to the fort. The Indians kept coming in disorder. They even seemed to have dogs with them laden with burdens.

"There's women and children there," Jimmy noted.

"Yeah, come on down."

“They’re coming for the treasure,” Jimmy added from the tree.

“What treasure?”

“The government goods in the factory. That’s the real treasure. The Indians know about the evacuation order, and they’re coming for the trade goods. Somehow they know everything!”

“Oh, boy,” Johnny said with a wince.



## Chapter 27

### “WAR ARRAY”

*August 10, 1812*

“Starr.”

“Here.”

“Simmons.”

“Here.”

“Van Horn.”

“Here.”

Sergeant Hayes finished the roll call based on the paper muster list in his hand. He let it roll itself up, and he remained at attention. It was 6:00 A.M.

“Thirty-nine present and accounted for, sir,” said Lieutenant Helm. “Twelve on sick call.”

“Why so many?” Captain Heald was annoyed. The number on sick call had been climbing almost every day for more than a week, but this was the first time Heald had publicly questioned it.

“It’s August, sir, and the men are getting their ague again and the bilious fever. The autumnal fevers.” Lieutenant Helm spoke from a rigid stance of attention.

“That will have to change. All right. I have something to read to you men.” Captain Heald produced a letter from a leather carrying case.

The men reacted with a clearing of throats, a movement of eyes,

and a shifting of hips or feet. Everyone knew something strange was going on, probably something very wrong. Soldiers believed most change meant something would be screwed up.

Indians had been allowed to camp again the evening before near Frog Creek. The crowd of Indians had grown until by sundown it reached nearly fifty. After the initial confrontation on the Vincennes Trail, the officers—who since the farm murders had vigorously dispersed any Indian groups that tried to camp near the fort—had suddenly stopped harassing the Indians. But the officers gave no new instructions to the men.

Sergeant Griffith, the garrison's new interpreter, had returned from a talk with the Indians quite puzzled and said, "They are convinced you are giving up the fort and the factory."

One private retorted, "Who's this 'you,' Sergeant?"

"Oh—us, then," said Griffith, a youthful-looking, heavysset fellow in his thirties whose hair was prematurely gray. He sometimes seemed to be a blowhard and tried continuously to ingratiate himself with the captain. Griffith had been in the army only two and a fraction months, and a gap remained between him and the rest of the garrison. Sergeant Griffith had gone to the captain's quarters to report what the Indians said, but afterwards he declined to speak to any of the soldiers and went to bed. He looked sick and distracted.

All the soldiers knew was that an unusual Indian had arrived at the front gate in the noon hour of the previous day to see the captain. The Indian had visited the captain's quarters. The same Indian had stayed inside the compound for many hours and had been fed a meal. According to sentries who returned to their barracks after late-night guard duty, the Indian had not been allowed to leave until after midnight, and then he had ridden away.

"This is an order from General Hull in command of our army up by Detroit," declared Captain Heald at the morning roll call. "It is written from Sandwich, which, for those of you who don't know, is over in Canada."

Some men smiled at that. An American army in Canada seemed to mean the American side was winning the war.

Heald raised the letter.

"Sandwich, July 29th, 1812. To Captain Nathan Heald. Sir: It is with regret I order the evacuation of your post—"

“Whaa?” said Private George Burnett, a young blond fifer in the front rank who had to step forward to keep from falling. His leg had given way at the announcement. Other soldiers were equally astonished but did not budge or make a sound.

“Silence in the ranks,” ordered Sergeant Hayes. His own eyebrows had shot up.

“Stand at attention, Private Burnett!” Ensign Ronan said, addressing his comment to Burnett who had already resumed his stance of attention.

The men moved their eyes to check the faces of the officers to see whether they showed the proper astonishment or had already known this.

“Eyes front,” said Sergeant Hayes.

Heald resumed: “It is with regret I order the evacuation of your post owing to the want of provisions only . . .” Heald skipped the next part about “a neglect of the commandant” and some garbled handwriting because it made no sense.

“The letter continues,” said Captain Heald. “You . . . Captain Heald . . . will therefore destroy all arms and ammunition, but the goods of the factory you may give to the friendly Indians who may be desirous of escorting you to Fort Wayne—”

The mouths of two soldiers in the rear ranks dropped open at this idea. One soldier in the rearmost rank muttered, “Friggin’ friendly Indians?”

“—and to the poor and needy of your post,” Captain Heald went on. “And General Hull says he hopes in his next—meaning his next letter—to give you an account of the surrender of the British at Malden as I expect six hundred men here by the beginning of September. I am, sir, yours and etcetera, Brigadier General Hull.”

Heald had also not read another part of the order, the part about the evacuation of Mackinac Island and St. Joseph’s Island for supposed lack of provisions. Abandoning Mackinac, which was the check point for passage between Canada and the American West, would be like leaving the front door open. But to tell the soldiers that Mackinac had been captured by the British and Indians was unthinkable.

“Well, we can expect to hear some good news from Canada in a few days,” said Heald, folding up the letter. “It looks as if Hull’s army has the advantage of them. There will be necessary work details. You

will have your orders. That is all.” Captain Heald turned to walk toward his quarters.

“Sergeant Hayes,” said Lieutenant Helm. “Appoint a detail to examine the wagons and make any necessary repairs.”

“Yes, sir,” Sergeant Hayes responded, frowning.

Helm continued: “Every man should go over his personal kit. There’ll be a full inspection tomorrow morning. Sergeant Holt, carry the announcements to the blockhouses and the sentries. Don’t embellish.”

“Uh, yes, sir.” Sergeant Holt spoke without enthusiasm.

“Ensign,” said Lieutenant Helm, turning to Ensign Ronan, who then said to the men, “You have a rare moment to get ready for whatever happens, each of you. Don’t waste it. Use your time.”

“Sergeant, dismiss the men,” said Lieutenant Helm.

“Kilpatrick, Grandpa, Daugherty, Fielding, Hurtt, Miller, Starr, examine the wagons,” Sergeant Hayes said. “Fill ’em with heavy barrels and see that the wagons are strong and ready to roll. Then empty the wagons again. Fix ’em where necessary. Company dismissed.”

Sergeant Hayes remained at attention, looking into space as if he knew what was coming. The ranks exploded on the officers and sergeants with many questions simultaneously.

“What the hell?” said Burnett. “You know this, Lieutenant?” asked Private Prestly Andrews. “Why?” asked Private Asa Campell. There was also “When we goin’?” “Are we at war?” “What’s happenin’ in Canada?” “What friendly Indians?” “What about the savages?” “Why don’t we stay?” “You agree with this?” “Who was that red devil?” “We’ll git killed!”

Lieutenant Helm and Ensign Ronan both shouted at once: “*Hey!*” Helm raised his arms. Ronan glanced over his shoulder toward the captain’s quarters.

“You will all be informed as soon as we know!” shouted Lieutenant Helm to the group which then became silent.

Sergeant Hayes asked a question that was audible to all in the sudden silence: “Sirs, when did we get an express rider?”

Lieutenant Helm hesitated. Ensign Ronan, standing next to him, also said nothing.

“Yeah,” said Private Michael Lynch.

“Shut up,” said Private Nathan Edson.

"The order," said Lieutenant Helm, "was brought by the friendly Indian whose name is Winnemac."

"There's no sech thing anymore," said Private David Sherror.

"What?" "Why an Indian?" "Where's the real messenger?" "What's goin' on?" said various men.

"Yes, there are friendly Indians, Private Sherror," Lieutenant Helm responded. "Captain Heald from his previous command at Fort Wayne knew this Indian, Winnemac, and the same warrior, I'm told, is considered a friend to Americans by Governor William Henry Harrison."

"Why are they sendin' Indians with army orders?" "Why are we leavin'?" "What's happenin' in Canada?" "We got lots of provisions." The questions and statements became a general noise. Helm raised his hand.

"You will get your orders." He kept his hand up for silence.

"What about our wives and children?" asked Private John Simmons. Simmons was a big, handsome fellow, five feet eleven, with a tenor singing voice. He had arrived at Fort Dearborn in the spring of 1810. In 1811, he impressed everyone in the garrison by walking four hundred miles back home to Miami County, Ohio, through mostly unsettled wilderness to get his wife and son. Private Simmons and his wife then carried their two-year-old boy, accompanied by a packhorse, and walked the four hundred miles back to Fort Dearborn. John and Susan Simmons traveled for thirty days, mostly alone, through the cold and rain of March and April, often crossing swollen rivers. Their curly-haired child, David, who had a demanding way about him at age two, was quickly dubbed "The Little Corporal" by the Fort Dearborn garrison after a certain emperor by that name in Europe. Susan Simmons had since given birth to baby Susan, who by August 1812 was all of six months old.

Ensign Ronan answered Simmons's question: "If we leave," said Ronan in a loud voice, "obviously everyone will march out together in good order. Everyone! Lieutenant Helm has a wife also, as does the captain."

"Whaddya mean *if*?" Corporal Jones shouted louder than all. Other soldiers heard Jones's question and paused. Jones added, "We might hold the fort?"

Ronan looked to Lieutenant Helm. "Orders will be forthcoming,"



said Lieutenant Helm. "You are all dismissed. Take advantage of this time. There may not be much."

Sergeant Crozier asked, "Why are all these aborigines out there?"

"Yeah!" "What the hell?" The Indians a few hundred yards from the fort had almost been forgotten for a moment.

"You're dismissed," said Lieutenant Helm.

"Hell, no!" shouted Private James Latta. "We need a damn answer!"

"The order says to distribute the goods of the factory to the Indians," Lieutenant Helm stated as if this were routine.

"Say that again!"

Helm repeated it. "You heard the order read."

"Who told the Indians to come here?" demanded Latta.

Helm answered, "We don't know how they knew. Sergeants, if the men don't have any personal matters to attend to, assign them work details. You are all dismissed."

When the men descended on Sergeant Hayes with another barrage of questions, Hayes looked straight ahead with his brow furrowed and his eyebrows pulled together, and he did not answer. He appeared to be concerned yet outwardly calm.

Finally, Sergeant Hayes said, "Kelso."

"Yeah, Sarge."

"Ask the Russells as well as the Leigh and Wheeler boys to prepare to move the cattle up this evening to within the esplanade—right on the grounds of this fort outside the walls. I'll give you the final word." Hayes had to get approval from the captain.

"Sure, Sarge," said Kelso. "We should probably move part of the rickrack fence to fill in the gaps of boundary fence around the esplanade. The cattle are going to make a hell of a mess of cow pies."

"Indubitably. You'll have some volunteers to help you with the fences when you're ready," responded Sergeant Hayes.

A sense of unreality descended. Indians continued to come in, at first from the Three Fires, the Potawatomes, Chippewas, and Ottawas, who lived together in the Calumet River village. Then Potawatomes from the Des Plaines River village at the principal portage started to come across the nine-mile prairie. Soon, in the blockhouses, the look-outs could see Indians coming from several directions.

During the day of August 10, John Kinzie was in and out of the captain's quarters. Soldiers examined and repaired their personal equipment and looked out their barracks' shooting holes or stood on the galleries and looked over the walls at the gathering Indians. Eventually, men assigned by their fellows to watch the captain's quarters noticed that Ensign Ronan went to the captain without apparently being summoned, and then returned. Then Lieutenant Helm walked rapidly over to the captain's quarters, both presumably with questions about the future. Dr. Van Voorhis went from the south barracks, Jimmy's building, where the sick had been gathered together on the first floor, then to the officers' quarters, and then back to the sick. He appeared agitated. A few soldiers found excuses to walk by the captain's quarters. Phrases could be heard in loud conversations between the captain and the officers, such as "one hundred fifty to two hundred miles," "women and children," "old and sick men," "hostile country," "eight to ten days."

"It's what you'd expect," Private Elias Mills reported when he returned to the north barracks from his eavesdropping expedition.

Then Lieutenant Helm emerged from the captain's quarters and ordered Sergeant Holt to assemble a detail on the parade ground.

When he addressed the detail, Helm seemed uncomfortable.

"We are to start taking barrels of flour and sacks of dried corn to the Indian encampment and give it to them."

The men grumbled.

"Let's take it from the factory, sir," said Sergeant Holt.

"Precisely, Sergeant." The factory's supplies had originally been intended to be traded by the U.S. government to the Indians for furs and deerskins. The soldiers did not have the same proprietary attitude about the factory's provisions as they did about the garrison's own.

Sergeant Holt borrowed a wagon from the wagon-fixing detail "for no good use." The soldiers, some of them hard-faced and silent, delivered the first shipment of goods to the Indian camp along Frog Creek. The location of the Indian camp had suddenly changed in a way that made the men extremely uncomfortable. For all its years that little camp had been located more than half a mile southwest of the fort, and it had been tiny—until, following the Leigh Farm murders, Captain Heald had it broken up and forced the Indians to leave.

Now the Indians that were arriving seemed emboldened. They had pitched their camp at the juncture of Frog Creek and the main branch of the Chicago River, almost within shouting distance of the fort and so that no man at the fort could miss the sight of the crowd of Indians.

When the soldiers delivered the first shipment of goods, the Indian women responded pleasantly and with gratitude. The young Indian men were standoffish. Two of the soldiers smiled almost involuntarily, possibly out of nerves or as people do when they give presents.

At 10:00 A.M., the American civilian men came into the fort in a body—Mr. Russell and Charlie, the operators of the farm in Mr. Leigh's absence, and also Louis Pettell, ex-private Tom Burns, Samuel Clark, and Mr. Henry. The latter four hunted and trapped and kept small gardens, lived almost like Indians, and occasionally hired themselves out to do jobs for Kinzie or passing traders, Pettell was French Canadian and had joined the militia. Antoine Ouilmette was conspicuously absent. Sentries greeted the civilians as friends. "Hey, gents." The civilian men went straight to the captain's quarters.

When the civilian men emerged, some looked nervous, some angry.

"Hello, Tom," said Private Paul Grummo, who had hung about on the parade ground to get news.

"We and our sons are the militia," Burns declared. "Ain't we supposed to be kept informed?"

"We didn't know nothin', either," Grummo said with a shrug.

"Hell of a way to run an army," Mr. Russell said, scowling.

In the afternoon the soldiers delivered more flour and corn from the U.S. Factory to the Indian camp.

About three o'clock word spread that the Indians in the Frog Creek camp outnumbered the soldiers and civilians in Chicago. People felt the hair on the back of their necks stand up. By sunset the population of the Indian camp was up to 150, and the Indians kept coming. At night the barking of the Indians' dogs and the appearance of new campfires made it clear to the sentries that more Indians had arrived in the dark. Many soldiers had difficulty sleeping. Others drank up their whiskey stashes, fell asleep, and snored. A few soldiers, against orders, wandered restlessly within the fort after the garrison had gone to bed. Finally, the officer and sergeant on duty stopped the wandering and restored order for the night.

*August 11, 1812*

On Tuesday, by which time the crowd of Indians outside the fort had swelled to 250, matters grew more ominous.

During the day and the sunlit early evening, soldiers, on orders from Captain Heald, delivered more foodstuffs from the U.S. Factory to the Indian camp. The lookouts in the blockhouses could see Indian riders head outward as if to bring in more of their fellows. The American civilians had moved into the empty Indian Agency house on the esplanade, the same agency house that had been fortified after the Leigh Farm murders. This time the civilians—mothers, fathers, older and younger children—appeared nervous and sad.

The big shock was the visit of the chiefs to the fort in the evening. Indian chiefs had visited the fort many times before to pay respects to the commander and to accept gifts. Such chiefs had dressed in long shirts, leggings, and turbans—with their best jewelry and ornamentation but plain faces.

These four, escorted by Sergeant Griffith from the nearby camp, wore fresh and fearsome war paint, were naked from the waist up, had their heads shaved or plucked except for topknots, and held tomahawks in their belts. They carried their powder horns, ammunition pouches, and muskets.

“War array,” said John Kinzie who watched from near the gate as they entered.

The chiefs had their chests out, chins high, and faces hard.

Under the paint the soldiers recognized Naunongee from the Calumet River and Cowabeemay from the Des Plaines River; the names of the other two chiefs were not immediately learned.

Sergeant Griffith, who was the interpreter, escorted the chiefs into the captain’s quarters. Sergeant Crozier emerged with orders to get Kinzie and another chair. What Crozier said ran around the fort like electricity.

“The captain and Kinzie are eatin’ dinner with the savages!” Crozier reported. “The savages are hostile. We’re at war, and we’re servin’ ’em at table.”

Yet no wagons were packed that day. No date was announced to evacuate the fort. People debated whether the captain knew what he was doing or whether anybody knew.

*August 12, 1812*

Captain Heald announced on morning parade that the Indian chiefs had professed friendship at the previous night's supper and had given assurances they would conduct the garrison safely through on the march. Lieutenant Helm and Ensign Ronan said nothing. The silence was total.

In the afternoon a short, ugly man named Peresh Le Claire was allowed into the fort through the side gate. Peresh, a fellow of many worlds, was half Potawatomi and half French and worked for Kinzie, sometimes at the Kinzie establishment at Chicago and sometimes at Kinzie's former base on the St. Joseph River in Michigan.

Peresh had made himself a hero to the soldiers on July 18, three weeks earlier, when he walked ninety miles from the St. Joseph River to Chicago without a stop in just over a day. He had brought the first word that the United States and Great Britain were at war. He was nineteen.

Often a wise guy but this day agitated, Peresh sought out Kinzie in Kinzie's sutler's store. Then Peresh immediately left there and entered the officers' quarters on the west side of the fort. Indians and half-Indians did not normally go inside the officers' quarters. (Despite his last name, Peresh was no relation to the LeClair who did secret jobs for Tom Forsyth.)

Captain Heald suddenly emerged from his own quarters onto the parade ground and summoned the officers. Instantly, in the center of the parade ground, the three were in a public disagreement. Their gestures and expressions told the tale.

Peresh sidled over to Sergeant Otho Hayes.

"Hayes," whispered Peresh, "don't let your officers go with the captain if he leaves the fort."

"Whaddya mean?"

"The captain has made an appointment to display to the chiefs all the goods. Heald says he will deliver these to buy safe passage to Fort Wayne. Some warriors plan to murder the officers at this council and take the goods anyway."

"Tell the captain."

"He does not like me. I told the younger officers, but I see Heald does not believe them."

“What a mess we got here.” Hayes spat in the dust.

The officers’ public discussion quickly adjourned to the captain’s quarters. A soldier was sent to get Kinzie. After a while, Kinzie with a long and reluctant face followed Captain Heald out the front gate. Lieutenant Helm and Ronan stayed behind.

As soon as Kinzie and Heald were beyond the gate, Helm and Ronan raced to the blockhouses and shouted orders.

The subalterns ordered the portholes of the blockhouses thrown open. Cannon barrels were thrust out. Outside, to the south of the fort, a delegation of about fifty Indians in war array climbed over the low boundary fence and entered the esplanade.

“God in heaven,” Private Kilpatrick said. Inside the south barracks, he looked out a shooting hole and prayed, “Watch over us.”

“I hope the fellas out by the meadow git away,” said Private James Corbin.

“And the boys tendin’ the horned beasts on the prairie,” said Kilpatrick.

Captain Heald and John Kinzie met the large Indian delegation between the captain’s garden on the east and the stables on the west.

The Indians cast baleful stares at the fort, especially at the open porthole of the nearest blockhouse and the exposed cannon barrel whose dangerous maw threatened them.

After talk and a pipe smoke—with Kinzie turning around periodically to check on the cannon barrels—Captain Heald opened the U.S. warehouse outside the fort and showed the delegation leaders the goods: ready-made clothes, scarves, traps, farm tools for women, knives, hatchets, steel arrowheads, bolt cloth, jewelry, tobacco, Mackinac blankets, cooking utensils, sewing utensils, dried fruits, and so forth, a long, long list of manufactured goods. The quality of the manufactured goods from the U.S. Factory had made notable strides in preceding years.

Next, Captain Heald led the leaders of the Indian delegation into the front gate of the fort.

“All the saints in heaven,” said Private Kilpatrick.

Captain Heald led this parade of Indian chiefs right into the fort’s magazine. Soldiers’ mouths dried up and their lips stuck together. They watched from various windows or from the parade ground itself. Inside the northwest blockhouse, four soldiers watched from the shadows.

“There are tons of guns, powder, balls, and lead for makin’ balls in that there magazine!” Private Andrews exclaimed. “The factor and Kinzie stopped all sales of arms and ammo to Indians. The captain cain’t give ammunition to the savages.”

Andrews looked to Ensign Ronan to seek some explanation. Ronan stared at the Indian chiefs and the captain outside but said nothing.

Captain Heald next led the delegation of chiefs to the guardhouse at the opposite end of the fort where one hundred new muskets and rifles from the U.S. Factory were temporarily stored. The men in the northwest blockhouse fell silent. Their eyes grew very wide. Captain Heald ordered the guardhouse opened. The captain led the Indian chiefs inside to view the long guns. The men who watched from the blockhouse touched each other in silence and fear.

That night the chiefs returned for dinner in the captain’s quarters in war array. Old Cowabeemay got overexcited and fired his musket into the captain’s ceiling. At the shot, soldiers raced to their posts without orders.

No attack came. The Indian chiefs left in what seemed to the soldiers a high and haughty mood.



## Chapter 28

WILLIAM WELLS

*August 13, 1812*

“Cicily, would you take your son for a walk for a few minutes? Fine,” said Captain Heald loudly to the unseen black slave. The captain assumed it was done. He pulled up a rocking chair and directed his wife to sit in the other rocking chair. They sat on either side of the door leading to the gallery outside the commanding officer’s second-story apartment, which was above his office. It was afternoon, and the blazing sun from the west came through the doorway enough to scorch a person, but the air through the open doorway was a small relief. They each sat out of the direct sun.

“I think I have things well in hand,” Heald began.

“Could Ah jest set in your office?” Cicily had suddenly appeared.

“What?” Heald flinched.

“Ah’m afeared of those savages outside, Cap’n.”

“Cicily, now how would that look? You sitting in my office with your infant? No.”

“Go for a walk, child,” said Rebekah Heald. “You don’t have to leave the enclosure.”

“Can Ah git a soldier to walk us by the river on the east side, a soldier with a gun?” Cicily asked. “Jes right out here.” Her gesture showed she intended to walk in the nearly hidden area between the east wall of the fort and the river, the safest spot on the esplanade.



"Sergeant Hayes will arrange it," said Mrs. Heald.

"Yes, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am!"

Mrs. Heald waited. Then she said to her husband, "It's a pity you don't have a reliable aide." She fanned herself with a decorated paper fan that had a yellow tassel hanging from the handle. It had been made in China and was supposed to have been imported by John Jacob Astor, a gift from the Kinzies. "Your subalterns are nervous boys. The surgeon is barely out of school."

She frowned and seemed to think of her wish for a more mature surgeon when she was pregnant and when she gave birth. Her baby had been born dead. She put the fan down and returned to the sewing in her lap.

"I know." Captain Heald was abruptly sad, too. "They are not helpful right now. But did I show you the dictionary Ronan inscribed to me?" The captain brightened and half-rose to get it.

"Sit down." His wife was impatient. "Your subalterns refused to accompany you to the Indian council and made that ridiculous display with the cannons. Were they going to blast you and Mr. Kinzie to kingdom come as well as the Indians?"

"It was rare, the thought of cannons at our backs. Helm and Ronan say little Peresh warned them of a plot against me. Their threat was that if the Indians harmed me and Kinzie, they would kill the Indians, and this threat might save us."

"My father trusts very few Indians."

"In carrying out my orders from General Hull, dear, I am calling on the better part of the Indians to come forward," Heald explained. "That is why I believe the Indians and I will reach a reasonable agreement."

"As I said, my father trusts very few Indians."

Rebekah Wells Heald was extremely proud of her father, Samuel Wells, who had fought many Indians. He had even led the Kentucky riflemen contingent at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Captain Heald meditated. He looked out the door into the distance and let his eyes go out of focus. "I have offered the chiefs a substantial reward when they have escorted us safely to Fort Wayne. That would be in addition to all the goods of the U.S. Factory here and all the provisions of Fort Dearborn. The total should keep them occupied for weeks. The chiefs seem like reasonable men."

"I wish Uncle Bill were here," his wife said. "There's nobody like Uncle Bill."

"Half Indian," said Heald.

"Please."

"I mean, he was kidnapped and raised by Indians. Not that he is one, of course."

Rebekah's uncle was Captain William Wells, the short, scrappy, and extremely perceptive former Indian, former Indian fighter, and onetime Indian agent at Fort Wayne.

"What are you sewing? That's my wamus." Heald referred to an underwear item in the shape of a cardigan sweater worn by a man in the winter. His wife was busy with it. Her sewing basket was on the floor to her left. "It's hotter than blazes in August," the captain exclaimed. "I couldn't possibly wear that. It is August."

"I told you, my father trusts very few Indians, Nathan. Promise them anything if you must." A commotion could be heard on the parade ground below. "I'm making pockets around your cuffs and around the bottom hem to hide paper money."

"Why?"

"Just in case we need it. What do you think's going on out there?"

"Matt Irwin always did say," Heald mused aloud, "that the Indians in this neighborhood were much friendlier than John Kinzie makes them out to be. Now we'll see."

"It's absolutely vital!" his wife blurted. She began to sew furiously.

They could hear a man's boots pound up the inside stairs. Lieutenant Helm appeared in the doorway. Although they were staring at him, he knocked on the doorjamb.

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Captain. Madam." Lieutenant Helm bowed. He appeared a bit disheveled, a bit fearful. He spoke without enthusiasm. "Captain Wells has arrived with another officer from Fort Wayne and twenty-seven or so Miamis."

"Oh, all is saved." Mrs. Heald threw down her sewing. "Oh, my! He came himself."

After he chose a site for his Miamis to camp near the fort, Wells strolled through the front gate accompanied by, of all people, Lieutenant Pettibone, the same nattily dressed fellow from New Jersey

whom Wells had first guided to Fort Dearborn in 1808. Then, Pettibone had been a young artillery officer and messenger from the War Department. This time, Pettibone wore another new uniform, an infantry officer's dark blue coatee with tails and scarlet collar and cuffs, white, almost skin-tight pantaloons, and black boots. His tall black cap had a white plume.

Despite Pettibone's finery, Wells was the object of all eyes.

Wells wore a plain white linen shirt, white pantaloons dusty from long use, and black boots. His hair was tied with a black ribbon at the back of his head in a queue such as George Washington had worn. He strode up to Captain Heald and Rebekah who waited in the center of the parade ground in front of the flagpole. Wells made a reasonable salute to Heald and then hugged his niece who kissed him. The garrison watched every movement. Soldiers peered from galleries, windows, blockhouses, and some from corners of the parade ground.

"I'm acquainted with your orders, Captain," said Wells. "It's good to see you." Wells appeared pleasant. "I observe a difficult situation outside. What is your plan, sir?"

"I've asked the cook to fix you the best we have, Bill," Captain Heald said with a smile, "and for this officer to see that your Miamis are fed and your animals are cared for. It's good to see you, too."

"I meant, Captain Heald, what is your plan for the garrison and the civilian men, women, and children?"

Heald appeared puzzled. "Uh, of course. As soon as all the property is distributed and you are rested, we intend to march out toward Fort Wayne . . . or Detroit, if you think that's better."

Wells nodded. "I know those are your orders." Then he pointedly raised his eyes and examined the interior perimeter of the fort. He stared up at the high walls all around. He particularly studied the northwest blockhouse. Then he slowly turned his body and took in the rest of the massive defenses, especially the southeast blockhouse. He came to a stop facing Heald. "Very strong defenses." He rubbed his three-day growth of whiskers.

"My orders are to evacuate the fort," Heald insisted.

"I see. In that case," Wells made a bump in his cheek with his tongue, "I suppose I should pay a visit to the very large assembly of Indians only a quarter mile from here."

"Don't you want to wash?"

Wells had already turned and was walking back toward the main gate. Pettibone stayed where he was.

"Not very friendly for a man I knew for three years at Fort Wayne," Captain Heald observed with a frown. He looked at his wife.

"Bill's just all business, dear, when it comes to these matters. He's never been a diplomat." Her face was more concerned and contorted than her words. She watch her uncle leave.

Wells had begun to look at the ground while he walked, as if deep in thought.

Pettibone piped up. "I suppose you wonder why I'm here."

"The thought hadn't crossed my mind," the captain said, looking at Pettibone as if he were a stranger on the street.

"I'm Lieutenant Pettibone. I've been posted as second in command at Fort Wayne!" Pettibone beamed. "I arrived before my predecessor was scheduled to leave, so I'm supernumerary for the nonce. Couldn't pass up this rescue mission with Captain Wells, a real wartime adventure. Your uncle, ma'am—" Pettibone bowed to Rebekah "is quite the fellow. I had misjudged him. He is different than his reputation among the desk commanders in the East."

"Oh, yes."

"I don't expect adventure, Lieutenant," Heald responded. "A long, dry, dusty trip and long, tiring Indian negotiations—that's all."

Wells walked directly from the front gate to the Indian camp that was now within easy reach at the spot where Frog Creek joined the main branch of the Chicago River. The soldiers in the blockhouses sent word to other soldiers in the fort that they could see Wells in the afternoon sun strolling about the Indian camp and sitting in one group and then another as if he were at a social event. Some soldiers struggled to see over the fence by standing on the galleries.

By this time the Indians outside Fort Dearborn were so numerous that they had split into two camps. One was within sight, six hundred yards from the fort. The second camp, the cattle watchers explained, had been established not quite two miles south on the east bank of the south branch of the Chicago River where the river made an elbow as it turned southwest.

“How are we going to get out of here?” Private Fielding Corbin, husband of Susannah, asked in the northwest blockhouse. Pettibone had gone into the blockhouses to view the situation and hear the enlisted men. He did not answer the question, which was addressed to anyone, because he didn’t know the answer. Pettibone finally realized he was learning.

“I’m sure Captain Wells has a trick or two,” Sergeant Hayes said calmly. “In the last war he commanded a cadre of spies, most of whom, like him, had been Indian captives and could pass for Indians. They would sit at the enemy’s campfires to find out what was up. Imagine that.”

Fielding asked, “Wasn’t Sergeant Wheeler one of those spies?”

“Yep,” Hayes responded. “He was never a captive, but Wheeler’s clever and can travel alone across hostile country. Wells picked him for his uses.”

“Sergeant Wheeler?” said Pettibone. “Didn’t I meet him here a few years ago?”

“His boy gave you a tour of the fort, sir. Sergeant Wheeler’s an express rider who’s been gone a long time. We hope for the best.”

After a small silence, Pettibone asked, “Didn’t Wells once save a group of officers and their women from a gang of assassins at an Indian council outside Fort Wayne?”

“The story is,” Hayes said, “that Wells noticed some of the Indians were carrying hidden arms, so he leaped into a mad war dance.” Hayes struck what he imagined to be a war dance pose and a war dance face.

The soldiers laughed in spite of themselves.

“He scared all them assassins before they could do anything.”

Said Fielding Corbin, “Hope he has a war dance for us.”



## Chapter 29

### OPTIONS

Jimmy Wheeler, Johnny Leigh, and Private John Kelso walked wearily to the front gate of the fort late in the day. They had returned the cattle to the esplanade and into the enclosure that they and many soldiers had built by moving the fence rails yet again. The boys and Kelso were very tired. They led their horses inside the fort for the night.

One of the sentries, a young fellow with black hair that stuck out here and there from his round hat, said, “You’re fools to come back.”

“Yeah, it’s bad,” agreed Kelso. His thick, hairy eyebrows knitted into a hedge. “Over yonder in that camp and in their second camp way south, all told must be five hundred Indians, mostly warriors. They’re measurin’ my scalp.” Kelso went on in and led the boys through the tunnel. He swaggered as he walked, the swagger of a man who had worked all day lifting fence rails and was trying to loosen his back.

Inside the fort, the boys went up to the second-floor sergeants’ room where Jimmy lived. They sat in the exquisite shade and let their eyes and skin adjust after a whole day in the sun. Johnny was in no hurry to return to the Indian Agency where the American civilians were living again.

“We got a civilian in here?” It was the voice of Sergeant Hayes who had come off duty and up the stairs.

“We got two civilians,” Jimmy answered.

Only Hayes's head and chest were above the floor; his lower body was on the stairs. "Come with me," he said.

"We're listening."

"No. Come along."

The boys sighed at the necessity of leaving their comfort. Hayes led them out of the fort again.

The new cattle enclosure had been built in the western half of the esplanade to leave the route to the main trail and the trail gate on the eastern half of the esplanade clear. The cattle enclosure was also placed one hundred yards south of the fort as a gesture to hygiene. It was roughly opposite to and parallel with the stables. Hayes walked them toward it.

"Lost any animals?" he asked.

"Not lately," Jimmy said. "The Indians haven't bothered them in a month. What are we—"

It was a full minute from the barracks to the cattle enclosure. This added to the mystery of this trip. Hayes then leaned on the fence of the enclosure, waved his big arm at the cattle for no reason, and stated, "Come up on either side of me. You're almost of age now. John, you're sixteen." Hayes looked to his left and then to his right. "Jim, you're fourteen. I'm making you both men. This is between us three. They're still going to try to persuade Captain Heald not to evacuate the fort. If they can't, we'll go in a day or two."

Johnny nodded. "We figured."

"If you boys go out with the cattle again, you don't have to come back."

The boys looked past Hayes at each other.

"Take off by ourselves?" Johnny asked.

"Look toward the cattle when you talk," Hayes said. "It's a hell of a risk to travel alone across country with all these Indians moving about, but the picture here is bad. Talk to your mother, John, or your grandpa or your uncle."

"I have to stay to protect my family."

"Your grandpa and your uncle will be here with your family. And all your family will be with the troops. You two won't matter. You boys know this country. It might be wise to separate some of you Leighs."

Hayes now looked at each one. “Mr. Wheeler. Mr. Leigh. You boys carry your family names.”

“Uhhh, you think something happened to my father?” Johnny asked.

Sergeant Hayes started to look at Jimmy instead, but Hayes caught himself.

“No, John, your father may be a prisoner of the British.” Hayes lowered his voice. “That is, if the British took Mackinac Island. Don’t repeat that. But if you two took off tomorrow, it would just be a precaution. You might meet us at Fort Wayne. I feel close to your fathers. I think they’d expect me to tell you where we are.” He smiled and looked at each in turn.

“John?” Jimmy looked over at his longtime partner.

“I ain’t goin’. I gotta stay with the sisters and my brothers and my ma. I couldn’t leave them.”

“I think I’ll wait for my dad, Hazy,” Jimmy said. He had no intention of leaving, afraid or not. He was angry about the strong possibility that his father had been attacked by Indians. Jimmy wanted to fight.

Hayes waited to see if the boys had more to say or any questions. Then he said, “That’s it, fellas. It’s a man’s decision. I’ll let you know things when I can.”

While Sergeant Hayes and the boys talked, Wells held a meeting with Captain Heald. The two were soon joined by Lieutenant Helm, Ensign Ronan, and John Kinzie in the first floor of the captain’s quarters. Pettibone was allowed to attend as a supernumerary and observer. Wells seemed aloof, yet calm and stiff, as if the meeting was in no way social.

“Captain,” Wells inquired, “may I ask the state of arms, ammunition, and provisions here?”

“As a matter of fact, Uncle Bill, it’s not what we would wish,” Captain Heald responded, appearing puzzled at Wells’s attitude.

Lieutenant Helm interrupted. “We have two hundred stand of arms,” he said, meaning that there were two hundred muskets or rifles.

“You’re vastly exaggerating, Lieutenant,” Heald contradicted. “We have only seventy.”



"Captain, the garrison has seventy," Lieutenant Helm argued, "but we have another one hundred or more belonging to the factory's stores that we have removed to the guardhouse for security. We also have our artillery. We have six thousand pounds of powder and a sufficient quantity of shot, lead, and so forth. We also have three months' provisions in Indian corn despite the provisions we have given away to the Indians in the last few days. We have two hundred head of horned cattle, including your own cows, Captain, and Kinzie's cattle and oxen, and twenty-seven barrels of salt. We're in pretty good shape, really."

"My orders are to evacuate and give those provisions to the Indians. And we have only seventeen barrels of salt."

"Twenty-seven, sir."

"No matter," Wells broke in. "I'll repeat what I told Captain Heald before you gentlemen arrived at this meeting. I have taken council with the Indians. The Indians are hostile. They do not say they will attack, but I know them and their manner. Some time before I came here, I personally sent my three daughters and my son for safety to Piqua, Ohio. I told my new wife to go, too, but she is a Kentucky woman and insisted on waiting at Fort Wayne. I know whereof I speak. The Indians in this part of the country are hostile."

Wells was forty-two and in the prime of his manhood. He looked at Heald, Lieutenant Helm, Ensign Ronan, and John Kinzie. He ignored Pettibone. "You have sufficient supplies to resist attacks from the Indians, should they try them, and even attacks from the Indians assisted by the British. But these Indians outnumber you. If we leave here, they will interrupt us. Captain Heald, what is your intention?"

"My orders are to evacuate," Heald answered. "The chiefs have personally promised to give us a safe escort in return for all our stores here and for a further reward upon our safe arrival."

"The Indians are hostile," Wells repeated. "I advise you against evacuation."

Kinzie broke his silence. "I advise against it also, Captain."

Pettibone's eyes widened.

"I intend to evacuate to Detroit or Fort Wayne," Heald stated, "with your escort, Captain Wells, and with an escort of those Potawatomes out there."

With a furrowed brow, Wells stared at Captain Heald. William

Wells had been successful in combat against whites and Indians, more than once against each. But Wells had never in his life successfully fought a bureaucrat. As a government Indian agent, Wells had struggled through disputes with the governor of the Indiana Territory, with the United States secretary of war, and with the U.S. factor at Fort Wayne who was Wells's rival. Wells always lost.

Wells narrowed his eyes and continued to stare at Captain Heald as if incredulous. Finally, Wells announced: "Then I believe I will get something to eat. Thank you."

"This meeting is ended, gentlemen," Captain Heald declared. "I have the Indian chiefs coming for supper."

"Damn."

The last was John Kinzie.

Wells ate dinner alone in a room on the first floor of the officers' quarters on the west side of the fort, opposite the captain's quarters that were on the east side. While he ate, Wells weighed his options. He had purposely ordered a big meal and got beefsteak, fresh biscuits, onions, and radishes; the radishes had been harvested just before the cattle were herded into the esplanade and trampled them in the officers' garden. The radishes were hot and spicy at this time of year. Wells ate a hearty meal because he thought this might be his last for a while. Captain Heald had stated his plan was to march out on the morning of Saturday the fifteenth. It was now the evening of Thursday the thirteenth. Wells decided he would be most at ease if he followed the familiar routine of his Indian days and ate nothing on Friday the fourteenth, the day before he expected a battle. He tried not to think beyond that.

A knock interrupted and annoyed him, but he realized he hadn't found any solution. "Who is it?"

"John Kinzie."

"Come in."

The door opened. Kinzie had Lieutenant Helm with him. "Sorry to bother you, Bill."

Wells waved away the apology. "I see the captain across the way is practicing his idea of Indian diplomacy. It may not matter."

Kinzie smiled with resigned acceptance. "You've met my son-in-law, Linai Helm. His father is a gentleman originally from Virginia."

Wells rose and shook Helm's hand. "My father was from Virginia, sir. Several parts. Kept moving west."

"I'm honored, Captain Wells. Everyone is counting on you."

Wells raised his eyebrows. Then he let that remark pass. "I have known your father-in-law, Lieutenant, since he and I met at Kekionga in the old days when I was a young warrior of the Miami."

"An Indian town." Helm showed no other reaction.

"Kekionga was, in a manner of speaking, Lieutenant, the Washington City of the Indians, the heart of the old Indian Confederation. Many Indian villages surrounded the Indian town of Kekionga and miles of corn fields. Kekionga and Miamitown, right next to it, also had many white people, and it had music and dancing. I thought it was the most extraordinary place in the world. The Americans launched three expeditions against Kekionga. As an Indian I fought against two of those expeditions. As a white man I took part in the third one."

"An eccentric life, sir."

"Your father-in-law was one of the Canadian traders at Kekionga and Miamitown."

Kinzie smiled warmly. "I remember you as a young warrior."

"How old is—" Wells began to ask. Then Wells and Kinzie traded information about their children.

After a minute, Lieutenant Helm cleared his throat.

"Yes, of course. You know what Kekionga is today?" Wells asked the lieutenant.

"I don't believe it matters."

"It's Fort Wayne." Then, as if he had just remembered, Wells turned to Kinzie and said, "Mechecunnaqua died a month ago, John."

"Oh, a great loss. I'm sorry. Tell the lieutenant who the great man was."

"Mechecunnaqua, or Little Turtle," Wells explained, "was my former father-in-law. He and Blue Jacket were the heads of the old Indian Confederation. So, gentlemen, let's sit down." They did. "Lieutenant, what would you like me to do?"

"Can we hold the fort?"

"I doubt it. If there's talk of mutiny, I will oppose it. I must support my niece and her husband. The white soldiers' custom is to obey orders. If Heald insists, the garrison will march out. Captain Heald's mind seems like a tree stump."

Then Kinzie told him the worst: "Captain Heald intends to deliver all the guns of the United States Factory and all the powder and the whiskey here to the assembled warriors tomorrow."

"What? That's unheard of. He can't." For a moment Wells seemed like his intense, more boyish self.

"Captain Heald thinks he can buy the Potawatomes' cooperation," Kinzie said, and then he shrugged his own puzzlement. "If we must leave, we ask you to prevail upon him to destroy the arms and powder and the fort's whiskey, and to help me dump my own whiskey into the river. The whiskey will inflame them. The ammunition will be used against our own people."

In the meeting room Captain Heald sat all the way back in his chair and kept his chin tucked in toward his chest. He appeared to be under siege. He had to lift his eyelids high just to look at the men who had come to badger him. "It is bad policy to lie to an Indian," he argued without lifting his head. "The Indians have made several applications to me for ammunition. I have promised it and the whiskey."

"There is going to be a general war," Wells countered. "The war has already begun at Detroit and in Canada. We know, Captain Heald, that Mackinac Island has fallen. Tecumseh at Detroit sent an order to tell the Prophet to unite the Indians and move their women and children for safety toward the Mississippi. We are already at war with the Indians." Wells went on in this vein, sometimes repeating himself, for ten minutes. He talked to the walls and the ceiling and the open doorway, and to Captain Heald.

Heald refused to budge on evacuation, but he finally and reluctantly gave in on the issue of the arms, ammunition, and whiskey.

The fort then became the scene of frenetic activity. To many of the soldiers it was mad activity because they thought that destroying most of their own arms and ammunition, and to march out with women and children in front of hundreds of warriors in an Indian war, was deranged. But they could not carry it all.

The soldiers and Kinzie and Wells worked extremely fast to remove all the kegs of gunpowder from the brick magazine building, and also the extra lead and shot, and the gun equipment and extra muskets from the guardhouse. They broke up the extra muskets as fast as possible and made a lot of noise.

In order to pour the gunpowder into the river under cover of darkness, they first had to open all the kegs inside the fort before the sun went down. They quickly broke the heads open with wooden mallets.

Kinzie became covered in gunpowder and went out the wicket gate to wash himself in the river while it was still light. While he stood in the shallows temporarily distracted, he was seized from behind by two Indians.

"I am Shaw-nee-aw-kee," he said.

"What is going on in there? We hear you banging, banging, and shouting." This was in Potawatomi.

"Oh, that?" Kinzie spoke in the same language. "We are opening barrels of food, salt pork and flour, to take on our trip. There is too much for us to take, so we will leave the rest for you."

"Shaw-nee-aw-kee," said a young Indian named Ogak, "we trust you."

Kinzie did not respond.

Kinzie informed the soldiers that there were Indian spies outside.

"Put the broken guns and gun equipment in the well," suggested Helm.

The soldiers carried the pieces of broken muskets, the unneeded bags of shot, and the flints and gun screws as silently as possible into the captain's quarters, through the trapdoor, down the tunnel, and dropped them into the secret well. Since this plan was a success, they discussed setting up a human chain to also move the kegs of gunpowder to the underground well.

Sergeant Hayes objected. "That powder is going to kill the water supply."

Wells told him it was either dump the gunpowder in water or leave it for the Indians, one or the other.

The civilians entered the fort and lent a hand. Some of the military wives got involved, too. In their fear, everyone needed something. They covered the open gunpowder kegs with cloth and moved them by way of a human chain, hand to hand, into the captain's quarters and then down the tunnel to the well. They dumped it into the well until the well turned to mush. Some soldiers cursed as they cooper-

ated. When it was pitch dark, they had to stop to avoid accidents. A few kegs remained on the parade ground.

People were covered in gunpowder, and they had perspired so much on this hot August night that the gunpowder was caked on their skin and on their clothes. Their condition was intolerable. A group of soldiers and civilians, including Johnny Leigh and Jimmy Wheeler, went out to the river.

No Indians could be seen. The soldiers carried the remaining gunpowder outside and down to the river on the east side of the fort, and dumped it in downstream. Then they went a little distance upstream to bathe.

"I think this is it," Johnny said softly as they bathed.

"We're leaving home," Jimmy agreed.

"The strangest day of my life. Even stranger than . . ."

Johnny did not finish. Jimmy knew he meant the day Liberty and Cardin were killed.

The soldiers who had just bathed set up a perimeter of armed guards on both banks of the river. Kinzie led a detachment of soldiers to one of his warehouses. While the frogs, crickets, wolves, and coyotes made their nightly concert and the Indians six hundred yards away sang their songs, the silent soldiers hauled out all the barrels of Kinzie's whiskey, enough to make any man on the frontier wealthy. They dumped that whiskey into the Chicago River, and the strong smell of the liquor in the air made the men dizzy.



## Chapter 30

### INDIAN COUNTRY

The rider carrying news of the war went ten miles out of his way on a trip of more than three hundred miles to see his family.

As he neared his goal, his thoughts went back over the long journey that started on the west side of the Detroit River. He had traveled west along the main channel of the River Rouge. When the River Rouge branched, he had followed the Lower Rouge further west. Then he turned away from the Rouge and kept along a winding horse path. He rode through a forested wilderness interrupted occasionally by small cross trails. He pushed the pony for all it had, southwest, but was slowed by the need to cross the Huron River, the Saline River, and the River Raisin. The last would soon become a battle cry.

When the nights came, he took one of the cross trails and slept in an Indian village. By day he kept on, crossing more rivers until he stopped one night near an ancient crossroads where the Potawatomi Trail crossed the St. Joseph River, one of two rivers called by the same name. Indian trails led in several directions. He had a meal and a smoke in a nearby Indian village, told his news of the war, learned important news from the west, and slept. In the morning he leaped on a fresh pony and rode south across an invisible line into what Americans called Indiana. Here he turned southwest and crossed the Kankakee River; about that time he left the forests and entered the leading edge of the great American prairie.

It was just the first finger of what eventually would be a wide con-

continent of grass. When the trail came near Lake Michigan, the rider entered woods again. At the beach of Lake Michigan, he turned east-southeast along the shore of this inland sea. At first he crossed a marsh. Next, back on the sand, he passed a slope to his left where tall pine trees grew. Then he entered the region of the great sand dunes. The vast expanse of dunes and sand along the lake shore was brilliant in the sun. Far off to the left, wildflowers and pine trees saved the dunes from the aspect of a desert, but the beach was hot and dry. Sand flies pestered man and horse. No wind blew. The pony sank a little with each step and plodded. Many footprints and some hoofprints showed that Indians were on the move to his front, around the bottom of the inland sea and toward Fort Dearborn.

He came to the mouth of the Grand Calumet River, which the Indians called Ken-o-mo-kouk, which flowed into Lake Michigan. Instead of crossing the river mouth, he kept to the south of the river, parallel with it, and continued straight west. Here is where he went out of his way.

He left Lake Michigan and followed a secondary trail onto the prairie again and across an imaginary line into the Illinois Country. The trail gradually turned northwest between two rivers a little more than two miles apart. These were the Grand Calumet River and the Little Calumet. When twilight came, although he was only twenty miles from his home, he got off the trail to be cautious, walked his pony to cool it down, and camped in the last tree grove he saw before complete darkness. A quarter moon showed through the trees this time of the month, and he slept with thoughts of swimming the river ahead.

In the morning he ate sparingly, drank some water, found his pony, and headed northwest. He swam his pony across the wide northern branch of the Calumet. Dripping and exhausted, yet exhilarated by the nearness of home, he went north around a bend in the river, then turned west.

At mid-morning, a ten-year-old boy in a tree saw the rider and shouted. Other children ran into the village to bring the news. The adults knew the most recent riders from that direction came from Tecumseh, the brother of the Prophet, and from Chief Main Poc with news of the war and appeals to join. The village was half empty. Most of the men and teenage boys had gone to Fort Dearborn, as



had the Indians from the St. Joseph River villages who had left their footprints on the beach. This village on the Calumet River, Chief Naunongee's village of the Potawatomies, Ottawas, and Chippewas, contained only the old men, women, and little boys and girls. Even a few of the women and children had gone off to Chicago where the release of all the goods of the government trading house and all the property of the fort was expected. Chief Naunongee went, too. Perhaps, it was rumored, deadlier matters were at hand.

Children and several women ran out to greet the rider and forced him to slow.

"Spotted Trout, welcome back," said the first woman, Sinkabe, or Mud Hen. "Welcome, welcome," said the other women as the children chattered. "Whose animal is that?" Sinkabe asked the father of Strong Pike, who was Jimmy Wheeler's childhood friend.

Spotted Trout's shoulders drooped and his knees flexed as he hit the ground. He breathed deeply. He released the tension of his ride and let the weariness he had held at bay for days come to the surface.

"I come from Tecumseh."

"Tecumseh, Tecumseh," chanted some of the children who had become used to hearing the name.

"Ho, the brother of the Prophet sends you," Sinkabe said, lifting her eyebrows. "You are close friends, I suppose."

"Tecumseh is the leader now, Sinkabe," Spotted Trout said. "Tecumseh has gathered the red men from many nations to fight."

The pony was nervous and badly needed to walk to cool off, but the children were all around it and touching it.

"Little Esben," Spotted Trout said to an eight-year-old he knew, "would you care for the pony of Chief Topenebe? It needs a very long walk." The boy did so gladly and led it away followed by two other boys. As Spotted Trout strolled into the village with the rest of the group, he looked ahead and left and right.

"Your wife is still here waiting for you," said one of the other women. Spotted Trout's wigwam was at the opposite end of the village.

"What does Tecumseh say to you?" Sinkabe asked.

"He tells us we must all act together."

"Tell me something he said just to you."

Spotted Trout smiled wearily. "Only one time, he said, '*Manasano*, hide here and wait for my signal.' That's all."

"Ohhhh!" Sinkabe touched Spotted Trout's back. Tecumseh, the Shawnee, had called Spotted Trout *warrior* in the Potawatomi language.

"*Manasano. Manasano*," said the little ones, and they ran all around.

Spotted Trout was thirty-five years old, and finally, after years of dreaming, he was a participant in great events. Great deeds, he had come to believe, were really a succession of actions, each small and uncertain in itself and doubtful. A man needed firm principles to guide those small, confused decisions so that they led in the direction meant to be great. In his travels he had learned how many groups of people and how many places existed in the world, and how small was one man. Yet there were a few great men, such as Tecumseh, who even though they looked the same as other men, other people wanted to follow them. Sometimes even the British followed Tecumseh.

Spotted Trout searched anxiously in the distance for his wife and hoped there was no trouble. Spotted Trout and Hen Splashes had quarreled before he left. Suddenly somebody jumped on him from behind, on the left side, and hung on his shoulders. The person was heavy, and Spotted Trout, while hearing the person's exclamations but being too startled to understand, wondered who would be so rude. Then he realized he was carrying his oldest boy piggyback, and he smiled.

"You almost knocked me over, Strong Pike."

"Father! Father!" Strong Pike got off, leaped in front, and walked a little in front and a little alongside his father. "You're back. What does Main Poc say? How long will you be here? When can I go?"

Strong Pike, just turned sixteen, was tall and skinny, still thirty-five pounds lighter than his father, but a great athlete. "Father, since you left I killed four deer for the village with arrows and your grandfather's white bow. We must save our gunpowder since the Kitchimokemon refuse to sell us any. Just like the Prophet said, Father, I use bow and arrow. Your bow has strong medicine, but it is short. My uncle taught me to get up close with such a short bow. It makes me a better hunter to sneak close. I'm going to try a spear. I have been practicing, but it's almost impossible."

Spotted Trout beamed at his son's unstoppable chatter as they walked, his son's happiness to see him, his own happiness to see his son, and his son's enthusiasm. "I don't think the Prophet could kill a deer with a bow and arrow," said Spotted Trout.

"But he's the Prophet."

"He has visions and gives speeches. You are the hunter, son."

Spotted Trout's estimate of the Prophet had fallen greatly since learning of the Prophet's antics before the Battle of Tippecanoe. The Prophet had told his warriors that he had cast a spell on the American forces and that half of the Americans were already dead and the other half were crazy and waiting to be tomahawked. The warriors had attacked, got a rude surprise, and were defeated. The defeat at Tippecanoe had scared off some Indians. Spotted Trout had also learned that Tecumseh blamed the Potawatomies for goading the Big Knives into war before the new Indian Confederation was ready.

"I want to be a warrior," Strong Pike said, becoming serious as he walked at his father's side. "Other boys have gone to Chicago to fight against the fort. The chiefs made me stay and hunt for the village."

"Then you must hunt."

"I did my part. Did you kill any Kitchimokemon?" The boy nearly whispered the last remark since he did not know the answer and did not want to embarrass his father.

"I don't know."

"Did you get any scalps?" He whispered again to preserve his father's pride.

"No."

"No?"

Spotted Trout smiled at his son's innocence. "The fight I was in, at a place called Turkey Creek, was run and shoot. We ran from them. They ran from us."

"You didn't run."

"Oh, I did. And you must run, too, when you should. That's how you live to fight. They were too many of them at first, son, and they caught us by surprise. But after more men of several tribes arrived, we suddenly outnumbered them. Then we chased them. I shot three times, but it was all very fast. Some Kitchimokemon were killed. Some of our people, too. Main Poc himself was wounded when the moon was three-quarters full."

"Wounded by the Kitchimokemon?"

"Even so. Where is your mother?"

"Did we win any victories?"

"Just before he sent me here, Tecumseh with only a few warriors and a few British ambushed an American column at a place called Brownstown. I will describe that victory at a council. Where is your mother?"

"She missed you, Father. All is well. She is in the fields with Sparrow and Little Bass picking corn. The first corn is just ripe."

At that moment Spotted Trout saw his wife coming toward him in a hurry. He thrilled and stiffened at the same time.

As soon as the news arrived that the British and Americans had declared war, Spotted Trout announced his intention to join Main Poc and fight. Main Poc, who was staying near the British Fort Malden in Canada, opposite Detroit, had sent repeated messengers urging Potawatomes to take up the hatchet against the Americans. Tecumseh, too, had sent appeals from Fort Malden, giving Spotted Trout even more reason to go. After being absent for the battle of Tippecanoe, Spotted Trout had promised himself that he would not be absent a second time. He felt he had stayed home long enough to satisfy his promise to his wife.

But when he had announced he was going to join Main Poc, Hen Splashes, to his shock, opposed his plan with shrieks. She argued once more that Main Poc was a drunk and a wife beater and a child beater. Then she even said in front of the children that Main Poc was a rapist. The boys and their father were stunned to hear Hen Splashes speak in such a manner. Their sister, Brown Sparrow, was scared, too, although everyone guessed at age eight that she did not understand. Spotted Trout had ordered his wife to be silent. He knew that Main Poc had long been out of control in his personal life and that the accusation was probably true, but it had nothing to do with the need to fight for the survival of the Neshnabe and all the red people.

"He is a warrior. This is the time for warriors," declared Spotted Trout. "Tecumseh is there, and he is now our leader. He is the most noble of all the red men. I will follow him and Chief Main Poc. That is my decision for the good of all."

The husband and wife hardly ever quarreled and always made up instantly. But this time Hen Splashes had moved out of their wigwam

for one night, as was the custom of their people when attempting to cool off a bad marital quarrel. She had never done that before. Spotted Trout had gone to her the next day and said he was sorry if he had been harsh.

Hen Splashes returned to their wigwam, but the husband and wife remained strained and uncomfortable. This was agonizing because it was so rare. He could see in her eyes that she was hurt, and he also thought she was letting her fear of the war disturb her mind. She did not seem right in the head. He did not approve of letting fear warp one's thoughts so much, but he could not teach his wife under the circumstances. They did not make love before Spotted Trout left. She packed his things carefully, but in his opinion with too much sadness and silence. They hugged but without the abandon that would normally take place just before he went on a trip. He carried her sadness and silence with him as a burden.

Having returned, Spotted Trout saw from some yards away that his wife, too, was uncertain. They hugged when they came together, at first stiff and clumsily. "Oh, my love. Thank you for coming back," she said. When they gazed in each other's eyes, her eyes were filled with fear. His hunger for her touch and warmth and voice had grown since he had left. He could tell she loved him as much as ever, and more, and he loved her, but they were both afraid of each other.

"You are my only love. I missed you every hour," said Spotted Trout. "I am sorry we fought. I was very sad for a long time." He felt her soften a little. He added, "I am sorry that in a little while I have to go on to Chicago."

She stiffened again, but she looked steadily at his face. He hoped it meant she accepted him as he was.

The father, mother, and Strong Pike entered their wigwam, and soon the sisters-in-law and all the children of several families crowded inside, hugging and teasing the returned warrior. Spotted Trout's brothers and brothers-in-law had gone off to Chicago. The other women made Spotted Trout a meal so Hen Splashes would not have to leave his side and could remain with him and touch him. After he ate, when the children started asking too urgently for stories of the fighting, the sisters-in-law chose that moment to pull all the children out of the wigwam and go for a long walk. Even Strong Pike was forced to go

on this walk with his aunts. He protested that he was too old. Strong Pike's aunt tugged him by the ear until it hurt, so he knew she was serious, and he went.

The sisters-in-law and the children did not return for well over an hour. By then Spotted Trout was lying on his back with his head in his wife's lap. She was stroking his hair and his face. The tension was gone from their faces, and Hen Splashes was glowing. "Thank you," she said to her sisters-in-law softly.

"Are we going to Chicago now, Father," said Sparrow as the children rushed in.

"Oh, Sparrow!" said Hen Splashes.

"What's the matter?" Sparrow asked. "Aren't we going to get things from the Kitchimokemon trading house? Everybody says the Americans will give everything away."

"We don't need anything," said her mother.

"Ohhhh!" answered Sparrow. "All the good things will be gone if we don't go."

"Strong Pike and I will go," said the father, still lying down, "and bring things back."

"No!" Hen Splashes was abrupt.

Spotted Trout sighed. "You know I must go." He spoke patiently. "I carry messages from Tecumseh."

"Then leave the children here with me."

"Mother, I am a man," said Strong Pike.

"You're not a man yet."

The father had to sit up. "May I take our oldest son?" He asked his wife gently for permission, then reached out and touched her hair.

"Take me, too. Me, too," said Little Bass in his difficult way of speaking. He was fourteen.

Hen Splashes started to get wild-eyed and jerky. She seemed to try to control it by clenching her fists. She said, "If you take our sons, our *sons*, we will all go together!"

"It may be night before we arrive," the husband said gently. "It's sixteen miles. I must go today."

"Then we will all go!" Hen Splashes said, rising. "Get up, children. We will all go. Get ready. We will take the Kitchimokemon horse that your brother found." Strong Pike had stolen the army horse the previous year from the vicinity of Fort Dearborn.

As the family gathered its belongings and packed, Sparrow asked, “Will the Kitchimokemon ever come back after they give away all their goods?”

“This land belongs to Indians,” Spotted Trout declared, “and whether the chiefs here agree with me or not, the warriors will see that *those people* never return.”

“Will the Weem-tee-gosh<sup>14</sup> leave, too, and the Weem-tee-gosh’s wives who are Indian women?” asked Sparrow.

“I said *those people* must leave and never return.”

“What does father mean by ‘those people’?” Sparrow asked.

“Those people means the Big Knives, the Kitchimokemon,” Strong Pike answered. “Those people is what we call the Americans now. Those people must leave forever.”

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14. French



## Chapter 31

### THE DEBATE

*August 14, 1812*

“We rejoice that the Great Spirit has appointed that we should this day meet, for we believe this meeting will be of the utmost consequence to our red brethren. We are convinced that our chiefs and warriors and our women, too, those here and far away, will be glad when they hear all we have to say,” proclaimed Chief Mkedepoke to a large crowd. “So we must discuss very seriously. The Great Spirit has let us converse together on what is in our hearts, not just for today but for our children and our children’s children.”

Many men and women agreed, saying, “*Eque in.*”

Mkedepoke, whom the Americans called Muck-otey-pokee or Black Partridge, was tall and slim and had a high forehead, a large nose, and piercing black eyes. He had fought as a warrior with Main Poc against the Osages and had also fought in the wars against the Big Knives years earlier. Yet everyone knew Mkedepoke was also a close friend of the Kinzie family and a friend of the farmers named Leigh. Strong Pike, who watched, thought Mkedepoke a man of many parts.

The united council of the Indians was held in the afternoon. The Indians by this time were five hundred warriors and almost two hundred women and children. The leaders held the council at the



southernmost of the two Indian camps, two miles away from Fort Dearborn and along the south branch of the Chicago River.

The council sat in a natural amphitheater of grass with live trees for walls, a clearing two hundred yards east of the river elbow. The Indians were the Three Fires—Potawatomies, Ottawas, and Chippewas—from villages near and far in all directions, and also Kickapoos from the Illinois River, Sacs from the west, and Winnebagoes from the north.

The largest giveaway of goods from the fort in the morning, which Strong Pike had witnessed, had been a fiasco. First, Strong Pike had watched the Americans drive their cattle out of a fenced enclosure south of the walls of the fort and onto the prairie to graze. He had seen Jimmy Wheeler riding with the horned beasts that moored, stunk, grunted, and dribbled.

Then the soldiers had driven wagonloads of valuable trade goods out of the fort and beyond the outermost fences. They disgorged these to the Indians: blankets, broadcloths, calicos in bolts, ready-made shirts and dresses of various sizes, paints, pots and pans, knives and needles, thread, leather goods, multicolored beads, silk ribbons, candies, cocoa powder, steel tomahawks and steel arrowheads, animal traps for the men and farm tools for the women, and more food in barrels.

Both sides had acted in a fairly orderly manner until Strong Pike's own village chief, Naunongee, asked, "Where is the gunpowder?"

A man replied in the Potawatomi language on behalf of the soldiers, "We have no extra powder to give you."

This spokesman with a proud demeanor stood erect with legs wide apart. He had red hair turning brown. Strong Pike and most of the Indians knew his name in the Miami Indian language was Apekonit, or Wild Carrot. His Big Knife name was William Wells.

Strong Pike objected, "Heyyyyy!" to Apekonit's claim of a lack of gunpowder, and his voice was part of a chorus. Everyone knew the captain of the soldiers had promised many kegs of gunpowder.

Then a war chief who was half Chippewa and half Potawatomi demanded, "Where is the whiskey? The river today tastes of strong grog."

This chief, Nescotnemeg, appeared to Strong Pike to be hard, confident, and cruel. Strong Pike knew this chief was Main Poc's brother-in-law and had taken many scalps, white and Indian.

Apekonit spoke coolly. "We have no whiskey."

Indians began to complain and some shouted, "Liar!" The Big Knives had violated the agreement.

Nescotnemeg spoke to a warrior. The warrior shot the ox nearest the white captain. Strong Pike's eyes bugged out. A dozen soldiers quickly raised their guns, and one stupid soldier began to fumble to load his musket. The Indians nearby with quickly leveled muskets vastly outnumbered the soldiers. No one fired. The white captain did not move but seemed stricken. Apekonit seemed to remain relaxed but also seemed fully alert like a cornered cat.

With a flurry of commands from other chiefs, including Sigenak,<sup>15</sup> an Ottawa from the Au Sable River, order was restored. Strong Pike watched as the white soldiers unyoked the wounded ox. In an awkward way, shouting and harassing the animals and looking over their shoulders, the soldiers marched away with the empty wagons and the wounded ox.

Apekonit remained.

An old chief asked, "Why did you destroy the powder? We only wanted to hunt."

"I had a dream," Apekonit said, "that the water gods wanted it."

Apekonit still remained, and the Indians drifted away.

That the soldiers had broken the agreement would figure heavily in the debate at the council, Strong Pike guessed. He was proud that his father, a messenger from Tecumseh, had been asked to sit at the front.

"War with the Big Knives, as we consider today, is a very uncertain thing," Mkedepoke continued. "One victory may lead us to more victories or may lead to a great defeat, terrible mourning, and death for our people from starvation. Our Great Spirit is angry."

Everyone mumbled agreement because of the earthquakes.

"When the Great Spirit is angry, we do not know what he will do," Mkedepoke continued. "Many red men have sold their lands. The Great Spirit did not give them the land to sell. Perhaps that is why the Great Spirit is angry. I want to live on our lands in peace. I say that is what we should do now that the soldiers are about to leave. Probably the Great Spirit wants us to return to ourselves and live in peace."

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15. Blackbird

Some older men and women applauded. Young men frowned and grumbled.

"One last thing. As a young man I fought the Kitchimokemon," Mkedepoke asserted. "I remember when our English fathers promised they would help us but left us in the lurch. We suffered the loss of a great many young men. Certainly we will not join the English again."

The fierce war chief Nescotnemeg, who had ordered the ox shot, rose to speak.

"I was in the Prophet's village the day that a messenger came with a talk from the Great White Father in Washington City. This messenger was full of lies about the Great White Father's kindness to his Indian children and how the Great White Father always keeps his word. Then the messenger said: 'Should any tribe dare to take up the tomahawk against the Great White Father again, they will be absolutely exterminated or driven beyond the Mississippi River.'

"This is their real plan," Nescotnemeg said, leaning toward those who favored him, "to exterminate us or drive us beyond the Mississippi."

"*Eque in!*" the warriors grunted.

"You saw this morning, the white man always lies and can never be trusted. We have the Big Knives within our grasp. Now we must kill them all."

Nescotnemeg stated the last and cut off his speech as if with a hatchet.

Young men cheered. Strong Pike was struck by the simplicity. Not a brilliant man, but direct.

Influential women were present, along with middle-aged and older men who were leaders of clans and parts of clans. Not everyone was moved.

Another Potawatomi village chief, Qua-she-gun, who had come all the way from Milwaukee, arose. He seemed as if he breathed fire. Strong Pike imagined that Qua-she-gun would give a speech to raise one's blood.

Qua-she-gun looked all around and narrowed his eyes. "Some of the foolish young men of our tribe have for some winters past ceased to listen to the voice of their chiefs. They have followed the counsel of

the Shawnee who pretended to be a prophet. They have killed some of our white brothers this spring at different places.” Qua-she-gun then looked directly at Nescotnemeg, who stared back with insolence.

“This pretended Prophet has taken great pains to detach certain young men from their own chiefs and attach them to himself. We have no control over these few vagabonds and consider them not belonging to our nation. We will be thankful to any people who will put them to death, wherever they are found.”

This brought gasps.

“We hear the white father in the fort say his heart is inclined for peace,” Qua-she-gun continued. “We also seek peace. We hope that all our women and children may lay down to sleep without fear.”

The crowd was thrown into confusion.

Sigenak rose, the Ottawa chief who also led many Potawatomes. “Like my brother Qua-she-gun, I was once a village chief,” said Sigenak. “Today I am a war chief. We must put a stop to the encroachments of the white people and establish that Indian lands should be the common property of all. We shall have only one bowl and one spoon. Our brothers the Winnebago have already deposed their village chiefs. Their warriors have taken control. I say to all village chiefs here, you, too, may be deposed or killed if you do not protect your people. The Americans have driven us from the sea coast, and shortly, if we do not stop them, they will push us into the lakes. If we remain quiet and try to live on our lands in peace, as our brothers Mkedepoke and Qua-she-gun ask, we will die. If we fight the Americans and lose as some of you fear, we will also die.” He made a face that such fear was of no consequence. “It is better to die one time as men than die a lingering death. Attack.”

Several young men could not restrain themselves and jumped up to shout approval, but their neighbors, both women and men, pulled them back down because they were too young to be allowed to speak. Strong Pike himself had nearly leaped to his feet but firmly controlled himself as his father had ordered him to do.

Naunongee, the chief of Strong Pike’s village, stepped forward. Strong Pike remembered that only a few months earlier, Naunongee had shown the zeal of a young man as he walked through the village talking about the coming war, but Strong Pike noticed the nearness

of actual war made Naunongee's eyes dart like flying insects. Strong Pike's mother had told him the presence of so many warriors made Naunongee fear that events were beyond his control.

"My brothers and sisters, this land where we have all gathered and where you hope to start this war is the place where my band lives today and has lived for many years," said Naunongee. "No prudent man invites war to his own village. These soldiers are leaving. Our strength forces them to go. If we let these pitiful few soldiers go, they will forget this place. We will burn down their fort and be rid of it. Surely Tecumseh's messenger, who is from my village, will tell us that many Kitchimokemon scalps are to be taken at the Detroit River. Many warriors are needed there to fight alongside the great Tecumseh."

Naunongee waved for Spotted Trout to stand up and speak. Spotted Trout remained seated. Naunongee waited.

The spell was broken when Topenebe rose, the great chief of all the bands in the St. Joseph River region. "May I?"

Naunongee nodded and sat down, relieved.

"You know I am a poor speaker," Topenebe said. "I have chosen someone else. Please listen." Then Topenebe shocked the assembly. He walked into the crowd, reached out, and dragged a white man to his feet, or someone Strong Pike thought of as a white man: the trader Che Che Pin Qua, also known as Alexander Robinson. Robinson was a métis, half white and half Ottawa, and because Robinson was in his early twenties, by far the youngest of any man yet allowed to speak, many in the crowd objected.

Robinson, who normally wore a white man's clothes, had dressed in Indian fashion in calico and moccasins with a red turban—but not in war array. He had no war paint. It was clear he still had his hair under his turban. Most warriors had shaved or plucked their heads, leaving only top knots.

Robinson stood before the assembly in a humble manner and then spoke Potawatomi in his high voice. "They wish me to speak because I live in both worlds. What I tell you, you will remember that you already know. I have sat and smoked and drank with many white men. I have guided their traders in many directions. The Americans and the British fight in the summer and in the winter, too. I know in long-ago wars that our fathers fought in the winter and traveled

long distances. But if you make war in the winter, you will miss your winter hunt and your wives and children, and old people will have no food. The Americans will come to your village when you are away and burn your village. They will dig in the ground for your hidden food caches and destroy them. They will carry away some of your wives and children as captives, and old people, too. They may kill some. The last war between the British and the Kitchimokemon, so I am told, lasted eight winters. That is all I have to say.”

The crowd became uneasy. Strong Pike frowned and thought, against his will, of his little brother and sister and his mother who could face starvation in a long war. He felt a deeper pool of thought open within, as if a hidden place had been revealed. He wondered if this was manhood, to weigh such profound matters.

Then a chill ran up Strong Pike’s back. His father rose. Strong Pike ached with anxiety that his father would speak well.

“I come from Tecumseh. You have heard already of the capture of the Big Knives’ fort at Mackinac,” stated Spotted Trout. “At Detroit, the Big Knives outnumber our red brothers and the British. Even so, Tecumseh and our warriors have cut the Americans’ supply trains. The Big Knives hesitate. They are cautious. They are afraid, and they are trapped.

“The day before I left,” Spotted Trout continued, looking out toward the crowd and projecting his voice far, “a small number of red men led by Tecumseh defeated a large troop of Big Knives at a place called Brownstown. Our arrows and our musket balls rained on the Kitchimokemon from every side, sowing death and creating panic. All the Big Knives who did not immediately die fled to escape our ferocious brothers. Afterward, our warriors placed many scalps on long poles by the roadside and drove long stakes through the bodies of the Big Knives left lying there. These are signs for the enemy if they ever pass that way again.

“We have heard what we should fear if we fight. What must we fear if we do not fight? *Those people* are determined to destroy you and your children and occupy *kwaw-notchi-we au-kee*<sup>16</sup> themselves. They will destroy these forests whose branches wave in the winds above the graves of your fathers chanting their praises. They will cast

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16. this beautiful land

our forests into the fire! *Be-sheck-kee*<sup>17</sup> are gone. *Way-mawsh-ka-she*, *pe-nay-shen*, and *ke-gon*<sup>18</sup> will disappear. Wherever *those people* have gone, *waw-bi-gon-ag*<sup>19</sup> that your maidens once loved to wear have withered and died.”

These were the most eloquent words Strong Pike had ever heard from his father. But he noticed that his father had stopped abruptly. The crowd stirred like a sudden squall. Then Strong Pike saw that a young man had ridden up to the outskirts of the clearing on a foam-flecked pony. Like everyone else, Strong Pike could see that the young man carried a red wampum belt.

The messenger walked through the crowd to the front, stumbled a little from his long ride, and then straightened up as Naunongee, Mkedepoke, Topenebe, and other chiefs who favored peace shook their heads ruefully.

“I come from Main Poc,” the young man declared. The crowd said, “Ohhhh!”

“We and our British allies have had five pitched battles over many days with the Americans, and we have won each time. I tell you now”—the young Indian displayed his red wampum belt and caught his breath—“we have taken the town and fort of Detroit!”

The crowd roared, and young men began to jump up.

“Main Poc asks, ‘Take up the tomahawk and strike the Americans!’”

Strong Pike caught his father’s eye. His father nodded and gave just the smallest grin. Strong Pike leaped to his feet. Some women leaped up, too.

The young men started a war dance without drums. The fort, just two miles away, was too close, and the drums would destroy surprise. Strong Pike and his father danced. Hen Splashes came and watched. Strong Pike thought his mother did fairly well pretending she had accepted this.

Long after dark, Mkedepoke, also known as Black Partridge, approached Fort Dearborn alone. He hailed a sentry and asked to be

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17. the buffalo

18. the deer, the fowl, and the fish

19. the wildflowers

admitted to see Captain Heald. The interpreter, Sergeant Griffith, came out of the fort, spoke to him, and then led Black Partridge inside. In the presence of the captain, the Indian, in a slow, solemn manner, took off the silver medal he wore around his neck, and then spoke.

"He says," translated Griffith, "leadern birds have been singing in his ears."

"What?"

"He means, Captain, he hears bullets and musket balls flying through the air. He says we had better be careful on our march tomorrow. He says, 'Father, I come to deliver up to you the medal I wear. It was given me by the Americans, and I have long worn it in token of our mutual friendship. But I cannot restrain our young men.'

"They are going to attack us, sir. He's not lying."





## Chapter 32

### NIGHT AND MORNING

*August 15, 1812*

Eleanor Kinzie sat on the floor of the sutler's store and stared into the dark. Around her, amid the boxes, sacks, and barrels, were her husband and four children, ages one to nine, plus the nurse-bride Josette, age fifteen. Eleanor prayed in a formulaic way, saying prayers she knew by heart over and over in her head.

Eleanor's husband had made feverish preparations the previous day by himself and with his slaves, Black Jim and Black Jack, his paid workers, including Chandonnais and Peresh, two house servants, and three French voyageurs who were on hand. They had loaded everything possible onto a large bateau. The same personnel would sail the Kinzies on their bateau on the ninety-mile trip around the bottom of Lake Michigan, then upriver on the east side of the lake to Parc aux Vaches, a former buffalo pasture on the St. Joseph River. They were going back to the spot where Kinzie had once kept his main trading house. Parc aux Vaches would be a temporary refuge. But Eleanor realized with bitterness that they were ruined.

The center of the Kinzie-Forsyth trading empire was at Chicago where it had been safe to store large quantities of goods in the shadow of the fort. Like all businesspeople, they owed money on some of their stock. Their fortune was in the rest, in their own livestock, and in the buildings, tools, and furnishings. In leaving everything behind,

and losing the goods in the outlying stores, too, the Kinzies would lose all. Eleanor understood they would have to beg their creditors for more loans just to survive until Kinzie could get started again. The crash was humiliating and life-threatening.

A knock came. Eleanor struggled stiffly to her feet, opened the door a crack, and said, "Who—"

"Peresh, madam."

"What do you need?"

"I would talk to monsieur. It is necessary."

"Very short, Peresh."

She took the little man's hand and led him through the darkness past the barrels and boxes to where her husband slept on his stomach on the wooden floor. A single candle she had kept burning provided the dimmest illumination. She pulled Peresh by the hand, assuming he could not see as she bent down to the floor where Kinzie slept with his mouth open. Eleanor placed Peresh's hand on Kinzie's back. Peresh shook Kinzie.

"Monsieur."

"Umm. What?"

Peresh bent and whispered into Kinzie's ear, then whispered again. Eleanor closed her eyes at this absurd caution. Everybody but the children knew the situation.

"*Merci*," said Kinzie. "Thank you, but no. Tell Topenebe 'thank you but no.' My wife and children will need all his help." Kinzie's voice was hoarse.

Kinzie laid his head down, turned it, and almost instantly snored. Kinzie was getting old, Eleanor saw.

"That's all," said Eleanor. She pulled Peresh away.

"Madam," whispered Peresh as she led him out, "they expect me to be in the militia. Mr. Kinzie signed me up a few weeks ago, but I can't fight. The Potawatomes are my people."

"We are also your people."

"Yes," Peresh replied and frowned in the dimness, then left. Eleanor went back to her spot along the wall, eased herself down until she sat on the floor, and stared into the dark.

Another knock came. Eleanor uttered a mild curse and struggled to her feet. She opened the door a crack and said "What!" in an angry whisper.

"How's father?" Margaret whispered.

"Dear, I'm sorry. What do you want? Do you want me to come out?" They were both whispering. Eleanor went out the door and closed it. Margaret was wearing a long skirt and a short jacket, quite stylish. Eleanor eyed her daughter's clothes, seeing her fully dressed at this hour of the morning, but said nothing.

"Mother, I will ride with the troops," Margaret said in a normal tone.

Eleanor whispered, "We have the boat, dear."

"I am the wife of an officer. Rebekah is riding with the troops. I am, too."

"Rebekah has no choice," Eleanor whispered as to a child. She moved closer in an effort to see her daughter's face in the dark. Then she spoke in a normal tone. "She is older than you, and she is the captain's wife." Eleanor's voice grew firmer. "You are just a girl."

"I am eighteen. She's twenty-two. I'm a lieutenant's wife. My father did his duty."

"Your father was killed doing his duty many years ago. You're his only surviving child. The boat!"

"What is it? What is it?" It was Kinzie's voice, ragged from sleep and tiredness as he came out the door.

"Uhhhh! Margaret has a bad idea. She wants to ride with the troops."

"Oh. Ummmm. Hello, Meg." Kinzie looked at his stepdaughter. "I know," he said, leaning on Eleanor's hip with his left hand. His back sometimes did not allow him to straighten up just after he rose. "Listen . . . uh. Me, too, Nelly."

"You what?"

"I am marching with the captain, and with Margaret."

Eleanor started to raise her arms and voice in protest. Kinzie squeezed her upper arm harshly.

"Nelly! You and the children must go in the boat."

"And you!"

"My name is all we have. I'm wiped out again. What can I trade to support us? Nothing but my name. I must go with these people. Perhaps my presence will deter the Indians. That's all there is."

By 5:30 A.M. the Indian Agency house with twenty-three residents, including twelve children, was a rambunctious beehive. The Leigh and Cooper-Burns civilian families had the two rooms on the second floor. Martha Leigh and her six children had one upstairs room, and Tom and Catherine Cooper Burns and their six children had the other. The single men, including Grandpa Russell and Uncle Charlie Russell, and also Louis Pettell, a recent widower, and his son, Michael, occupied the two rooms on the first floor for defensive purposes and so that the children would be spared the bachelors' language and occasional drinking. Upstairs, so many children made a lot of noise in the morning, yet the two-month-old infant, Molly Leigh, still slept.

"How does she do it, Ma?" asked seven-year-old Stephen Leigh.

"She is a peaceful child, Stevie. I don't know why."

The noise at the moment was a dispute among the Leigh females. Johnny Leigh walked in on it when he returned from his morning ablutions at the river.

"The river still stinks of whiskey," Johnny said.

"Lillie wants to ride the mare," reported Mary, his sister.

Johnny told Lillie, "You're supposed to go in one of the wagons to help Ma hold the baby."

"The wagons are too crowded. Mother doesn't need my help," said Lillie, who was ten and had long auburn hair the same color as her mother's. "Why are we taking the mare if nobody's going to ride her? Mary gets to ride old Jake."

"We need the horses to start over."

"We're leaving all the cattle, the plow, all our things. We're leaving everything," Lillie whined.

"Maybe we'll come back for our things," Mary offered. "Don't you believe so, Johnny?"

"Oh, yeah, sure." Johnny eyed Mary, who was twelve but wise for her age.

Mrs. Leigh carried two-year-old Matthew on her hip. She seemed to count her children with her eyes. "Do you want to ride the mare, Lillie?" Martha said softly.

"Yes!"

"Okay, then you ride her for a while."

Lillie cheered.

Mary sidled toward her mother. "In any excitement," she said in a

low voice, “she might fall off. She fell off last month when the horse reared.”

“What do you two think?” Martha asked the older ones.

“I’ll tie her on,” John decided. “Lillie, you must ride right beside Mary every moment—every moment. And stay right with the wagons. I’ll tie you to the horse.”

Sergeant Hayes supervised the packing of the two wagons, a tedious chore of sorting, loading, unloading, and reloading in an effort to take the maximum amount of needed things, but no more than could be carried.

They had to haul food for more than ninety people for eight to ten days plus a small amount of ammunition in addition to what the men would carry on their persons. The two wagons would also have to hold a dozen or more children, two or three watchful mothers, and three men prostrate with illness who simply could not walk. The people in the wagons had to fit amid blankets, tents, some tools, and the barrels of provisions.

At 7:45 A.M. the soldiers began to hitch the draft animals to the wagons.

“It is a fine, bright morning,” Sergeant Holt said as he backed a horse into the traces.

“It is that,” said Sergeant Hayes. “A bit hot. A clear sky. Good weather, don’t you believe, sir?”

Ensign Ronan had just exited the front gate. He answered, “Days of pure delight ahead, you rascals.”

At 7:50 A.M. Ronan went to the Indian Agency house to address the civilians. The cattle, still penned up a few yards to the south and well past the time they should have been released to get water and graze, made a racket of lowing and complaint.

“Everybody, make sure you eat now even if you’re not hungry. When I come back for you in a few minutes, and not before then, I want the militia to line up outside the front gates in front of the wagons in marching order.”

The men and boys of the militia had been standing slouched in front of the Indian Agency in a show of nonchalance, and a couple of members sat on the ground. All rose to listen to the ensign with their hats on, muskets and rifles in their hands, gun butts on the earth.

Each had a powder horn, ammo pouch, and a canteen hanging from straps on his shoulders. Each had at least one knife, and most had tomahawks in their belts.

"Women and children will be asked to move to the wagons in a few minutes, at the same time as the militia," Ronan told the ladies. The ladies waited on the porch of the Indian Agency. "The ladies with infants—that means Mrs. Leigh and Mrs. Burns and Private Simmons's wife—will ride in the wagons. I will trust you to sort yourselves out. Three invalid soldiers will be aboard. Mrs. Corbin will have the privilege of riding if she wishes in her advanced state."

Grandpa Russell spoke up: "The militia is to march alongside the wagons, Ensign."

"Tom Burns is getting his orders from the captain, Mr. Russell." Tom Burns, the ex-soldier, was head of the militia. "But I believe the militia will be at the front of the formation, just behind half of those Miami Indians who came with Captain Wells and just ahead of the officers. The troops will follow the officers. The wagons will follow the troops."

"No!" Catherine Burns stamped her foot in a rare outburst from a shy woman. "Our husbands and sons must be with the wagons. They must."

"I agree," said Martha Leigh.

"It's not my idea," answered Ronan. "They won't be separated by that much."

A stern-faced Sergeant Otho Hayes appeared behind Ronan. "Excuse me, sir. I need the Wheeler boy."

"Oooo, look at his face," whispered Johnny Leigh to Jimmy. "He's mad at you. Gimme your musket."

"Make it short." Ronan said, and then turned smartly and departed.

Jimmy squinched up his face in puzzlement as he walked up to Hayes. "What? What did I do?"

"Shut up and follow me."

Some of the other militia chuckled. Sergeant Hayes and Jimmy walked swiftly toward the fort. A couple of the militia sat back down on the ground.

Johnny Leigh had a sudden intake of breath.

Two hundred yards to the southeast, a rider in civilian clothes,

possibly a white man, was coming up from the trail gate on a tired horse.

“Who’s that?” said one militia member.

“Some dumb trader.”

“A Frenchman.”

Then Johnny shouted, “Jimmy! *Jimmy!*”

Sergeant Hayes waved him off without even looking back. Jimmy looked back but kept walking.

The Leigh boy shouted again: “*Jim!*” but then became tongue-tied.

Jimmy could see Johnny gesturing wildly.

“What’s the matter with him?” Hayes asked.

Hayes turned and looked at the militia, then looked in the direction they pointed.

The rider was still almost two hundred yards off, and the horse was very slow.

Jimmy saw and bolted. He sprinted as fast as he could without fully realizing that he had begun to run. Jimmy wondered if he was mistaken; then he knew he wasn’t; then he thought he was. The rider moved to dismount. Now there was no doubt that despite his funny clothes, that of a French *habitant*, it was Sergeant James Wheeler.

Jimmy charged as if to knock him down. The rider put out a hand as a gentle stop signal.

“Don’t bowl me over.”

“*Dad!*” Jimmy nearly bowled him over.

Sergeant Wheeler was soaked from his feet to the top of his head with the exception of his bandanna. He said, “Ah brought the river along. Crossed well south of the forks. Ohhhh, son, Ah want to lift you, but Ah think you’re too big.”

“Where you been? Awwww, Dad.”

“Long story.”

The sergeant took Jimmy’s hat off, played with his hair, and felt his face. They could hear the cheers of the civilians far off.

Sergeant Hayes finally trotted up, his eyes shining with moisture. Hayes grabbed Wheeler’s arm and shook him violently. Wheeler smiled.

“Sun’s in my eyes,” said Hayes.

“Me, too.” Wheeler blinked.

Sergeant Wheeler rested his hand on Jimmy's head and looked questions at Hayes.

The militia soon ran up and pounded Sergeant Wheeler and Jimmy. The cattle continued to low nearby.

"Damn, damn, damn, damn," Grandpa Russell said. "We got a hell of a situation here, Wheeler."

In the stockade, drums began to sound.

"Hey now!" Hayes bellowed. "You militia get back there and wait for the ensign! *Go back* to your assembly point! I mean it!"

The drums had recaptured everyone's attention. The militia, except Jimmy, retreated in good-natured disorder, shouting more greetings.

"I got your uniform Dad I got it in your knapsack back there folded real careful had to weight it down to get it in there I couldn't get your round hat in I was going to hang it from my waist everything's clean and polished maybe wrinkled."

"Take a breath, son. By golly. Could you go git it fer me? Ah'll be there in a minute."

"You sure?"

The sergeant kissed his head. "Yes."

"Don't leave again, ever."

The two sergeants were silent as they watched Jimmy run off.

"Spoke to Bill Wells out by the gate with his Miamis," said Wheeler after a while.

"Yep."

"So what can we do here?" Wheeler looked toward the teeming Indian camp a quarter mile to the west and then looked back at Hayes.

"I got only one idea, Jim. It ain't much of an idea, and I'm sorry I didn't do better. You put me in charge of him."

"Ah commended mah boy into your hands. Ah trusted you. Still do. Have to."

Hayes then told Sergeant Wheeler his only idea.

Word of Sergeant Wheeler's return had not yet completely spread inside the fort.

"Shit! Damn! All the saints and devils!" exclaimed Private Kilpatrick. "This here's the fire, not the fryin' pan, Wheeler, you resurrected, bewhiskered old dobbin."

". . . 'lo, Sam," Wheeler said with a smile.



"Where's Sergeant Griffith?" Hayes looked angry again. "I told him to wait."

"He was just here," Kilpatrick answered.

"Sergeant Wheeler!" ordered another voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Get in uniform immediately!" It was Lieutenant Helm.

"Yes, sir."

"And, Sergeant, it is magnificent to have you back. We need you badly."

"Thank you, sir. The dispatches, sir." Sergeant Wheeler gave Lieutenant Helm the sealed tin box.

Hayes, jaws clenched, said, "I gotta go find Griffith."

As he donned his uniform, which had never been cleaner or the metal of his equipment shinier, kept out of faith in a long-absent man, tears came to Sergeant Wheeler's eyes. He had a hard time looking at his boy and a hard time not looking at him. "Ah don't know how you did it."

"It's all right, Dad. There may be a fight."

The sergeant studied his boy, and then his face changed to pleasant, secret approval. He put on the last of his hanging gear, put his round hat under his right arm, and hefted his gleaming, polished musket in his left. "Let's go."

They clomped down the stairs. Jimmy, behind, touched his father's back with his hand. The boy said, "Do you think I'll be a good soldier?"

"Yes, indeed." At the doorway the sergeant stopped and said nonchalantly, "Right now Otho has a special mission fer you. You have to help the new Sergeant Griffith find two missin' packhorses with Doc Voorhis's medical supplies."

"I do?"

"Thet's right. Listen. Ye know why all these soldiers"—the sergeant waved his finger at the parade ground as the soldiers gathered again—"and you and me are marchin' out of this crazy place?"

"Heh," Jimmy scoffed. "Hardly anybody would, but the commanding officer ordered."

"And Ah'm givin' you an order, a little one."

Jimmy showed a pleasantly puzzled expression.

Sergeant Wheeler still had his round hat under his right arm. "Ah'm your commander, appointed by the Lord. So Ah'm tellin' you to see this errand through with Sergeant Griffith even though it may be difficult."

"To find the packhorses?"

"It might get hard."

"It won't, Dad."

"You must obey Griffith till yer done."

Jimmy looked more puzzled, but in a good-natured way.

"That is mah order. Here comes Otho and Griffith." The father donned his round hat. "Now all's well. This is where Ah belong. What'd Ah jest say?"

"All's well. This is where Ah belong," repeated Jimmy with affectionate mimic. "Me, too, Dad."

"Sergeant Griffith, fine soldier that he is," Hayes announced as he walked up, "has volunteered to find the medical supplies, which he lost. You have volunteered, too, boy."

"You won't leave without us?"

Sergeant Hayes gave Jimmy a fierce look.

"On my word of honor, Griffith," Hayes said in the manner of a fanged animal about to attack, "you have become my next of kin. I will locate you wherever you are, wherever you go, whatever you do. The father of this boy is my best friend. Do you fully understand, Griffith?"

"Oh, yeah, Sarge, of course, oh, sure," said Griffith unctuously. Griffith had joined the garrison only three months earlier. "The kid'll help me. Fine. Sorry about those two horses running off. This won't take long."

Sergeant Wheeler stared hard at Griffith until Griffith almost had to speak.

Private Kelso, whom Hayes had assigned to keep track of Griffith, hung back several yards away and watched.

"Griffith, you must fully understand the consequences," said Hayes yet again.

"I'm a man. Sure."

Hayes made a sign to Kelso as if to tell Kelso to let Griffith go.

Sergeant Wheeler touched the back of his son's head to say good-bye.

Jimmy said, "I'll be right back," and he and Sergeant Griffith started toward the wicket gate.

At 8:25 A.M., outside the main gate, Mrs. Corbin, wife of Private Fielding Corbin, was attempting to tie a belt around her to hold a military scabbard and sword. Since she was in a very advanced stage of pregnancy, she couldn't do it. Mrs. Corbin's young-old face was red, and she was weeping.

Five other women watched painfully—Mrs. Burns, Mrs. Leigh, and the military wives Mrs. Sergeant Holt, Mrs. Private Needs, and Mrs. Private Simmons—but they were caught up with holding the eighteen children steady inside and outside the wagons.

Cicily, Rebekah Heald's slave, moved over. "Hang that belt over your shoulder, honey," said Cicily, who had placed her own young son in the lead wagon that carried twelve of the children. "Let the blade hang down your side."

Mrs. Corbin did as Cicily suggested and succeeded well enough. "Oh, thank you," Mrs. Corbin said.

"Ah wisht ah had a big thing like that," Cicily added.

Ensign Ronan, who had led the women and the militia over to their places outside the main gate, reached over the tailgate of one of the wagons. He drew something up from the bottom, held it behind his back, and walked over to the two women. The drums began to sound inside the fort again. Ronan produced in his two hands a sword in a scabbard without a belt and presented it to Cicily. "Compliments of the Army," he said and walked off toward the fort.

"He gave this to me!" Cicily held up the sword. "That's a man. Ah do believe Ah'm goin' to carry this to Fort Wayne."

Sergeant Hayes addressed Johnny Leigh, Joe Burns, and the other members of the militia, who numbered twelve. "I sent Jimmy with Sergeant Griffith to find the surgeon's packhorses."

Johnny started to give two muskets, his and Jimmy's, to Joe Cooper, the boy with the clubfoot. Cooper would have three muskets. He made a face. "I'll go help Wheeler," Johnny said. "We can't leave him."

"Nope, I can't let you go off by yourself," Hayes answered. "You said you wanted to be with your family to protect them. Remember? Jimmy will have to catch up. Put his musket in a wagon."

The same drums that called Lieutenant Ronan then called Sergeant Hayes.

“Sergeant Wheeler, take the roll.”

“Private Adams.”

“Here.”

“Private Allin.”

“Here.”

Sergeant Wheeler on the parade ground read from the roster in a trumpeting voice. He spoke so loud that the lookouts in the block-houses and the sentries at the gates were able to shout “Here.” Several of the men beamed to see and hear the long-lost Sergeant Wheeler, but the company as a whole seemed tense and preoccupied with the unknown.

Each enlisted man was fairly resplendent in his uniform of dark blue coatee with red trim over his white vest. Each wore blue overalls with black gaiters and black shoes. White leather belts crisscrossed each man’s chest, and from these hung his cartridge box, canteen, powder horn, bayonet, and gun tools. This time each man carried on his back a blue-painted knapsack marked with tall red letters on a white oval: U.S. A black round hat with a bearskin crest over the crown, a black cockade, and a tall white plume was each man’s crowning glory.

“Fifty-one present and accounted for, sir,” Wheeler reported. “Three absent. Sergeant Griffith is chasin’ down the surgeon’s horses, plus Sergeant Crozier and Private Nate Hurtt.”

“Where are those two?” Captain Heald demanded.

Lieutenant Helm answered, “Don’t know, sir. They may join us yet. We have one extra officer who asks permission to march with us.” Lieutenant Helm pointed to Lieutenant Pettibone who had accompanied Wells from Fort Wayne but had lined up with the Fort Dearborn troops in the front rank.

“Permission granted.”

“Shall I order the men to load, sir?”

“As a mere precaution, Lieutenant Helm. Load by word.”

“Yes, sir.”

The men had their muskets at their sides, butts to the ground, the tips of the long barrels reaching almost to their right ears.

"Prepare to load," Helm ordered.

They brought their muskets to horizontal at hip level, pointed at angles to avoid their mates.

"Open pan."

Helm then gave, one at a time, eight distinct orders that required the soldiers to perform eight fairly complicated maneuvers so that each man primed his weapon and loaded one round into it. In this ritual manner the loading of one round took almost a minute.

When it was completed, Lieutenant Helm asked, "Fix bayonets, sir?"

"Fix bayonets . . . solely as a precaution," Heald said. He seemed reluctant.

"Fix bayonets!" Helm said, then waited.

"Shoulder arms."

Each man put the butt of his musket in his left hand and rested the barrel on his left shoulder, the bayonet sticking wickedly aloft.


"Prepare to march," ordered the captain.

"Yes, sir. Sergeant Wheeler, line them up in a column of twos facing the front gate," Lieutenant Helm ordered. "We will stop just outside to allow the militia to march ahead, the lookouts to come and join us, and the wagon drivers to fall out. The troops will follow the militia. The wagons will follow the troops. At the trail gate we will stop briefly again for Captain Wells and his Miamis. Half the Miamis will go ahead as the advance guard. The other half will follow as the rear-guard. . . . Sergeant."

Sergeant Wheeler: "*First Infantryyy! Column o' twos!*"

John Kinzie stood off to the side. His horses were in the wagon teams. Captain Heald was also on foot, as was every soldier except Dr. Van Voorhis. The captain gestured to Mrs. Heald, Margaret Helm, and Dr. Van Voorhis, all of whom stood beside their mounts, to take their place ahead of the troops. They would walk their mounts out the front gate. Captain Heald stepped to the front of the troops and invited Kinzie to stand alongside him.

Heald ordered: "Forward, march."



## Chapter 33

### THE BATTLE BEGINS

9:00 A.M., *August 15, 1812*

They came out of the gates quietly at first—Rebekah Heald, the captain's wife, followed by Margaret Helm and Dr. Van Voorhis and their horses, followed on foot by Captain Heald, John Kinzie, and Ensign Ronan.

But then behind them the four-piece band struck up “The Dead March.”

The two drums boomed in the tunnel that led to the front gate. On either side of the tunnel were the south barracks, and above was the observatory where Captain Whistler had watched the great race. Those walls vibrated to the noise and added to the echoes of the drums. The wail of the fifes in the passage had a faraway sound.

The day was already hot, windless at the surface, the sun powerful. In a bright blue sky the ends of the clouds swept up in a stratospheric updraft toward heaven.

The troops fell into a slow march behind the band in time with the funeral music.

As Ensign Ronan exited the outer gates at the front of the line behind John Kinzie, he turned his head with a cynical grin at the choice of music but did not interfere. Captain Heald kept his eyes straight ahead and gave no sign of recognition. His wife, after turning to look

at him, did the same. Margaret Helm, who held the reins in her right hand as she walked her horse, put her left hand to her breast and gave a quick laugh: "Aha!" Her breathing was quick and shallow, and she was red in the face in betrayal of her emotion.

When they got out in the open air, the drummers, Hugh McPherson and John Hamilton, no relation to the long departed Lieutenant Hamilton, looked proud and banged the drums slowly. The two fifers, George Burnett and John Smith, held their heads high. All four seemed to dare anyone to question their choice of music.

The slow march, nevertheless, gave the militia time to line up in a column of twos to take the lead. The wagons were parked to the east, or left side, of the line of march. The company marched slowly by the wagons until the whole garrison had marched out of the stockade. Then Heald ordered: "Halt." The music stopped. The captain's wife, Margaret Helm, and Dr. Van Voorhis mounted up.

"Peresh, now, come on." Militia leader Tom Burns gestured for Peresh Le Claire to come from the rear of the tiny militia group to the front to sort them by size. Peresh was the shortest.

Peresh refused.

"Peresh, come on, dangit."

"Cicily?" Sukey Corbin whispered. "Your boy afraid?" They stood and waited by the first wagon.

"He don't know nothin'," Cicily answered. "Ah don't think any of the chillens is afraid. Cap'n sposed to know what he's doin'. That's what people say."

Sergeant Wheeler spoke in a low but firm voice to the musicians: "When we march, let's have a reg'lar tune, boys."

"Whatever you say, Sarge."

Heald ordered again, "Forward, march."

McPherson called out a new tune, and the band struck up a jaunty martial air, equally defiant. In the slow way that a long line begins, the soldiers marched past the wagons, past the women who would walk, past the Leigh girls on their horses, and past Sergeant Holt's wife who was mounted on a thoroughbred, the Holt family's proudest possession. The mannish Mrs. Holt seemed to take inspection.

Ten-year-old Lillie Leigh was tied fast under her dress to the saddle of a large gray horse. In high spirits, she wore a white ruffled dress with a pink ribbon and a black jockey hat with a white plume on one

side. Her sister, Mary, wore brown cotton pants and her best yellow blouse and rode a dark brown horse, Old Jake.

The children in the wagons with the canvas sides rolled halfway up cheered the soldiers. Some of the women, both inside the wagons and outside, bit their lips with anxiety but cheered, too. The Leigh girls waved.

The soldiers, compelled by human nature, began to throw kisses to the girls.

"They're throwing me kisses! Look!" Lillie said to her mother.

"To all the girls and ladies, Lillie."

The girls threw kisses back.

As the last of the troops passed, Sergeant Holt, the driver of the lead wagon, said, "Giddap." The lead wagon began to move. It carried twelve children among the baggage, all supervised by Mrs. Needs. Cicily walked alongside the lead wagon that contained her son. Alongside Cicily walked the pregnant Mrs. Corbin. Her son, Eddie, rode in this first wagon. Mrs. Holt rode alongside this wagon, which also carried her children.

Sergeant Hayes on the driver's seat of the second wagon snapped the reins. "Yah!" The second wagon jerked and creaked into motion. It carried Mrs. Leigh, the farmer's wife, and her infant, Molly; and Mrs. Catherine Cooper Burns and her infant, Catherine, and two more of her children, including nine-year-old Isabella, a cheerful sprite with striking long blond hair. The second wagon also carried Mrs. Susan Simmons, the woman who had walked across Ohio, Indiana, and part of Illinois, and her infant. These three mothers with infants were separated from their other children who were in the first wagon. Three soldiers prostrate with fever were also crammed into the second wagon. The three babies in this wagon had been crying, but the music stilled them.

Alongside this second wagon rode the Leigh girls, the daughters of farmer Leigh. Their horses pranced and champed at their bits to the beat of the martial music.

The march stopped again two hundred yards away at the trail gate. Fifteen of Captain Wells's thirty Miami Indians lined up in front of the militia. All the Miamis rode Indian ponies, and the Miamis' feet almost touched the ground. The Miamis kept gazing into the far distances.

A group of Indian women, children, and old men stood outside this



last gate, the farthest edge of the spacious grounds around Fort Dearborn. These peaceful Indians waved and said good-bye to personal friends. Among them were other Indian women and children from villages far away who had not the slightest interest in the Fort Dearborn residents.

“Uncle, are you and your Miamis ready?” Captain Heald asked at the front of the line.

Wells wore a wide-brimmed hat, his old blue military jacket from his army days, his dusty white pantaloons, and his boots. He was mounted on the thoroughbred that people called a two-story horse, seventeen hands high. In a surprise to the troops and the civilians, Wells had painted his face black in an Indian style.

“As well as can be, sir.” Wells said and then shouted an order in the Miami language. The advance guard of Miamis nudged their ponies into movement. Heald ordered the march to resume. The civilian militia followed the first fifteen Miamis out of the trail gate. The Fort Dearborn company and the wagons followed the militia. Wells and the last fifteen Miamis hung back.

Peresh—the half-white, half-Indian man who had walked ninety miles to bring the news to Fort Dearborn that war was declared, who had warned the officers of the recent Indian plot to kill them in the midst of a council, and who had warned John Kinzie about this march only hours earlier—bolted as soon as he was out of the trail gate. He ran out of his place in the militia line and ran straight west toward the Frog Creek Indian camp without explanation or farewell.

Several soldiers cursed him and pointed their guns at his retreating form.

“Hold your fire!” Sergeant Wheeler shouted. “Hold your fire! Save your powder.”

The last fifteen of the Miamis on their ponies followed the wagons out of the gate. Wells rode at the very end of the line. Wells had barely cleared the trail gate when a crowd of Indian women and children and old men surged through and raced pell-mell on foot toward the fort for plunder.

The size of the Fort Dearborn evacuation train made the going slow. When the van had moved a quarter mile and was about seven

minutes from the trail gate and approached the river mouth, the Kinzie family's boat glided down to the mouth of the river.

Without warning, everyone heard the sound of many gunshots. Two women screamed by the wagons. Lillie screamed. Horses jumped. Mary reached across to quiet Lillie and her mount.

"It's all right," boomed Mrs. Holt in a mannish voice. "It's all right." She looked again to the rear. "They're shooting the cattle." The cattle had been released for the last time but were doomed.

The march continued.

"Well, what's that yonder?" Private Jim Corbin asked after they had marched about twenty-five minutes and had passed the point of no return. "Is that our escort?"

A line of warriors on foot with long guns became visible to their rear and several hundred yards to their west, still up on the prairie. The Fort Dearborn marchers had gone onto the beach.

"Where?" another soldier asked.

"A little behind us, but they're catchin' up. They got a late start, I guess."

The warriors seemed to trot in a single file and appeared to come from the direction of the Frog Creek Indian camp. Their line got longer. To the farsighted, almost every warrior seemed to wear only a loincloth and moccasins. They had no burdens except weapons.

"That's beginnin' to be a hell of a big escort, ain't it?" asked Private Peter Miller. The heads of the men in the company had almost all turned toward the prairie, yet the soldiers continued to march. Before long, those who seemed to be the leaders of the Indian file, still a couple of hundred yards off to the west, trotted to be about even with the leading Americans. The warriors made no move to come any closer and slowed to a walk. By then the visible warriors outnumbered the garrison eight or nine to one.

"Those Indians ain't right," observed one private.

"Hell, no, they ain't," said another. "They're lyin' savages. They attack us, I'm gonna take some of 'em with me." Men began to curse the Indians.

Sergeant Wheeler spoke up: "All right, let's have some order. Cut that music!"

The two drummers slung their drums around to their backs as they

marched. The fifers stowed their fifes, and the four took their muskets from their friends who had carried them.

"Ye know why . . . it took so long . . . to get back . . . from St. Louis, boys?" Sergeant Wheeler said, speaking slowly and loudly. He directed his voice up and then down the line.

"Hell, no, Sarge."

"Why's that?"

"Sarge, what about those Indians?"

"Ah met this Spanish lady . . . in St. Louis. . . . Keep yer intervals. . . . Check yer flints. . . . Check your powder. . . . You kin hear me. . . . Cork yer canteens. Ah met this Spanish senorita. . . . Ah thought . . . Ah'd learn real Spanish."

Elias Mills, the youngest soldier, asked, "Say somethin' Spanish."

"Oh. Ah didn't learn many words, Mills."

The men guffawed. They applied themselves to discipline and marching, a long habit, settled down, and listened for their orders.

The wagons, troops, and walking women and those children who walked moved at about two miles an hour. The Miamis in the advance guard moved a little faster, and the men in the militia also moved faster. A gap developed.

A mile and a half from the fort, a line of low sand hills appeared. The hills ran north and south and created a clear boundary between the beach and the prairie. Inland, just beyond the hills, stood a line of occasional pine trees, and beyond that was the prairie. The fifteen Miamis in the advance guard and the American militia just behind them veered to the left of the sand hills and continued the march down the beach as planned. The line of warriors on the prairie veered to the right of the sand hills. The hills soon cut off the Americans' view of the Indians directly to the west and the view of the prairie beyond.

But it was just possible for the soldiers to see the tips of the Indians' muskets and rifles aloft on the other side of the low hills. From the movement of the gun tips, it could be seen that the front of the Indians' line sped up to get ahead.

"Captain, you see that?" asked Ensign Ronan.

"Yes, I see it."

The line of Indians was so long, it also stretched far back to the rear

for three-fourths of a mile. The Indians' line was still roughly parallel with the Fort Dearborn evacuees and 150 yards to their right.

At this point some of the women observed William Wells ride up from the rear at a gallop, his horse kicking sand. Wells rode past the wagons and swung wide to avoid the girls and the women on horseback and the women and children on foot. He rode past the double line of troops and did not slow until he pulled up very abruptly by the officers.

"Captain Heald! I'm going to take a look ahead."

Wells spurred his horse again. The soldiers near the front of the company could see that the advance guard of fifteen Miamis far ahead had started to trot their ponies in an apparent effort to prevent the Potawatomies from getting too far in front and cutting them off. The militia began to double-time on foot for the same reason, to keep the way open. Joe Burns with his clubfoot could be seen to struggle as he ran with an outrageous limp.

A quarter mile out in front of the main body, Wells caught up with his Miami advance guard. Those men with good eyesight saw Wells stop, stand in the stirrups, and look all around. The Miami advance guard stopped. Then Wells wheeled his horse. He galloped back.

"Uncle sees something ahead of him there," commented Captain Heald on foot to Rebekah on her horse. "There is something wrong."

Rebekah rode sidesaddle, as did Margaret Helm, as real ladies. The Leigh girls and Mrs. Sergeant Holt rode astride.

As Wells galloped back, he removed his broad-brimmed hat and waved it in a wide circle over his head. Then he made the wide circle over his head again.

Rebekah Heald said, "We are surrounded by Indians."

Margaret Helm looked at her stepfather. Kinzie had a cloud on his face.

Far to the front, shots sounded, but the militia still carried their weapons on their shoulders. The Miami advance guard retreated. The militia far ahead of the main body then formed up. The militia could be seen to present their weapons and fire one round.

It all seemed slow and unreal to the soldiers and the women.

"Halt!" Captain Heald ordered.

The militia began to fall back toward the main body.

The speeding Wells pulled his horse up on the sand.

"Gentlemen, we are surrounded," Wells said matter-of-factly to Captain Heald, John Kinzie, and Ensign Ronan. "What's best to be done?"

Kinzie said, "We must make the best defense we are able."

An awkward silence followed.

Wells looked at Captain Heald. The captain seemed to wait for Wells. All others held their breath.

Wells responded: "We ought to march up to those sand ridges and take a position where we can half-stand up." He put on his hat. "They are about to attack us. Form your men."

Heald ordered: "Company, to the right in line!"

The marchers had walked for an hour and were two miles from the fort. To the west of them, many Indian heads popped up and down behind the sand hills, like turtles. Those Indians and the continuation of their line far back to the rear appeared to make a line of Indians three-quarters of a mile long.

"To the right in line," Ensign Ronan repeated. "To the right in line," Sergeant Wheeler repeated. From his proper position at the tail of the company, Lieutenant Helm repeated, "To the right in line."

"March!" Heald ordered. This meant to execute. "March. March" was repeated through the ranks. The company came out of two ranks and formed into a single line facing what had been their right. They stiffened.

"Get the wagons in behind us," Heald commanded. "Dr. Van Voorhis, take command of the wagons." The doctor looked astonished.

Wells shouted, "Charge them!"

William Wells was an experienced and courageous warrior, but he had no experience as a leader of large groups in action. The largest military or Indian body Wells had ever led in fighting was three or four men.

Wells spurred his horse toward the sand hills and the hostile warriors on the far side.

The soldiers of Fort Dearborn charged.

Johnny Leigh felt exasperated with his leaders as the militia ran back toward the wagons and the soldiers—exasperated as only a

young man can feel when he endures the stupidity of his elders. When Tom Burns ordered the militia to return fire, Johnny wanted to shout, “No, dammit, no!” The militia’s best threat to keep the Indians at bay had been their charged muskets and rifles. Now, with empty guns, the militia could not scare anybody. Moreover, they had to run a long way back to the wagons and the soldiers. Johnny believed the militia should never have separated from the wagons and the soldiers in the first place. He could not understand how his people could mess up the defense so utterly.

He looked to the west and saw Indians, some in war paint, come over the sand hills toward them—at first a bold few, then more. “Joe, club your musket. We don’t have time to reload.” Joe did as Johnny said. He and Johnny reversed their muskets to swing them. Joe worked devilishly hard to keep up with the militia.

“Stick together!” Tom Burns kept shouting. “Stick together!” This held them to the speed of the slowest, Grandpa Russell and Joe Cooper, so Joe was able to keep up. The Indians began to yell. Johnny saw more Indians moving across the beach to get in front of them, in between the militia and the wagons.

In another part of his mind, removed from the action, Johnny grew perplexed. In that part of his mind, Johnny saw the farm in flashes and saw himself behind a plow on the first day he plowed alone. He saw himself in the cool river, coming up for air with exuberance. He saw himself milk a cow by lantern in winter, the cow’s breath like smoke. He saw two of the Ouilmette girls, including Archange, on a skinny-dip in one of the sloughs when he came upon them by accident. And they were beautiful. Why all those days? What was that about? What for?

Shots rang again. The Indians at this spot had fresh weapons. Johnny heard yells and saw his uncle, Charlie, fall. “Charlie, get up!” Then Grandpa Russell fell and gave out a funny noise. They were still more than two hundred yards from the wagons. The soldiers far off seemed to line up. The Indians to the militia’s left flank were now nearly upon them. Johnny turned to face them. Other militia did, too, and Joe.

“Joe!”

“Stick together!” yelled Burns.

“Yeow!” Out of the corner of his right eye Johnny saw Joe Cooper’s

musket shot out of his hands. He heard Joe yell. Johnny Leigh was in the militia's rear line and did not know the Indians had gotten behind him. He felt wild to fight. He bared his teeth.

He heard a war whoop. Joe Cooper, who had gone to one knee next to Johnny to retrieve his musket, fell at Johnny's feet with a tomahawk in the back of his head. Then Johnny screamed bloody mayhem. He swung his musket wildly at that Indian and other Indians, struck heads and bodies here and there. He turned and turned, swung and turned, cursed and hopped around the fallen body of his friend, Joe Cooper. Johnny Leigh swung his musket and shrieked and snarled, his teeth bared like a wolf's. He kept the Indians at bay until they shot Johnny Leigh finally in the heart and killed him.

Down the beach, the soldiers charged toward the sand hills.

Just over an hour earlier, as the garrison assembled for roll call, Jimmy Wheeler and Sergeant Griffith went out the wicket gate past its last sentry, Private Nathan Edson, a chubby, unkempt fellow with brown hair that was too long under his soldier's round hat. "Where you goin', Sarge? Hey, watch the gate for me? I wanna get in line."

"Yeah, go ahead, Private," said Sergeant Griffith.

Jimmy Wheeler and Griffith walked out the gate and down the sunken road leading to the loading dock at the riverbank.

"We're not going to watch the gate," said Jimmy.

"Be quiet," Griffith commanded. "Watch me. Listen for my orders like a dog."

Sergeant Griffith and Jimmy Wheeler turned upriver and walked along the bank past the U.S. Factory, past the Indian Agency house, and then past the low root houses used for winter storage of potatoes and carrots and located to their right, closer to the river. Beyond the little root houses, Sergeant Griffith and Jimmy were well out of effective musket range from the fort. Here the river vegetation grew taller because the soldiers did not cut it. Jimmy and Griffith were also only 150 yards from the Frog Creek Indian camp and could see, and were able to be seen by, hundreds of Indians. Without warning, Sergeant Griffith crouched down and disappeared into tall weeds along the riverbank. Jimmy assumed that Griffith saw something. The pack-horses? He followed Griffith into the weeds.

A man grabbed Jimmy's neck from behind with a naked arm. This

shocked the boy and made his mind protest that it was impossible. No one had been there. Jimmy anticipated a tomahawk splitting his skull, but after a second when he wasn't dead, he started to fight.

"Stop, kid, dammit. You're gonna get us killed." It was the voice of Sergeant Griffith. Jimmy was too panicked to heed it, and the world was going black.

"Fihht!" Jimmy tried to gasp "fight" as his eyes grew dark and he started to lose control. Like the frightened turtles, frogs, and lizards he had caught by the dozens, Jimmy urinated. He felt himself thrown to the ground. The light returned. He gasped. He was on his buttocks, free and wet. He realized he was grateful to live and to breathe for one more second or five seconds. He tried to get his breath back, but he knew that if he lifted one arm to touch his pained throat—his arms were holding him up in a sitting position on the ground—he'd fall over. He began to think, but then a powerful hand picked him up by his hair and his scalp screamed. Convinced his scalp was to be ripped off, he began to swing his fists and elbows wildly, and got thrown down again, this time on his knees. He remembered wrestling in the past with Johnny Leigh and felt the extraordinary difference. This man was as hard as a gun barrel and tossed him like an ear of corn.

Jimmy assumed, because of the naked legs and moccasined feet ahead of him, that the attacker behind him was also an Indian. The Indian in front held Sergeant Griffith, who was also on his knees. The voice from Jimmy's captor behind said in Potawatomi, "Who is the boy?"

"A boy from the fort," Griffith answered in Potawatomi.

"Should I kill him?"

"No, leave him. I brought him here. Where's Topenebe?" Griffith asked. The entire conversation was in the Indian language. Jimmy knew the name Topenebe, the important Potawatomi chief from St. Joseph's River.

"Griffith, you will get killed someday." This was an older man's voice speaking in English from somewhere in the weeds.

"Not today, I hope," said Griffith, still on his knees.

Topenebe came out of the tall weeds to the side of Jimmy and gave orders in Potawatomi. The Indians relieved Griffith of his musket, his powder horn, his ammunition pouch, his own tomahawk, and his



knife. They did the same to Jimmy and made both of them stay on their knees. The ground around this part of the riverbank was dry in August. In the spring a man would sink here.

"Where is his gun?" Jimmy's captor asked.

"He forgot it," said Griffith.

"I left it back there," Jimmy said in Potawatomi, pointing back toward the fort. He had left it with Johnny Leigh.

Jimmy wondered why he was speaking with the enemy, but he could not think of what else to do. He sat back on his haunches and looked up. He could see Topenebe—a middle-aged man, heavier than the average male Indian, with a face starting to show the ravages of whiskey. Topenebe was a cold and confident man with the murderous expression that some Indian chiefs were so good at and was dressed for war, but Jimmy guessed he was past fighting.

"Put them in the canoe," Topenebe ordered. "Griffith, my friend"—this part was in English—"cross this river, go deep in the woods on the other side, and do not come out. Do not come back. This day is very dangerous. Indians want to kill even me today."

Jimmy's captor kicked him in the ribs and motioned him to get moving.

As Griffith and the boy paddled themselves across to the north bank of the river, Jimmy's mind was a-tumble. He had to go back to his father. He had to stand and fight like his father, his grandfather, and his uncles. Was he running away? Was he a coward? He didn't even have a gun or a knife. He felt naked. He had often heard that every Kentucky man and boy was fool brave. Yet he was scared. He wanted to stand and fight with his friends and with the rest of the militia, with the soldiers and their families.

"I have to go back."

"Sure," said Griffith. "Help me get the canoe way into the trees. You can swim back."

They ran and stumbled and struggled to haul the canoe fifty yards into the tree line north of the north bank of the river. Jimmy dropped his end. "That's it." He turned to go back.

"Wait, you ain't done yet," Griffith said.

"Yeah, I am. This stinks. Somehow you fixed this, Griffith. I'm going to the militia." The forest's blanket of leaves and twigs of years

past were crunching under Jimmy's feet every time he shifted his feet: *crich, crich, crich*.

"Don't act dumb. What'd your dad tell you?"

"He told me to go find the packhorses."

"I don't think we're gonna find those horses today."

"Because you fixed it to be captured."

"Boy, why do you think you're here? This escape was my idea alone. That tyrant Sergeant Hayes suspected me and had me followed. Kelso pointed a gun at me, threatened to kill me if I didn't tell him what I was up to. They're the only reason you're here. I don't need you. They *made me* take you."

"No! My dad expects me to fight like a Kentucky man."

Griffith chuckled. He reached his right hand into the pocket of his uniform coat, pulled out a carrot-shaped plug of tobacco, and bit off a piece. "Want a chew?"

"No. You got a knife, Griffith? I need a weapon."

Griffith looked at the tree tops. "Who do you think lives in Kentucky? The living. That's who. How long do you think them Kentucks would live if they did what Captain Heald is doing today?"

Jimmy whirled, but Griffith grabbed him roughly by the collar. "Listen, boy. A chief came to see Heald last night. He said, 'Me and my five hundred brothers are going to kill you all, you and your sixty. Come out of your fort in the morning, and we'll shoot you down.' I already told Wells. Am I a hog on hog-killing day? Hell, no."

Jimmy dropped to the ground to get out of Griffith's grasp, then leaped up with the agility of a fourteen-year-old and tried to bolt. But Griffith was on him, threw him on his face, and knelt on the back of his shoulders. Griffith was eighty-five pounds heavier than Jimmy and was a serious, painful weight. Griffith began to laugh so that his body shook and caused Jimmy more pain. Then Griffith cursed and made a crying sound without tears.

The boy began to weep tears of frustration. "My father! Pleeeease!"

Periods of silence alternated with Griffith's moaning or odd laughing or wandering monologues.

"It was the day of my death. Couldn't sleep," said Griffith, rambling. "Saw that little ferret Peresh sneaking about this morning."

"Shut up!"

"I told him, 'Peresh, you have many fine relatives among the Neshnabe, eh? Can you get a message to Topenebe for me?' I know Topenebe from times back. We worked it out. I had to make a horse run off."

"Go to hell!"

"Then the other packhorse ran off, too. Sorry about that. So I'm sorry either way." Griffith chomped away and spit. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen. You're a coward! Let me go!"

Eventually they heard gunfire, a lot of shots, disorderly shots. It was the Indians killing the cattle, although they did not know that.

"Nnnnnn!" Griffith whined. "Aw hell. Aw hell. Aw shit." He spit tobacco juice off to the side, but some went on Jimmy's ear. "Nnnnnn," Griffith whined again. Then he began to use very foul language.

"I'll kill you, Griffith!" Jimmy screamed. He tried to rise and throw Griffith off.

Griffith shifted his weight carefully each time Jimmy made this effort.

"Listen, boy. If you're dead, you're dead! Then you can't help anybody!"

Jimmy got him in the midst of "anybody," dumped the big man to one side, and got free.



## Chapter 34

### THE INDIANS

*10:00 A.M., August 15, 1812*

“Keep your head down until I tell you. Use cover. Always.” Spotted Trout spoke in a harsh voice. Strong Pike felt his father’s left hand on his shoulder pushing him down. The boy already had his head down. He heard his father say, “The soldiers stopped their march. They are in our grasp.”

Spotted Trout had figured out where the battle would begin. Hours earlier, before dawn, Strong Pike had been awed and mystified that his father patiently explained the battle plan to him as if the boy needed to know the whole plan. The father said the attack had been devised by an experienced raider, Main Poc’s brother-in-law, Nuscotnemeg, from the Kankakee River. His father further explained that the warriors had chosen Sigenak, the Ottawa chief from the village of the Three Fires on the Au Sable River, to lead. To involve two important chiefs from different villages in the attack, his father said, linked many warriors together.

While Strong Pike was applying his war paint with the help of his uncle, Loud Crow, his father had also lectured the boy about the Three Fires. He said the Three Fires had so dominated in leaders and numbers that the Winnebagoes, Sacs, and Kickapoos grew aloof and decided to allow only small delegations to join the fight as a mere token of Indian unity.

Strong Pike was disappointed that he would not have a musket and had to use a bow and arrow, although he knew some other boys had only spears. But Strong Pike could see no reason why he needed this other knowledge. His father had lectured while the boy was jumpy.

"Your father believes you will be a leader someday," said Loud Crow after a long while. "He is telling you how things are done."

"He does?" Strong Pike exclaimed in surprise; he had never heard his father's lofty estimation of him. Loud Crow laughed.

On the sand hills, the Potawatomies, Ottawas, and Chippewas, but mostly Potawatomies, held their fire with what seemed to Strong Pike an impossible level of self-control. The boy trembled with excitement and fear; he had sand clinging to him where he sweat and vegetation scratching his face. He wanted to look. He wanted to aim. But he also wanted to do what his father said and be a good warrior. He was in an endless line of warriors on the inland side of the sand hills near the rounded tops. On the opposite side of the hills, the broad beach stretched toward the soldiers and the lake. At the bottom of Strong Pike's own side of the sand hills, just below and behind the warriors, was a shallow ravine between the sand hills and the start of the prairie.

Strong Pike had been allowed to look while the soldiers marched south. He knew from their line of march that the soldiers were about a hundred yards away and parallel with the warrior line. The boy's father was to his right, and to the boy's left was his uncle, Loud Crow, his mother's brother, who had taught him how to hunt and shoot and clean game and maintain weapons. It was the Neshnabe way for the maternal uncle to teach a boy his lessons. But on this day, Spotted Trout was the senior man in the family and gave the orders. Strong Pike turned his head to look at Loud Crow for his reaction to things. Loud Crow seemed oblivious, concentrating, with his jaw clenched. Then Loud Crow winked.

Gunfire had started farther south. Strong Pike looked quickly that way, to his right. No one on Strong Pike's part of the line had yet fired. While he hunkered down, the boy could see this man and that peek over the top of the sand hills. Mostly they maintained cover.

"The soldiers come now!" said his father.

From the men and boys around Strong Pike came a few shouts and yells due to nerves and determination.

Strong Pike's ears began to ring from the blood pounding in his head. At such a short distance they should wait only seconds. But it seemed as if they waited, waited, waited. Maybe a chief gave an order. The boy wasn't sure. He saw his father and other men straighten, raise up over the top of the ridge, aim their muskets, and almost simultaneously fire. He heard Loud Crow fire to his left. The noise was deafening. The boy had never heard such explosions at once. The giant sound was over in an instant but reverberated in his ears along with scattered late shots. The Potawatomies had to reload. Strong Pike started to rise up to shoot his arrow. He scrambled on his knees to get high enough to shoot over the top, but before he saw anything more than a line of moving big hats that seemed near enough to touch, his father grabbed him and pulled him down the hill. They slid and scrambled down the incline. Other red men pulled away, too, down into the ravine, some while trying to reload, an extremely difficult task.

"Stay down. Stay down," said his father who jerked his arm and pulling his body down again.

Strong Pike distinctly heard a man shout in English from the top of the sand ridge. Then a volley of guns sounded over Strong Pike's head, and he felt a deadly breeze. He knew the soldiers must have fired from the top of the hills over his head.

"Stay with me!" growled his father as the three rose and ran, father, son, and uncle.

They ran up the other side of the dry ravine toward the prairie. Suddenly, they heard the Kitchimokemon shout their war cries. Strong Pike turned his head as he ran and saw the soldiers come over the top of the ridge. Their bayonets gleamed in the sun. The warriors at this part of the line had not had time to reload, nor had the soldiers.

"Move," said his uncle. "Follow me!" shouted his father who ran to the north. Other warriors ran south. The boy dashed with his father and uncle to the north. Strong Pike saw no panic. It felt like a game.

The boy heard more shots but no more volleys. Farther to the north and back far to the south, the shooting was general, but at this part of the line he and his father and uncle and the warriors around them had to run before the soldiers' charge.

The boy ran for many yards across the low, sparse grass in the sandy soil and began to wonder if they really were running scared.

Then he saw warriors ahead of him stop and turn and load their weapons in earnest. His father and uncle stopped also. Strong Pike did, too, and turned. He saw that the soldiers had run down into the ravine, up the other side, and out onto the prairie in pursuit of the fleeing warriors. The soldiers were in short, sandy grass in the open. His father and uncle fired, and other warriors fired in a scattered manner. A few soldiers fell. Strong Pike drew back his bowstring but was interrupted again as his father cautiously made him get down behind a grassy hillock only a foot high and did so himself.

Spotted Trout started to reload his musket while lying down. But just then a few red men and boys—and suddenly Uncle Loud Crow—ran back at the soldiers with tomahawks and spears and rifles used as clubs. The Indians screamed and whooped. The soldiers tried to fend them off with bayonets. Strong Pike could see a soldier here and there try to reload amid the melee.

Then Strong Pike saw a rider, in blackface and a broad-brimmed hat and astride a giant Kitchimokemon horse, charge right and left. The rider had three guns. He charged and wheeled his horse, charged and wheeled, and scattered warriors in front of him, attempting to drive away the Indians single-handedly. Strong Pike had never seen a man even carry three guns. The rider thrust his used-up, short-barreled rifle into a sling on the side of his horse, then raised a pistol and fired. An Indian fell. The rider drew another pistol from his belt and fired while he charged again. Indians broke from him left and right but came back to challenge him repeatedly, especially from behind. It was a brave sight to see on both sides.

Strong Pike sensed the crowd grow around him as Indians ran toward this battle from the north where there were no soldiers to shoot. The soldiers here, all that there were, were obviously trapped. Indians fired on them from three sides, yet the Indians also had to withhold much of their fire to avoid their own people who challenged the soldiers hand-to-hand to show their bravery.

“Now use your arrow and aim well,” said his father. Strong Pike saw his father smile. Strong Pike took good aim and fired at a soldier who had lost his hat, but the boy had to raise his aim at the last moment because one of his own people got in the way. The arrow went over all the soldiers. The fight was infinitely faster than a hunt and very crowded. Strong Pike drew another arrow. It appeared there

were few Kitchimokemon left, not even thirty. Hundreds of shouting warriors faced them.

In the struggle on the low grass and sandy ground, Sergeant Wheeler wanted to lead the men back to the sand hills, but the confusion was profound with continual fire directed at them and the Indians rushing at the perimeter here and there with tomahawks and spears. He did not approve of the charge onto the prairie. But once Wells and the captain went straight over, Sergeant Wheeler knew it would be impossible to stop the men and they had to stay together. Blood from a minor cut on his forehead had run into his right eye. He had been shot twice in the gut. One of those he knew of. The other one had ricocheted off his sword hilt, turned sharply, and gave him a wound across the belly. That didn't hurt much. He had not drawn his sergeant's sword and instead relied on his musket with fixed bayonet.

Sergeant Wheeler shouted an order and then couldn't remember what he had shouted. An Indian with a tomahawk rushed at him, and Wheeler saw the Battle of Fallen Timbers. He stepped forward and thrust his bayonet at the Indian. With an acrobatic move, the Indian avoided it, tomahawked someone near him, and ran off.

Sergeant Wheeler tried to get his bearings. The noise of gunfire and Indian cries and soldier cries was intense.

"Sarge. Help me up. I'm shot all over."

Sergeant Wheeler saw Jim Corbin to his left on the ground. "Damn Indian near took my arm off."

"Come on." Wheeler bent to help Corbin up. The sergeant used his left arm and held his musket in his right. He felt a looseness in his gut. Like a wind, he sensed everybody move. The soldiers were bolting in a body. "All right, come on, you and me." The sergeant was reduced to helping one man.

Sergeant Wheeler and Jim Corbin stumbled out across the prairie and held each other like two men tied together in a three-legged race.

"Oh, ow, ah, oh, hell, aw, gee, oh, oh, oh."

Sergeant Wheeler started to fade but used willpower to clear his head and maintain consciousness. "Corbin, who's carryin' who?"

"I don't know, but you're bleedin' like crazy, Sarge, and I think your guts are comin' out."

"You got your weapon?"



“Dropped it.”

“Take mine. Ah’ll hold my guts in.” He reached across and gave Jim Corbin his musket.

That was the last thing Sergeant Wheeler said. He thought, “Watch my son.” He meant that God should. The sergeant and Jim Corbin staggered along and held each other up.

Strong Pike saw the Kitchimokemon break in a body for the open prairie, like a flock of birds. The red men gave way in front of them as before.

“This is a man’s work; we will finish them,” said Spotted Trout. “Go down toward the beach. Shoot their wagon guards with your bow from a distance. You are a fine shot.”

The rider in blackface had gone off to their right. The boy was amazed to see that the rider had the barrel of one of his pistols at his own mouth. He blew in it. The Indians gave him and his horse plenty of room and tried to shoot him from afar. Strong Pike realized that the rider had blown the lead ball from his mouth into the pistol. The rider then rammed the charge into the barrel of his pistol while riding. The crazed horseman, whom Strong Pike now knew was Apekonit, the white Indian, charged behind them and then abruptly wheeled.

“Down!” said his father, who was on one knee reloading but stopped to pull the boy down. The boy flattened, looked up, and saw the rider pull up very near and fire in their direction. The boy heard his father grunt. Strong Pike raised his bow and arrow and let fly at Apekonit, but again everything moved too fast. Apekonit wheeled back to the south even before the arrow left.

“Go to their wagons. Go!” said his father very loudly, speaking in an odd voice.

“The soldiers!” Strong Pike said.

“Loud Crow and I!” shouted his father. “Go to the beach. Shoot from a distance.”

Strong Pike rose with his grandfather’s white bow of strong medicine and ran toward the ravine. The saliva had left his mouth, and he was dry and thirsty. He ran down into the ravine and back up onto the sand ridge. He stumbled because his legs did not work right, and he underestimated the rise of the ground and failed to lift his legs enough. He almost fell into the side of the hill but made it to the top.

There he saw about two dozen warriors start onto the beach. He saw the bodies of dead and dying soldiers before him and to either side of him; they were lying in odd postures just below the sand ridge where they had been felled by the first Indian volley. He saw the wagons and their panicky horse teams a hundred yards off. He fired an arrow at the wagons to use the arrow. Then he drew his tomahawk. He had waited enough. He had done all his father had said. Strong Pike knew that before it was over he had to run in like other brave boys and fight close.

Up to this point the battle had lasted about five minutes.

Strong Pike ran across the beach as fast as he could. He passed Potawatomies, primarily, and other Indians of the Three Fires who seemed to come from up the beach, down the beach, and across the beach as he was. Some were young boys, but most were men with guns. Several chiefs walked with authority across the beach toward the wagons.

Red men fired wildly and shouted with the terrible killing emotion and elation, both of which Strong Pike himself felt. He slowed to a walk to avoid getting in front and being shot by his own people. The warriors fired at the two wagons, at the screaming beasts that were tied to the wagons, at two or three soldiers by the wagons—any target that was worthwhile to shoot at. The shots were ragged, here and there, because it took each warrior a long time to reload. One Kitchimokemon horse had been shot down, and its rider, wearing a fancy uniform, limped away. The white women's horses pranced and bounded as the women fought to control them. A girl in a white dress hung upside down from her horse like a rag doll, as if she were tied onto the saddle. The girl's horse sprinted on the beach with its eyes big and rolling in a panic. As the girl hung upside down, her white ruffled dress fell near her face so all her legs showed.

Strong Pike had so much to see and so few Kitchimokemon to shoot that he was in a daze. He became aware oddly, as if in a dream, of a hot quarrel among chiefs as he passed them quite close.

"Kill every white devil!" came a shout in Potawatomi over the general din on the beach.

"No!" roared another voice, and the roaring chief, whom Strong Pike recognized as Black Partridge, shoved the first chief and issued a threat: "I will destroy whoever spills the blood of the Kinzies—even, if I must, my nearest friends! If we kill Shaw-nee-aw-kee, we will not

be able to stop as long as there remains one white person or half-blood in the land.”

“Save them yourself.”

“We will protect Shaw-nee-aw-kee!” declared a third chief. Strong Pike knew this third chief as Waubonsee. “I support my brother,” this chief declared.

Strong Pike ignored the rest of this. His own blood was up, and he was inclined to kill every white devil and their animals, too. Yet despite his teenage ferocity, he had one reservation that he had made much earlier and buried deep in the back of his head. If he saw Jimmy Wheeler, he would let someone else kill him. He would kill Wheeler only if he had to. He was older and stronger. Rarely and fleetingly, he thought he would somehow let Jimmy live.

At the very start, when the soldiers had charged toward the sand ridge, John Kinzie, standing on the sand, had remained alone with two women on horseback who rode sidesaddle: his stepdaughter and Rebekah Heald. He saw the Indians fire as the soldier line approached the sand ridge. He saw soldiers fall and heard wild musket balls and bullets whistle through the air all around. He saw his stepdaughter struggle to control her horse. “Margaret, hold him!” They all saw at a distance Private Kennison, known as Grandpa, survive the Indians’ first volley and try to run in an old man’s way up the sandbank. He was too old. He fell. Meanwhile, one of the brilliantly dressed officers had been shot down at the bottom of the sand ridge. The officer crawled on the sand and appeared to try to pull himself up.

Kinzie saw Rebekah Heald’s horse rear up when the soldiers fired their first volley from the top of the ridge, but Rebekah was a good rider, and her horse, a bay mare, was well trained. Kinzie and the two women hung together without any plan.

The fifteen Miamis who had been the rearguard trotted up on their ponies and passed by as spectators, not stopping. They glanced at the sand ridge just as the soldiers charged over the top, and the soldiers disappeared out onto the prairie. Before the last of the Miamis passed, one raised his hands to his mouth and shouted in Potawatomi in words Kinzie fully understood. He trembled.

“Potawatomies! You promised safe conduct to these people. You lied and are going to murder them. You know not what evil the dead

will bring. By and by you may hear your wives and children cry. You will not be able to help them. Potawatomes beware!”

This lone Miami then rode on and disappeared with the rest of the Miami rearguard and the Miami advance guard as if the battle was none of their affair.

Kinzie felt the hair on the back of his neck standing up. He started to walk north toward the wagons so as not to be isolated on the battlefield. He expected his stepdaughter and Mrs. Heald to follow him, but when he turned, he saw that Rebekah Heald had ridden off toward the sand hills. Perhaps her horse had gone mad, Kinzie thought. The sound of firing became general.

Kinzie's thoughts flitted in a lightning manner back to his fears for Eleanor and the children who were in the boat. An irresistible force of instinct forced his mind back to the beach and the doorstep of his own annihilation. He held his rifle in a painful grip in his shaking right hand but could not bring himself to shoot at the Indians. Without thinking about it, he knew they had been his livelihood and the support of his families. They had been his allies against his enemies, the Americans, in his earlier life. The Indians had been his safety very recently when he needed to escape. Many were his friends. Kinzie assumed he was near death, but he knew that if he fired at his Indian friends, he—and his stepdaughter and his wife and small children—were dead for certain. He decided he could take no part in the battle.

When the soldiers had been out of sight from the beach for several minutes, Kinzie saw and heard Indians start to run onto the beach in front of him to the north and behind him to the south. He realized that they had outflanked the garrison and had come around on both sides. On impulse, Kinzie looked south for the militia. His heart fell. The militia, a pathetic group of ten or eleven men and boys who could not reload fast enough to hold off scores of warriors had never made it back to the wagons. They had fallen under a crowd of Indians. Indians knelt on top of the militia and scalped them.

Kinzie looked at the sand and switched his rifle to his other hand which did not shake so much. He knew mutilation of the dead militia would follow. It was the Indian way. The boys of the militia were good lads, thought Kinzie, yet they had never lived. There was Johnny Leigh, Joe Burns, and Michael Pettell; good fathers, Mr. Burns and

Mr. Pettell; the Russells, father and son, good, solid men. Wherever he was, Johnny Leigh's father, who had gone off on a ship, would most likely never know what had happened to his family.

Kinzie had just about reached the wagons when the Indians attacked the wagons and the people there at close quarters. Sergeant Holt, the driver of the lead wagon whom Kinzie knew well, had fallen, and blood gushed from his neck. He crawled on the sand. Mrs. Holt rode up to her husband on her thoroughbred. Sergeant Holt seemed to shout her name. She leaned far over, and he gave his wife his sword. Sergeant Holt half-rose and stumbled into the lake.

Kinzie saw scene after scene in a rapid kaleidoscope of grisly struggles to live and violent death, all tumbled together and fractured apart at once.

Red men came after Mrs. Holt with gun butts and began to jam them into her legs, laughing, trying to knock her off her horse. It was a fine horse. Every man wanted it. Mrs. Holt slashed at those on her flanks with her sword, swinging wildly but effectively. Her horse ran back and forth over the sand. Someone shouted loudly in the Potawatomi language: "Brave woman. Do not hurt her." Mrs. Holt fought until the crowd became overwhelming. Then she slashed her way out and rode across the beach toward the prairie.

The officer who had fallen at the sand ridge—Kinzie could now see it was Ensign Ronan rather than Captain Heald or Kinzie's son-in-law, Lieutenant Helm—struggled to one knee from where he had fallen at the base of the ridge and fought with Indians by swinging his musket. Kinzie had often sipped whiskey with Ronan, the young man from West Point, until both were drunk and silly or argumentative. Kinzie had found him arrogant in the way of youth, overconfident. An Indian shot Ronan in the back from up close and ran on. Ronan, who was about eighty yards away, rose a second time, tried awkwardly to load his musket, and was shot down again. He rose to his knees a third time.

Kinzie saw a younger Indian come up behind Ensign Ronan and tomahawk him twice, burying the weapon in his head the second time.

Sick soldiers, who had apparently stumbled out of the farthest wagon, had been cut down and now lay in grotesque postures on the sand.

Kinzie could hear Indian chiefs quarrel nearby. Kinzie guessed that Indians quarreled in hell.

A massive soldier who had been shot down only twenty yards away got up and, despite his size, skillfully used his bayonet and the butt of his musket to fend off attackers. Kinzie soon saw that the muscular soldier was Sergeant Otho Hayes who had been at Fort Dearborn since the beginning and had helped build the fort. Dogged and stern, Sergeant Hayes, friend and honorary uncle to Jimmy Wheeler, was the last soldier on the beach.

Hayes pressed ahead with his bayonet at a tall, mature Indian. The Indian parried the bayonet with his tomahawk and tried to chop the sergeant. Kinzie realized with a shock that the Indian was Naunongee, principal chief of the Calumet River village. Then Kinzie recalled in an instant that Sergeant Hayes and Naunongee had known each other—for years. Hayes with his bayonet managed to wound Naunongee in the chest and draw blood. Naunongee slipped away to the side. Hayes, who had started to move in a jerky manner as if he had lost something, recovered faster than Naunongee expected, lunged, and plunged his bayonet through Naunongee's midsection. Naunongee's eyes grew wide as he leaned in at the exact same moment and chopped Hayes's head open with his tomahawk. Both hung together upright, one dead, the other half dead, and then both fell together. Other Indians pounced on Hayes and decapitated him, chopping his massive neck numerous times.

Kinzie saw the greatly pregnant Susan Corbin, wife of Private Fielding Corbin, scream and weep and slash with her sword. Cicily, a few yards away, screamed her own battle cries and sliced left and right with her sword. He knew that some women, Mrs. Corbin among them, had said they would never be taken prisoner by Indians. Kinzie saw a group of Indian men and boys try to take Mrs. Corbin prisoner, making signs to her as best they could with open hands, pledging safety. Mrs. Corbin slashed about her, weeping, until the Indians lost patience and cut her to pieces. They scalped her and decapitated her. Kinzie turned away. He heard what sounded like his stepdaughter cry out. He looked where she had been, but he couldn't find her. Looking around the beach in a panic to see where she had gone, he turned back only to see that death had come to Cicily. She lay on the sand, and an Indian just at that moment decapitated her. Then he saw the Indians tear out and kill Mrs. Corbin's unborn child. Kinzie closed his eyes and put his hands to his face.

Why was he here? Had the same fate happened to Margaret? He had always escaped before, he thought. In previous wars he had always known when to run, even if his trade goods had to be left behind and were lost.

Kinzie heard Indian cries rise in pitch. He opened his eyes and saw Wells ride onto the beach, then spit blood and load a pistol. His niece, Rebekah Heald, rode from somewhere toward him.

“Rebekah!” Kinzie shouted. Or he thought he did. Then he realized he had said nothing but had only screamed in his mind. Wells was clearly drawing fire. Even Wells pointed for Rebekah to go toward Kinzie.

Kinzie felt someone grab his rifle but leave it in his hand. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a fiercely painted Indian loom over him. Kinzie stopped to die.

“Shaw-nee-aw-kee!”

Kinzie was stunned. He knew that voice. It belonged to Mkedepoke, the Black Partridge. Kinzie blurted, “Can you save Margaret?”

Black Partridge had a young warrior with him who carried a tomahawk. Black Partridge pointed the young warrior toward someplace behind Kinzie. Kinzie turned where Black Partridge pointed and saw Margaret still on her horse, which danced in panic only yards off.

Dr. Van Voorhis was on foot, resplendent in his surgeon’s uniform but bleeding heavily from the thigh; he was trying to talk to Margaret. So the military doctor still lived, Kinzie thought. Where was the doctor’s horse? Margaret’s horse reared, and as it did, two unknown Indians came up to Dr. Van Voorhis, one in front, one behind. They chopped him to death.

The young warrior sent by Black Partridge, still holding his tomahawk, leaped at the reins of Margaret’s horse and seized them. Margaret began to thrash the Indian with her gloved hand and then leaned over to grab the scalping knife that hung over his heart. She fell off the saddle but grabbed onto the Indian and landed mostly on her feet. The knife and sheaf tore from his neck and fell on the sand.

“Margaret!” shouted Kinzie. He feared the young warrior would kill her if she resisted more. He heard himself really say, “Margaret!”

He saw Black Partridge push through the melee toward his stepdaughter. He was unrecognizable in his war paint.

“Margaret, Mkedepoke! Mkedepoke!” Kinzie saw Margaret claw at the first warrior.

Black Partridge picked up Margaret and threw her over his shoulder facedown.

Terrible sounds made Kinzie's head turn.

Ohhhh! End of goodness. Fullness of horror. He saw that a young Indian with a knife and a tomahawk had climbed into the first wagon. From the screams now, Kinzie knew this Indian was murdering the children in the lead wagon. Kinzie could hear their shrieks, their piteous calls for their fathers, their mothers, their brothers, even their gurgles. These horrifying sounds went on and on in the wagon for minutes. Kinzie closed his eyes and fought down vomit.

Finally, he opened his eyes and looked back for Margaret. She was gone. He reeled as he turned around and around. He gasped. Margaret's head was far out in the lake. But then he saw that she was alive, standing up to her neck in water. Next to her were Black Partridge and the young warrior, who were also up to their necks in the lake. Kinzie imagined that Margaret had run away into the lake. But Margaret was safe.

Strong Pike saw and heard the screams of the children. Moments earlier he had leaped onto the tongue of this same wagon with his bow in one hand and raised tomahawk in the other. But he saw a dozen terrified children and a white woman and jumped off. Not worthy. He had run up to challenge the last soldier, a wobbly, giant man with a bayonet, and had lusted to kill him and wet his tomahawk and whole arm with the man's blood; but an Indian in his forties with the appearance of a chief—who Strong Pike suddenly realized was his chief, Naunongee, from his village—had the same soldier in a duel. Younger warriors backed off. As soon as the soldier ran the chief through with the bayonet, Strong Pike and other young men attacked to punish and destroy the soldier. Strong Pike tried to chop the giant soldier's head off, but he had the neck of an ox. Strong Pike drew his tomahawk out before other falling tomahawks could chop off his hand, but he knew the man was already dead. The dying Naunongee had split his head open.

Strong Pike cast about this way and that for a challenge, not ready to ponder what it meant that his own chief had received a possibly mortal wound. The competition to kill a Kitchimokemon was intense. There were not enough of them.



It was then that Strong Pike heard the screams of the white children from the lead wagon. It was different because he could understand. He could hear “Mommyyyyyy” and “Oh, Daddy, Daddy” and “Johnny, please help me” and “Don’t!” Strong Pike’s blood lust still surged, but this was not proper. He had never heard anyone tell of a man who was a brave killer of children. No one cherished such a title. Warriors killed warriors. This was not right.

As he stood transfixed and looked at the children’s wagon, a mother inside heaved her boy out the back of it and set him on the sand. The little boy ran down the beach. He was so small, no one paid any attention to him. Strong Pike even wished the little one would escape.

Another Indian boy about fourteen, younger than Strong Pike, reached into the second wagon. He pulled a girl out by her long blond hair and tomahawked her in the forehead, or tried to. Strong Pike had seen this little girl once or twice from a distance. The girl got to her feet and resisted most of the force of the tomahawk blow with her arms. The young Indian tried to scalp her alive with his knife. She had a fine head of hair. The girl, who unbeknownst to Strong Pike was nine-year-old Isabella Cooper, daughter of Mary Cooper Burns, scratched the Indian boy, bit him, and fought like a wildcat. The Indian boy got a tiny part of her scalp with hair attached, but the girl kept most of it and lived. The Indian boy ran away.

The horse ran by carrying the other girl in the white ruffled dress who hung upside down from the saddle. The girl’s legs were still exposed. She did not fall off the horse. As the horse ran about, her body flopped.

Rebekah Heald was shot across the breast and thrown backward, more by her own reaction. To recover, she willed her back muscles and neck to push her upright again while she pulled desperately on the reins. Her horse twisted, and she lost sight of the officer who had been shot down on the beach. Her right breast burned.

She had ridden her spirited bay mare up onto the sand ridge to see the fate of the soldiers who had charged off the ridge onto the prairie. She saw the soldiers get hemmed in on both sides and saw her uncle ride like a mad man to push the warriors back. When she turned because she couldn’t watch, she spied a handsome young officer down on the beach and thought it might be her husband.

After Rebekah was shot, she saw the remaining soldiers race all together southwest across the prairie. She saw Wells, fire-eyed, shoot at one Indian and then look toward the sand hills and the beach. He tried to kick his horse into a dash, but the great animal answered in a sluggish way. Wells rode over the sand hills near her, not seeing her, his mount heaving. She saw Wells pause near what appeared to be a circle of Indian chiefs on the beach, and he shouted. Rebekah spurred her mount down onto the beach toward her uncle in time to hear a chief say to him, "My son, you can live." Wells saw her and rode to her. Like hammer blows, musket balls hit her twice in the left arm as she and her uncle met. She moaned. She lost the use of her left hand and took both reins in her right.

"Farewell, my child," said Wells. Blood oozed from his mouth and nose. He placed one of his pistols in his belt and pointed with his free hand toward the wagons. She ignored this. She saw that her uncle still had one pistol free. Indians fired on him from a distance, and she could hear the balls passing. It seemed Indians were firing from both sides.

"Uncle, I hope you will get over this." She was then shot in the right side and again in the left arm. "Ohh!" she cried.

"No, I cannot. I am shot through the lungs and can't live more than an hour," said Wells. "Tell my wife if you live to leave here. Oh, I doubt if anyone will get out of here alive. Tell her I died doing the best I could. There are seven red devils over there that I have killed. My horse is wounded. I fear it cannot carry me to the wagons."

Rebekah was shot a sixth time as he spoke, this in her right arm. She sensed she was losing the ability to feel.

Wells spurred his horse, but its hind legs buckled and it fell over toward Rebekah's horse. His mount had a bleeding bullet hole in its right flank behind the girth. Wells tried to dismount, but his leg had gotten trapped beneath his horse. He kept hold of his pistol as he fell and fired at a group of Indians as they ran toward him from the front. One dropped.

Rebekah watched as Wells, with the powder, wads, and balls on his person, tried to reload his pistol and rifle as he lay on the sand. His leg was under the horse.

"Uncle!" she shouted. "There is an Indian pointing right at the back of your head."

Wells lifted his head and spoke to her: "I trust you will die bravely." Then he said to no one, since he could not turn around to look back, "Shoot away." The Indian shot Wells in the back of the head. The same Indian and others dragged Wells out from under the horse. Rebekah saw the shooter scalp her uncle. It seemed impossible. She looked away but refused to leave him and felt compelled to look back. They cut Wells's chest open in the shape of a cross, and one of them reached into the gore and took out his heart. That Indian put the heart on the ramrod of a musket and whirled it around as he danced. "Apekonit! Apekonit! Apekonit!" they all yelled. They attracted more of a crowd now that Wells was dead. The Indian with the heart lowered it, and the crowd began to cut up the heart and eat it.

As she sat on her horse near her uncle's body, Rebekah Heald looked at the sky. An Indian pushed a piece of her uncle's heart toward her face. She shook her head and grimaced. The Indian rubbed the heart fragment on her cheek, marking it with a red smudge. She looked back, raised her only usable fist, and shook it, a Kentucky woman.

"Apekonit! Apekonit!" shouted more Indians. They pointed at Rebekah as they shouted the name over and over. It sounded to Rebekah like "Epeconier." She had heard this foreign name applied to her uncle before. Now they began applying it to her. This name frightened her. She understood that the Indians knew she was the niece of Wells. She shook her head: "no." She denied who she was.

Five minutes after the battle had begun and while they were fired on from both sides, twenty-eight soldiers had broken out of their doomed position west of the sand hills where they had been trapped after their second charge. Under fire and under hand-to-hand attack, they ran farther into the open prairie where the grass grew taller, to escape. The leaders headed toward a small but broad elevation, three or four feet high, the only visible landmark prior to the oak woods farther to the south. Captain Heald, who had a musket ball in his hip, fell behind, as did Private Jim Corbin and Sergeant Wheeler who struggled together.

Before they reached the elevation, Lieutenant Helm turned to face the enemy, and the men with him also turned. A musket ball had struck the barrel of Helm's gun, ricocheted, and penetrated his uniform

coat; its force miraculously spent, the ball came to rest in the lining of the coat. Another ball at that moment struck Helm in the right heel, wounding him but not seriously. When Helm turned, the enemy was at an extreme long range for musket fire.

"Reload," ordered Helm. "Then reload for them that ain't able. The Indians ain't followin'." The men were a confusion of agonized postures and wounds. Corbin came up dragging Sergeant Wheeler, whose eyes then rolled up in his head. Wheeler fell on his back, and his head bounced. Corbin couldn't hold him. Gory, Wheeler was also unconscious.

Far to their rear, Indians could be seen climbing the sand hills to watch. About three hundred Indians soon faced the small group of soldiers from far off. The rest of the Indians were out of sight on the beach.

The battle on the prairie had reached a stage where the surviving soldiers had run almost out of musket range. Either the Indians or the soldiers would have to advance into the range of the enemy's fire to resume the fight.

Captain Heald then caught up with his troops; he had his sword in his left hand because he had been shot a second time, in his right arm. He was soaked with sweat, and his face was blotchy red and white.

"Form into a line," Heald croaked. "Prepare to charge that body of Indians." The men who were able, plus their captain, formed.

"Forward!" Captain Heald called out, and advanced toward the Indians. Some of the twenty-eight advanced with him toward the three hundred. Other soldiers were down. Some retreated. The defectors reduced the attacking soldiers to an absurd number. Captain Heald stopped after a few steps and looked about him. He dropped his head.

Without orders, some of the soldiers then retreated further to the top of the small elevation nearby. It was out of range of muskets, and it enabled them to see across the prairie in all directions.

"Can somebody help me with Sergeant Wheeler? I can't carry him," Jim Corbin said. His brother, Fielding Corbin, and two other men lent a hand and they dragged Sergeant Wheeler. Soon the entire body of men plus their captain reassembled on that rise. Heald followed and reassumed command. They took stock.

When they counted up, nineteen of the soldiers who had gotten that far were wounded. The soldiers eyed the line of three hundred

Indians far off and began to bind their bloody flesh. Gunfire ceased on the prairie.

"Lieutenant, could you tie up my arm? I'm bleedin' terrible," said Corporal Bowen. Helm pulled out his own handkerchief and tied a tourniquet. "What's going to happen to us, sir?"

Men with good eyesight said "Hey!" as one man emerged from the Indians and walked alone through the grass and wildflowers toward the soldiers. He seemed to wear white man's clothes. A slight fellow, he walked steadily, his head erect. He risked being shot by either side. At length, the sharpest-eyed soldier announced, "Peresh! That's Peresh Le Claire who ran away."

"Peresh," the men mumbled. Then one said, "It *is* Peresh!"

Peresh Le Claire, for it was he, walked until he was within hailing range. He stopped and shouted.

"Captain Heald, sir! Captain Heald!"

Captain Heald limped down off the rise and limped across the prairie to meet him.

Corporal Bowen said, "Look, look."

After Captain Heald had limped twenty yards, a tall Indian could be seen to leave the Indian ranks on the far-off sand hills and begin his walk in a stately manner toward Heald. The soldiers did not know it, but it was Sigenak, the commander of the attack.

When the three finally came together, Captain Heald, the Indian, and Peresh could be seen to exchange a few words. Heald and the Indian seemed to shake hands. Captain Heald turned over his sword to Peresh. Peresh gave it to the Indian.

The battle had lasted fifteen minutes.

"Lieutenant, what's gonna happen to us?" asked Bowen again.

Helm gazed at the distant meeting of the captain and the Indian chief. "I believe we must die with our arms, Corporal, or before we surrender, the savages must promise to spare our lives."

"Captain, Lieutenant," said Fielding Corbin. "Sergeant Wheeler seems to be dead."

"God rest his soul," answered Lieutenant Helm.

The most seriously wounded soldiers cried for water.



## Chapter 35

### STRONG PIKE

Strong Pike felt very tired and deeply thirsty. He walked into the lake, put his tomahawk in his belt, knelt in a few inches of water, and lowered his head to drink. He drank until his belly was full. His belly had been very empty. He had fasted for the entire day before the battle, as was the Indians' custom. When he arose from the shallows, he decided to ignore the Americans' baggage. He walked tall across the beach toward the sand hills and toward the prairie beyond where he had left his father. It was a great victory, he knew. Yet he had not accomplished any of the personal measure of valor and glory he had hoped for. The screams of the dead white children sounded in his head, and the weeping and sobbing of the white women and surviving children as they were led away had annoyed him. He feared he would hear the dead children again in the future. He tried to thrust this thought from his mind. He saw a young man he knew drinking from a soldier's canteen. The young warrior lofted the canteen in the air and then showed Strong Pike his bloody tomahawk. Strong Pike showed his own bloody tomahawk, although he felt false since he had attacked a dead man. Strong Pike walked on. He was still astonished about the bayonet thrust absorbed by his village chief, Naunongee. The boy had seen Naunongee writhing on the sand attended by warriors.

Halfway between the lake and the sand hills, Strong Pike met Ogak, an older friend from his village. Ogak held a musket.

"We did well," said Strong Pike.

"Find your mother," said Ogak.

Strong Pike thought Ogak insulted him.

"My mother has her children with her."

"I mean no disrespect, my friend." Ogak touched Strong Pike's shoulder. "Your mother needs you. Apekonit killed your father."

"No." Strong Pike shook his head. "I was with my father. He is fine."

"I saw your father where he lies. Apekonit shot your father and killed him."

"My father told me to go to the beach. He said he would chase the soldiers onto the prairie." Strong Pike backed away from Ogak's hand. "He told me."

"Those soldiers are surrounded from a safe distance. Many men saw Apekonit ride at your father on his horse and shoot him." The young Ogak tapped the right side of his own chest near the center. "Here is where the ball entered. I am very sorry to tell you. Your father is a great man among our people."

"I saw the white warrior charge at us," said the perplexed son, wheeling around. Ogak had already passed by. "My father pushed me down . . ." Strong Pike's mind was a welter of confusion. "My father is alive."

Ogak stopped, turned completely around, and looked at Strong Pike. He finally said, "I will go with you."

But feeling blood rush to his head, Strong Pike ran toward the sand hills. He ran up one of the hills and passed an absurdly old soldier held prisoner there. Two warriors were stripping off his uniform. The boy ran down the other side of the hill, into the ravine, stumbled, regained his footing, and ran up the ravine and across the prairie to where he thought he had left his father. The scene was all changed. He looked around and around. He saw a knot of men to the north. He approached. They made an opening.

Spotted Trout was lying on his back with his mouth and eyes open. His legs were bent underneath him in a painful way, and there was a round hole in his chest.

"Father, get up." Strong Pike bent down and pushed his father's body to rouse him. The body moved oddly, like a piece of meat. The boy put his head to his father's chest and listened for his heart. His

father's chest was quiet. "Father!" The boy pressed his ear to his father's open mouth and listened for breath. He looked into the dead eyes. The boy stood up and looked in several directions. Then he looked at his own feet and saw the grassy hummock where his father had pressed him down.

Strong Pike's legs gave way, and he sat hard on the sand so that his bones jarred.

"Your uncle, Loud Crow, has gone to get your mother," said a voice behind him, a friend of his father's.

The boy heard, but not well. He thought very carefully and deeply and realized that his father had told him to go to the beach without betraying that he had been shot. The boy looked straight ahead for an unknown amount of time, seeing nothing.

"Who will help me carry my father?"

"We should wait for your mother and your uncle," said the friend of his father's.

At the mouth of the Chicago River, the Kinzie women, children, and workers, led by the muscular Chandonnais, remained on their boat, guarded also by two Indians sent by Topenebe. Before the massacre began, Topenebe had sent a messenger to hold the boat at the river mouth and not let it go south.

At the fated moment, those on the boat had seen smoke far off down the beach and seconds later had heard the belated first report of the Indians' muskets.

"*Mon Dieu*," said Josette, the Kinzie children's nurse.

After the firing far off, audible only partially and in waves, had died out, the victorious Indians started to return in a high mood with the first prisoners and with loot. Eleanor saw Rebekah Heald being led away—a captive on her beautiful bay mare. She was obviously wounded.

"Run, Chandonnais! That is Mrs. Heald. That Indian will kill her. Take the mule tied to the boat and offer it to release her."

Chandonnais jumped off, untied the mule, and went among the Indians who were his people to begin negotiations.

A young warrior with a pistol in one hand walked up the beach directly toward the Kinzie boat. With an intense look on his painted face he studied the occupants, and then he waved his pistol at them.



The two Indian guards shouted in vain but stayed back at the far side of the boat.

The slave, Black Jim, pushed forward to confront the pistol bearer. Black Jim held a long axe and lifted it high. "This boat contains only the wife and children of Shaw-nee-aw-kee," said Black Jim. "Shaw-nee-aw-kee. You hear, red man?" Black Jim made a small circle aloft with the axe as if selecting where to cleave the Indian. The Indian pointed the pistol at Black Jim. Time stopped. Then the Indian turned and walked away.

"Oh, thank you, Jim," gasped Eleanor.

When the sun was well advanced and making afternoon shadows, Strong Pike walked alone along the south bank of the Chicago River. He was carrying his father's bow across his back, held in place by the bowstring across his chest. He forgot he carried it. His mother was surrounded by women, some wailing their grief, while other women from among his relations prepared his father for burial. The wails and keening of the white women and Indian women, the crying of the children, the dogs barking, and the shouts of angry warriors sounded through the camp. The Indians had lost comparatively few dead—no more than ten as far as the boy could tell—but still far too many. The groans of the wounded, most of them soldiers, were low and easily ignored. The Indians were stripping the soldiers of their fancy outer uniforms.

After two hours of negotiations among the many chiefs present, the chiefs had agreed to let most of the surrendered soldiers live. Strong Pike's relatives had kept him informed of the negotiations and the outcome. He decided he would never be a chief and never talk so much. He could not understand why they let any soldiers live.

He thought the Kitchimokemon were contemptible. "The children of the evil spirit, they grew from the scum of the Great Water," in the words of the Prophet. Strong Pike was full of hate and wanted to kill. He was held back only by a sense that it was beneath him. He did not see himself as one who killed captives. It lacked dignity. It did not fit his picture of himself. Yet he wanted to kill several soldiers with several swings of his tomahawk and leave them to the animals.

How could his father be killed when so few red men were killed?

Strong Pike had shouted himself hoarse in approval when three

of the soldier prisoners were killed for stupidity. Warriors had fired a volley in the air to honor their dead, including Strong Pike's father, and a frightened soldier pulled a hidden knife. Three shots ended that soldier and two near him. How had he ever feared these white soldiers as a child, Strong Pike wondered?

Those Kitchimokemon who could survive might be useful as forced labor, but the badly wounded were worthless. He doubted that many would be allowed to live long. He walked out of the camp to get away from the Americans, their moans, their weeping women and wailing children, and to think about his father.

An hour later, with his hate under some control and his grief beginning to compete with the hate, he returned to the Frog Creek camp. He saw his mother emerge from a group of women and push away a friend who tried to restrain her. When she saw him, he was startled because she looked at him accusingly, as if he had killed his own father. He was also startled because his mother resembled an old hag who had lost her mind. Then, in an instant, his mother's accusatory expression changed to one of defeat and terrible sorrow, and her face fell further apart. She stumbled up to him and hugged him. She hung on him so completely that he had to hold her up to keep her from falling. He was embarrassed, yet he felt like a man, stronger than his own mother. He noticed that captive soldiers sitting on the ground were looking at his mother. They were looking at his mother! He spotted the deceitful Mr. Kinzie and his daughter nearby. Strong Pike learned that Kinzie had lied to the Indians about the destruction of the powder and the liquor. The boy thought someone would soon strip the Kinzies of their clothes and open their heads.



## Chapter 36

### AFTERMATH

*Afterward: August 15, 1812*

Jimmy Wheeler sat on a rotten log. He examined an oak leaf he had plucked from a tree; its veins, large ones and small ones, carried whatever a leaf's blood was. The design was finely worked, like a Spanish saddle, yet there was an infinite number of such leaves, each delicately wrought. So why, he thought, did God who made so many leaves and caterpillars . . .

Jimmy had run through the woods in a panic to return to his father, to his people, to his family as he thought of them. But no one can run through the woods except in broad zigzags to skirt fallen trees and trees at an angle across one's path, plus the thickets and fallen branches in every direction in the general disorganization of the forest. Jimmy in his overwrought sprint fell twice in thirty yards. The second time, Sergeant Griffith caught him and knelt on his back again for a long time.

After a while, Sergeant Griffith got Jimmy to admit exactly what his father's instructions were. "Be patient," Griffith had said. "You can't change this day yourself. Better people than you have tried. Don't be a girl and run off screaming."

Forty-five minutes after the first outbreak of shooting—they had heard the cattle bellowing and guessed that at least some of the cattle had been shot—they heard a greater volume of shooting; it was

only in brief snatches, for a second on a puff of air from far away, then silence, then another puff with that far-off racket of gunfire, but enough to imagine. After fifteen minutes it ended.

Then Griffith let Jimmy up.

"Damn, my knees hurt from kneeling on you." He had knelt on Jimmy for more than an hour. The sergeant added, "Now sit still whether you like it or not. We have no weapons. Sit still."

Jimmy thought of the Indians shooting his father and his friends, and he retched and vomited. His father and friends would fight. Maybe they would win. Then he remembered sixty fighters among his people and the hundreds of warriors.

If they had died, he wished he had died with them instead of losing all notion of good and glory and being forced to live.

Then Jimmy was angry. He ground his teeth with the need to kill. Then he was afraid and felt sweat run down his back. He wanted to live, to run farther and hide. No, he couldn't. He would kill them like a good Kentuckian.

"Griffith. What can we do?"

"I don't know."

"You think maybe some of them got away?"

"I sure hope so. The land is on fire now. There's going to be killings on top of killings. There's going to be revenge and more revenge. There's going to be burnings. The best that we can do today is save ourselves, and that is doubtful. If you want to fight in this war, first we have to get back to the settled areas."

"How?"

"Don't know. We got that canoe, but we got no food, no knives, no guns. You got ideas?"

"We can eat the onions," said the boy. "Damn, I wish we were with them."

"Onions like around here don't grow everywhere else, let me tell you. I was hoping we could get away from here."

"Shut up."

Then Jimmy suddenly bawled like the child he was. His chest heaved. His nose ran. He wept tears in buckets, whined and sobbed, his face tortured and showing all the sadness of the earth.

"You gotta quiet down."

Jimmy ran out of energy after half an hour, then lay down and

cried quietly for a while. Jimmy thought of his father's last words: "You must obey Griffith till yer done. Now all's well. This is where Ah belong."

Incongruously, for no sensible reason, the birds were singing.

Lieutenant Pettibone was in shock. This was a debacle beyond his imagination. He had been hit three times. The first shot had taken the white pompon off his hat. The second had ripped the epaulet off his left shoulder. The third broke his sword in his hand and stunned his hand. Pettibone had turned himself over to the continued protection of the Almighty. The Indians had disarmed the soldiers out on the rise on the prairie and fired off the soldiers' muskets to empty them. Their captors then placed some of the wounded, including Jim Corbin, onto horses. The Indians led the rest who could walk back toward the beach. They left Sergeant Wheeler where he lay.

Some soldiers were silent on the walk back; some talked to themselves or each other. All the warriors' faces were painted in horror-provoking red and black. Pettibone noticed that four Indians in particular guarded him. He knew his uniform marked him as an officer.

Remembering the Almighty, Pettibone looked up to heaven.

"Pettibone, you shan't be killed."

The ordeal had temporarily unbalanced him. Pettibone made a face and vowed to keep his wits together.

"Pettibone, I know you. You gave me some tobacco at Fort Wayne. You shan't be killed."

This time Pettibone turned to look at the painted faces of his guards. He realized the speaker was not the Almighty but an Indian named—What was his name? Pettibone recognized under the paint a thin Potawatomi with a pockmarked face whom the lieutenant had indeed met at Fort Wayne only a week or two earlier.

"Mr. Raccoon! I believe that's what they call you in English."

"Yes, Pettibone, White Raccoon."

When they came up out of the ravine, climbed the sand hills, and saw the beach, Lieutenant Helm gave out a loud "Ohhh!"

Like a medieval painting of hell, the dead men, women, and children lay naked on the sand with their heads cut off, and the beach was red with blood and gore. The birds had gathered above, ready to rip the dead apart when the Indians cleared away, and some had

already begun. Pettibone was immediately conscious that he did not want to swallow his tongue. He resolved to act as the deepest friend to his savior, White Raccoon.

He also resolved to escape at the first opportunity.

The chiefs gathered for another council in the late afternoon at the southernmost Indian camp at the elbow of the south branch of the Chicago River. John Kinzie was allowed to come. Kinzie sweated profusely. The heat was fierce. He intended to make deals to save his family. Maybe, he thought, he could even save a few other people through negotiations and promises. Out of nowhere, Peresh Le Claire plopped down next to him.

“*Monsieur*, your son-in-law is all right. He has one small wound.”

“Peresh! You’re alive?”

“I ran away, sir.”

“Oh, yes. I remember at the beginning. Thank God! They killed the children.”

Peresh groaned.

“Not all, but . . . so many. The militia are all dead, Le Claire.”

“If I had stayed with them, I would be, too. I am lucky to be alive.”

“Half the soldiers are dead,” Kinzie related. “Women. I didn’t do anything. I watched. Do you hear me? I did nothing. Margaret is alive. Eleanor and my children. I didn’t move. They tore the baby out of the—”

“*Monsieur*.”

“Bill Wells is dead, Peresh. I’ve known him since he was a young man. Sergeant Hayes. I think Ronan is dead—”

“Mr. Kinzie.”

“Captain Heald may be dead.”

“Sir, your son-in-law is alive. He has one small wound. Your step-daughter’s husband. He’s alive.”

“Linai? What a relief! I saw him in the other camp. He’s extraordinarily lucky.”

“The badly wounded Americans will get no mercy. They can’t travel.”

“I know. Peresh?”

“Yes?”

"I saw Black Partridge kill a little girl."

"*Excusez-moi?*"

"She was in terrible shape. She was shot out of the saddle but tied on and dragged. Unconscious. Couldn't live. But I would have left her. I couldn't do it. He took pity on her and killed her on the beach. Black Partridge truly cared for her. It was Lillie Leigh, one of the Leigh girls. He was fond of Lillie for years. It was hard for Mkedepoke to deliver the blow."

"Mkedepoke is a gentleman and a warrior. What do we do, *mon-sieur?*"

Kinzie leaned forward and put his face in his hands.

"Sit up straight, Mr. Kinzie."

Kinzie sat up straight. His face was flushed deep red, and the muscles of his face were working with emotion. Then he spoke softly: "Black Partridge has made Margaret and me his captives."

"To protect you."

"Of course." Kinzie could see Indians look at him with distrust because of this quiet conversation with Peresh. "Eleanor sent Chandonnais off to negotiate the purchase of Mrs. Heald. I have to bargain for Linai's life, my son-in-law. I don't know what we can do. We must do our best."

"*Monsieur*, the soldiers and Lieutenant Helm will remain as captives. The women and children who are still alive will be taken away as captives. All will be held for ransom or kept to do work. We cannot prevent this. When the council starts, the chiefs will discuss who gets which prisoners. That is the purpose here."

"I suppose Linai, too."

"All of them, sir." Then Peresh whispered, "Captain Heald is still alive, sir, but he may be killed yet. That's what I hear. One of the Corbin brothers, Jim, can't walk. I told my people he is a blacksmith who can fix their tools and guns, so they put him on a horse to try to save him."

"Shaw-nee-aw-kee!" An older chief approached them. The chief pointed at Peresh to stay and waved for Kinzie.

The chief led Kinzie a hundred yards across the flattened grass, among painted warriors who sat and smoked or ate. Then the chief pointed. Kinzie saw an officer lying on the ground on his side in a bloody shirt and pants. His uniform hat and jacket were gone.

“Nathan?” Kinzie said.

Heald, his face half on the earth, said, “Do you hear anything of my wife?”

Kinzie knelt down on the grass. “Rebekah has been wounded many times and is in great pain. But she is a strong girl. I saw her from a distance in their camp at the Chicago River. I have not been allowed to talk to her.”

“Is there anything, anything you can do for her?” Heald looked up into Kinzie’s eyes. “I ask you as a friend. I ask you also as a Freemason.” Despite their many disagreements, Heald and Kinzie both shared membership in a relatively secret brotherhood.

“What I can, I will do, as a Freemason.” Kinzie indicated with a wave the vast body of hostile Indians.

Heald spoke very softly. “I have some money in my underwear, John. I don’t wish to make a spectacle. I want to give it to you for safekeeping.”

Kinzie took off his coat and gave it to Captain Heald. Some minutes later, Kinzie took his coat back from Heald. “I will return this money to you when we can,” said Kinzie softly.

When Kinzie looked in his pockets later, he discovered that Captain Heald had given him, in addition to the money, the evacuation order from General Hull.

More than twenty chiefs attended the council. Early on, they agreed to let Shaw-nee-aw-kee take his family and his stepdaughter, Margaret, back to the Kinzie house for the time being. Kinzie was not allowed to ransom his soldier son-in-law.

The subject of Captain Heald came last.

Kaganwikashi, or Grizzly Bear, a Potawatomi chief from the far north near Green Bay, spoke up: “We should kill the white chief.”

Several chiefs mumbled in agreement.

“This man deceived us by destroying the guns and powder that he had promised and shown to us. He has also poisoned the flour that he gave us.”

A flurry of exclamations erupted over the poison charge.

“May I speak?” interrupted Kinzie. It was allowed. They all spoke Potawatomi.

“The white chief obeyed orders from his superior when he destroyed the powder. He had no choice.” Kinzie drew from his pocket



the written order to Captain Heald from General Hull commanding destruction of the powder and guns. "Peresh?"

Peresh, half Potawatomi, took the order from Kinzie, read and translated it aloud into Potawatomi, vouched for the contents, and showed it to various chiefs. Some looked at it. Others turned their faces away. None could read it.

"As for the flour that this chief says is poisoned, I say this is false. To show you this is false, if you bring me some of the flour, I will eat it here in front of you."

Sigenak then said, "This poisoned flour was hard to believe to begin with. Our people have already eaten some, and no one got sick."

Qua-she-gun, the village chief from Milwaukee, said, "I wish to talk to Captain Heald."

A warrior brought Heald to the council and made him sit. Heald moved slowly and awkwardly. His appearance was dirty, sweaty, and bloody.

"Heald," Qua-she-gun said, "do you think the Great White Father to the east will forgive us for deceiving you and attacking you?" Peresh interpreted.

"Forgive you?"

Qua-she-gun asked another question. "What will happen in this war between the Seventeen Fires<sup>20</sup> on your side and the British and some of our people on our side?"

Heald shifted to find some position to sit without agony. He looked at Kinzie.

"They want to know what will be the outcome of this war," Kinzie explained again. "Say something appropriate."

Heald grimaced. "My father was a colonel in the last war against the king." Heald spoke to Kinzie, not to the Indians. "My father said they had many defeats. General Washington kept at it and wouldn't quit. I was born the year it began. I was eight years old when we won. I guess they'll do that again."

"Peresh, you translate that," said Kinzie.

That night Kinzie's top hand, Chandonnais, reverted to his Indian identity as the nephew of Topenebe. Chandonnais ransomed Mrs.

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20. the United States

Heald and took her across the river to the Kinzie house. Next, during the same night, Chandonnais rode out to the southernmost Indian camp on a borrowed horse. He persuaded his uncle, Topenebe, to ransom Captain Heald in exchange for three horses that belonged to Topenebe, an expensive ransom. The uncle and the nephew placed Heald on an Indian pony and took him to Kinzie's house.

Jimmy Wheeler was in shock and greatly confused as he listened to the frogs and toads, the wolves, coyotes, and panthers, the crickets and the night birds, and to the snoring of Sergeant Griffith. But there was another sound, a human wailing that carried only occasionally on the wind from far off.

Near dusk, Griffith and Jimmy had verified it was over by crawling to the edge of the woods and seeing across the river that Indians were dressed in white women's clothes and soldiers' uniforms. Then before nightfall, Jimmy and Sergeant Griffith had gone deeper into the woods. From years of playing in these woods, Jimmy knew he was about a half mile west-northwest of the fort. He and Griffith were inside a nasty thicket where no sensible Indian would go.

Jimmy was quite safe. This tormented him. He had heard many stories of American captives who escaped from Indian villages during the old Indian wars. He suspected some Americans would try it again, maybe even tonight. He wanted to help.

Jimmy thought that if he could help rescue one person, he would have a small redemption. After a long debate he decided his obligation to obey Griffith was over. He could make up his own mind.

He had broken sticks in the daylight until he had gotten himself a sharp, strong one that he was satisfied would serve as a primitive knife. He had no illusions. The sharp stick would cause pain, but that was all.

When he guessed that it was approaching midnight—he could not see the stars through the trees—he started off while Griffith was sound asleep.

The woods were black. He fell time and again and was slashed on the face and all over his body by branches, almost losing both eyes. It took hours before he concluded he was totally lost.

He stopped, lay on his back, and cried more. He wanted to scream but instead turned over and crawled out of anger, determination,

and fatalism. He was muttering curses until he thought he detected a thinning of the blackness ahead. He crawled forward a few yards more and realized he was at the edge of the woods. But which edge? He had intended to go south, but he no longer knew his directions. He crawled to the tree line and realized he had actually ended up southeast. He could tell by the dim glow of the spent campfires that he was one hundred yards or so upstream of the Frog Creek Indian camp on the opposite bank of the Chicago River. The Indian camp had sprawled onto both sides of the creek. By the rotation of the stars that he could see outside the woods, Jimmy guessed it was three in the morning. He had to crawl across open ground to get to the river so he could swim the river. And then what? What could he do? Now that he was at the brink, it seemed impossible. He decided to be sensible and go back in the woods.

Twenty minutes later, against all common sense, he swam in the Chicago River. Then he climbed and slithered like a snake onto the opposite bank. What? What? his mind demanded. What was the plan? Something. He told himself the Indians would sleep in their lean-tos and a few temporary wigwams. The captives would be left in the open. That was what he hoped. But they would be tied. He would have to use his teeth. Good. He had strong teeth.

He crawled away from the only fire actually still burning, trying to see shadows of people in the dim firelight. An Indian came out to urinate twenty-five yards away. Jimmy felt one with the ground and did not move. The moon had gone down. The Indian returned to the camp. Jimmy did not move a hair for a full fifteen minutes to allow that Indian to go back to sleep. Jimmy was about thirty yards from the fringe of the camp. He waited some more.

He got ready to move one knee. Suddenly he was yanked off the ground by his shirt. He was utterly terrified. Shouts and howls of at least two men filled his ears. They had seen him first and surprised him from behind. He was insane with fear and knew only that he must break free and get to the river. He clutched his sharp stick in his right hand with the grip of his life as he was held by a man behind and buffeted by one in front. He yanked his arm and plunged his stick into the front Indian's face. Jimmy shrieked for all he was worth. He tried to twist to face the rear man. The first stab felt good, as if he had found an eye or near it. The wounded Indian went berserk with

his own shrieking, and the man behind Jimmy twisted his arm and nearly broke it, until he dropped his stick. The man he had stabbed bit Jimmy's ear and screamed in it. Jimmy did not recognize the language. The man continued to scream in pain and rage.

Strong Pike was awakened from a deep sleep filled with dreams by Little Bass, who spoke in great agitation in his usual difficult style. Strong Pike finally understood. The message was "Jimmy Wheeler."

"Jimmy Wheeler is dead," Strong Pike said with weariness. "The only white men who lived were soldiers, Little Bass."

"Jimmy Wheeler," repeated Little Bass, who shook his older brother by the shoulders. "They are making a fire." Little Bass managed to convey that he was awakened by the screaming of angry people, screaming that was still audible. Little Bass had gone out to see and observed people piling wood for a bonfire. A man was tied to a stake buried deep in the ground in the middle of the wood pile, and a cord was tied around his neck. It was, Little Bass insisted, Jimmy Wheeler.

The day had been so traumatic that neither Strong Pike's sisters nor his mother were awakened by this disturbance. They were exhausted with grief, war, and fear of the future without the head of their family.

Strong Pike sighed and wiped the saliva off his face from his brother talking awkwardly inches away. Then Strong Pike rested his forehead on his little brother's forehead and pulled their heads together to tell Little Bass how much he loved him.

"Jimmy Wheeler is dead."

"No!"

"If it is Jimmy Wheeler, he is not our prisoner," said Strong Pike. "We can do nothing."

"You are a warrior," said Little Bass. "Kill him."

Strong Pike was shocked when he understood these awkward words. His brother shook him again. Strong Pike reluctantly decided to go along with his brother because he saw no other way to make his brother leave him alone. Strong Pike felt for his bow, his father's and his grandfather's white bow of powerful medicine, and his quiver of arrows. With his stumblings in the dark, he inadvertently began to wake his sisters. Strong Pike felt the tomahawk placed in his hand

by Little Bass. Strong Pike slipped the tomahawk into the waistband of his loincloth and groaned with exhaustion and the soreness in his young muscles from the high-pitched tension of the previous day. He rubbed his eyes. The boys started to walk toward the noise of angry voices. They ignored their sisters' mumbled questions behind them.

When they were in the open, Strong Pike said quietly, "I did not know you understood that our father is against the torture of captives. Our leader, Tecumseh, has condemned torture and tries to stop it. Father, too." They walked as fast as Little Bass could walk in his halting gait.

"I hear our father when he talks to you," Little Bass answered. "I always hide nearby. I wish he were here now." The younger brother dropped his head and stopped. Strong Pike rested his hand on the back of his brother's head. They both cried.

Soon they started again and had to cross a log footbridge to the opposite side of Frog Creek. Little Bass led the way to the western edge of the large camp near the Chicago River.

When they got to the spot, the fire was not yet lit. People were completing the circle of wood around the victim who stood on open ground in the center. They had to collect unburned wood in the dark from nearby campfires, and this took time. A torch was ready. Strong Pike saw it was true. Jimmy Wheeler was tethered around his neck to a short stake pounded into the ground. His hands were tied behind his back. He would be able to run within the circle of fire, but he could not escape.

Strong Pike drew an arrow from his quiver, felt the extremely sharp steel arrowhead tip, and took a deep breath.

"Whose prisoner is this?" he said loudly.

He was ignored.

"Whose prisoner is this?" he said louder.

"Who asks?" a man's voice said.

"Strong Pike, son of Spotted Trout who was killed in battle today."

"My friend fears he may lose his eye because of this evil boy. He attacked us for no reason. We intend to burn him."

"From your speech, you are a Kickapoo." The man in the dark spoke Potawatomi, but in the manner of a Kickapoo.

"It matters not who we are. But, yes, we are your neighbors near Lake Peoria. I speak your language."

"My friend in the dark, I want you to know my father who died today opposed torture. Tecumseh, who has become the leader of all the red men, condemns torture. He says it is beneath us. I will kill this man instantly for you, this boy. I know him."

The wounded man leaped out of the dark, holding his hand over his left eye, shrieked, and punched Strong Pike in the ribs with his right hand.

"My friend asks if you will give him your eye also."

Being struck insulted Strong Pike. In response, he punched the other man with his bow hand. "Take this bow made from the rib of a great fish." A deal had not occurred to Strong Pike, and he acted on impulse. "This bow from the greatest fish in the world, from the far western sea." He could not stop, for he had said it and would not take it back. "This bow has traveled through many Indian nations. It is ancient yet strong. It belonged to my grandfather and my father. It possesses powerful medicine." The words were bitter on his lips because he regretted what he offered.

The wounded man seized the bow and spoke rapidly in Kickapoo. Strong Pike kept firm hold of the bow for the moment.

"My friend says he will take your bow *and* your eye, or instead we will burn this evil boy."

"Eeeeeee!" A screaming crazy woman ran out of the dark. She, too, seized the bow. Strong Pike and the wounded Indian and the woman all pulled and tugged. Up close, Strong Pike recognized his haggard mother, who was out of her mind with grief and had many other troubles but was now protecting her husband's bow. Strong Pike felt he was losing his own mind. The wounded Indian's friend jumped in, and now four people pulled this way and that, bending and bending and bending the whalebone.

Crack!

"Ohhhhh! Oooooo!" the onlookers exclaimed as if they had witnessed a bad omen.

Strong Pike's mother had fallen. The wounded Indian had fallen. The bow was broken forever. Strong Pike closed his eyes. With his eyes closed, he knelt to lift up his mother. She pushed him away. She began to shriek at him and accuse him. Little Bass forced his way in, knelt with their mother, and started saying something to Strong Pike, but Strong Pike could not understand it. Strangers shouted

incomprehensibly. Strong Pike sensed that this scene had descended to the lower depths. He stood up and drew his tomahawk.

"No torture," he said in a choked voice. "I have decided. I will honor my father. I will pay your friend. Tell him."

In the darkest mental state of his life, Strong Pike turned and stepped onto and over the gathered wood for the bonfire. Jimmy Wheeler, inside the circle of wood, gazed at Strong Pike with a poised face. Strong Pike swung his tomahawk and chopped the tether near the stake buried in the ground. He led Jimmy Wheeler away on this leash.

### *The Next Day, August 16, 1812*

Billy Caldwell, the Irish Indian who had once shown Jimmy Wheeler how to transplant corn shoots in a garden, could do clever tricks. He was about to do one.

Caldwell, also known as Sauganash, had a sad side. His father, Captain Caldwell of the British army, hated him. His white step-mother was cold to him. His white half brothers tolerated him. His Mohawk mother was lost to him. Billy loved them all.

Billy loved people. He was a good hunter. He was a sought-after companion who was trusted by all, even by women. He was a sharp clerk in business and employed by men of wealth, Kinzie and Forsyth, although those two patronized him as a servant.

Quietly, Billy knew he was smarter than most people. Some days he truly believed in himself. Other days he doubted himself and drank too much. His doubts were rarely visible. A tall and commanding man, Caldwell had a big voice. He had many voices. He could play a king or a pauper.

He arrived in Chicago the day after the massacre dressed completely as an Indian—his clothes, hair, paint, and accoutrements—and was alarmed to discover that the Kinzie family was in danger. A party of Indians from the Wabash River who had gotten to Chicago too late for the battle nevertheless wanted to kill some free-running Americans. They were headed for the Kinzie home on the north bank of the river, which was once again occupied by the large Kinzie family. The family members were semiprisoners of Black Partridge and

his brother, Chief Waubonsee, but these two and three companions could not protect Eleanor, her children, and the nurse, Josette, against the twenty braves who arrived. John Kinzie was off negotiating. Caldwell, a fine fellow to be around, easily gathered a dozen idle Indians to back him up and walked into the Kinzie living room just as the standoff between the five and the twenty had begun. (Margaret Helm was hiding in the Ouilmettes' house. The Healds were hidden in the woods.)

"How now, my friends. A good day to you. I was told there were enemies here, but I am glad to find only friends." Caldwell regaled the leaders of the hostile band in this hearty manner for more than fifteen minutes in Potawatomi. The hostile twenty drooped, then relented. The Kinzies were saved.

### *The Des Plaines River*

A slow march rattled and clanged. Pots and pans hung on or packed on Indian horses and Indian ponies banged against canteens and swords, against blacksmith's equipment, guns, steel traps, and what all, the goods from the fort and the factory. The wounded captives groaned and made peeps and cries as they marched, but tried to stifle these sounds so as not to attract a tomahawk to the brain. Amid the large band of Indians, the captives from Fort Dearborn said little. Private Fielding Corbin walked vacant-eyed with an army drum that belonged to a dead drummer and bumped against Fielding's knee and thigh with every step. It was now an Indian drum carried by a captive. Fielding Corbin had already fallen twice from hunger, weariness, and grief, and from the drum to which he did not pay sufficient heed. His brother, Private James Corbin, rode on horseback; he was mostly unconscious with multiple wounds, and his body shook with the slow gait of the horse.

On both sides of the trail, the prairie grass, alive with insects and birds, was interwoven with green, purple, and gold wildflowers.

Jimmy Wheeler walked down this dusty portage trail to the ford over the Des Plaines River. He marched alongside the Corbins and was extremely hungry. When the Indians stopped for a break, Jimmy saw a grasshopper with the brown fluid in its mouth that the children



called the grasshopper's tobacco. He wondered with envy what grasshoppers ate. The Potawatomies had cooked a meal of fresh beef at daybreak from the butchered cattle and had eaten in advance of their trip, but they had not fed the captives. The captives' mouths had watered at the smells, and their stomachs had bubbled. Jimmy had eaten almost nothing the day before. He was fourteen and always hungry anyway, and he was far hungrier than he had ever been.

He was also adrift. Fielding Corbin had told Jimmy his father was dead. Jimmy tried not to believe it. He suddenly smelled his own clothes and remembered the great fire that had put a final end to everything and cast him into the sea. The Indians had set Fort Dearborn ablaze after breakfast. When the flames were forty feet in the air, the Indians fired their guns to celebrate. After a while the blockhouses fell in flames. The tall inner pickets crumbled. The officers' quarters, the enlisted men's barracks, the captain's quarters, the sutler's store—buildings whose strong back walls had formed much of the perimeter of the fort—were consumed by fire until their roofs, floors, and walls fell in. The fort was nine years old and burned well. The summer's variable wind had blown the smoke and showers of sparks across the river toward the Kinzies' place, then toward the lake, and then back up the river into the Indian camp where the captives were. The Indians cheered.

After several hours the burning ruins were no longer of interest. The Indians separated the prisoners for travel.

Jimmy knew this band of Potawatomies was going south to the Illinois River country near Peoria because Strong Pike had told him.

"I traded our family's horse to the man you wounded. You have cost my family so much that I cannot help you anymore. I have given you to distant relatives of mine. You will work for them. That is all I can do."

Part of Jimmy had wanted to thank Strong Pike, but he now had no tolerance for talk with Indians. He hated Indians. He refused to respond and looked off. The moment passed. Strong Pike walked away.

There were no white women or children with this group. From whispered conversations with other captives, Jimmy knew that some white women and children lived. They had been kept apart from the soldiers. Jimmy had learned, and he accepted as part of the loss of

everything, that the militia men and boys like himself were all killed, including the best friend he had ever had, Johnny Leigh.

Jimmy looked up at the blue sky and asked God for help to escape. Jimmy was fiercely angry at God, but he demanded God's help anyway.

As they entered the tree line before the river, Jimmy also remembered an odd thing that Dr. Van Voorhis, who was twenty-two, had once said to him and Johnny Leigh: "In my solitary walks I contemplate what a great and powerful republic will yet arise in this new world. Here, I say, will be the seat of millions yet unborn. Here, the asylum of oppressed millions yet to come." Dr. Van Voorhis had told the boys he meant Chicago. The boys had had a good laugh. Jimmy wondered if he or any Americans would ever return to the charred prairie called Chicago.

*"You're gonna build this country someday. You'll build it by each man relyin' on the other."*

"Fielding?" Jimmy said. "Fielding?"

Fielding Corbin had lost his wife and son and unborn child, and was temporarily beyond caring. If this Corbin brother couldn't keep up, the Indians would kill him. Jimmy stepped forward and grasped the drum strap. "Fielding, give me the drum." He lifted the drum off Fielding and carried it.

So when you walk on the Magnificent Mile through the woods in back of Point de Sable's house; or when you walk along State Street south of the river where the Indians gathered and dreamed to save the land for their way; or when you pass by Michigan and Wacker, the site of Fort Dearborn, remember how we got here.



## *Author's Note*

Twenty-seven soldiers were killed in the battle. Six more soldiers were killed by the Indians after they surrendered, and two soldiers died in captivity. Except for Peresh Le Claire, all of the civilian militia—totaling ten or twelve men and boys—were killed in the battle, as was Captain Wells. Two American women were killed in the battle. One American woman, Mrs. Needs, died in captivity. Eleven American children were killed, and one, the Needs boy, was left to die of exposure afterward, a total of twelve children killed. The combined American death toll from the battle and aftermath was sixty-one to sixty-three. As many as fifteen Indians were killed in the battle called the Fort Dearborn Massacre.

In the chart below, by “Native Americans” Captain Heald means “born in America.”

### *Quarterly Return of Captain Nathan Heald's Co. of First Regiment of Infantry for quarter ending 30th June 1812*

#### **Composition of the Company**

Native Americans	42
Englishman	1
Irishmen	6
Scotchmen	2
Germans	2
Born at sea	1
TOTAL	54

N. Heald, Captain, Commander of the Company



## Methodology

A wise adviser told me to explain my technique, approach, and research base.

I am a newspaper reporter. My approach is to interview the witnesses and participants, apply common sense, and tell the story.

The witnesses and participants are numerous here and are all in the past, so I “interviewed” them by studying their letters and reports. Next, I studied their accounts that were recorded by others. Examples of these accounts are found in the works of Henry Schoolcraft, Clarence Burton, Joseph Kirkland, A. T. Andreas, and Juliette Augusta Magill Kinzie, the author of *Wau-Bun*, and in some of the letters of Thomas Forsyth, John Kinzie’s half brother, who summarized his information on Fort Dearborn for the United States government.

When a newspaper reporter starts a new story, he often knows very little about the event and very little about the participants and witnesses. He may not even know who knows. That was the case when I began research into Fort Dearborn.

My approach is to start anywhere. I read the first account I could find. I started a few years ago so I can’t remember what the first account that I read was, but one of the first was Joseph Kirkland’s *The Chicago Massacre of 1812* in the library of the Chicago Historical Society.

Like an upside-down mountain, I started at a pinpoint, with a single work, and kept widening my research by going to the sources of each book. This is where research librarian John McInnes was invaluable. I could give John a list of sources I knew existed but could not find, and he discovered where they were and in places that were convenient for me.

Very quickly I discovered that the best and most commonly known account of the Fort Dearborn Massacre and the events leading up to it was Juliette Kinzie’s *Wau-Bun* based on her interviews with the Kinzie family. She was John and Eleanor Kinzie’s daughter-in-law.

I also discovered that the premier historian of Fort Dearborn and the early history of Chicago is Milo Milton Quaife. Fort Dearborn buffs rightly call Quaife's 1913 book, *Chicago and the Old Northwest, 1673-1835*, "the bible."

Oddly enough, Quaife despised *Wau-Bun* and wrote more than one denunciation of it. It is not unusual for a reporter to find such antagonisms when researching controversial events. Such antagonisms can be handy because they can keep a source, or sources, lively and independent.

Quaife was a great detective, a reliable publisher of every useful document, and an honest man. I followed as far as he led, and then I kept going and followed many other sources that became available. An example of a newer source is John Kinzie's account, unearthed by Mentor Williams in an attic and a basement.

Many other sources became available to me or were easier to find after Quaife because of the publication of *The Territorial Papers of the United States* in book form; these twenty-seven volumes edited by Clarence Edwin Carter and John Porter Bloom were an amazing achievement. Equally amazing was the microfilming of the National Archives and the distribution of those archives to regional centers as well as the microfilming of the Draper Manuscripts by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The Draper Manuscripts are available today outside Wisconsin in such fine libraries as Chicago's Newberry Library. These kinds of collections made my task in some ways easier than Quaife's.

I also sought out other collections of letters of Fort Dearborn contemporaries in the Midwest and Canada. These letters, formerly loose and hard to find, are also available in book form today. Many of these collections are listed in the notes and bibliography. Quaife pointed the way to some of these, and I discovered others by hook or by crook.

The premier historians of the Potawatomi Indians are James A. Clifton and R. David Edmunds. Quaife did not have their help or the help of Helen Hornbeck Tanner's works on American Indians, but I did.

If one keeps at this research long enough, one gets lucky. Jerry W. Lewis, also known as Mswemakek, a Chicago-area Potawatomi and former tribal historical researcher, directed me to a book that told of a hitherto forgotten but essential letter of Thomas Forsyth.

I found Allan Eckert's *Gateway to Empire* to be a good collection of many things I needed to know early on, and useful in that regard, but his source notes are in a code too hard to understand for researchers.

Regarding the old Quaife vs. *Wau-Bun* controversy, this has to some extent

limited historical research into early Chicago. But this controversy generates far more heat than light.

To list all Quaife's objections to *Wau-Bun* would require the many pages that he devoted to it. I will list two from Quaife's "Some Notes on the Fort Dearborn Massacre," published in 1912, for the flavor:

First, in Juliette Kinzie's work, Quaife says, "A desire to magnify the role played by the Kinzies in the massacre is evident."

Second, he says, "Mrs. Helm,<sup>21</sup> on whose authority the description of the actual massacre is given, could not have played the part in it which is ascribed to her; and there is some reason for thinking that she was temperamentally incapable of accurately describing such an affair."

No man could get away with the "temperamentally incapable part" today. Secondly, Quaife years later admitted after further research that the part Mrs. Helm described for herself in the massacre was accurate. My notes in this book for chapter 32 discuss Margaret Helm's role in detail.

The Kinzies in their accounts play up and defend their family's role, as one would expect. The Healds, whom Quaife prefers, play up and defend their family's role. I used both.

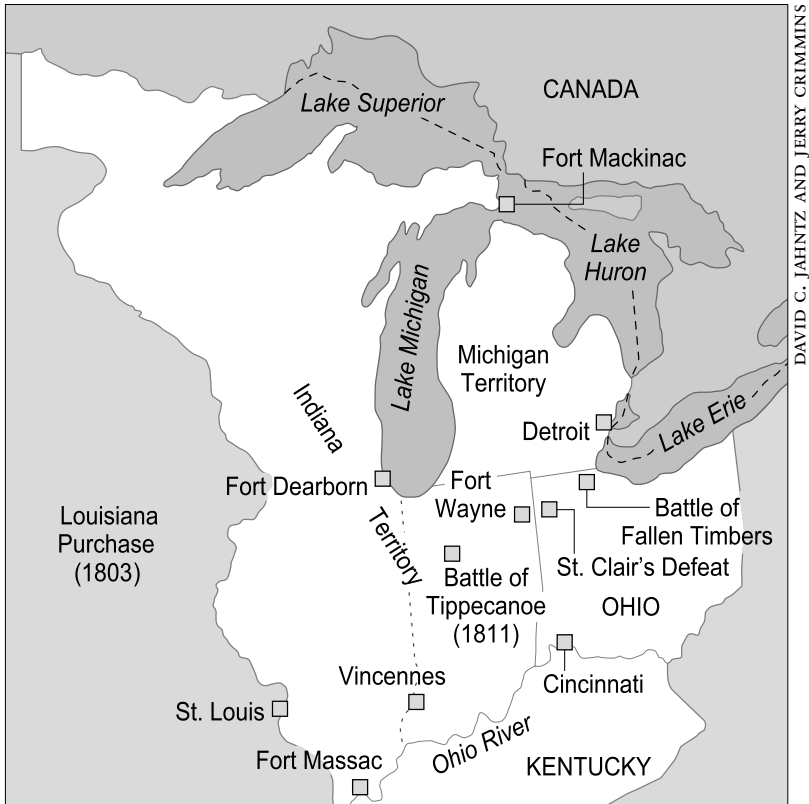
Lieutenant Helm's account, as Burton points out, is independent because Juliette Kinzie never met Lieutenant Helm.

I wrote this story in the form of a historical novel to make it available to the widest audience, especially to the young. I want the young to know. I included the notes so you know it's true.

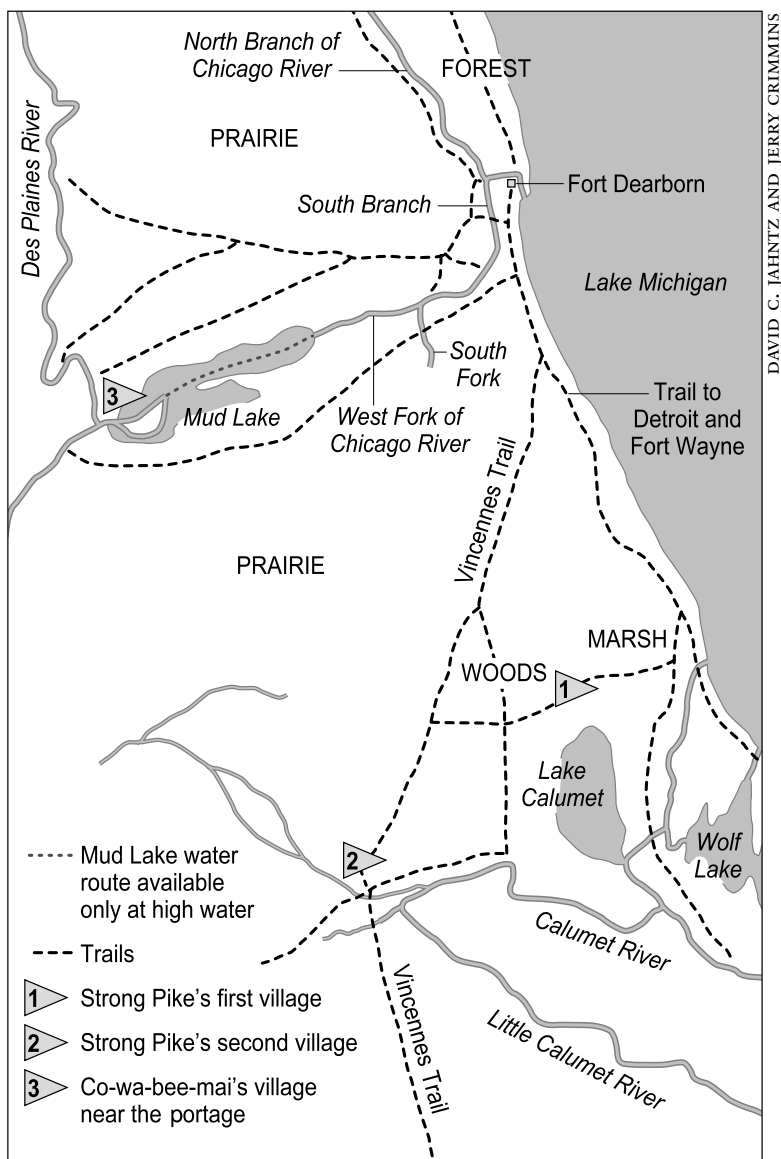
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21. Margaret Kinzie Helm

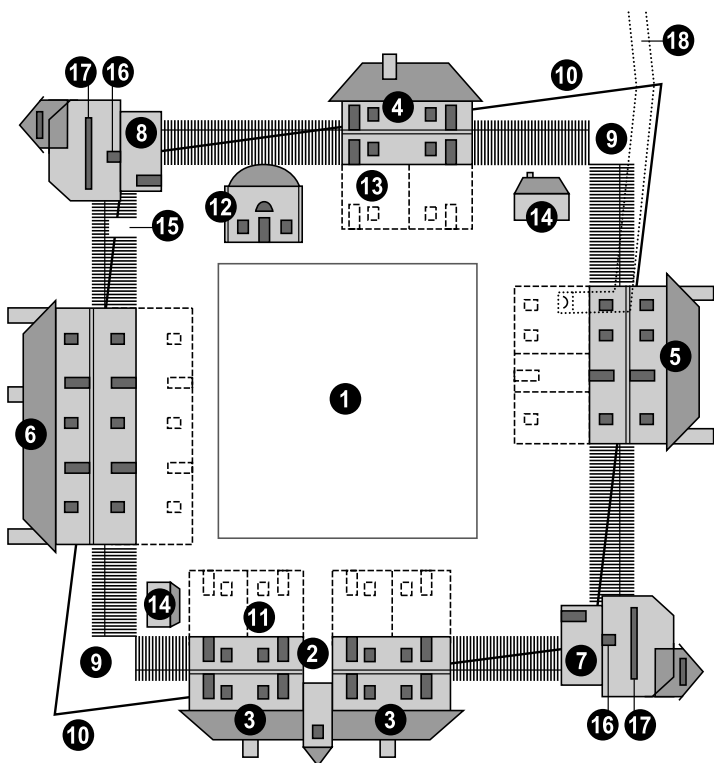




*The Northwest in 1808 showing Fort Dearborn's isolation. The area between the dotted line and the Mississippi River became the Illinois Territory in 1809.*



*Chicago in 1808.*

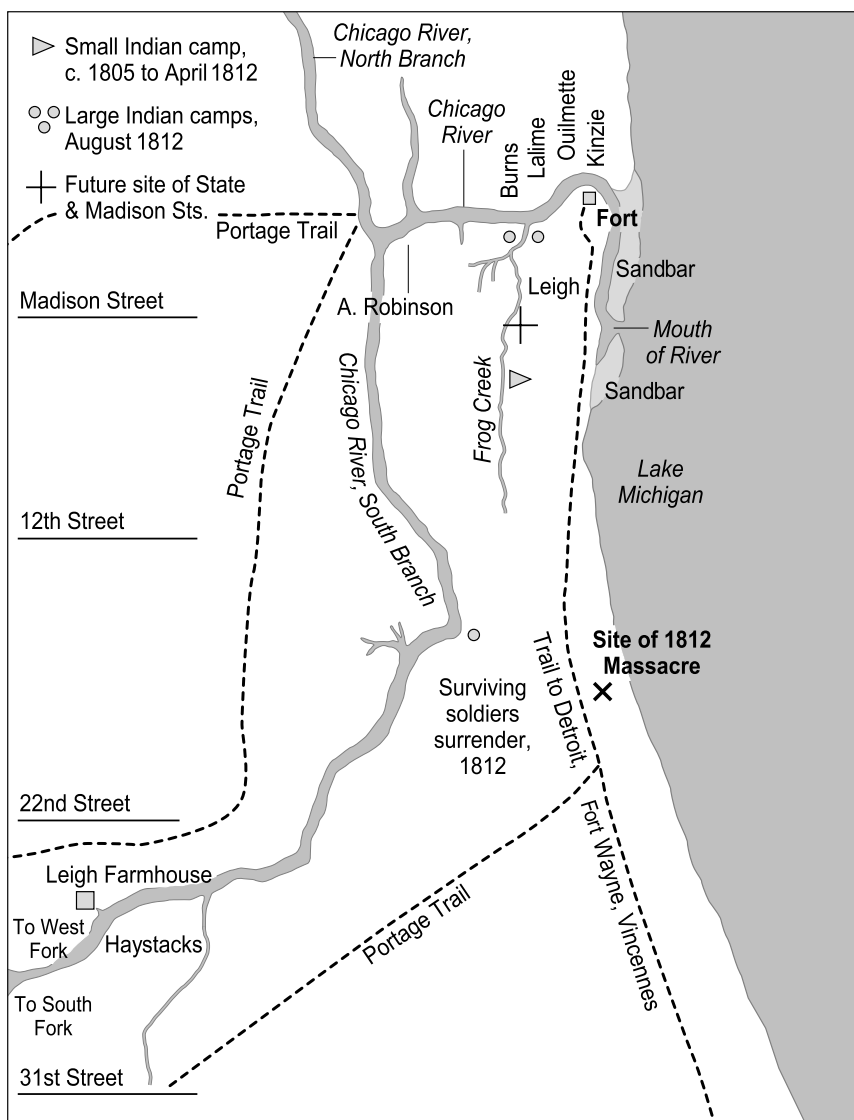


DAVID C. JAHNTZ AND JERRY CRIMMINS

- |                                     |                                |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Parade ground, flagpole in center | 10 Outward row of pickets      |
| 2 Main gate                         | 11 Guardhouse                  |
| 3 South barracks                    | 12 Brick magazine              |
| 4 North barracks                    | 13 Sutler's store, first floor |
| 5 Commanding officer's quarters     | 14 Privies                     |
| 6 Officers' quarters                | 15 Wicket gate                 |
| 7 Southeast blockhouse              | 16 Portholes for cannons       |
| 8 Northwest blockhouse              | 17 Slit windows for muskets    |
| 9 Inward row of pickets             | 18 Tunnel to well, emergency   |

Note: Barracks, officers' quarters, and commander's quarters have outdoor galleries or balconies at second-floor level that face the parade ground. These are not shown.

*Fort Dearborn in 1808 based on Captain John Whistler's drawing, a copy of which is in the Chicago History Museum. The original is signed "Fort Dearborn, 20th Feb.y 1808. J. Whistler, Capt."*



*Fort Dearborn environs. At the bottom left are the Leigh Farm and farmhouse for workers, and across the south branch of the Chicago River are the haystacks. However, the Leigh family actually lived below the fort, where marked. Their house stood at what is today the southwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street.*



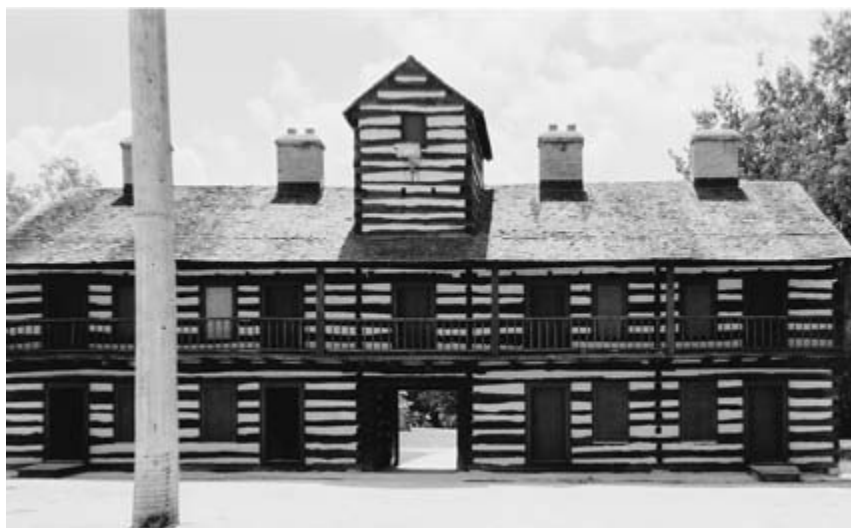
COURTESY OF CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM (X.0269)

*William Wells, who died heroically in the Fort Dearborn Massacre trying to lead the garrison and civilians to safety. Wells did not approve of the attempt to evacuate the fort but supported Captain Nathan Heald, the fort's commander. Heald was married to Wells's niece.*



JERRY CRIMMINS

*This is a replica of another fort by John Whistler, Fort Wayne, built to plans very similar to those for Fort Dearborn. Missing are the inner high fence, which would connect the structures to make a stockade, and the outer low fence, which created a narrow no-man's-land around the stockade. This building suggests how Fort Dearborn's south barracks appeared and shows what Fort Dearborn's main entrance looked like.*



JERRY CRIMMINS

*This image of the rebuilt Fort Wayne at Fort Wayne, Indiana, shows what the south barracks and main gate at Fort Dearborn probably looked like from the inside.*



CHARLES OSGOOD

*A modern-day view. This photo looks south on the Michigan Avenue Bridge. The former site of Fort Dearborn is in the background at the far end of the bridge. In the foreground, about where the white arrow is on the pavement, is the location of the Point de Sable house, later the Kinzie house. The identification of this spot is based on studies by Donald W. Schlickan. The Ouilmette cabin was positioned at the far right of the photo near the river—where the Wrigley Building stands today. The large Indian encampment near the fort in August 1812 was situated along the south bank of the river where it now meets State Street.*





## Notes

Most Chicagoans don't know the full history of Fort Dearborn. Historians will find some conclusions here about the massacre controversial. And some parts of the history presented here are newly discovered.

The following notes contain abbreviated references. For full citations on each work, see the bibliography. Please note that the Chicago Historical Society changed its name to the Chicago History Museum in 2006.

### *Prologue*

- 3 *Potawatomes had been hounded* Edmunds, *Potawatomis, Keepers of the Fire*, 4; and Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 109–10.
- 3 *The Iroquois confederation had driven* Clifton, *Prairie People*, 36–38; and Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 29–31.
- 3 *Potawatomes led a last-ditch stand* Blair, *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi*; vol. 1, pp. 151–57; compare to Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*, 110, including note; also Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, Map 19, between pp. 95 and 96.
- 3 *The Illinois tribe lost* Blasingham, *Illinois Indians*, 93 and 95–129; Hauser, *Ethnohistory of the Illinois Indian*, 28.
- 4 *The Shawnee, the Miami* Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 43 and Map 13, pp. 58–59; Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, vol. 1, pp. 385, 852–54, and vol. 2, pp. 530–36.

- 4 *The Iroquois, Shawnees, Miamis, Delawares* Josephy, “These Lands Are Ours,” 15–19; for a detailed account, Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio*, 204–337; and Anson, *Miami Indians*, 58–144; for the Iroquois, Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 208–20 and 278–96.
- 4 *One such adventurer* This book uses the name given in a recent biography by Swenson, “Jean Baptiste Point de Sable,” in Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, 388–94. Quaife, in *Checacou*, 31–46, uses the name found in the bill of sale for the pioneer’s Chicago estate, Point Sable. See both biographies for moderately similar versions of his life. For a different version, that he was from Santo Domingo, see Meehan, “Jean Baptiste du Sable, the First Chicagoan,” 39–53.
- 4 *Wild onions and garlic* Wild onion is the traditional interpretation of Chicago. See Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 117–24; also Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 90. Wild garlic is a favored alternative, based on the French. See Hurlbut. Also see Swenson, “Chicago: Meaning of the Name,” in Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, 377.
- 4 *Point de Sable was a visionary* For information on the property, the participants in the sale, and the terms, see the May 7, 1800, bill of sale in Quaife, “Documents, Property of Jean Baptiste Point Sable,” 89–92.
- 5 *On August 17, 1803* Lieutenant James Strode Swearingen, “Remarks on the Road from Detroit to Chicago,” also known as “Swearingen’s Journal,” James Swearingen Letters, ms. copy in the Chicago Historical Society. For the location of the fort, see maps of early Chicago in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, following page 112. Also, see Captain John Whistler’s 1808 drawing of Fort Dearborn and environs in the Chicago Historical Society.

## Chapter 1

- 7 *The racket of the frogs at night* For information on the sloughs and tributaries of the river, see Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 589. For information on Frog Creek, see Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, 165.
- 8 *Barking coyotes jumped in* For a list of early Chicago wildlife, see Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 592.
- 8 *While eating supper in their canvas tent and Lucky to hev those beans* Coffman, *Old Army*, 15, 116.
- 9 *Its interior fence* For the dimensions of Fort Dearborn, see Captain John Whistler's 1808 drawing in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 9 *The odd-looking residences* Based on the full-scale replica of Fort Wayne at Fort Wayne, Indiana, built according to John Whistler's plans for the Fort Wayne of 1815. Copies of the plans are in the History Center of the Allen County Fort Wayne Historical Society.
- 9 *Jimmy discovered it was crowded* The number of soldiers is an estimate based on garrison strength of various years in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, 69. The number of civilian men, women, and children is an estimate based in part on the genealogy of Major John Whistler in the Chicago Historical Society and also from the Web site of descendant Cheryl Whistler Garrison at: <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/g/a/r/Cheryl-W-Garrison/index.html> and in part on the number of Fort Dearborn dependents of 1812, to be cited later.
- 10 *As if to prove her father right* For data on bilious fever, see Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 135. Information on the first soldier's cemetery is in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 141.
- 10 *Enlisted soldiers were often illiterate* Coffman, *Old Army*, 17, 112. Conditions, rations, and pay of Fort Dearborn soldiers and the few wives and children in chapter 1 and throughout this book are also from a number of works, including three journal articles by Caldwell: "Frontier

Army Officer,” 101–30; “Enlisted Soldier at the Frontier Post,” 195–204, and “Civilian Personnel at the Frontier Military Post,” 101–19.

## Chapter 2

- 12 *Captain John Whistler* For biographical information on Whistler, see Quaife, “Detroit Biographies: John Whistler,” 1–5.
- 13 *Chicago River as the Cheykag and the Cheykago and the prairie as parraria* See Captain John Whistler’s 1808 drawing of Fort Dearborn in the Chicago Historical Society. Regarding the belief that the prairie floated on a body of water, see Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, 124.
- 13 *And we ain’t been paid* Frontier soldiers were typically paid twice a year but often far less frequently. See Caldwell, “Frontier Army Officer,” 117, and Jacobs, *Beginning of the U.S. Army*, 193.
- 14 *Once went more’n two years* Quaife, “Detroit Biographies: John Whistler,” 4.
- 14 *Battle of the Thousand Dead [or “Slain”]* The name for St. Clair’s defeat is from an interview with Jerry W. Lewis, also known as Mswemakek, a Chicago-area Potawatomi and former tribal historical researcher. In *Blue Jacket, Warrior*, Sugden suggests a top estimate of 980 U.S. casualties including killed, wounded, and captured.
- 15 *Captain had gotten a tomahawk wound* Captain Whistler’s tomahawk wound is mentioned in Quaife, “Detroit Biographies: John Whistler,” 3.
- 16 *I do not get my seven dollars* This was a U.S. private’s pay in 1807. See Caldwell, “Frontier Army Officer,” 105. But it may have been less. Privates on the Fort Dearborn payroll for May and June 1812 received five dollars a month. See Heald Papers in Draper Mss., 8U71, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, microfilm copy, Reel 56, in Newberry Library of Chicago.
- 16 *The soldiers had built Fort Dearborn* Captain Whistler’s 1808 drawing in the Chicago Historical Society; nine or ten feet above the surface of the

lake, the slope to State Street, and the height of Loop prairie, is in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 589. Also see in this work by Andreas the map following p. 112 for information on the Chicago River.

- 17 *Kinzie, the "father of Chicago"* See, for instance, Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 72. For Kinzie's age and a brief biography, see Ibid. and 73. Other bios to be cited later.
- 17 *Eleanor Kinzie* Quaife, "Historical Introduction" to Lakeside Press edition, Mrs. John H. Kinzie's *Wau-Bun*, pp. xxxvi to xlii.
- 18 *Kinzie was a large, intimidating man* A facial picture of John Kinzie is in the Chicago Historical Society; a body description by Moses Morgan is in the William R. Head Papers in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 18 *The north bank of the river* Captain Whistler's 1808 drawing of Fort Dearborn in the Chicago Historical Society, and Colonel Musham's interpretation of Whistler's drawing in *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1947, also in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 19 *Big mob of the Ouilmette family* For a description of Ouilmette, his wife and children, and family history, see Grover, *Antoine Ouilmette*, 4-5. Also see Bushnell, *Wilmette: A History*, 5-9.
- 19 *Mr. Lalime, who now lives* For information on John Lalime's eviction by Kinzie from de Sable's estate, see Peterson, "Founding Fathers," in Holli and Jones, *Ethnic Chicago*, 311.
- 19 *What was far more curious* The information that Lalime was married to a Potawatomi woman is based on the Treaty of 1821 in Hurlbut, 194. *Pierre Le May marriage to a Potawatomi woman* is from Wilson, "Chicago from 1803 to 1812," an account drawn mainly from the recollections of Dr. John Cooper, surgeon at Fort Dearborn, ms. in the Chicago Historical Society, 3. *Pettell's marriage to a Potawatomi woman* is from Mrs. William Whistler in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 25.
- 20 *Doc Smith* The information on Dr. Smith, Fort Dearborn surgeon, is from Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 170.

- 20 *Her name is Turtle* The description of the fictional horse Turtle and its ancestry is from Curler, "Morgan Horses in American History," compiled for the *National Museum of the Morgan Horse*, which is on the Internet at [www.morganmuseum.org](http://www.morganmuseum.org). The Morgan horse became prized by American farmers, teamsters, ranchers, and cavalry soldiers.
- The horse's facts, needs, and capacities were supplied during interviews with horse trainer Laura Amato, who suggested a Morgan horse, and Mary Rose Crimmins.
- 21 *The green sea was topped* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 121; Nelson, *Illinois, Land and Life*, 87.
- 22 *The boy found the horse path* The much abbreviated descriptions of early trails to and from Fort Dearborn are taken from Scharf's map, *Indian Trails and Villages of Chicago*, Chicago Historical Society, and additional details are from Quaife, *Chicago's Highways, Old and New*, 51–71.
- 23 *A man who walked near* Martineau, *Society in America*, vol. 1, p. 356.
- 23 *Strong Pike's village* Calamick, the earlier name for the Calumet River and Lake Calumet, is from Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 439.
- 23 *Strong Pike called it the Kenomokouk* Ibid.

### Chapter 3

- 24 *The long Indian wars* The casualty numbers are taken from Faragher, *Daniel Boone Life*, 144.
- 24 *The long truce was imperfect* Edmunds, *Potawatomis, Keepers of the Fire*, 155–57.
- 25 *Around Fort Dearborn the Indians stayed generally quiet* Wilson, "Chicago from 1803 to 1812," 3; Indian Agent Charles Jouett's letter to secretary of war, Dec. 1, 1807, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 7, p. 496.

- 25 *The Indian girls wore* Taken from paintings and descriptions of Potawatomi clothing by George Winter in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians and a Changing Frontier*. Potawatomi wore cloth turbans for decades prior to 1812: Edmunds, "George Winter: Mirror of Acculturation." Indians in the Midwest bought ready-made clothes from traders beginning in the mid-eighteenth century: Henderson, "The Lower Shawnee Town on the Ohio," 199.
- 27 *He soon came in sight of a large lake* The Indian village in this chapter was near Ninety-eighth Street, east of Cottage Grove Avenue and just north of Lake Calumet, based on Indian village number 12 on Albert F. Scharf's map. Scharf wrote, "Today, the water of the lake is one mile south. This recession of Lake Calumet holds good in its entire circumference as related by old residents." Box 1, largest folder, p. 36, Scharf Collection, Chicago Historical Society.
- 27 *Scores of Indians were fighting in a large clearing* The portrayal of the adult lacrosse game depicted here is taken from the description and paintings of a game in the 1830s among the Choctaws in Oklahoma in Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians*, vol. 2, p. 140. Prairie Potawatomes still played lacrosse in 1936: Landes, *Prairie Potawatomi*, 132.
- 28 *At least sixty men* The number of participants was suggested in an interview with Jerry W. Lewis, also known as Mswemakek, a Chicago-area Potawatomi and former tribal historical researcher. The Calumet-area Potawatomi village in 1812 had about one hundred men: Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, pp. 78–79.
- 29 *He had ridden* The distance of sixteen miles is from Wilson, "Chicago from 1803 to 1812," ms. in the Chicago Historical Society, 3.

#### Chapter 4

- 30 *Bozho, Jimmy* The Potawatomi greetings are taken from the Potawatomi dictionary found on Smokey McKinney's Prairie Band Web site at [www.kansasheritage.org/PBP/homepage.html](http://www.kansasheritage.org/PBP/homepage.html).



- 32 *Strong Pike's aunt* The small Indian camp (at Jackson and State Streets) was located just over a thousand yards southwest of the fort; from Billy Caldwell in Matson, *French and Indians*, 206; and from Juliette Kinzie's "Massacre at Chicago," 31.
- 33 *This is made from a whale bone* Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians*, vol. 1, pp. 37–38.
- 34 *When Kennison was gone* Kennison at the Boston Tea Party is from Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 255–57.
- 34 *Lieutenant Billy, or Lieutenant William Whistler* His description is from Quaife, "Detroit Biographies: John Whistler," 10; and the genealogy of Major John Whistler in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 34 *The scout or "spy"* William Wells, for whom Chicago named Wells Street, was freckle-faced, about 5 feet 6, and very active: Interview with Colonel Thomas S. Hunt in the Draper Mss., 21S57; red hair, Hutton, "William Wells: Frontier Scout," 184. A portrait of Wells is in the Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.
- 34 *He wore a smoke-tanned buckskin hunting shirt* Based on Wells's dress in Howard Chandler Christy's painting of the Treaty of Greenville in the capitol building at Columbus, Ohio, and on a mail carrier's outfit in frontier Wisconsin in 1827 in Fonda, "Early Reminiscences of Wisconsin," 227.
- 38 *"Skishéug," said the old man* All Potawatomes are divided into two teams at birth, "Skishéug" for senior and "Gishgo" for junior, according to Landes, *Prairie Potawatomi*, 131. The colors and compass directions related to each team are from *Ibid.*, 132–35.
- 38 *(Something) kitchimokemon* Meaning Big Knife or American: Clifton, *The Potawatomi*, 19.
- 39 *Kitchimokemon mjummito!* Based on "White devil with his mouth wide open," a description of Americans used by a Chicago-area Potawatomi chief, June 8, 1805, in Anonymous, "Indian Council at Amherstburg,"

41. *Mjumnito* is also found in the Potawatomi dictionary on Smokey McKinney's Prairie Band Web site.
- 40 *Yellow boys* See the kidnapping of Daniel Boone's daughter, Jemima, in S. Hempstead to Lyman Draper, Draper Mss., 16C76.
- 41 *Your fort bad medicine* As time went on, Fort Dearborn, placed far out in the Indian country, began to irritate more and more Indians. See Sugden, *Blue Jacket*, 248, 250.
- 42 *The trail led instead* The description of the scary swamp is from the Scharf Collection, Box 1, largest folder, 37, Chicago Historical Society.

### Chapter 5

- 43 *We'll do the formal introductions* The cast of characters at this fictional meeting is from the actual officers and civilian authorities at Fort Dearborn in 1808. Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 168–75, and Quaife, *Checagou*, 110, 162, and 165.
- 43 *You'll be glad to know* The information about more than doubling the size of the army is from Elliott, *Winfield Scott*, 19–20.
- 44 *Pettibone looked like a peacock* Pettibone's uniform is Winfield Scott's uniform in 1808 as a new officer. Elliott, *Winfield Scott*, 23.
- 45 *The British had attacked* Hickey, *War of 1812*, 17.
- 45 *President Jefferson's Embargo Act [and its effects]* Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 410–13.
- 46 *We almost ran out of meat* Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, 24.
- 47 *One new fort* Information on the founding of Fort Madison on the Mississippi and Fort Osage in 1808 is in Prucha, *Guide to the Military Posts*, 90, 96.

- 47 *The English believe they own the place* Acting Illinois Territorial Governor Pope to secretary of war, May 11, 1809, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 36, 37; *Jouett*: sketch in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, pp. 86–87.
- 48 *We are aware of war talk* William Hull to Dearborn, Oct. 18, 1805, and Sept. 9, 1807, in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 40, 1929, pp. 77–78, 201.
- 48 *Don't overlook the Kickapoos* William Wells to William Henry Harrison, Aug. 20, 1807, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 239–43.
- 48 *British agents told the tribes* John Johnston, U.S. factor at Fort Wayne, to secretary of war, Dec. 31, 1807, in Letters Received by the secretary of war, Registered Series, 1801–1870, RG 107, M221, Reel 9, frame 2833, National Archives.
- 48 *What about that Shawnee Prophet* Jouett's opinion is in Jouett to secretary of war, Dec. 1, 1807, Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 7, p. 496.
- 48 *Governor Kirker and Shakers* Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 138–42, 160–64.
- 48 *The Prophet wants* The Prophet's teachings as outlined by Pettibone are described by Thomas Forsyth in "The Shawnee Prophet," in Blair, *Indian Tribes*, vol. 2, pp. 273–79, and Blair's footnote, p. 273.
- 48 *He burns his opponents alive* See Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 39. His supporters proceeded to burn to death several Indians alleged to oppose the Prophet. See Drake, *Life of Tecumseh*, 88–89; and Raymond, *Tecumseh*, 50–51.
- 48 *Captain Wells . . . has asked that the militia* Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 58–59, and Raymond, *Tecumseh*, 54.
- 49 *That the Shawnee Prophet . . . principal danger* William Wells to William Henry Harrison, Aug. 20, 1807, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 239–43; Wells to secretary of war, Dec. 5, 1807, RG 107, M221,

- Reel 15, frame 4855, National Archives; and Harrison to secretary of war, Sept. 5, 1807, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 247–48.
- 49 *Arr good friend Cap'n Wells was captured by the Indians* A good summary is in Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 79–86.
- 50 *In 1776 I was in the British army* Quaife, “Detroit Biographies: John Whistler,” 2.
- 50 *Governor Harrison’s purchase of the Sacs’ and Foxes’ territory* Hagan, *Sac and Fox Indians*, 16–25; and Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe*, 44. As for whether it was premature, fifteen years later it was still almost devoid of American settlers. See Buck, *Illinois in 1818*, map 63.
- 50 *The governor and I were young lieutenants* Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe*, 13.
- 51 *In the thirty-three years that Americans have crossed the Cumberland Gap* Smith, “This Idea in Heaven, Image and Reality on the Kentucky Frontier,” in Friend, *Buzzel About Kentuck*, 82, says more than two hundred thousand.
- 51 *It was . . . perhaps as many as three hundred thousand* Sign in Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, Daniel Boone Visitors’ Center, observed in May 2005.
- 51 *Our best estimate . . . over half a million* U.S. Census of 1810 counted 678,835 Americans in Kentucky and the Northwest Territory.
- 51 *But it is not our government’s wish* Jefferson’s plan to civilize Indians: Vogel, *This Country Was Ours*, 82–83; also Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe*, 36–38.
- 52 *The Shawnee impostor has received* Wells to secretary of war, Dec. 5, 1807, RG 107, M221, Reel 15, frame 4855, National Archives.
- 52 *The Prophet and his brother* Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 58–59; and Raymond, *Tecumseh*, 54.

- 52 *Mr. Wells's father-in-law is the principal chief* Griswold, *Fort Wayne*, 31.
- 52 *I told you that Sweet Breeze died* Harvey Lewis Carter, *Little Turtle*, 200.
- 52 *I have helped all the Indians* Wells to secretary of war, Mar. 6, 1808, and April 2, 1808; War Department objects and Wells's reaction in Wells to secretary of war, April 20, 1808, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 7, pp. 531–32, 540–42, and 555–56.
- 52 *You have been reprimanded* Woehrmann, *At the Headwaters of the Maumee*, 149.
- 52 *Those Indians who fail to provide* Ibid., 209–10.
- 52 *That's the Indian way of life* Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 20.
- 52 *At any rate, four Indian chiefs speaking* Ibid., 168.
- 53 *The president is convinced* Drake, *Tecumseh*, 219–20.
- 54 *I've heard it said that this is the best wooden fort* Quaife, *Checagou*, 76.

## Chapter 6

- 55 *I'm sorry about the passin' of Wahmangopath* Griswold, *Fort Wayne*, 31.
- 55 *One of my boys died in March* Wells to secretary of war, Mar. 6, 1808, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 7, p. 531.
- 55 *I've asked for a leave* Wells to secretary of war, June 30, 1808, in RG 107, M221, Reel 33, 1013, National Archives.
- 56 *The Prophet says the Great and Good Spirit* Trout, "Speech of Indian Chief (Trout) to Various Tribes," 127, hereinafter referred to as "Speech of Trout."

- 56 *The greatest Indian warrior . . . could become a dangerous enemy* Wells to secretary of war, June 5, 1808, in RG 107, M221, Reel 33, frame 0989, National Archives. Wells really called him Mar Pack.
- 56 *Spent two months in the Prophet's village* Edmunds, "Main Poc, Potawatomi Wabeno," 262.
- 56 *I'm going to try to take* Wells to secretary of war, June 5, 1808, in RG 107, M221, Reel 33, 0989, National Archives.
- 56 *The Quakers did set up model farms* For information on the model farms for Indians and why they failed, see Hutton, "William Wells," 208–10.
- 57 *Those on duty wore the colorful U.S. Army uniform* A picture entitled "Uniform of Infantry and Artillery Privates, 1802–1810," from the U.S. Army is in Griswold, *Fort Wayne*.
- 57 *One middle-aged soldier in fatigues* Identities of almost all the soldiers at Fort Dearborn, usually correct for the year, are from these sources: abstract of John Kinzie's account books, starting July 1804, by the Reverend William Barry, Chicago Historical Society, hereinafter referred to as Kinzie's Books; also from the Fort Dearborn 1810 roster in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre*, 150, and Captain Nathan Heald's Fort Dearborn rosters for May 1812 in Draper Mss., 8U70 and 71. Burns first appears in Kinzie's Books on Aug. 27, 1809. For literary continuity this story places Burns here. Not every soldier will get a separate citation.
- 57 *Now that building we just left* The descriptions of Fort Dearborn are from John Whistler's 1808 drawing, in the Chicago Historical Society, and interpretations by Don Schlickan in Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, the back dust cover, and by Colonel Musham, mss. in Fort Dearborn file, Chicago Historical Society.
- 57 *Captain Whistler and his family* *Genealogy of Major John Whistler*.
- 59 *The one on the left is where I live* For an example of a sergeant living with his wife among soldiers in frontier barracks, see Shaw, *Narrative*

*of the Life*, 130. Housing of married enlisted men and their families in western forts in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries varied from a barracks room to a blockhouse, tents, huts, or casemates, to a nice house, and depended on the custom and will of the commander: Coffman, *Old Army*, 119, 116, and 112.

- 61 *Show me the strongest Fort Dearborn defenses . . . that blockhouse first* Based on the full-scale replica of Fort Wayne at Fort Wayne, Indiana, built according to John Whistler's plans for the Fort Wayne of 1815 in Fort Wayne Historical Society. Some details, such as the name for the "murder holes," are from O'Brien and Dubbeld of the First U.S. Light Artillery of Fort Wayne, War of 1812 reenactors.
- 62 *The inner fence was twelve feet high* Dr. Cooper, quoted in Wilson, *Chicago from 1803 to 1812*, p. 2.
- 63 *I must have sawed three hundred oak trees* Otho Hayes was a sawyer in Kinzie's Books, July 1804, mss. in the Chicago Historical Society. The information on soldiers in harness to drag the logs is in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 26.
- 63 *Then you add a real good dose of horse manure* Sean O'Brien and Walt Dubbeld, Fort Wayne reenactors referred to above.
- 64 *Those three deer are heading for the river* Dr. Cooper in Wilson, *Chicago from 1803 to 1812*, p. 3.
- 66 *I just see Captain Whistler's daughter, Eliza, and his daughter-in-law, Julia* *Genealogy of Major John Whistler*.

## Chapter 7

- 68 *I like to buy his cocoa powder* This is an important element of the frontier Indian trade, says Eckert in *Tecumseh*, 51.
- 68 *Shadows began to obscure the drying racks* J. P. Gulley painting, *Woodland Indians*.

- 69 *When the Great Spirit renews the land* Many of the Prophet's sayings in this chapter are quotes or paraphrases from the Prophet's disciple, Chief Le Maigouis, or Trout, in "Speech of Indian Chief (Trout)," 28. Other teachings of the Prophet in this chapter are from Thomas Forsyth, "The Shawnee Prophet," in Blair, 273–79; Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 37–40; and White, *Middle Ground*, 507–10, 515.
- 69 *But our real name, children, is Neshnabe* Clifton, *Potawatomi*, 20–21.
- 70 *It would be down the Sheshikmaoshike Sepe* Hurlbut, 437.
- 70 *Mount Juliett* Kinzie's Books, July 22, 1807. See note for p. 57 regarding Kinzie's Books. Kinzie's original books were lost in a fire.
- 70 *Wakesha Sepe* Clifton interview.
- 70 *Riviere Boeuf* Quaife, *Lake Michigan*, 186.
- 70 *So there must have been many buffalo here* Quaife, *Lake Michigan*, 186.
- 71 *One time, white men slaughtered . . . to take only the animals' tongues* Kentuckians blamed this incident of a herd of buffalo killed for tongues—and tallow—and a land strewn with bones on Frenchmen from southern Illinois, in Draper, "Life of Boone," Draper Mss., 3B65.
- 72 *The wigwam was a tall dome* The description is from Jerry W. Lewis and also from the J. P. Gulley painting, *Woodland Indians*.
- 72 *He returned with a wicked war club* The words for war club and lacrosse stick are from Trout, "Speech of Indian Chief (Trout)," 131.
- 72 *Wkamek council* Means Council of Elders, according to Clifton, *Potawatomi*, 20.
- 73 *Tell us what the Prophet looks like* The description is taken from the picture in Lewis, *Aboriginal Portfolio*, from 1824 in the Newberry Library, and George Catlin's painting, *Open Door, Known as the*



*Prophet, Brother of the Great Chief*, in the National Museum of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

- 75 *I rode with Main Poc against the Osage* Edmunds, "Main Poc: Potawatomi Wabeno," 261–65.
- 75 *Main Poc is a Neshnabe* Main Poc not born of woman and Main Poc's behavior are from Thomas Forsyth in Tecumseh Papers, 8YY 57 to 57(4), Draper Mss., and also from William Wells to secretary of war, Jan. 16, 1809, RG 107, M221, Reel 33, 1317, National Archives.

### Chapter 8

- 76 *In addition to the two beds* The interior of the barracks, including different rooms for noncoms and enlisted men, is based on the Fort Wayne replica and on information from reenactors O'Brien and Dubbeld referred to in the notes for chapter 6. It is also based on Captain John Whistler's 1808 drawing of Fort Dearborn in the Chicago Historical Society, which indicates a slight difference in width of adjacent barracks rooms, interpreted here as 14 by 16 for the noncoms' room and 16 by 16 for the privates' common room.
- 77 *Bill Wells was raised first as a Kentuckian* Carter, *Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 83; return to whites: Hutton, "William Wells," 186–89, and Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre*, 174–75.
- 78 *Mrs. Eleanor Kinzie was raised an Indin* Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 266–87. Note that references to the text of *Wau-Bun* are always to the 1856 version. References to Quaife's "Historical Introduction" to *Wau-Bun* are to a different version; see below.
- 78 *Ab don't know . . . Kinzie's first wife was captured* Quaife, "Historical Introduction," Lakeside Press edition of Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, xliii to xliv. See note above on Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*.
- 78 *She left Kinzie* Ibid.
- 79 *When the Indins get in their Indin trot* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 62.

- 79 *While Ah was in Philadelphia* Fort Jay was built on Governor's Island in New York Bay, 1794–1800; see Roberts, *Encyclopedia of Historic Forts*, 555.
- 79 *Young bloods swim there [by the Battery in Manhattan]* Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 373.
- 80 *The moon was nearly full and approached the height* The rising, setting, and the phases of the moon, and the times of sunrises and sunsets and related data in this book are accurate to the historic dates. They are from the U.S. Naval Observatory “Sun and Moon Data for One Day,” on the Internet at <http://aa.usno.navy.mil/> (accessed July 24, 2004).
- 81 *The river was about fifty yards wide* Author's assumption for early June. In Oct. 1817 the river was forty yards wide, according to Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 182.

### Chapter 9

- 84 *Correct, my young sir. I am Billy Caldwell* Billy Caldwell (after whom Chicago has named Caldwell Avenue, Caldwell Woods, and Billy Caldwell Golf Course) is based on Clifton, “Merchant, Soldier, Broker, Chief,” 185–210; also Clifton, “Billy Caldwell's Exile in Early Chicago,” 218–28; Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, pp. 108–9; and Gurdon S. Hubbard's note in Kinzie's Books, mss. in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 87 *Jimmy started to trot . . . and soon he could see the laundry women* For their role at frontier forts, see Caldwell, “Civilian Personnel,” 103–4.
- 87 *Mrs. Corbin . . . Mrs. Needs* “Niles Weekly Register,” June 4, 1814, story on Fort Dearborn, reprinted in *Fergus' Historical Series* no. 16, 1881, p. 53. The newspaper story refers to Mrs. Corbin as the “wife of Phelim Corbin.” Phelim does not appear in the Fort Dearborn muster roles. It may be a confusion with Fielding Corbin, who appears in the muster roles. An explanation of the various Corbins at Fort Dearborn is in the notes for chapter 34.

- 88 *Two hundred Indian warriors* Wilson, *Chicago from 1803 to 1812*, p. 3, says: "Mar Pock . . . with several hundred warriors made threatening demonstrations owing to dissatisfaction with an alleged act of wrongdoing and injustice on the part of the United States Contractor." Edmunds, *Potawatomis, Keepers of the Fire*, 167, says inferior trade guns.
- 88 *The chief seemed to Jimmy a ferocious and wild giant* The physical description of Main Poc and his followers and the soldiers' reactions are from Forsyth in Tecumseh Papers, 8YY57 to 57(4), Draper Mss.; Tyson, *Life of Elisha Tyson*, 70 (where Main Poc is referred to as Wapakee); McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 298.
- 90 *William Wells had led a committee of Indian chiefs* With report on behavior of Main Poc: Wells to Dearborn, Jan. 16, 1809, RG 107, M221, Reel 33, 1317, National Archives.

### Chapter 10

- 91 *Captain Whistler heard from a variety of sources* Winnebago plan in John Johnston's letter, May 18, 1809, addressee unknown, in Thornbrough, *Letter Book of the Indian Agency*, 51-52. The Sac plans in Jouett to secretary of war, May 31, 1809; Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 40.
- 91 *He believed westerners must . . . "keep this country whilst we are in it"* Daniel Boone in Smith, "This Idea in Heaven," 87.
- 91 *Johnny Leigh* Some Leigh children are named in Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 259.
- 92 *Leigh kept the farm going* Implied by Leigh to Colonel Kingsbury, Mar. 3, 1811, Kingsbury Collection, Chicago Historical Society.
- 92 *Ex-sergeant Leigh* Ibid. Sergeant James Leigh, sometimes spelled Lee, appears frequently in Kinzie's Books, mss. in the Chicago Historical Society, until Dec. 11, 1805, when he becomes simply James Leigh.
- 92 *Top hand, Liberty White* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 205.

- 92 *My father says Liberty can split two hundred rails in a day* Nash, *Wooden Fences*, 10.
- 92 *This is a worm fence* “Nature Bulletin No. 240-A, Old Rail Fences,” Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Oct. 15, 1966.
- 93 *And my father says a plow can’t cut the prairie* Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, 123–24; and Nelson, *Illinois, Land and Life*, 85–86.
- 94 *On the surface . . . until the Winnebagoes tried a surprise attack* Jouett to secretary of war, Sept. 1, 1809, in RG107, M221, Reel 24, 8066–8068, National Archives. In 1803, the first soldiers to arrive could walk across the river on the sandbar: Quaife, *Lake Michigan*, 68. That the Winnebagoes came this way is my speculation.
- 95 *Indins think that retaliation* Quaife, *Fort Wayne in 1790*, p. 18; also Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, p. 54.

## Chapter 11

- 96 *Forty-five years ago the Indians staged a lacrosse game* Peckham, *Pontiac Indian Uprising*, 163, and Miller, Albert, “An Incident in the Capture of Mackinaw,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection*, vol. 12, pp. 499–501.
- 96 *They want . . . a foot race outside the fort* This race is based on the real race between Lieutenant William Whistler and an unnamed young Potawatomi chief in Wilson, “Chicago from 1803 to 1812,” pp. 9–10.
- 97 *When we arrived . . . the “big canoe with wings”* Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 25.
- 97 *We have seventy-seven men* This was the strength of the garrison in Sept. 1809: Kirkland, *Massacre at Chicago*, 69.
- 97 *Topenebe was the big chief of all the Potawatomi villages in the area of the St. Joseph’s River* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 77 and note.

- 97 *Related tribes known as the Three Fires: the Potawatomes, Ottawas, and Chippewas* Clifton, *Prairie People*, 149.
- 98 *The grove was just in back* Today it is the northwest corner of State and Madison Streets. See map in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, following p. 112.
- 98 *The official wager* For information on wagers, see Wilson, *Chicago from 1803 to 1812*, pp. 9–10.
- 98 *Wolf Eye's horse* The decorations are taken from George Winter's paintings in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians*, plates 12, 15, and 21, and also from Winter's description of Pash-po-ho's pony, *Ibid.*, 69.
- 98 *Wolf Eye himself* His clothing is taken from George Winter's painting *Yo-ca-top-cone* in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians*, 72 and plate 26. Indian warriors prior to 1812 wore ostrich plumes from the British: Edmunds, "George Winter," 28.
- 99 *The wife of Wolf Eye* Winter's painting of Queh-mee in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians*, cover.
- 101 *The outermost fence of Fort Dearborn* Captain Whistler's drawing in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 104 *She was Mrs. Buisson* Trader Buisson is often in Kinzie's Books starting in 1804. Buisson's wife, according to Juliette Kinzie in *Wau-Bun*, 230, was the sister of Ouilmette's wife and sometimes visited Chicago. Franke in *French Peoria* gives their physical descriptions on p. 54.

## Chapter 12

- 106 *Each runner walked up* The distance of the race, the contestants, the winner, the winning margin, and a few other details are in Dr. Cooper's account in Wilson, *Chicago from 1803 to 1812*, pp. 9–10.

- 106 *Although decades later he would weigh 260 pounds* Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 27.
- 107 *The first leg was originally a deer path* Dr. Cooper did not give the boundaries of the five-mile course or the date of the race. The course here is designed to meet the criteria of a contest Dr. Cooper said was “witnessed by several hundred Indians and the entire garrison.” In modern terms, the course described here would run, very approximately, from fifty yards west of State and Madison Street to Wells Street, then south along Wells Street to an imaginary extension of Balbo Drive or Eighth Street, then east to Wabash Avenue, then north on Wabash. The runners would gradually bear east along the trail leading to the fort in a way that is not possible today because of the buildings and would finish the north leg on the east sidewalk of Michigan Avenue. They would then turn back west between the former street called Haddock Place on the south and South Water Street on the north, run one hundred yards west along the boundary or garden fence of Fort Dearborn, then cut diagonally southwest from approximately Garland Court and South Water Street back to State and Madison Streets. They would repeat the same route and finish at the start.
- 108 *Where’d you learn to speak English?* For an example of a Potawatomi warrior who understood and spoke English in those days, see Corporal Walter Jordan’s letter of Oct. 12, 1812, in Barnhart, “Documents: A New Letter,” 191. Other examples are available.
- 110 *They’re south of the river mouth by . . . the sandbar on the trail* The river mouth in those days was at Madison Street, and the sandbar extended a little farther south of Madison Street. See Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, the map following p. 112. The lake shore in those days would have been just east of Michigan Avenue. I relied on the map of Colonel Musham in “Chicago in 1808” and Scharf’s trail map. The trails on Andreas’s 1830 map of Chicago are shown after years of evolution.
- 115 *Sixteen yards* Taken from Dr. Cooper’s account in Wilson, *Chicago from 1803 to 1812*, pp. 9–10.

### Chapter 13

- 116 *Feud at Fort Dearborn* For the feud at Fort Dearborn, see Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 171–76, and Matthew Irwin’s letter to secretary of war, Dec. 30, 1809, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 17, pp. 66–68.
- 116 *During the spring flood, the flat Chicago portage* Swearingen, *Journal (or Remarks on the Road from Detroit to Chicago)*, last page, “Portage.”
- 117 *South branch . . . dubbed by locals the Portage River* Hill, *Chicago River*, 12.
- 117 *The west fork, a narrow, crooked* Portage-Mud Lake, Scharf Collection, folder 16.
- 119 *En roulant ma boule* Chorus to a voyageur’s song in Blegen, *Voyageurs*, 16.
- 120 *Mud Lake* This lake no longer exists. The Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal flows through what used to be the center of Mud Lake. See Piehl, “Chicago’s Early Fight,” 231. Mud Lake formerly ran diagonally west-southwest from Kedzie Avenue and Thirty-first Street to Harlem Avenue above and below Forty-seventh Street. The West Fork now exists only as a stump between Twenty-seventh and Twenty-eighth Streets from Damen Avenue to Leavitt Street.
- 120 *Wetland birds startled* Some wildlife portrayed in Mud Lake is from the cattail marsh section of the “Nature Walk” exhibit in Chicago’s Field Museum, main floor (winter, 2001). Other wildlife is from the letter of J.G.F. in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 88–89, or Hubbard, *Autobiography*.
- 120 *Bloodsuckers* From a voyage up the West Fork through Mud Lake in Hubbard, *Autobiography*, 41–43.
- 121 *For those who ain’t been here . . . Continental Deevide* The exact location is in dispute. Two authors from the Fort Dearborn period place the Continental Divide clearly inside Mud Lake. They are the sol-

dier “J.G.F.” in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 88, and Major Long in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 166. Scharf, who traveled the route, placed the divide where this novel has it, that is, in Mud Lake at Central Avenue, 5600 West, which would be about at the intersection today of Forty-seventh Street. “Letter to Mrs. McIlvain,” Scharf Collection, folder 16.

- 121 *Then the Chicago River runs . . . to the Atlantic Ocean* Quaife, *Lake Michigan*, Prelude and 61.
- 122 *When they got near . . . they could see a tree line* Scharf Collection, folder 16.
- 122 *To their left, the fast main channel* The spring flood condition of the Des Plaines River described here is from the author’s visit to the same locations in the Chicago Portage Woods and forest preserves to the north of there, June 3, 2000.
- 122 *Chief Co-wa-bee-mai’s village* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 79. The exact location of the village, according to Scharf, was just south of Ogden Avenue and extended down to Mud Lake on the east side of the river: Scharf Collection, folder 50, “Indian Village Number 10.”
- 123 *The west and north banks of the U bend* Today this is the grassy area just west of the Riverside Public Library.
- 123 *Sergeant Wheeler took Jimmy aside* Sergeant Wheeler’s version of the feud was taken from Matthew Irwin’s letter to secretary of war, Dec. 30, 1809, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 66–68.
- 123 *He almost got arrested* Quaife, “Detroit Biographies: John Whistler,” 5.

#### Chapter 14

- 126 *Farmer Leigh jumped out of his chair* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, pp. 84–85, describes Jean Baptiste Beaubien buying what seems very likely the Leigh house. The house Beaubien purchased was at the



southwest corner of Randolph and Michigan. See the plaque on the exterior wall of the Chicago Cultural Center at that corner. This may originally have been the Leigh family cabin and is the site in this novel. Juliette Kinzie says on p. 18 of “Massacre at Chicago” that it was at the southwest corner of Michigan and Monroe Streets.

- 126 *Muck-otey-pokee* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 79, lists the name Black Partridge.
- 127 “B’jou,” *the Indian said* This is a version of “b’joo,” which is probably an abbreviation of the French “*bonjour*,” says Kirkland, *Story of Chicago*, 61.
- 127 *Black Partridge, tall and slim* Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 243. Matson, however, has Black Partridge about seventy in 1812 on p. 274. The chief’s career in 1812 and 1813 shows that Alexander Robinson, who knew Black Partridge, is more accurate. Robinson makes the chief fifty in 1810. Draper Mss., 21S281.
- 127 *People around Fort Dearborn referred to him* Mkedepoke was a closer pronunciation of Black Partridge’s name. See the modern phonetic system used by Clifton, *Prairie People*, 514.
- 127 *Black Partridge sat next to Lillie* His friendship with her is given in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 236. Matson, in *Pioneers of Illinois*, 260, has Lillie pals with a different Indian. Matson interviewed Mary Leigh when she was about eighty but fails to distinguish between his ideas and Mary’s. This novel chooses the traditional version.
- 127 *Five-year-old Stephen* The two younger Leigh boys, Stephen and Matthew, were real, but their names and ages are unknown and are fictionalized here. See Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 259.
- 128 *Some ha’e meat, and canna eat* Robert Burns, “The Selkirk Grace.” The first grace is from *The Book of Common Worship*. Both are in Batchelor, *Doubleday Prayer Collection*, 343–44.
- 129 *Muck-otey-pokee’s band lived* Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 242. Eckert,

in *Gateway to Empire*, 336, says Black Partridge's village was once on the Des Plaines River.

- 129 *Everybody knew Muck-otey-pokee had fought* Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 243.
- 130 *Tell him we know about the post rider* Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 110–11.
- 130 *Four men in the Coles party* Stevens, "Illinois in the War of 1812–1814," pp. 66–67.
- 130 *Main Poc, yes* Implied by Harrison to secretary of war, June 14, 1810, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 427.
- 130 *Shaw-nee-aw-kee referred to Kinzie's skill* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 73.
- 131 *I miss the whole Whistler family* Captain Whistler was transferred to Detroit in the spring of 1810, and the secretary of war decided to disperse the Fort Dearborn officers: Drennan Papers, John Whistler to Colonel Kingsbury, May 27, 1810; and Kingsbury to Matthew Irwin, June 11, 1810.
- 131 *Your dad and your brother, Charlie* Prior to this book, the identity of Mr. Russell, who became co-owner of the Leigh Farm, had been lost to history. I discovered James Leigh's father-in-law and brother-in-law also lived in Chicago in 1812. See Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, July 20, 1813, "Letters sent by William Clark," *Records of the United States Superintendency of Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, p. 10. I base my conclusion that her father is Russell on the following: Steve Russell first appears in Kinzie's Books in Oct. 1809. Kinzie's Books have the first joint mention of "Messrs. Russell and Leigh," Sept. 30, 1810. The farm became jointly owned: Letters of Captain Heald and John Lalime, Draper Mss., 26S47 and 49. The actual name of Mrs. Leigh's brother (called Charlie here) is unknown.
- 131 *What is shooting star . . . Tecumseh* Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 4.

## Chapter 15

- 132 *A new batch of Army officers took charge* Juliette Kinzie in *Fergus' Historical Series* no. 30, pp. 10–11. Nathan Heald's Journal, 17U32–33, Reel 58 (microfilm edition), Draper Mss.
- 132 *The British government . . . wanted to push* Stevens, "Illinois in the War," 62–65; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 171–74.
- 132 *Initially, the British hoped to control* Stevens, "Illinois," 62; and Cruikshank, *Invasion of Canada*, 106.
- 132 *The aim of Britain* Stevens, "Illinois," 64–65. See especially reports from Little Turtle and General Clark.
- 132 *The Indians had a very similar plan* Josephy, "These Lands," 83; Harrison to secretary of war, June 26, 1810, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 433.
- 133 *Some Indians dreamed of exterminating* Wells to Harrison, August 20, 1807, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 239; Report of Antoine LeClair, July 14, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 255.
- 133 *American leaders . . . expected to take Canada* Hickey, *War of 1812*, 26.
- 133 *The great Indian leader Tecumseh rallied Indians* Josephy, "These Lands," 83.
- 133 *Bands of Indian men east of the Mississippi* Edmunds, *Potawatomis*, 157, 173; Clifton, *Prairie People*, 194.
- 133 *Potawatomies and the Kickapoos . . . surrendered killers* Stevens, "Illinois," 85–89 and 106–10.
- 133 *In 1810 and 1811, small warrior bands* Clifton, *Prairie People*, 194; and Stevens, "Illinois," 66–77.
- 133 *In response, settlers in southern Illinois* Stevens, "Illinois," 69–76.

- 133 *At a council with several tribes at Peoria* Captain Levering and Governor Ninian Edwards in Stevens, "Illinois," 78–94.
- 134 *An Indian chief answered* An alternate translation of the speech of the Potawatomi chief called Little Chief at the Peoria council in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 78.
- 134 *If whites had kept on the other side* Stevens, "Illinois," 85–89, 106–10.
- 134 *The Prophet is organizing* W. H. Harrison to secretary of war, June 14, 1810, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 423.
- 134 *Tecumseh . . . "one of those uncommon geniuses"* Harrison to secretary of war, Aug. 7, 1811, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 549.
- 134 *The new officers . . . including the new captain, Nathan Heald* Heald enlisted in 1799, after the Indian wars, and the other two officers later. See sketches of all three in Juliette Kinzie, "Massacre at Chicago," 10–11.
- 134 *He found it "remote from the civilized part"* Quaife, *Chicago and Old Northwest*, 153.
- 134 *Heald . . . was an experienced post commander* Ibid., 176.
- 134 *The former commander, John Whistler* Whistler to Henry Dearborn, April 1, 1808, in RG 107, M221, Reel 33, 0934, National Archives.

## Chapter 16

- 135 *She had a long pestle to use standing up* Based on George Winter, *Camp Scene with Woman Pounding Grain*, plate 33, in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians*.
- 135 *Spotted Trout accepted compliments for his role as kiktowenene* Clifton, *Prairie People*, 120.

- 136 *Iowas, Kickapoos . . . who walked the Indian highway* See Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 417, 427.
- 137 *The warriors must take charge* See Harrison to secretary of war, June 26, 1810, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 433.

### Chapter 17

- 138 *Private Fielding Corbin's wife, Susannah* See author's explanation of all the Corbins in the notes for chapter 34.
- 139 *By late November 1811, the garrison . . . had shrunk* Sizes of the Fort Dearborn garrison at different times are from Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 69.
- 139 *In the sixteen-by-sixteen-foot room . . . soldiers slept . . . two to a bed* Coffman, *Old Army*, 150.
- 139 *Outside the barracks this night, the Great Comet* Penick, "I will stamp on the ground . . .," 85–86; Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, 664.
- 139 *The first report is forty-two of our boys dead* The first report, Harrison to secretary of war, Nov. 8, 1811, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 615, says 179 total U.S. casualties of which 42 were dead and more would die. A traditional estimate of Indians killed is 25–40. See, for example, Josephy, "These Lands Are Ours," 85. More modern estimates say the Tippecanoe casualties were about even. See Edmunds, *Shawnee Prophet*, 115.
- 140 *The news [of the Battle of Tippecanoe] came from Detroit by ship* See Susan Simmons, wife of Private John Simmons, in N. Simmons, *Heroes and Heroines*, 26. Three weeks after the battle is my own estimate.
- 140 *Why'd they kill more of us if we carried the day?* Various battle figures show Indians usually had fewer casualties in battle compared to Americans. Also, W. H. Harrison said an American soldier could lick two British or three French or four Spanish, but he needed a two-to-one

advantage versus the Indians: Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe*, 92. At Fallen Timbers the Americans lost 31 dead and 102 wounded. Harrison's biographer, Cleaves, stated, "The enemy loss was not quite as severe as had been suffered by the Americans but such was usually the outcome in Indian fighting." Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe*, 19.

- 141 *Private David Kennison was seventy-five years old* Born 1736. Danck-ers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, 213.
- 141 *Another thing, you men heard the captain's wife is expectin'* Counting backward, based on Captain Nathan Heald, Journal, in the Draper Mss., 17U33.
- 141 *And Tom Burns's wife, too!* Mrs. Burns, formerly Mrs. Cooper, had five children by her late husband, Cooper, and was remarried at this time to ex-soldier Tom Burns and was pregnant. This is based on Sergeant Griffith's letter, Jan. 13, 1820, in the Draper Mss., 8U88; also Quaife, *Checagou*, 136; and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 202-3. The name of Mrs. Cooper's oldest son is either James or Joseph based on the handwriting of Griffith.
- 141 *Eighteen days later, on December 16, 1811, one of the biggest earthquakes* Penick, *New Madrid Earthquakes*. Chicago was in the level five zone: "Felt by nearly everyone; many awakened," 141-43. Nine aftershocks were counted as far away as Detroit and Canada between Dec. and April, p. 7.

## *Chapter 18*

- 142 *The older farmhands . . . to clear more land for cultivation* James Leigh's request to Colonel Kingsbury, Mar. 30, 1811, Kingsbury, Papers.
- 142 *Archange was one of the younger daughters* Antoine and Archange Ouillette had four sons and five daughters, including two named Archange, a natural daughter and an adopted daughter. The age of the girl Archange here is a guess. Bushnell, *Wilmette*, 5-6.

- 143 *"Peggy" was Margaret Helm* She was born in 1794 to Eleanor McKillip, later Eleanor Kinzie: Quaife, "Historical Introduction," Lakeside Press edition, Mrs. John H. Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, xxxix; Margaret married Lieutenant Helm in Detroit: same edition of *Wau-Bun*, footnote, 259.
- 144 *Lieutenant Helm* See sketch in Juliette Kinzie, "Massacre at Chicago," 10-11. Lieutenant Helm was an "officer of great merit and of the most unblemished character," says A. B. Woodward to British General Procter, Oct. 8, 1812, in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," *Magazine of History*, Mar. 1912, p. 87.
- 144 *The other new officer, Ensign George Ronan* See Juliet Kinzie, "Massacre at Chicago," 10-11, and Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 177.
- 144 *Captain Heald's wife, Rebekah* And niece of William Wells: Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 80.
- 144 *Captain Heald's wife, Rebekah, twenty-two* Born in 1790, from Draper's interview with Darius Heald, in Draper Mss. (microfilm edition), 23S57.
- 144 *The word had gotten to Fort Dearborn . . . Winnebagoes had attacked Van der Zee*, "Old Fort Madison," 525-43.
- 145 *The report was that the Winnebagoes ate the Americans* Captain Heald's letter, Mar. 11, 1812, quoted in Stevens, "Illinois," 98-99. However, it appears the Winnebagoes butchered the victims and threw their flesh into the trees: Van der Zee, "Old Fort Madison," 531.
- 145 *He should've taken the Indian ferry at Wolf Point* Captain John Whistler's drawing of Fort Dearborn and environs, mss. in the Chicago Historical Society. The operators are unknown.
- 145 *He said the Indians killed ten people in one family named O'Neil* The murders of the ten O'Neils by Kickapoos, Feb. 10, 1812, are in Governor Edwards to secretary of war, Mar. 3, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 194, and Governor Edwards to secretary of war, May 16, 1812, in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 321. That the

inhabitants of Fort Dearborn and the settlers learned by April 6 is my speculation. Governor Edwards knew of the O'Neil murders on Feb. 18. See Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 305. Edwards did communicate with Chicago, as is shown in Edwards's letter of Mar. 23, 1812, in *Ibid.*, 311. William Clark at St. Louis also communicated with Chicago. See *American State Papers*, 806. And Kinzie and Forsyth were generally well informed.

- 146 *People said the bilious fever was what had killed Lieutenant Thompson* He died Mar. 4, 1811, at Fort Dearborn. See Calendar of Letters Relative to Northwestern Campaigns, Fort Dearborn, etc., in Drennan, Papers.
- 146 *Dr. Isaac Van Voorhis was barely out of his teens* Quaife, *Chicago and Old Northwest*, 177, 196, 387.
- 149 *I'm gonna court Josie La Framboise and You're too late* Josie, or Josette, La Framboise became engaged to J. B. Beaubien about this time: Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 313. Josette's age is unknown.

## Chapter 19

- 151 *April 6, 1812* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, gives the date of these events at the Leigh Farm as April 7, but other letters make it April 6: Captain Heald to Wells, April 15, and John Lalime to Wells, April 13, are both quoted in the Draper Mss., 26S45-50, and also Irwin, April 16, 1812, to secretary of war, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 212.
- 151 *Want some whiskey, Johnny?* Johnny Leigh is the boy at the farm on April 6: Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 244.
- 152 *A fierce-looking Indian . . . wearing a long blue gentlemen's overcoat* Portrait of Winnebago in Lewis, *Aboriginal Portfolio*, 62.
- 153 *I do not like the appearance of these Indians* The outline of the Leigh Farm murders, including some quotes, is from Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*,



202–9. Other details are from the letters of Captain Heald to Wells, April 15, 1812, and John Lalime to Wells, April 13, 1812, both in the Draper Mss., 26S45–50.

- 155 *Johnny and Kelso paddled across the narrow south branch* John Kelso escapes with Johnny from Leigh Farm: John Kelso in Lalime's April 12 letter cited just above. Kelso is an ex-soldier: See Fort Dearborn muster list for Dec. 1810 in Kirkland, *Massacre at Chicago*, 150.
- 155 *Kelso and Johnny sped into the woods behind the haystacks* The haystacks would be on the east side of the river at about Twenty-fourth Place and Racine Avenue today, although those streets do not go through. The haystacks can be located by matching two maps, "Map of Chicago in 1812," upper left-hand corner, in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 81, with the "Map of Chicago in 1830," Ibid., between pages 112 and 113.
- 156 *Nelly! Indians!* Eleanor Kinzie's actions that day are from Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 202–3.
- 157 *But John Kinzie was playing the fiddle* Ibid.
- 158 *The blast of a cannon* Ibid., 207.
- 158 *In the next room . . . numbered pegs on the wall* From Sean O'Brien and Walt Dubbeld, reenactors of the First U.S. Light Artillery of Fort Wayne.
- 158 *Each man had hung on his individual peg* The soldiers' accoutrements are from Chartrand, *Uniforms and Equipment*, 103–10.
- 162 *The Indian Agency house is empty. . . . We're fortifying it* Captain Heald to Wells, April 15, 1812, Draper Mss., 26S45, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 209.
- 162 *The missing soldiers returned* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 207–8.

## Chapter 20

- 163 *John, the traders you said would deliver the smuggled goods* Irwin to secretary of war, Oct. 30, 1811, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 179.
- 164 *Kinzie has turned the officers against me* Irwin to secretary of war, May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, 219–20.
- 164 *My dear wife is an Indian* Her name is Noke-no-quaa, in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 194.
- 164 *Kinzie has taken my business* Point de Sable sold his house, livestock, and property on May 7, 1800, to John Lalime according to the bill of sale in Quaife, “Documents, Property of Jean Baptiste Point Sable,” 89–92. But the bill of sale says William Burnett, a trader in Michigan, was the man to whom Point de Sable owed a substantial amount of money. Burnett in the document accepts all Point de Sable’s property partly in payment of de Sable’s debt to Burnett, and Burnett agrees to pay the remaining balance from the sale to de Sable. Thus, in this author’s opinion and in the opinion of others, including Danckers and Meredith (see *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, p. 90), Burnett really owned the de Sable place, although Lalime lived there and presumably ran the business until Kinzie bought it in 1803. For more on Burnett, see Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, and Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 74–75. Lalime was evicted by Kinzie. See Peterson, “The Founding Fathers,” in Holli and Jones, *Ethnic Chicago*, 311.
- 164 *Kinzie seems in league with the British* Irwin’s opinion is in three letters to secretary of war: Mar. 10, 1812; May 15, 1812; and again on May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 196, 219–21.
- 164 *But we believe Kinzie’s subordinates are trading* Ibid.  
Author’s note on Kinzie’s politics: I present Irwin’s assertion that Kinzie was a British operative in 1812 as only Irwin’s assertion. The British authorities in Canada considered Kinzie a British subject during and after the War of 1812 based on testimony given in Canada. It was

stated that during the war Kinzie was employed by Robert Dickson, the British trader and agent. The year of Kinzie's alleged employment by Dickson is not clear, possibly 1813. See Anonymous, "Court of Inquiry re. Charges Against Lt. Joseph Cadot of H. M. Indian Department, Fort Drummond, 10 October 1815," pp. 327-34. By 1813, Kinzie for certain was a secret American agent and was imprisoned in Canada for his efforts on behalf of the United States.

- 165 *Kinzie's half brother, Tom Forsyth . . . is a known British sympathizer* Irwin tells his beliefs to secretary of war, Jan. 19, 1812; Mar. 10, 1812; and May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 185, 196, 220. Also in Irwin to Mason, Oct. 12, 1812, in Quaife, "Notes and Documents: The Fort Dearborn Massacre," 570.
- 165 *The doctor was sure . . . regain his optimism* See Quaife, *Chicago and Old Northwest*, 387.
- 165 *Many Indians from this locale* Irwin to secretary of war, May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 219.
- 165 *Matt . . . the Potawatomes in this quarter are for war* Lalime to Wells, April 13, 1812, Draper Mss., 26S45-50.
- 166 *Your six Saukie Indian friends* Irwin to secretary of war, May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 219. There is no indication that these murders took place, and if they had, Irwin would have recorded it. Irwin presumably warned the Saukies.

### *Chapter 21*

- 167 *The "nine-mile prairie" . . . was a tub* Harriet Martineau tells of the "nine-mile prairie" east of the Des Plaines River, with "water and mud . . . knee deep," in *Society in America*, 356.
- 168 *Why'd the La Framboise brothers leave their sister here?* Josette La Framboise, their sister, was still in Chicago, Aug. 15, 1812. See Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 349-50.

- 168 *The La Framboise brothers . . . and their French father . . . had disappeared* Captain Heald to Wells, April 15, 1812, Draper Mss., 26S45–50. Wells said, “Three of our militia have deserted—one Frenchman, and two half-Indians. It is believed they have taken off with them ten or twelve horses and gone to Millewakee.” This description fits the family of Francis La Framboise who lived in Chicago in 1812. See Andreas, *History of Cook County*, 84, 85, and the names of the sons, 235. Their sibling relationship to Josette and their mother’s name, Shaw-we-no-quā, is in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 194, 356. That they stole anything is Heald’s speculation.
- 168 *I got my opinion. . . . We should get rid of all the Frenchies* See threats against local French with Indian wives in Irwin to secretary of war, April 16, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 212.
- 169 *The Indians’ small harassment attacks* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, p. 210.
- 169 *The day after the Leigh Farm murders* Ibid., p. 208.
- 169 *The Indians had cut Liberty’s throat* The death wounds are described in Heald to Wells, April 15, 1812, Draper Mss., 26S45–50.
- 169 *Jimmy also told Johnny . . . it was the Winnebagoes who killed Liberty and Cardin* Irwin to secretary of war, April 16, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 212.; Heald to Wells, April 15, 1812, Draper Mss., 26S45–50; Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 209; John Kinzie to Thomas Forsyth, July 7, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 248.
- 169 *Captain Heald had asked . . . to form a militia and originally got fifteen men and boys* Irwin to secretary of war, April 16, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 212; Irwin says 13–14 after the La Framboises deserted.
- 169 *Heald chased the Frog Creek Indians away and Irwin . . . opens up his store agin’* Irwin to secretary of war, April 16, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 212; and Heald to Wells, April 15,

- 1812, Draper Mss., 26S45-50; Irwin to secretary of war, April 28, 1812, and May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 216, 219.
- 170 *Maybe with the captain's baby born dead* Heald's son was born dead on May 4, 1812. From Nathan Heald's "Journal," Draper Mss., 17U33, Reel 58.
- 170 *His status . . . since his stepfather, Tom Burns* Sergeant Griffith to Captain Heald, Jan. 13, 1820, in Draper Mss., 8U88, Reel 56.
- 170 *Can you tell me what that British spy was all about?* He was Francis Rheum. Irwin to secretary of war, May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 219-22.
- 171 *The trader said Dixon controls all the Indians* Or Dickson. See Kellogg, *British Regime in Wisconsin*, 282.
- 171 *The trader didn't know . . . because he couldn't read or write* Rheum signed his confession with an X. From "Deposition of Francis Reheum" in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 14, pp. 574-75.
- 171 *We need old Jouett . . . but Jouett's gone back to Kentucky* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 87.

## Chapter 22

- 174 *Captain Heald . . . had restricted most of the men to the grounds* Irwin to secretary of war, May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 222.
- 174 *We hev been at war for months* This opinion of Sergeant Wheeler's and many of the sergeant's opinions that follow in this chapter are based on the statements in 1812 of Illinois Territorial Gov. Ninian Edwards, a fellow Kentuckian and contemporary. This first observation is from Edwards to secretary of war, May 12, 1812, in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 319.

- 174 *Who's in charge of this big army* Cruikshank, *Invasion of Canada*, p. vii, note on p. 1, and Hull's letter to secretary of war, p. 36.
- 175 *What we should be doin' is sendin' expeditions* Edwards to secretary of war, Jan. 25, 1812, in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 295.
- 175 *We don't need fat generals with no war spirit. We need men with a bark on* Examples of Kentucky speech: Faragher, *Daniel Boone*, 39, 147.
- 175 *Lieutenant Helm told us today that some militia killed two Indians* Actually, rangers did: Edwards to secretary of war, May 6, 1812, in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 315.
- 175 *The Indins won't make a big general attack* Edwards to secretary of war, May 12, 1812, *Ibid.*, 320.
- 176 *Kelso has reenlisted* Fort Dearborn muster list, May 31, 1812, Draper Mss., 8U70, Reel 56.
- 176 *I've been watching the new sergeant, Griffith* William Griffith enlists at Fort Dearborn on May 1 and immediately becomes (1) a sergeant, and (2) an Indian interpreter. From McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 113.
- 177 *Billy's father, Captain William Caldwell . . . is one of the worst enemies* Billy Caldwell's father fought on the British and Indian side at Blue Licks and at Fallen Timbers. See Captain William Caldwell (son of the elder Caldwell and half brother of Billy) to Lyman Draper in Draper Mss., 17S212, 214, 216, 236. For Fallen Timbers also see Quaife, *Fort Wayne in 1790*, p. 32.
- 178 *The brig Adams will come here* Adams did, in Quaife, *Chicago and Old Northwest*, 243; vessels *Mary* and *Friends Good Will* did in 1812, Irwin to General John Mason, Oct. 12, 1812, in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 561-73.
- 178 *When we went to Kentucky* Aron, *How the West Was Lost*, 6-8. The Iroquois who claimed Kentucky by right of conquest sold Kentucky to the English at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768: Hulbert, *Boone's*

*Wilderness Road*, 22–24. The Cherokees, who used Kentucky for hunting, sold it to Colonel Richard Henderson in 1774: *Ibid.*, 42–43. The Shawnee Chief Cornstalk surrendered Kentucky in October 1774 in a treaty at the end of Lord Dunmore’s War: *Ibid.*, 85–87. For the first and last treaty, the last one a surrender of hunting rights in Kentucky, see also Downes, *Council Fires*, 143, 144, 177.

- 179 *Bonnie Doon* Composed in early 1700s. Words and history are from the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps Internet site at [www.mdw.army.mil/fdc/music/index.htm](http://www.mdw.army.mil/fdc/music/index.htm).
- 180 *Jimmy knew . . . head north along a trail that paralleled the north branch* Today it is Elston Avenue. See Scharf map in the Chicago Historical Society.
- 180 *Five miles north of Wolf Point he would turn onto a secondary portage trail* Irving Park Road. See the application of Portage Park (Chicago Park District) for National Register of Historic Places, Mar. 17, 1995, p. 8, on the Internet at [www.state.il.us/hpa/ps/20144](http://www.state.il.us/hpa/ps/20144).
- 180 *He was headed for St. Louis, Louisiana Territory* Express riders’ route between Chicago and St. Louis even amid the troubles of 1812; it is shown in Heald’s Feb. 7, 1812, letter in *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, p. 806.

### Chapter 23

- 181 *Still June 18* The date of the fatal encounter between Lalime and Kinzie is given in some books as early as Mar. 1812, but Matthew Irwin’s May 15, 1812, letter, referred to frequently above, shows Lalime was still alive then. Kinzie arrived in Milwaukee on June 21, “having to leave Chicago for the present,” as he says—directly after he mentions his “unfortunate affair,” which he does not describe. Allowing a generous three days to flee one hundred miles on horseback from Chicago to Milwaukee makes June 18 the approximate date. See Kinzie’s letter to Thomas Forsyth, July 7, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 248.

- 183 *Madaline and Victoire* Victoire and Madaline Mirandeau and family are described in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 105.
- 184 *Kinzie stabbed Lalime in the heart* The basic description of the death of Lalime and the wounding of Kinzie is from Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, pp. 73–74; from Andreas’s interview with Victoire Mirandeau Porthier, vol. 1, p. 105; and from Hubbard’s account that Hubbard says is from Eleanor Kinzie and Margaret Helm, also found in vol. 1, p. 164. Alexander Robinson’s third-hand account also calls it self-defense by Kinzie in Draper Mss., 21S282–83. Matthew Irwin asserted that Kinzie murdered Lalime but gave no evidence. See Irwin to Mason, Oct. 12, 1812, in Quaife, “Notes and Documents,” 57.
- 184 *Just then Jimmy noticed Matthew Irwin* Captain Heald to Irwin, June 26, 1812, says, “. . . in consequence of your refusing to obey my orders when called on to assist in apprehending a citizen who had but a few days earlier stabbed another citizen to the heart in your presence.” The citizen is unnamed here, but I believe this means Irwin saw the death of Lalime. Mss. under Nathan Heald, Box 170, Chicago Historical Society.
- 185 *Get Kinzie. He done this* Irwin’s letters from 1812 clearly show the officers were allied with Kinzie and hotly displeased with Lalime. Thus, it is more likely Lalime’s “warm friends at the fort,” in Andreas’s words, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 74, were the common soldiers as well as Irwin and Dr. Van Voorhis. Hubbard’s third-hand account written 77 years later, found in *Ibid.*, 164, states Lalime was “a favorite with the officers who were greatly excited” by his death. This is clearly wrong. But Hubbard did not live in Chicago in 1812.
- 185 *Damn the Englishman Kinzie* See “our sutler, John Kinsey, an Englishman,” in Quaife and Forsyth, “Story of James Corbin,” 223.
- 185 *To curry favor . . . Kinzie had begun charging* Irwin to secretary of war, Mar. 10, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 196.
- 185 *Captain Heald had given the order that the soldiers could purchase* *Ibid.*



## Chapter 24

- 187 *Chandonnais, a young man only twenty-three* In Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 232, Chandonnais was placed on the boat that carried Mrs. Kinzie and her children on Aug. 15, 1812, a sign of great trust. Born c.1788: from Juliette Augusta (Magill) Kinzie, "Massacre at Chicago," 40.
- 187 *"Yes, ma'am," said Black Jim, a slave* Black Jim, or Black James, would have been one of Kinzie's "two negros," presumably both slaves, the other Black Jack. See Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 150–52. Also, for the saga of Jeffrey Nash, a black slave/servant who escaped from Forsyth at Peoria and gained his freedom, see the Louisiana court case *Forsyth et al. v. Nash*, 4 Mart. (o.s.) 385, (La. 1816). Black James or Jim and Black Jack died in 1832 or 1833, according to Hubbard. See Hubbard's note next to Black James's name in Kinzie's Books for Aug. 20, 1805.
- 187 *Wolves were everywhere* As late as 1835, hunters killed "not less than 200" wolves in the fall in Chicago, including 19 in one day. But this was partly due to the attraction of the refuse of early slaughterhouses. Letter of Suminecatha, or Big Wood Wolf, Dec. 9, 1835, cited in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 92–93.
- 187 *Let me bandage you and stop your bleeding* Hubbard's version, in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 164.
- 188 *Josette, known as Josie, La Framboise, the nurse* Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 350.
- 188 *The oldest Kinzie boy* The Kinzie children—John Jr., Ellen Marion, Maria Indiana, Robert—and their ages are from the genealogy in Juliette Augusta (Magill) Kinzie, "Massacre at Chicago," 43.
- 189 *Black Jack was another slave* In Kinzie's Books, July 22, 1808.
- 190 *To Eleanor it was obvious that Helm and Ronan, too, had been drinking* The officers and Kinzie had been drinking, and Lalime with them, says Alexander Robinson in Draper Mss., 21S282–83.

- 190 *Mirandean and Kinzie . . . left after midnight* Mirandean version in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 105.
- 191 *Three-quarters Potawatomi and one-quarter French* Derived from Juliette Augusta (Magill) Kinzie, "Massacre at Chicago," 40, and his mother's obvious Indian name Chip-pe-wa-quā in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 194.
- 191 *Chandonnais . . . spoke several languages* The British said he was an interpreter in 1813. See Anonymous, "Court of Inquiry re. Charges Against Lt. Joseph Cadot of H. M. Indian Department," 331.
- 191 *After Eleanor's first husband had been killed . . . Eleanor was forced to engage in the Indian trade* Burton, "The Fort Dearborn Massacre," 75-76.
- 191 *Then Tom Forsyth arrived at the front door* Forsyth to Governor Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 250. Forsyth says, "Since mine of the 29th Ultimo [i.e., June 29, 1812], I have been at Chicago."
- 192 *A large man, becoming portly at age forty* See Forsyth's biographies in Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 246-52; Blair, *Indian Tribes*, vol. 1, pp. 244-45; and Draper in a note to Forsyth's "Journal of a Voyage," 188.
- 192 *Eleanor knew this big man could live in the saddle for weeks* See Forsyth's travels in the summer of 1812 in his letters in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16.
- 192 *The parlor* Possible interior layout of the Kinzie house, from reconstructed blueprint by Donald Schlickan in Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, 218.
- 192 *They discussed . . . shut down the government trading store* Irwin to secretary of war, May 15, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 220.
- 194 *But my father was a Tory* Burton, "The Fort Dearborn Massacre," 75.

- 194 *He had examined the pictures, The Musician and Love and Desire* Formerly owned by Point de Sable, from Quaife, *Checagou*, 38.
- 195 *I work for the government of the United States* Based on Forsyth to Governor Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 252; also Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 249–50, and Kellogg, *British Regime in Wisconsin*, 292.
- 195 *I make myself acquainted . . . so the Indians suspect me* Forsyth to Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 250; the French are Forsyth's business rivals: *Ibid.*, 252.
- 195 *If the French find out the truth about me* Forsyth to Governor Howard of Louisiana Territory, Sept. 7, 1812, *Ibid.*, 264.
- 195 *I communicate only with men at the top* Based on several of Forsyth's letters in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16.
- 195 *My letters are carried by a man who has my complete faith* Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 249, says Antoine Le Pense was a "confidential Frenchman" used by Forsyth. Another, or the same man, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 253, is Antoine LeClair.
- 196 *My father fought alongside Wolfe at Quebec* Forsyth's father's biography is in Reynolds, *Pioneer History*, 246–74, and in Draper in Forsyth's "Journal of a Voyage," 188.
- 196 *John ran away from home* "John Kinzie, a Sketch," by Eleanor Lytle Kinzie Gordon in *Fergus' Historical Series*, no. 30, p. 56.
- 197 *Chief Gomo of the Potawatomies told me* Forsyth to Governor Edwards, June 8, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 229–30.
- 197 *Will the Americans . . . and That is what I am supposed to discover* Orders from Governor Edwards to Forsyth, May 24, 1812, in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 323.

- 197 *I am to examine . . . and I have Billy Caldwell on the Wabash* Billy Caldwell to Forsyth, July 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 255.
- 197 *I have sent that excellent Frenchman* Forsyth to Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 252.
- 197 *Of course, the United States government must pay me* Governor Howard to secretary of war, June 14, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 14, p. 569, where Forsyth demands more money.
- 197 *I may or may not get off with my life* Forsyth to Governor Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 252.
- 197 *When I was a little girl* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 266–87.
- 198 *John would have to give me strong evidence* See notes for chapter 25.

### Chapter 25

- 199 *Secret report of Antoine LeClair* The report, shortened here and edited slightly for readability, is from Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 253–55. Falsovoine Indians is another name for the Menominees. It equals Folles Avoines, referring to wild rice or wild oats. See Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 75.
- 200 *Kinzie turned to look for him* Kinzie and Forsyth together in Peoria, July 14, 1812, is based on Kinzie's own letter to Forsyth of July 7, 1812: "I am on my way to the Piorias where I shall wait your arrival," in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 248–50; and also Forsyth's letter to Governor Edwards dated "Piorias 13th July, 1812," *Ibid.*, 253.
- 202 *Forsyth's place at the southwest edge of Lake Peoria* Franke, *French Peoria*, 49, 52.
- 202 *I have to leave for Vincennes this afternoon* Forsyth to Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 253.

- 202 *Kinzie fingered Billy Caldwell's report* Ibid., 255.
- 202 *It's war now* War was declared June 18, 1812. The word arrived in Chicago July 10, 1812. See "Helm's Narrative of the Massacre" in Burton, "The Fort Dearborn Massacre," vol. 15, p. 90.
- 202 *I did send a letter to Captain Heald yesterday* Kinzie's letter to Captain Heald warning of Indian danger is mentioned in Lt. Helm's narrative, Ibid.
- 203 *I gave you my own letter describing the British and Indian war council* Kinzie's letter to Forsyth regarding Indian plans and British traders, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 248–50.
- 203 *Harrison is to blame for this war* The opinion offered is based on Eckert, *Gateway to Empire*, 378, where he says Kinzie blamed Harrison and the British for the Indian troubles. Echoes of the idea are still propounded today.
- 203 *The Prophet has been preparing the Indians for war* Tecumseh's role was not widely recognized by his American contemporaries, except for William Henry Harrison, until after the war began, certainly not by Forsyth and Governor Edwards. See Forsyth's and Edward's numerous letters in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16 for 1812.
- 203 *The Potawatomes raided and murdered* Stevens, *Illinois*, 68–77, 278.
- 203 *Just in the last few days . . . the same fellows who murdered the Coles* Forsyth to Governor Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 251.
- 204 *The prairie may be farm country* For a common opinion of the times, that Indians took up too much good land they were not using, see William Henry Harrison in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 487–96.
- 204 *My own life is one war after another* Quaife, "Historical Introduction," Lakeside Press edition, Mrs. John H. Kinzie's *Wau-Bun*, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

- 204 *And the death of John Lalime tears at me* Based on Hubbard's statements that Kinzie "deeply regretted" the killing and that Kinzie for the rest of his life kept Lalime's grave in good order, both in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 164. Also, in an 1821 Indian treaty that Kinzie helped negotiate, Lalime's son, John, was granted a half section of land, perhaps through Kinzie's instigation. See Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 347.
- 204 *Keziah Forsyth appeared* She is the former Miss Keziah Malotte, from the *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 6, p. 180.
- 205 *So, then, you and I are Americans* Kinzie's decision to cooperate with his brother, the U.S. secret agent, and give information to the U.S. is based on the following: While Kinzie was with him, Forsyth sent four letters—Kinzie's, Billy Caldwell's, Antoine LeClair's, and his own—to Illinois governor Edwards in one package. In paragraph five of Forsyth's letter of July 13, 1812, he says: "I herewith enclose you a translation of Mr. Le Clere report to me." Then in paragraph 8, Forsyth says: "I herewith enclose you two letters I recd lately and have to beg you keep the names of the writers a profound secret." Those two letters would be Kinzie's and Caldwell's. All four letters—Forsyth to Edwards of July 13, 1812; Kinzie to Forsyth of July 7, 1812; the report of Antoine LeClair of July 14, 1812; and Billy Caldwell to Forsyth of July 1812 are found together in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, pp. 247–55.

## Chapter 26

- 206 *Napoleon's army had crossed into Russia on June 24* Will and Ariel Durant, *Age of Napoleon*, 701.
- 206 *He controlled most of Europe* Forrester, *Age of Fighting Sail*, 11.
- 206 *The British navy* Hickey, *War of 1812*, pp. 10, 12; Zimmerman, *Impressment of American Seamen*, 267, last paragraph.
- 206 *The French also seized* Gordon, "Land of the Free and Free Trade," 56.

- 207 *The boys . . . were able . . . to make a good-sized cattle enclosure* Based on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 223; also implied in Schoolcraft's account of the Fort Dearborn Massacre in *Narrative Journal of Travels*, 390.
- 207 *The Indians had killed more than twenty* Indians killed some of the Leighs' and Russells' cattle: Heald to Porter Hanks, July 12, 1812, in Cruikshank, *Invasion of Canada*, 55. Also Heald to Porter Hanks, July 13, 1812, *Ibid.*
- 207 *What ever possessed your dad, Leigh* James Leigh goes to Mackinac Island at about this time: Tom Forsyth to William Clark, July 20, 1813, "Letters sent by William Clark, letters received from Indian agents," in *Records of the United States Superintendency of Indian Affairs*, 10. That Leigh intended to become an Indian trader is my speculation. The farm cabin did later become an Indian trading house.
- 208 *Wheeler's dad's gone seven weeks* Soldiers on distant errands were sometimes gone for months: Caldwell, "Frontier Army Officer," 117, footnote 87.
- 208 *On the other hand . . . Fort Dearborn residents had heard a report* Shaw, "Narrative of Colonel John Shaw," 204.
- 210 *After taking testimony, they had acquitted Kinzie* Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, pp. 74, 164.
- 210 *Much earlier . . . the soldiers had buried Lalime* The original spot of Lalime's grave is at the south terminus of Rush Street at the Chicago River, *Ibid.*, 164.
- 210 *John Kinzie . . . immediately asked permission to move . . . inside the fort* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 211.
- 210 *Irwin left for Mackinack, too* Irwin to Mason, Aug. 6, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 256; and Irwin to Mason, Oct. 12, 1812, in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 568.
- 212 *The tunnel ran under the northeast corner of the fort* The location

of the water tunnel in Fort Dearborn: Colonel Musham's interpretation of John Whistler's 1808 drawing of Fort Dearborn and vicinity in *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1947; and especially the blueprint of the fort by Donald Schlickan, based on Whistler's 1808 draft, in Danckers and Meredith, *A Compendium of the Early History of Chicago*, back cover.

- 214 *It says Mackinac is being abandoned and asks us to evacuate this post* Aug. 9, 1812, Captain Heald received the order to evacuate Fort Dearborn: "Extract of a letter from Captain Heald . . . Oct. 23, 1812," in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 1. Also, Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal of Travels*, 390, says Aug. 9. Other versions are Lt. Helm, Aug. 8, in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91; and Aug. 7 in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 210.
- 214 *To the best of my knowledge, Lieutenant, there are two Winnemac* One friendly, one hostile: Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, note 3, p. 427.
- 214 *I do not entirely trust him* Mentor L. Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.
- 214 *Umm, the Indian already asked to see Mr. Kinzie* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 211.
- 214 *Sir: It is with regret I order the evacuation of your post* Text of evacuation order: Draper Mss., 8U52.
- 215 *He said that according to the Indian Winnemac* Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91, says, "Winne Mag . . . informed Captain Heald *through Kinzie* to evacuate immediately." John Kinzie in his own account in Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348, says, "The Indian then pressed him [Captain Heald] *through me* . . . to go the following day." Emphases added. The above information indicates that Winnemac spoke little or no English, which will become important since it will be seen that somehow Winnemac knows what the message written by General Hull says.
- 215 *I'm sorry to tell you . . . that Winnemac reports the United States fort* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 164. Also, the fall of Mackinac was learned



by General Hull on or before the day he wrote the order to evacuate Fort Dearborn (i.e., on or before July 29). See Hull to Governor Scott of Kentucky, July 29, 1812, in Cruikshank, *Invasion of Canada*, 103. Thus, Winnemac could also have known. The information may have been available in Hull's army on July 28. See Quaife, *War on the Detroit*, 262.

- 216 *Winnemac advises, Captain, that it may no longer be practical* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 347.
- 216 *Winnemac says . . . you must leave . . . by a different route* Ibid., and from Lieutenant Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 90.
- 217 *Winnemac said there is a possibility* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348. "Captain Hill (Heald), however, somewhat distrustful of the Indian and expecting Captain Wells with some Miamies, did not adopt the advice." Hull sent an order to Fort Wayne to assist Fort Dearborn evacuation. Carter, *Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 230.
- 217 *Winnemac says you should march out now and leave everything* Kinzie agrees: Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 212, and Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.
- 217 *The execution of this order will take a few days* Heald declined the advice to leave immediately or at the latest the next day. Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.
- 218 *Stay as long as you please* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 212, and Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.
- 218 *Do not say a word about Fort Mackinac captured* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 214.
- 220 *The Indians know about the evacuation order* Indians knew immediately and came for government trade goods the same day, according to Captain Heald's Oct. 23, 1812, account in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812; also Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.

## Chapter 27

- 221 *Twelve on sick call* Juliette Kinzie, Henry Schoolcraft, Joseph Kirkland, and Darius Heald, all of whom wrote accounts of these events, all agree that Fort Dearborn had a significant number of sick soldiers on Aug. 15, 1812. John Wentworth in “Fort Dearborn: An Address,” p. 19, said twenty-four, but this is too high compared to subsequent events.
- 223 *Abandoning Mackinac . . . would be like leaving the front door open* Principal point of entry for British traders: Kellogg, *British Regime in Wisconsin*, 264.
- 225 *Private Simmons and his wife then carried their two-year-old boy* Story of John and Susan Simmons: Simmons, *Heroes and Heroines*, 20–27.
- 227 *Eventually, men . . . noticed that Ensign Ronan went to the captain* Lt. Helm and Ensign Ronan debate evacuation with Captain Heald; Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 165–66, and Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 390.
- Author’s note: The disagreement or lack of it among Captain Heald and others about evacuation is one of the essential disputes of early Chicago history. Juliette Kinzie says in *Wau-Bun*, 212–14, that the officers argued against evacuation, were ignored, and “considered the project of Captain Heald little short of madness.” Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 390, who wrote his account based on interviews with the Kinzie family eight years after the event, said the “inhabitants” and officers “did not coincide” with Captain Heald’s trust of the Indians. Rebekah Heald says through her son Darius in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 23, “Not an officer objected to leaving. Nobody objected but Kinzie who did so for personal reasons.” These positions are diametrically opposed. The notion that no one but Kinzie objected to leaving the fort in the midst of war despite months of Indian attacks and despite the fact that they were surrounded by Indians ten times their number is less credible than the Kinzie family version.
- 227 *Phrases could be heard . . . “eight to ten days”* The estimated travel time is from: Simmons, *Heroes and Heroines*, 31.

- 227 *We are to start taking barrels of flour* Burton, *Fort Dearborn Massacre*, 91.
- 228 *They had pitched their camp* The original Frog Creek camp, as described earlier, was at what is today Jackson and State Streets. That the August 1812 camp was much closer is from James Corbin in Quaife and Forsyth, "Story of James Corbin," 222.
- 228 *We and our sons are the militia* Eckert, *Gateway to Empire*, 635, 639, 645, and 646. Ouilmette and Buison are not in the militia is implied by Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 229–30, and by subsequent events.
- 228 *By sunset the population of the Indian camp was up to 150* The day-to-day numbers of Indians gathering outside Fort Dearborn are fictional estimates until Aug. 14 and 15.
- 228 *Many soldiers had difficulty sleeping* Inhabitants of the fort are restless and fearful; Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 215–16.
- 229 *The captain and Kinzie are eatin' dinner with the savages* Suggested by Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.
- 230 *Captain Heald announced . . . Indian chiefs had professed friendship* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 216–17.
- 230 *Peresh . . . walked ninety miles from the St. Joseph River to Chicago* Hubbard, *Autobiography*, 142.
- 231 *The subalterns ordered the portholes of the blockhouses thrown open* Helm and Ronan fear assassination at the Indian council of Aug. 12 and train cannons on the council. Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 216–17.
- 231 *Captain Heald led this parade of Indian chiefs right into the fort's magazine* Heald made this offer himself and displayed the proposed gift of arms to the Indians: Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348. Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91, also stated that Captain Heald planned to give the surplus arms to the Indians, as does Juliette

Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 216. One account states that Heald and William Wells promised to give the guns and ammunition to the Indians, namely the letter of Ensign Curtis, Sept. 21, 1812, in Peckham, "Recent Documentary Acquisitions," 413. I believe the part about Wells's participation in such a promise is mistaken, as will be seen as events unfold.

- 232 *There are tons of guns, powder, balls, and lead for makin' balls in that there magazine* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348, and Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91.
- 232 *Old Cowabeemay got overexcited and fired his musket* Unnamed Indian chief fires gun into captain's ceiling and some soldiers react: Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 215.

## Chapter 28

- 234 *But did I show you the dictionary Ronan inscribed to me* From the Heald family, in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre*, 83.
- 234 *Helm and Ronan say little Peresh warned them of a plot against me* Based on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 216, which says the officers were "secretly informed." Peresh as informer is my speculation.
- 234 *He had even led the Kentucky riflemen contingent* See Harrison to secretary of war, Nov. 18, 1811, Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, 621; and the interview of Darius Heald, Heald's son, with Draper in Draper Mss., 23S41, Reel 50.
- 234 *I have offered the chiefs a substantial reward* Based on the interview of Darius Heald, Heald's son, with Draper in Draper Mss., 23S41, Reel 50.
- 235 *I'm making pockets around your cuffs* Interview of Darius Heald with Draper in Draper Mss., 23S56, Reel 50.
- 235 *Captain Wells has arrived* Captain William Wells's arrival on Aug. 13 is from Captain Heald's account in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, pp. 89–90,

and also from the interview of Darius Heald with Draper in Draper Mss., 23S41, Reel 56; and Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 390; in other words, from sources on both sides. Other versions say Wells arrived Aug. 12 or Aug. 14.

- 235 *Wells . . . accompanied by . . . Lieutenant Pettibone* This is fictional. Pettibone in this instance is based on the real Corporal Walter Jordan who did accompany Wells to Fort Dearborn from Fort Wayne. See Jordan's account in Barnhart, "A New Letter About the Massacre," 187-99.
- 236 *This time, Pettibone wore another new uniform* The uniform as in Chartrand, *Uniforms and Equipment*, 21.
- 237 *Wells walked directly from the front gate to the Indian camp* Wells held his own talks with the Indians in Lt. Helm's account: Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91.
- 237 *By this time the Indians* "Map of Chicago in 1830" in Andreas, *History of Cook County*, between pp. 112 and 113, shows the second Indian camp. The interview of Darius Heald with Draper in Draper Mss., 23S41, Reel 50, also says two Indian camps.
- 238 *In the last war he commanded a cadre of spies* Wells's career under Anthony Wayne: Griswold, *Fort Wayne*, 32; and Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 78-83.
- 238 *Didn't Wells once save a group of officers and their women* Letter of A. H. Edwards in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre*, 176-77.

### *Chapter 29*

- 239 *Over yonder . . . must be five hundred Indians* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91, says "500 warriors, 179 women and children."
- 240 *The new cattle enclosure . . . placed one hundred yards south of the fort* My speculation. Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 223, has the cattle within

easy sight, and presumably the garrison tried to keep its food supply until the end.

241 *Captain, . . . may I ask the state of arms, ammunition, and provisions* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91.

241 *We have two hundred stand of arms* Ibid. Also found here Helm's list of powder, corn, cattle, and salt.

241 *You're vastly exaggerating, Lieutenant* Heald's last inspection return, May 31, 1882, for the garrison's supplies only, is in Draper Mss., 8U67-68.

Author's note on arms and ammunition: Dr. Cooper, who served at Fort Dearborn from 1808 to 1810, said the fort had "several hundred stand of small arms." See Wilson, "Chicago from 1803 to 1812," p. 2. Cooper and Helms both must have counted the U.S. Factory's stores, which included arms and ammunition, while Heald in this novel counts only the army property.

242 *I have taken council with the Indians. The Indians are hostile* This is a paraphrase of Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91.

242 *Some time before I came here* Griswold, "Fort Wayne," 31, 54, and 55.

242 *You have sufficient supplies to resist attacks* Based on Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.

242 *I advise you against evacuation and I advise against it also, Captain* Ibid.

243 *But Wells had never in his life successfully fought a bureaucrat* All biographies of Wells demonstrate this.

243 *His father is a gentleman originally from Virginia* Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 87.

244 *My father was from Virginia* Carter, *Life and Times of Little Turtle*, 82.

244 *I have known your father-in-law . . . since he and I met at Kekionga* This is my speculation although they had known each other for nineteen

years. Kinzie had a trading post at Miamitown, adjacent to Kekionga, until 1790, according to Quaife, "Historical Introduction" to the Lakeside Press edition of Mrs. John H. Kinzie's *Wau-Bun*, p. xxxv. Wells would have been quite prominent in Kekionga and Miamitown as the son-in-law of Little Turtle. Also, by 1793, Wells and Kinzie appeared to be well acquainted. At that time the Indians suspected Kinzie of passing Wells military intelligence on the Au Glaize River. See Anonymous, "Indians Speeches at the Glaize," May 6, 1794, pp. 346-47.

- 244 *Kekionga was . . . the Washington City of the Indians* A detailed description of Kekionga is in Eckert, *A Sorrow in Our Heart*, 223.
- 244 *As an Indian I fought against two of those expeditions* Wells fought against Gen. Harmar's expedition in 1790 and against St. Clair's expedition in 1791, and then served with Gen. Wayne in 1794: See note 7 in Peckham, "Recent Documentary Acquisitions," 412.
- 244 *Mechecunnaqua died a month ago* Little Turtle died July 14, 1812: letter of Indian Agent Stickney to secretary of war, July 19, 1812, in Thornbrough, *Letter Book*, 161. The spelling of Mechecunnaqua is from Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, p. 97.
- 245 *If we must leave, we ask you to prevail upon him* Based on Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91.
- 245 *The Indians have made several applications* Based on Heald's affidavit of Dec. 2, 1817, in Draper Mss., 1T6. Heald's other arguments for giving the ammunition to the Indians are from Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91; and from Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.
- 245 *Tecumseh at Detroit sent an order to tell the Prophet* Wells to Harrison, July 22, 1812, in Cruikshank, *Invasion of Canada*, 79.
- 245 *Heald . . . reluctantly gave in on the issue of the arms, ammunition, and whiskey* A variety of explanations exist that end with a fascinating possibility: (1) Captain Heald in his account in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, said the destruction of the excess arms and whiskey was his own idea.

(2) In Heald's affidavit cited just above, he says the idea was his and Captain Wells's. (3) Another contemporary account, from Aaron Greeley in *The War*, Oct. 10, 1812, vol. 1, no. 16, p. 70, said, "Captain Wells ordered the powder and balls to be thrown into the river." (4) Kinzie in his own account in Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348, says he and Wells advised the captain to destroy the excess ammunition and liquor, and Heald agreed. (5) Juliette Kinzie in *Wau-Bun*, 217-18, says Kinzie did all the persuading. (6) Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91, says Kinzie, Helm, and Wells joined together to persuade the captain, but Heald hesitated as seen in this story. Then, according to Helm, Kinzie "wrote an order as if from General Hull. . . . It was supposed to answer," and was carried out. Helm's version gibes with John Kinzie's vague statement that "stratagem" was adopted to justify the destruction to the Indians. The new "order" is not described by Helm. But if true, this suggests that the copy of the evacuation order presumed to be from General Hull that still exists today was really written by John Kinzie and that General Hull's actual order was destroyed. This possibility could explain many small contradictions that various participants make in describing what Hull actually ordered. No sample of John Kinzie's handwriting exists today for comparison. Hull could have written the order himself or had a secretary do it.

- 245 *The fort then became the scene of frenetic activity* This scene is based primarily on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 218. The date for the disposal of the excess arms and all whiskey was Aug. 13: Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 91; Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 218. Although some accounts disagree, Forsyth to Gov. Howard, Sept. 7, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, 261, definitively corroborates Aug. 13 in detail.
- 246 *While he stood in the shallows . . . he was seized from behind* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 348.

### Chapter 30

- 248 *The rider carrying news of the war* He followed the Potawatomi Trail from Detroit, also known as the Great Sauk Trail: Quaife, *Chicago's Highways*, 38-41.



- 248 *Here he turned southwest . . . and entered the leading edge of the great American prairie* A finger, the easternmost portion of the prairie, began here. See map in Nelson, *Illinois Land and Life*, 86.
- 249 *Then he entered the region of the great sand dunes* Martineau, *Society in America*, vol. 1, p. 346.
- 249 *He left Lake Michigan and followed a secondary trail* From the map of Albert F. Scharf in the Chicago Historical Society, trail "P."
- 249 *The adults knew the most recent riders . . . came from Tecumseh* Based on Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 109. Main Poc also sent runners to the Potawatomies telling them he was going to war against the Americans. See William Clark's letter, Mar. 22, 1812, in *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, p. 807.
- 250 *"Spotted Trout, welcome back," said the first woman, Sinkabe* The Indian words Sinkabe, Esben, and Manasano are from Clifton, *Prairie People*, 112.
- 251 *We must save our gunpowder* Indians in Illinois were extremely short of powder in the spring and summer of 1812. Gov. Ninian Edwards to secretary of war, July 21, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 244.
- 252 *The Prophet had told his warriors that he had cast a spell* R. I. Snelling to Harrison, Nov. 20, 1811, in Esarey, *Messages*, 643-44.
- 252 *The defeat at Tippecanoe had scared off some Indians* "It was too soon. It frustrated all his plans": Whickar, "Shabonee's Description," 356.
- 252 *Spotted Trout had also learned that Tecumseh blamed the Potawatomies* See Tecumseh's speech in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 2, p. 51.
- 252 *The fight I was in, at a place called Turkey Creek* The description of the battle is from Quaife, *War on the Detroit*, 256-59.
- 252 *Main Poc himself was wounded* Ibid., 248.

- 253 *Tecumseh . . . at a place called Brownstown* Aug. 5, 1812, a Tecumseh ambush and victory. Ibid., 89–90.
- 253 *Then she even said . . . that Main Poc was a rapist* See Edmunds, “Main Poc: Potawatomi Wabeno,” 267. Thomas Forsyth in his interview re. “The Main Poque” in Tecumseh Papers, Draper Mss., 8YY57 to 57(4), said Main Poc “would in his drunken frolics attempt to force the first woman he met.”
- 253 *Hen Splashes had moved out of their wigwam* The Potawatomi custom for cooling marital quarrels is from Blair, *Indian Tribes*, vol. 2, Appendix C, 288.
- 255 *We will take the Kitchimokemon horse that your brother found* Indians stole army horses from the vicinity of Fort Dearborn in 1811: John Wentworth, “Fort Dearborn: An Address,” in *Fergus’ Historical Series* no. 16, p. 49.
- 256 *Will the Weem-tee-gosh leave, too* Weem-tee-gosh for Frenchmen: Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 240.
- 256 *I said those people must leave* That Indians used “those people” as a negative term for Americans is in Forsyth to Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 252.

### Chapter 31

- 257 *We rejoice that the Great Spirit has appointed* Black Partridge’s speech is partly based on the speech of his neighbor, Potawatomi chief Gomo, at Cahokia on April 16, 1812, quoted in Stevens, *Illinois*, 107.
- 257 *Eque in* Meaning “That is so”: George Winter’s record of a Potawatomi event in 1837 in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians*, 65.
- 257 *The united council of the Indians* The Indian council on Aug. 14, 1812, on whether to attack the garrison: Sergeant Griffith in McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 114; it is also suggested by Juliette Kinzie in *Wau-Bun*, 215.

- 257 *The leaders held the council at the southernmost of the two Indian camps* The location is based on Andreas's map in *History of Cook County*, between pp. 112 and 113; today it would be at Sixteenth and Clark Streets. The elbow in the river has since been eliminated.
- Author's note on Indian council speeches: I often created fictional speeches from contemporary Indian speeches of that locale, each of which will be cited.
- 258 *The largest giveaway of goods from the fort in the morning* The Aug. 14 date for this is from Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, vol. 1, no. 21, p. 89; and from Sergeant Griffith's account in McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 113.
- 258 *Where is the gunpowder* Details of the quarrel between Wells and the Indians over gunpowder are from Forsyth's letter, Sept. 7, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 262.
- 258 *Strong Pike and most of the Indians knew his name . . . was Apekonit* From Hutton, "William Wells," 184.
- 258 *The river today tastes of "strong grog"* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 220.
- 258 *This chief, Nescotnemeg . . . was Main Poc's brother-in-law* Edmunds, *Potawatomis*, 185, and Clifton, *Prairie People*, 195, 198, 207.
- 259 *The warrior shot the ox nearest the white captain* Quaife and Forsyth, "The Story of James Corbin," 222.
- 259 *With a flurry of commands . . . Sigenak, an Ottawa* Governor Edwards's May 1812 letter re. "Letourney," in Edwards, *History of Illinois*, 315, and Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 78.
- 259 *I had a dream . . . that the water gods* From Draper's interview with Potawatomi Joseph N. Bourassa, July 2–3, 1868. Bourassa was a two-year-old in 1812 but later knew the participants. Draper Mss., 23S194.
- 259 *Probably the Great Spirit wants us to return to ourselves* That Black

Partridge favored letting the garrison leave peacefully is from Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 244, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 220.

260 *Should any tribe dare to take up the tomahawk* The secretary of war's warning to potentially hostile Indians is from Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 550.

260 *Now we must kill them all* That Nescotnemeg favored attack is from several sources, including Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 352. Nescotnemeg's actual words, "We must kill them all," are from Alexander Robinson's account of the Indian debate in Draper Mss., 21S285-86.

260 *Another Potawatomi village chief, Qua-she-gun* From Draper Mss. 21S285-86. Qua-she-gun's words are based on those of an unidentified Potawatomi at the Mississinewa River council on May 15, 1812, in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 51-52.

261 *Sigenak rose, the Ottawa chief who also led many Potawatomes* Anonymous, "Indian Council at Amherstburg," 41.

Sigenak's speech is composed mostly of comments of the Prophet and of Tecumseh in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 433, 434, 460, and 544.

261 *Our brothers the Winnebago have already deposed* Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 471.

261 *It is better to die one time as men* Sigenak's peroration is from the speech of White Pigeon, July 13, 1812, quoted in Forsyth to Edwards, July 13, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 252. That Sigenak favored attack is from several sources, including Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 352.

261 *Naunongee, the chief of Strong Pike's village, stepped forward* His speech is fictional. That Naunongee favored letting the garrison leave peacefully is speculation based on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 220.

262 *The spell was broken when Topenebe rose* That Topenebe opposed

attack in this story was taken from Robinson's account in the Draper Mss., 21S285-86.

- 262 *He walked into the crowd . . . and dragged . . . the trader Che Pin Qua* This Indian name has sundry versions. This is the spelling of the woods near the author's home, formerly Robinson's property.
- 262 *Robinson . . . then spoke Potawatomi in his high voice* Robinson gives a fairly detailed account of the debate in Draper Mss., 21S285-86, so it is possible he was there. He does not say he spoke. It is my speculation, based on his subsequent actions, that he did speak for peace. His speech is fictional.
- 263 *The day before I left . . . a small number of red men led by Tecumseh* Spotted Trout's description of the Battle of Brownstown is based on Quaife, *War on the Detroit*, 89-90.
- 263 *Those people are determined to destroy you* The rest of Spotted Trout's speech is from Pokagon, "The Massacre at Fort Dearborn," 650.
- 264 *I come from Main Poc* That Main Poc's message arrived Aug. 14 and the details are from Forsyth to Governor Howard, Sept. 7, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 262. Main Poc's report of the capture of Detroit by the British was premature, but not by much.
- 264 *He hailed a sentry and asked to be admitted to see Captain Heald* Black Partridge's speech to Captain Heald and the surrender of the medal on the night of Aug. 14 are from Sergeant Griffith in McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 113-14; Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 94; and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 220.

### Chapter 32

- 266 *The same personnel would sail the Kinzies . . . to Parc aux Vaches* Today this is Bertrand, Michigan: Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 222. The description of the party in the Kinzie boat: *Ibid.*, 223.

- 267 *Peresh bent and whispered into Kinzie's ear* Kinzie's receiving the warning from Topenebe of the attack and the advice that he should take the boat is from Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 222.
- 268 *Perhaps my presence will deter the Indians* Ibid., 223.
- 269 *By 5:30 A.M. the Indian Agency house with twenty-three residents* Based on Sergeant Griffith's letter to Captain Heald, Jan. 13, 1820, Draper Mss., 8U88, which says Tom and Catherine Burns had six children, and on Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 259, which says the Leighs had six children. Three of the twelve militia were a man and two boys from the above families, two Burnses, and Johnny Leigh. Peresh Le Claire was also a possible militia member: Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 431. But Peresh would have lived in one of the Kinzie buildings. This leaves at most eight unattached men, including the two Russells (who are identified in chapter 14 and the notes for chapter 14), in the Indian Agency house. The total is twenty-three people in the Indian Agency house.
- 269 *Upstairs . . . the two-month-old infant, Molly Leigh, still slept* The actual name of the Leigh infant is unknown.
- 270 *They had to haul food for more than ninety people* Ninety-three to ninety-five people marched away from Fort Dearborn on Aug. 15, 1812, by the best contemporary sources: nine women, eighteen children, twelve male militia, fifty-two to fifty-four soldiers, plus John Kinzie and William Wells. A letter from Judge A. B. Woodward to the British General Procter, Oct. 8, 1812, found in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 86-88, says ninety-three people, but Judge Woodward may have forgotten to count John Kinzie and possibly William Wells. Quaife in *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 429, says ninety-six people and counts Corp. Thomas Forth. However, Heald's after-action report in the Draper Mss., 8U71, says Forth had been discharged earlier. The difference between ninety-three and ninety-five also depends on whether two of the fifty-four-member garrison had deserted just prior to this. Further details below.
- 270 *The two wagons would also have to hold* The description of the wagons and their contents is based on Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 391. Two wagons is a good guess. Schoolcraft says "several." What seems to

be the account of Moses Morgan in the unpaginated Head Papers, mss. in the Chicago Historical Society, says that on July 14, 1816, mechanics sent to build a new Fort Dearborn found remains of two wagons on the beach. The sick soldiers with the women and children is based on Darius Heald's account: Draper Mss., 23S53. The actual number of sick soldiers in the rear is speculation.

- 271 *But I believe the militia will be at the front* The order of march is from Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, pp. 24–25. Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S44, also puts the militia at the front, which is probably correct. Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 225, places the militia in the rear. Ensign Curtis's Sept. 21, 1812, letter written from Fort Wayne, in Peckham, "Recent Documentary Acquisitions," 413, apparently summarizing the account of an unnamed Indian witness, says there was only one wagon and it was between the officers and the enlisted men.
- 274 *You have to help . . . find two missin' packhorses with Doc Voorhis's medical supplies* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 239.
- 276 *Mrs. Corbin . . . was attempting to tie a belt . . . to hold a military scabbard and sword* Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 392, says several of the women had swords.
- 276 *Five other women watched painfully* The identities of these women—Mrs. Burns, Mrs. Leigh, Mrs. Needs, Mrs. Holt, and Mrs. Simmons—are from the letter of Judge Woodward in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 86–88. The identity of the sixth, Mrs. Fielding (Mrs. Phelim) Corbin, is from the *Niles Weekly Register*, June 4, 1814, vol. 6, p. 221, reprinted in *Fergus' Historical Series* no. 16, p. 53. The seventh woman, Cicily, is identified by Rebekah Heald in her "Petition to the U.S. Government." Cicily and Cicily's child are valued together at \$1,000. Cicily is mentioned, unnamed, by Lt. Helm in Burton, cited just above, 96. Rebekah Heald and Margaret Helm, attested in all accounts, make a total of nine women who marched. The total of 18 children mentioned here was agreed on by Judge Woodward in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 88; by Lt. Helm in Burton, 94; by Forsyth in his letter to Gov. Howard, Sept. 12, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 262; and by Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 430.

- 276 *Sergeant Hayes addressed . . . members of the militia, who numbered twelve* According to Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90; also according to Judge Woodward's letter in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 87, and Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 390. (Forsyth, in his letter to Gov. Howard, Sept. 12, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 262, says ten. Lt. Helm in Burton, p. 94, says fourteen militia.) It is not clear how each of these sources counted William Wells. Kinzie seems to be considered separate from the militia. Jimmy Wheeler is the thirteenth member in this novel.
- 277 *Each enlisted man was fairly resplendent* The enlisted man's uniform is from Chartrand, *Uniforms and Equipment*, 18, 106. The colors of the knapsacks are from Sean O'Brien, reenactor, First U.S. Light Artillery, Fort Wayne.
- 277 *Fifty-one present and Three absent* The Fort Dearborn company had fifty-four men according to Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90; also fifty-four according to Forsyth in his letter to Gov. Howard, Sept. 12, 1812, cited just above, p. 262; also fifty-four in Judge Woodward's letter in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 87; and fifty-four in Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 390. Lt. Helm says fifty-six in Burton, p. 94. Quaife, in *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 429, after an exhaustive study, says fifty-five, but erroneously counted Corporal Forth as noted above.
- 277 *Three absent . . . Sergeant Crozier and Private Nate Hurtt* Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 96, lists them (Nathan Hunt for Nathaniel Hurtt) as "deserters." Captain Heald in his after-action report says these two "escaped, got into Fort Wayne." They are the only two not killed, wounded, or captured in the after-action report in the Draper Mss., 8U71, Reel 56. Woodward, however, lists Crozier as a survivor of the action: Burton, 87.
- 278 *Helm then gave . . . eight distinct orders* Primarily from Colonel Alexander Smyth, *Regulations of the Infantry*.



### Chapter 33

- 279 *They came out of the gates . . . Rebekah Heald . . . followed by Margaret Helm and Dr. Van Voorhis and their horses* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 224–25; Darius Heald in Kirkland, “The Chicago Massacre,” 31, and other accounts. No firsthand account puts Kinzie or Captain Heald on a horse.
- 279 *But then . . . the four-piece band struck up “The Dead March”* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 223.
- 280 *When they got out in the open air, the drummers and The two fifers* Their names are in Heald’s after-action report, Draper Mss., 8U77, Reel 56.
- 280 *Militia leader Tom Burns gestured for Peresh* Peresh Le Claire as a member of the militia is based on Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 431.
- 280 *Ah don’t think any of the chillens is afraid* This is suggested by Mary Leigh Besson’s account in Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 259–60.
- 280 *McPherson called out . . . and the band struck up a jaunty martial air* Ibid.
- 280 *Ten-year-old Lillie and The soldiers . . . began to throw kisses* Ibid.
- 281 *Sergeant Holt, the driver of the lead wagon and Sergeant Hayes on the driver’s seat* This is based on their actual roles later on.
- 281 *All the Miamis rode Indian ponies* Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 31. The size of the ponies is in Cooke and Ramadhyani, *Indians*, 43–44.
- 281 *A group of Indian women, children, and old men stood outside this last gate* Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 31.
- 282 *He was mounted on the thoroughbred* Ibid.

- 282 *Wells had painted his face black* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 223, and from Darius Heald's interview in Draper Mss., 23S55.
- 282 *The civilian militia followed the first fifteen Miamis . . . and the last fifteen Miamis hung back* Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, pp. 24–25.
- 282 *Peresh . . . bolted as soon as he was out of the trail gate* Based on Griffith's account in McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 114. McAfee says Le Claire ran away "at the commencement of the action." Le Claire himself says that when the shooting began, he was already on the Indian side, in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 572.
- 282 *Wells had barely cleared the trail gate when a crowd . . . raced pell-mell on foot toward the fort for plunder* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 228.
- 283 *They're shooting the cattle* Ibid.
- 283 *A line of warriors on foot with long guns became visible* Ibid., 174.
- 284 *The fifteen Miamis . . . and the American militia . . . veered to the left of the sand hills and The line of warriors . . . veered to the right* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 174. The sand hills intervened between beach and prairie at today's Roosevelt Road: Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 65.
- 284 *The hills soon cut off the Americans' view* Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 391. The "sand banks" were "elevated to such a height that the country back of it is completely hid from the view."
- 284 *But it was just possible for the soldiers to see the tips of the Indians' muskets and rifles* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349.
- 284 *The line of Indians . . . stretched . . . for three-fourths of a mile* Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S45.
- 285 *At this point some of the women observed William Wells ride up from the rear at a gallop* Wells started in the rear of the entire line, as opposed to

the usual assertion, and then later came around in front: Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349; also from Captain Heald’s report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 89, and Griffith’s account in McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 114. A special note will explain Griffith’s account later since he wasn’t there.

285 *A quarter mile out in front of the main body, Wells caught up with his Miami advance* Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 31. In his separate interview in the Draper Mss., 23S44, Darius Heald says, “Captain Wells and the militia were *half a mile* in advance” when the shooting began, but that seems a stretch.

285 *The Miami advance guard stopped. Then Wells wheeled his horse. He galloped back* The information in the first, third, and fourth following paragraphs in the novel is from Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S44.

285 *Far to the front, shots sounded* The action presented here is based on Darius Heald’s interview in Draper Mss., 23S45. Both Darius Heald, *Ibid.*, and McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 114, mention that the advance guard was fired upon first.

286 *What’s best to be done? and We must make the best defense* Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349.

286 *The captain seemed to wait for Wells and We ought to march up to those sand ridges* Based on Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, pp. 31–32.

286 *They are about to attack us. Form your men* Based on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 224.

286 *The marchers had walked for an hour* They marched out at 9:00 A.M. in Captain Heald’s report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 89, and were attacked at 10:00 A.M. in Lt. Helm’s account in Burton, “Fort Dearborn Massacre,” 91–92.

286 *Two miles from the fort* Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349; also James Corbin’s account in Quaife and Forsyth, “Story of James Corbin,”

222. Others say a mile and a half, but landmarks contradict this. Kinzie's account is especially convincing because he pointed out the spot to Captain David Bates Douglas, a topographer, in 1820. See Williams, 346, 349, and footnote 9. The approximate site of the massacre today would be at Eighteenth Street east of Prairie Avenue based on the venerated "massacre tree" formerly at that spot in Kirkland, *Story of Chicago*, 71. See also the *Chicago Tribune Chicagoland Map* by Rand McNally. Continual accretion of sand onto the Chicago shoreline, plus landfill, means that all or almost all the shoreline from 1812 is well inland today.
- 286 *To the west of them, many Indian heads popped up and down . . . like turtles* Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S45.
- 286 *Company, to the right in line. . . . March* Based on McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 114, "formed in line of battle," and Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 391, "Captain Heald formed his men with deliberation." The actual words are from Smyth's *Regulations of the Infantry*.
- 286 *From his proper position at the tail of the company, Lieutenant Helm repeated* Peresh Le Claire's account in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 572.
- 286 *Get the wagons in behind us* "Maj. Heald got the wagons . . . between the troops and the lake." Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S46.
- 286 *Dr. Van Voorhis, take command of the wagons* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 94.
- 286 *Wells shouted, "Charge them!"* Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 32.
- 289 *The Indian in front held Sergeant Griffith* Sergeant Griffith, while looking for packhorses, is captured by Topenebe just before the march, stripped of arms, sent across the Chicago River in a canoe, told to hide in the woods, and does. This is related in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 239–40. That this was prearranged is my speculation.

## Chapter 34

- 293 *The father said the attack had been devised by an experienced raider, Main Poc's brother-in-law, Nuscotnemeg Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative,"* 352.
- 293 *He said . . . the Winnebagoes, Sacs, and Kickapoos . . . decided to allow only small delegations* Forsyth to Clark, July 20, 1813, *Records of the United States Superintendency of Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, p. 9, says "one Sakee one Kikapous and three Winibagoes."
- 294 *Strong Pike was disappointed that he . . . had to use a bow and arrow* Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S53.
- 294 *At the bottom . . . was a shallow ravine between the sand hills and the start of the prairie* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 229.
- 294 *He knew . . . that the soldiers were about a hundred yards away* Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 89.
- 294 *"The soldiers come now!" . . . [Strong Pike] saw his father and other men . . . aim their muskets, and almost simultaneously fire* This passage is based on "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349, where Kinzie says, "the men [soldiers] were faced towards the land and advanced in line up the bank as they rose the Indians fired their first volley several fell but the soldiers still preserved their course & pressed upon the Indians into the prairie . . ."
- 295 *They [the Indians] slid and scrambled down the incline. Other red men, pulled away, too, down into the ravine* This is based on Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 89, which states, "We charged, and the Indians gave way in front and joined those on our flanks."
- 295 *Strong Pike . . . heard a man shout in English from the top of the sand ridge. Then a volley of guns sounded over Strong Pike's head* That the soldiers fired their first volley from the top of the sand ridge is implied by Capt. Heald's report in *Ibid.*, which states, "I immediately marched with the company up to the top of the bank, when the action commenced; after firing one round, we charged . . ."

- 295 *[Strong Pike's] father . . . ran to the north. Other warriors ran south* This is based on Capt. Heald's report in *Ibid.*
- 295 *Farther to the north and back far to the south, the shooting was general* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 224.
- 296 *[Strong Pike] saw that the soldiers had run down into the ravine, up the other side, and out onto the prairie* Based on Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349, which states, "the soldiers . . . pressed upon the Indians into the prairie."
- 296 *Then Strong Pike saw a rider . . . charge right and left. The rider had three guns* Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 32.
- 296 *Indians . . . challenged the soldiers hand-to-hand* Based on Corbin's account of receiving "a deep tomahawk wound in my right shoulder": Quaife and Forsyth, "Story of Jim Corbin," 222; also from McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 114, and Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S53.
- 298 *Strong Pike saw the Kitchimokemon break in a body for the open prairie* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92; and Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90.
- 299 *Up to this point the battle had lasted about five minutes* Based on "The men in a few minutes were, with the exception of 10, all killed and wounded." Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92.
- 299 *One Kitchimokemon horse had been shot down, and its rider, wearing a fancy uniform, limped away* Dr. Van Voorhis in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 225.
- 299 *The white women's horses pranced and bounded* *Ibid.*
- 299 *A girl in a white dress [Lillie Leigh] hung upside down from her horse like a rag doll* Described in Matson, *Pioneers of Illinois*, 260, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 245.

- 299 *I will destroy whoever spills the blood of the Kinzies* The quarrel and scuffle among the Indian chiefs on the beach regarding protecting the Kinzies is from Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349–50.
- 299 *If we kill Shaw-nee-aw-kee* See Black Partridge's vow in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 236–37.
- 300 *I support my brother* Based on the presence of Black Partridge's brother, Chief Wau-Ban-See, on the beach. Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 230.
- 300 *At the very start, . . . John Kinzie . . . had remained alone with . . . his stepdaughter and Rebekah Heald* Kinzie in Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349.
- 300 *They all saw at a distance Private Kennison, known as Grandpa* Based on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 224.
- 300 *The fifteen Miamis who had been the rearguard . . . passed by as spectators, not stopping* From Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 352, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 224, including the gist of the speech by the Miami.
- 301 *He expected his stepdaughter and Mrs. Heald to follow him, but . . . Rebekah Heald had ridden off toward the sand hills* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349, and also from Darius Heald in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 33.
- 301 *He decided he could take no part in the battle* From Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 429.
- 301 *He realized that they had outflanked the garrison and had come around on both sides* Captain Heald in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90, and Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349.
- 301 *The militia . . . had never made it back to the wagons* This is my speculation based on the fact that no survivor mentioned seeing the militia's part of the fight, yet all of the militia were killed.

- 302 *She leaned far over, and he gave his wife his sword* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 231–32. Mrs. Holt’s sword fight is also included here.
- 302 *The officer who had fallen at the sand ridge . . . was Ensign Ronan* Based on Ibid., 225, and John Kinzie’s account in Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349. That Ronan fell on the beach is obvious by the fact that Kinzie witnessed Ronan’s death, and he never left the beach during the fight.
- 303 *Hayes pressed ahead with his bayonet at a tall, mature Indian . . . Nau-nongee* John Kinzie’s account in Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 247.
- 303 *Kinzie saw the greatly pregnant Susan Corbin . . . scream and weep* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 230–31.
- 303 *Then he saw the Indians tear out and kill Mrs. Corbin’s unborn child* *Niles Weekly Register*, June 4, 1814, vol. 6, p. 221, reprinted in *Fergus’ Historical Series* no. 16, p. 53.

Author’s note regarding the three adult Corbins: The muster lists of 1810 in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 150, and May 1812, in Draper Mss., 8U70–71, name only two soldiers named Corbin, James and Fielding. The above-mentioned story in the *Niles Weekly Register* lists James and “Phelim” Corbin as survivors. The same paper says, “Mrs. Corbin, wife of Phelim Corbin,” was killed and beheaded and her unborn child similarly killed. Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 230–31, explains how Mrs. Corbin, a soldier’s wife, fought to her utmost to avoid being taken captive, before she was slain and “cut to pieces.” The number of women on the march is definitely established (see notes for chapter 30 the list and explanation of the women who marched out). Thus, Mrs. Susan Corbin, wife of Fielding Corbin, is the only adult female Corbin.

As for Fielding-Phelim Corbin. Kirkland in the text of his *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, pp. 20, 118, 146, and 150, mentions Phelim Corbin as a soldier but no Fielding. But since the muster list has only Fielding Corbin and James Corbin, it is my judgment that Fielding and Phelim are the same person. Later, to add to temporary confusion, there developed a Chicago legend that a woman named “Sukey Corbin”—sometimes identified as the wife of Fielding Corbin, sometimes the wife of the phantom Phelim Corbin, or even as the wife of James Corbin—and Sukey Corbin’s



children were murdered by an Indian on the porch of the Burns house on the north bank of the Chicago River on the day of the massacre. A particular Indian is accused of this in Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities*, 105, and Andreas, *History of Chicago*, vol. 1, p. 90. The story of these alleged murders on the porch of the Burns house is told by Mrs. Callis, a daughter of the Indian agent Jouett. Neither Mrs. Callis nor any Jouetts were in Chicago at the time of the massacre. The story is not found in any account by a survivor of the massacre. Kirkland expresses doubt about this story on p. 48 of *Chicago Massacre of 1812*. Quaife omits any mention of it. The well-known number of women and children leaves no room for an extra Corbin family. It is my judgment that this legend of the killing of “Sukey Corbin” and her children on the porch of the Burns house is false, although the fact that they were killed is undisputed. Three other matters: The number of children born to Fielding and Susan “Sukey” Corbin is unknown. In this book it is one boy, three, and an advanced child in the womb. The fact that Sukey’s alternate name is Susan comes from Andreas, 90. Finally, it is unknown whether Fielding and James Corbin were related. This novel makes them brothers.

- 304 *He opened his eyes and saw Wells ride onto the beach* Based on the fact that Kinzie could see Mrs. Heald ride up to Wells and could see Wells tell her to return to Kinzie. Kinzie says Wells could hear the Indian chiefs arguing on the beach, in Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349–50. The sand banks were too high to see the prairie from the beach, so Wells did not stay out on the prairie.
- 304 *His niece, Rebekah Heald, rode from somewhere toward him* Darius Heald’s account in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 34. Mrs. Heald was wounded near Wells: Darius Heald in Draper Mss., 23S48, and John Kinzie in Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349.
- 304 *Kinzie felt someone grab his rifle but leave it in his hand* It is Black Partridge, who also goes to help Margaret Helm: Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 349.
- 304 *Dr. Van Voorhis . . . was trying to talk to Margaret* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 225.

- 304 Author's note on the rescue of Margaret Kinzie by Black Partridge and Margaret's misunderstanding and her fight with her rescuers: The incident is true, and a neglected Chicago monument is based on it, but it has doubters. See, for instance, Quaife's early doubts in *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 387. Some historians mocked this incident as false, such as Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," p. 358. Even John Kinzie in Williams, 350, says Margaret ran into the lake herself. However, Margaret Helm's story in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 225–27, is clear that she was rescued by Black Partridge. Juliette Kinzie accepted the story despite John Kinzie's scoff. Other corroboration is substantial. Margaret Helm repeated the story in different words and without the tomahawk detail, but otherwise almost exactly the same as in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun* to Harriet Martineau in the 1830s, and Martineau recorded it at length in her book, *Society in America*, vol. 1, pp. 353–54. Nehemiah Matson in *French and Indians of Illinois River*, 204, says he confirmed it with "Mrs. Benson—who was present." (He probably means Mrs. Buisson who was in Chicago that day and helped hide Margaret after the massacre.) Finally, and convincingly, only five weeks after the massacre, a survivor, apparently Captain Heald, told of this rescue of Margaret Helm by an Indian who took her into Lake Michigan. This was recorded in John Askin's diary, in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 564. The discovery of Askin's diary caused Milo Quaife to print on the same page of that article a retraction of his doubts. The essence of the neglected monument is this: During the attack by Indians on the Fort Dearborn evacuation, Margaret Helm, like all the evacuees, was in great danger of losing her life; she fought with an Indian, not understanding that he wished to rescue her, and Black Partridge rescued Margaret Helm. This is all true. The monument is essentially correct.
- 305 *From the screams now, Kinzie knew this Indian was murdering the children* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 349, and Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 230.
- 306 *The little boy ran down the beach* Various accounts agree that twelve American children died, usually described as all from one wagon. This escapee then is the Needs boy who was later tied to a tree and left to die, according to an account in the *Niles Weekly Register*, June 4, 1814,

reprinted in *Fergus' Historical Series*, no. 16, p. 53. The Needs boy would become the twelfth child fatality from the one wagon.

- 306 *The girl . . . Isabella Cooper . . . fought like a wildcat* Letters of A. H. Edwards in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, pp. 197–99.
- 306 *Rebekah Heald was shot across the breast* The information related here about Rebekah Heald, her wounds, and Wells is all from Darius Heald's two major accounts to Kirkland in *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, pp. 31–38; and in Draper Mss., 23S46–49.
- 307 *My son, you can live* This was Topenebe's response when Wells said to him, "Father, I want to live." Based on Draper's interview with Joseph N. Bourassa, a Potawatomi Indian from Chicago who was a child when the massacre took place but who knew many of the Indian participants, Draper Collection, 23S194–195.
- 308 *"Apekonit! Apekonit!" . . . She denied who she was* Darius Heald's account in Draper Mss., 23S49, says, "Indians charged her with being an Ep-pi-con-yare—a Wells. This, from supposed policy, she denied." The Epiconier spelling of Wells's Indians name is found in Darius Heald's account in Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 35.
- 308 *Five minutes after the battle had begun . . . twenty-eight soldiers had broken out* Based on Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92. Helm says twenty-seven survived. Heald says twenty-six or twenty-eight in different places in his report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90. Charles Askin's secondhand account says twenty-nine survived to this point, in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 564.
- 308 *Before they reached the elevation, Lieutenant Helm turned to face the enemy* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92.
- 309 *Captain Heald then caught up with his troops* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," p. 92, where Captain Heald arrives last. Captain Heald wounded in the hip is from Darius Heald to Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 33. Heald's wound in the right arm is from Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 241.

- 309 *"Form into a line," Heald croaked* His orders to form and readvance on the Indians, the failure of the advance, and the retreat are from Lt. Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92.
- 309 *It was out of range of muskets* Captain Heald's account in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90.
- 309 *When they counted up, nineteen of the soldiers . . . were wounded* Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 564.
- 310 *Gunfire ceased on the prairie* Implied by Captain Heald's account in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90.
- 310 *Helm pulled out his own handkerchief and tied a tourniquet* Lt. Helm's second account in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 573.
- 310 *Peresh Le Claire . . . walked until he was within hailing range* Le Claire's own account in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 572 (where Peresh also reported that Heald surrendered his sword to Peresh).
- 310 *The soldiers did not know it, but it was Sigenak* Helm in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92.
- 310 *The battle had lasted fifteen minutes* Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90.
- 310 *I believe we must die with our arms, Corporal* This was suggested by Lt. Helm's second account in Quaife, "Notes and Documents," 573.

Author's note on Sergeant Crozier and Nathaniel Hurtt: Although Lt. Helm listed them as deserters, as discussed in the notes earlier, they could have escaped through the grass here which some soldiers consider desertion. Yet this does not gibe with Helm's account of how many soldiers survived to this point, so the matter is not clear.

### Chapter 35

- 313 *At the mouth of the Chicago River, the Kinzie women, children, and workers . . . remained on their boat* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 232–33.

- 313 *Eleanor saw Rebekah Heald being led away—a captive* Ibid.
- 314 *Black Jim . . . pushed . . . to confront the pistol bearer* Ibid.
- 314 *The Indians had lost comparatively few dead—no more than ten* A compromise based on Captain Heald's report of fifteen in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90. The low versions are three, in Forsyth to Gov. Howard, Sept. 7, 1812, in Carter and Bloom, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 16, p. 262, and two in Alexander Robinson's account in Draper Mss., 21S287.
- 314 *After two hours of negotiations among the many chiefs present* Lt. Helm in Quaife, "Notes and Documents" 573. For details of negotiations see pp. 572–73 and Helm's other account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 92–93.
- 315 *Warriors had fired a volley . . . and a frightened soldier pulled a hidden knife* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 350.

### Chapter 36

- 318 *Lieutenant Pettibone was in shock* Lt. Pettibone's experiences in the battle and White Raccoon's words in English are based on the real Corporal Walter Jordan's experiences described in his letter to his wife of Oct. 12, 1812, in Barnhart, "Documents: A New Letter," 190 and 191.
- 318 *Like a medieval painting of hell, the dead men, women, and children lay naked on the sand* Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 93.
- 320 *I saw Black Partridge kill a little girl* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 236. Matson in *Pioneers of Illinois*, 260, says Chief Waupekee from the Des Plaines River was Lillie Leigh's friend and was forced to kill her. Matson's source is not told.
- 320 *Monsieur, the soldiers and Lieutenant Helm will remain as captives* The Indians' promise to let remaining soldiers live does not cover the mortally wounded: Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 350. Kinzie adds,

"Several others were dispatched under various pretenses during the afternoon & evening." That Indians tomahawked some soldier-prisoners in Frog Creek camp is found in Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 94; also in Quaife and Forsyth, "Story of James Corbin," 222; and Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal*, 391.

- 320 *I told my people he is a blacksmith* In this way, James Corbin's life is saved. Quaife and Forsyth, "The Story of James Corbin," 221.
- 321 *Rebekah has been wounded many times and I have some money* Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 350.
- 321 *The subject of Captain Heald came last* The debates among Kinzie and the Indian chiefs over whether to kill Captain Heald and all the rest of the subjects: *Ibid.*, 350–51.
- 321 *Kaganwikashi* A fictional character, but his complaints are real Indian complaints: *Ibid.*
- 322 *My father was a colonel in the last war* Kirkland, *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 180, and Quaife, *Checagou*, 108.
- 322 *Chandonnais ransomed Mrs. Heald* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, p. 232.
- 323 *He persuaded his uncle, Topenebe, to ransom Captain Heald* From Alexander Robinson's account in Draper Mss., 21S288. Lt. Helm's account in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 94, says, "Captain Heald through Kinzie sending his two negroes got put on board a Indian boat going to St. Joseph." This led one modern author, Eckert, in *Gateway to Empire*, 634, to speculate that Kinzie traded two black slaves to the Indians for Captain Heald. Helm does not say that. Such an interpretation requires solid evidence. Helm's sentence could mean two black men carried Heald to the water's edge. Kinzie himself says, "I got a faithful fellow [Chandonnais] to take Mrs. & Captain Hill [*sic*] to St. Joseph in his canoe which he did though pursued 15 miles by some of them," in Williams, "John Kinzie's Narrative," 351. My guess is that Alexander Robinson, also half Indian, was another crewman in this canoe, and there probably were other crewmen to outrace pursuit. Black Jim, or

Black James, who would have been one of Kinzie's "two negros," died in 1832 or 1833, according to Hubbard. See Hubbard's note next to Black James's name in Kinzie's Books for Aug. 20, 1805.

- 323 *Near dusk . . . Indians were dressed in white women's clothes* Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 234.
- 325 *A man was tied to a stake. . . . It was . . . Jimmy Wheeler* The real Corporal Jordan said his captor and savior, White Raccoon, told him that if he "attempted [*sic*] to run away tha [they] would Catch me and Burn me alive." Barnhart, "Documents: A New Letter," 192. Accounts of Indian tortures of captives are numerous, although not all tribes apparently used torture, perhaps neither the Chippewas nor the Potawatomes. See Nathaniel Knowles, "The Torture of Captives."
- 326 *From your speech, you are a Kickapoo* See a reference to the Kickapoos burning a white man to death in 1812 in *Ibid.*, 191.
- 326 *I speak your language* Kickapoos recognize that Potawatomi resembles their language "but they deny mutual intelligibility." Voorhis, *Introduction to the Kickapoo Language*, Introduction page, unnumbered.
- 327 *Tecumseh . . . condemns torture* Drake, *Tecumseh and His Brother*, 226.

Author's note on alleged torture of Fort Dearborn captives: Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 434, says five soldiers, whom he named, "are evidently the men who were tortured to death at Chicago. Concerning the first two we have the positive statement of Woodward in his letter to Procter. The belief that this was the fate of the others rests, obviously, on inference and deduction." If we examine Judge Woodward's letter, we find Woodward says in Burton, "Fort Dearborn Massacre," 87: "It is said that five, and it is not known how many more, were put to death in the night after the action. Of those who are said to have thus suffered, I have been able to collect only the names of two, Richard Garner and James Latta." That is all. No mention of torture. Kirkland, in *Chicago Massacre of 1812*, p. 38, says that Darius Heald (who wasn't born yet in 1812) told him, "It is thought that the Indians went down the lake to have 'a general frolic'—in other words, torture to death the wounded

prisoners.” The reader is expected to assume everything in that sentence. There is no actual assertion of torture here, nor does Kirkland give the reason for the accusation. Finally, in the Head Papers, mss. in the Chicago Historical Society, quoted in Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest*, 235, a French-Indian woman states she could see the “torture ground” on the south bank of the Chicago River where the squaws had three men and the warriors one white woman undergoing the most fearful torture. Yet some soldiers survived, including James Corbin and Lt. Helm, who were in this same Indian camp and reported no such thing. Margaret Helm was held in this Indian camp, and John Kinzie walked through it. Both witnessed killings of prisoners there, such as Tom Burns. Neither reported torture. No Fort Dearborn prisoner is tortured in this book, and I find no persuasive evidence that any were tortured. Jimmy Wheeler comes close because the threat hung above all the captives.

328 *Billy Caldwell, the Irish Indian* This information was related by Billy’s half brother, Captain William Caldwell, to Lyman Draper, in Draper Mss., 17S212 and 229–30. Also, Clifton, “Merchant, Soldier, Broker, Chief,” 186–87.

328 *A party of Indians . . . were headed for the Kinzie home* The threat to kill the Kinzie family on Aug. 16 and their rescue by Billy Caldwell is related in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 234–39.

329 *The Healds were hidden in the woods* This was done by Chandonnais who would soon spirit them away. Based on Williams, “John Kinzie’s Narrative,” 351; Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 241–42; and “Nathan Heald’s Journal” in the Draper Mss., 17U34.

Author’s note on Billy Caldwell’s rescue of the Kinzie family: Modern historians, including James A. Clifton, one of Caldwell’s biographers, tend not to appreciate Billy Caldwell, but Caldwell’s Chicago contemporaries spoke of him in high terms. Clifton doubted Caldwell’s rescue of the Kinzie family in “Merchant, Soldier, Broker, Chief,” 196, but Clifton left open the possibility. Edmunds in *The Potawatomis, Keepers of the Fire*, 186–88, said Caldwell was across the Detroit River just over in Canada at the time he was reported to have rescued the Kinzie family. William R. Head, in the William R. Head Papers in the Chicago Historical Society, says the same. John Kinzie mentions the episode of his family



being in danger from the Indians in his absence, but Kinzie leaves out Billy Caldwell. None of these objections is definitive. If Caldwell had fought on the British and Indian side in the battle of Maguaga on Aug. 9, as some histories assert, Caldwell had six to seven days to ride 360 miles to Chicago by Aug. 16, eminently doable because the newlywed Healds did 50 miles a day from Kentucky to Chicago along with packhorses in 1811. However, Caldwell's own signed transaction shows that he was still working for Forsyth in Peoria on July 15, 1812, both according to Clifton in "Billy Caldwell's Exile," 222, and according to Clifton's later study, "Merchant, Soldier, Broker, Chief," 196. For the evidence that Billy Caldwell *did* rescue the Kinzie women, Billy Caldwell's half brother, William, told Lyman Draper that after the massacre Billy "came up in time to protect the Kinzies," in Draper Mss., 17S212 and 231. Alexander Robinson said the following in Robinson's Draper interview, 21S283: "Kinzie employed Billy Caldwell to go on a mission to Gov. Harrison at Vincennes with a statement of the [Lalime] case. Caldwell returned just after the Chicago Massacre, in time to save the Kinzie family." The Kinzie women assert with all their vigor in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 234-39, that Caldwell rescued them. Thus, the rescue of the Kinzie women by Billy Caldwell is twice corroborated.

- 329 *A slow march rattled and clanged* The description of the captives on the trail is based on Forsyth to Wolden, Dec. 9, 1826, in Quaife and Forsyth, *Story of James Corbin*, 227.
- 330 *The Indians had set Fort Dearborn ablaze* Captain Heald's report *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90.
- 331 *In my solitary walks I contemplate* From Dr. Van Voorhis's letter of 1811 in Quaife, *Checagou*, 111.

#### *Author's Note*

- 333 *Twenty-seven soldiers were killed in the battle* The American death toll is based on a study of Captain Heald's after-action report in the Draper Mss., 8U71, and also on the information in the *Niles Weekly Register* for June 4, 1814, in the *Fergus' Historical Series* no. 16, p. 53; and on

Burton, "The Fort Dearborn Massacre," 96. A small amount of the information in these documents is contradictory and cannot be reconciled, at least by this author. The fate of the Needs boy is also reported in the *Niles Weekly Register* for June 4, 1814.

- 333 *As many as fifteen Indians were killed* The high estimate is from Captain Heald's report in *The War*, Nov. 14, 1812, p. 90.

Author's note on Sergeant Griffith: Sergeant Griffith's role in this story is partly based on Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, and is partly fictional. Sergeant Griffith's personal account in McAfee, *History of the Late War*, 113-15, tells of Griffith taking part in the fight against the Indians. The fight description is flowery and lacks a tone of reality. In that account Griffith also makes himself a key participant at the end of the fight, although Captain Heald, Lt. Helm, and Peresh Le Claire, the actual participants, do not record Griffith's being there. Finally, Griffith was the only soldier, aside from Captain Heald and the two supposed deserters, to escape immediately. It is the conclusion of this author that Griffith survived by hiding and was later spirited away with the Kinzies, both as described in Juliette Kinzie, *Wau-Bun*, 239-40. This is supported by the fact that Griffith quickly made it to Mackinac Island and Detroit alongside Captain and Mrs. Heald, according to Nathan Heald's "Journal" in the Draper Mss., 35. Thus, Griffith most likely got his description of the battle from the Kinzies and from the Healds, not by participating in it. Sergeant Griffith went on to perform valuable service to his country during the War of 1812. He also tried to help Catherine Burns and her surviving children later in life. He appears to have been a fine fellow.

- 333 The composition of the Fort Dearborn garrison is from Captain Heald's papers in the Draper Mss., 8U773, Reel 56.



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