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WOLF BROTHER

BY JIM KJELGAARD

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THIS BOOK AND MY HEART
ARE DEDICATED TO
KAREN

This is the story of a young Apache in the 1880's, when Indian reservations were new. Returning to his "home" after six years in the white man's schools, Jonathan hoped to help his people adjust to new ways of life. Instead, he was forced by circumstance to flee the reservation and join Cross Face's band of outlaws, who would not be confined.

Jonathan soon learned that the lost cause of constantly raiding, fighting, or eluding the white soldiers was no solution. How he was captured, escaped, and worked out his own destiny form the climax of an eventful, moving book told entirely from the Indian viewpoint.

Although fiction, *Wolf Brother* is based on actual events in Apache history. It is one of Jim Kjelgaard's most unusual, gripping tales of outdoor adventure.

FOREWORD

A few years ago, in downtown Phoenix, an Apache beggar touched me for a quarter. As I walked on, I was more than a little depressed.

Like so many of my generation, I had been brought up on tales of villainous fighting Indians, heroic Indian fighters, and ferocious encounters between the two. And of them all, the Apaches were the most courageous, the most fiercely independent, the most resistant to the white man's domination.

Was it all a myth? If not, was there any way to reconcile the derelict in Phoenix with the proud traditions of his haughty ancestors? What was the Apache side of the "winning of the West," anyway? I determined to find out.

Since I already lived in Arizona, which is as rich in Apache lore as in minerals, I was ideally situated. I visited battlefields, forts, libraries, museums. I read every book I could find. I consulted Indian authorities, in particular Odd Halseth of the Pueblo Grande Museum. I went to see present-day Apaches at their prosperous cattle ranches in Arizona's White Mountains, and talked with Apache rodeo performers at dusty little desert stockades.

When the material had been sifted, the obviously false information discarded, the legends and the facts evaluated, I knew the book I wanted to write. This is it. WOLF BROTHER doesn't even pretend to be history. All the characters are fictional, and I have made no attempt to fit the events to any actual chronological sequence. However, much of it is based on historical happenings, and I have done my best to keep the spirit true to Apache traditions.

Jim Kjelgaard

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	7
ONE Renegade	11
TWO Cross Face	31
THREE Closing Circle	49
FOUR Wolf Cub	67
FIVE Forced Retreat	83
SIX Trapped	100
SEVEN Betrayal	115
EIGHT Exiles	130
NINE Flight	144
TEN Dark Mesa	165
ELEVEN Homecoming	180

ONE *Renegade*

When the train mounted a crest, Jonathan saw soldiers in the valley beneath him. Superbly mounted and armed, obviously well trained, they were maneuvering in precise formation. Jonathan kept his face turned toward the window so that the car's other two passengers could not see his eyes. Again to his ears came the words of Father Harvey, the beloved Jesuit who had taken an orphaned Jonathan into his care as a child of ten and was sending him back to the Hawk Apaches as a youth of sixteen. Father Harvey had spoken sadly at parting.

"I have taught you what I may, Jonathan, but there is still much to learn. Will you not reconsider and go on to school in the East?"

"I thank you, Father," Jonathan had replied gratefully. "With my whole heart I thank you. But my heart aches for the scent of pine, the bite of wind, the feel of snow and the joy of rain. Most of all, it aches for my people."

"Then go back to them," Father Harvey had counseled. "Return to them with all you have learned. Continue to learn. Be a teacher and I promise you that, as surely as did the Israelites, your people will emerge from the wilderness. Show the path to those who cannot find it and soften the hearts of any who still rebel. For if they continue to resist, they are lost."

Now, as he looked out the train window and saw the cavalry, Jonathan understood in part what Father Harvey had meant. There had been many bitter battles between the Apaches and their white opponents. In one such battle, Jonathan's father, mother, and three older brothers had all been killed. The blue-clad soldiers had swarmed up the butte, and except for smaller children had mercilessly slaughtered anyone they found. But Dango Crisley, blood brother to Jonathan's father, had taken no part in that battle and was now living on the tribal reservation at Quartz Flat. It was Dango Crisley whom Jonathan was now seeking, after six years in the Jesuit school.

Jonathan turned to face the front of the lurching car, his thoughts bitter. His people had suffered a series of crushing defeats, and their only choice had been surrender. But it had not always been thus. There had been a time when the very thought of an Apache raid had caused white men to tremble in their homes or flee to their forts. Indeed, it was not wholly one-sided now. Jonathan had heard that a warrior named Cross Face and his band, which the white men said numbered anywhere from two to five hundred, still raided almost at will across the border. Even in this year of 1884 Apache was still a name to reckon with.

He sat quietly, apparently unmindful of the sweltering heat that filled the car like a heavy, damp blanket. But behind his unreadable eyes, an alert mind worked furiously. Go back and teach, Father Harvey had said. Teach what? He could speak the white man's language, read his writing, was acquainted with his mode of living, and thought he understood white men. But how much food would such knowledge put into any cooking pot or how many horses would it bring to any lodge? Father Harvey never spoke idly or without meaning. But exactly what had he meant? Jonathan comforted himself with the thought that he possessed two keen eyes. After he had looked about Quartz Flat, no doubt he himself would discover what should be taught.

The far door opened. A blue-clad conductor thrust his head through and intoned nasally, "Mus-Tang! Mus-Tang! A-ha-hall out for Mus-Tang."

The other two passengers, a sweating drummer in a loud-checked suit and a grizzled miner whose face had been burned by so many suns and creased by so many winds that it was dark as an Indian's, rose and started toward the landing platform. As they passed, Jonathan heard the drummer mutter, "Gad! What a dump!"

Jonathan looked steadily out of the window. Quartz Flat was the next stop, and since it was only ten minutes from Mustang it stood to reason that it must be very much the same sort of desert country. Where were the whispering pines, the snorting deer, the cool breezes, the flowing streams, the leaping trout?

Although Jonathan tried not to judge in advance, he still could not quell a rising uneasiness, and knew that it sprang from the lessons given him by Father Harvey. No Apache ever borrowed trouble or worried over problems that had not yet arisen. White men did, and Jonathan had had a white man's training. He pondered about Quartz Flat.

Some aspects of the desert, such as the fruit of various cacti and the skulking deer and bighorn sheep that lived in the cactus, were good, and a part of Apache life. But even though the rockbound, almost treeless mountains that rose on one side were a mile away and the mountains on the other side a good five miles, that was not enough room or variety for Apaches. They were born to limitless horizons.

Nevertheless, Jonathan reminded himself, his people did have a place to live. And in spite of the fact that some unconquerable warriors like Cross Face were said to prefer death to submission, it was better to be alive than dead. Also, as Jonathan had learned during his stay with Father Harvey, the whites were not without mercy. They would never spare the lives of captured Apaches only to let them die in some barren desert.

As the train descended a slope, Jonathan glanced out upon a large adobe building flanked by various smaller ones also built of sun-dried bricks. The large building was perhaps thirty feet long by twenty wide. Sun glanced brightly from its windows. The door stood open. A slat-ribbed, dun-colored dog dozed in the shade the building cast.

To one side was a pole corral holding a dozen horses, some fat and some scrawny. Near the corral was a wagon in which a man lay sleeping. There was a stack of hay from which wandering horses and cattle had cropped just enough to give it a ragged appearance. A windlass and bucket, mounted on a circular stone platform, must be the well. The whole place was hemmed in by prickly pear and saguaro. The only tree in sight was a sad-looking palo whose green needles drooped beneath the sun.

The conductor stuck his head back into the car and said, "Quartz Flat, bub."

In spite of himself, Jonathan bristled. If the conductor had not been affable when announcing Mustang, at least he had been impartial. Now, addressing an Indian, his manner was more than a little supercilious and bordered on contempt. But Jonathan said nothing.

Gathering up the carpet bag that held his few possessions, he made his way to the front of the car, descended the steps, and waited until the train stopped. As he stepped onto the landing platform, a searing blast of heat attacked him. He looked about uneasily.

Apaches needed meat for their pots and grass for their ponies. Here, insofar as he could see, was neither. Jonathan fought down a rising discouragement. The reservation granted the Hawk Apaches, Father Harvey had said, was a large one. Naturally some portions would be less desirable than others, and no doubt the train's passengers disembarked at one of these less-favored places. Surely no Apache would be content to have a permanent home here.

The sleeping dog raised its head, looked at Jonathan with little interest, and went back to sleep. Jonathan skirted the large building, a combined depot-store-warehouse, and walked over to the wagon in which he had seen the man sleeping.

The man was an old Apache, aged by both years and trouble. He wore cast-off clothing which must have come from some white man's trash pile, and his body was fat and flabby. His mouth hung open, and even though his eyes were closed, Jonathan knew as he looked that they would be dull.

A swelling pity stirred in Jonathan's heart as he touched the sleeping man's shoulder. The sleeper came instantly awake—he still had some Apache instinct left—and Jonathan recoiled in shocked surprise.

The man was Manuelito. At one time a leader second only to the great Cochise himself, and sometimes surpassing even that master of audacity and daring, Manuelito had been a symbol of Apache resistance. It was he who, with a single companion, had skulked 150 miles into white man's country, killed seven men, and brought back eighty mules. It was he who, single-handed, had held thirty besieging whites at bay while his companions made good their escape. It was Manuelito who had always argued for further rebellion and derided reservation life. Now he was a leader no longer, only a broken, pathetic old man in whom the breath of life somehow persisted.

Jonathan reverted to the tongue of his ancestors. "I seek Dango Crisley. Where is he?"

"That way." Manuelito pointed indifferently and went back to sleep.

Carrying the carpet bag, Jonathan trudged on, assailed by doubt. Had Father Harvey known what he was talking about? Or had this land, so barren and bitter, been granted to the Hawk Apaches because no white man wanted it? The horses he saw beside the wretched hovels were little more than bone racks; in the old days, any warrior would have been ashamed to mount such a one. Jonathan swerved to where an old man was skinning a jack rabbit.

"I seek the lodge of Dango Crisley."

"Next one." The old man did not even look up.

Jonathan went sadly on. Plainly his people had fallen. Formerly, no matter whose house he approached, he would have been invited to rest himself and share the contents of the cooking pot. The present Hawk Apaches seemed fearful that

they would not have enough for themselves. Jonathan mounted a rise and looked down on the home of his uncle.

It was like all the rest, a small adobe structure with glassless windows and the inevitable smoke hole on top. Only, in this instance, the smoke hole was surmounted with a small, square chimney. A burro so old that his hair was gray sniffed listlessly in a pile of refuse, and half a dozen rawboned horses dozed in the heat. A few vari-colored chickens scratched here and there, watched by a small, short-haired black dog with pointed ears. A girl about twelve years old was picking small pieces of wood from a pile. When she saw Jonathan she ran eagerly forward.

"Hello!"

"You speak English!" Jonathan said in surprise.

"Oh yes! The Sisters had a school for almost three years and I attended." She finished proudly, "I can even write!"

Her features were vivacious and expressive, probably because age and hardship had not yet had time to dull them. Her bright eyes were aglow with friendly curiosity.

"The Sisters called me Helen, but my Apache name is Ee-Lah and I like that better. Who are you?"

"Jonathan."

"Oh. And have you been to school too?" she asked.

"For quite some time. Six years."

"Did you come to see us?"

"I surely did. That is, if your father is Dango Crisley."

"That's right!" the girl said eagerly. "I'll bring him!"

She flitted like a butterfly into the house and came out leading an older man by the hand. Jonathan looked at him appraisingly. Dango Crisley seemed to be afflicted by the same curse that had touched all adult Hawk Apaches when they submitted to the whites. Like all the rest Jonathan had seen so far, he seemed spiritless. But he came forward with his hand outstretched and friendliness in his eyes.

"Greetings! Welcome to my home and all within it!"

"Thank you. I am Jonathan."

"Jon-A-Tha?" Dango Crisley wrinkled questioning brows.

"I was not so called by the Apaches," Jonathan said, "but I have lived long among the white men, who gave me one of their names. I am the son of Big Antelope, who fell in the battle of Ragged Butte."

The girl cried out in delight, and Dango Crisley came forward and embraced Jonathan.

"My brother's son! Long shall this happy day be remembered! Come!"

He led Jonathan into the house and seated him on a steer hide which was obviously a place of honor. Jonathan dimly recalled other days and other lodges, where the distinguished guest's seat was fashioned of softest baby elk skin upon which no one else had ever sat and which was destroyed as soon as the guest departed. There was a wide gap between those days and these, but Dango Crisley was upholding the finest Apache tradition insofar as he was offering the best he had.

Jonathan said feelingly, "It is good again to see one's people!"

"It is good to have you come. Your father would be pleased to know that you have returned, and have not forsaken your people."

"And what," Jonathan asked sadly, "has happened to our people?"

With a gesture, Dango Crisley indicated the entire reservation. "You have seen." His voice was tinged with bitterness. "There is food assured for all. No longer must we worry whether our hunt succeeds or fails. Our enemies threaten no more. Our women and children may go their way in peace."

Jonathan asked, "Is that a life for an Apache?"

"It is when there are enough soldiers with enough guns to tell us what we must do and how we must live."

"I have heard that Cross Face still holds out."

"Ah! Cross Face!"

Dango Crisley's face changed. His eyes lighted, and some of the old fire again danced in their black depths. Jonathan sensed that Cross Face, a hated and despised renegade to the soldiers who were trying to catch him, was a Messiah and standard-bearer to his people. He and those with him were evidently the only Apaches left who dared defy the white man's soldiers and continue to live as Apaches had always lived.

Dango Crisley's eyes were still aglow as he said quietly, "Since your journey must have wearied you, nephew, refresh yourself."

The girl brought him boiled chicken on a platter, peeled cactus fruit, sweet potatoes, piñon nuts, and a gourd filled with water. Jonathan ate and drank, and did not speak while doing so for it was not the part of courtesy to talk while partaking of food in another's house. He finished, pushed the empty dishes aside, and the girl came to take them. Jonathan turned to his host.

"Who provides your food, Uncle?"

"The agent for this reservation, named Dollarson."

"Is there enough?"

Dango Crisley shrugged. "There is not as much as we ourselves used to have at times, but more than we've had at others. If there are no feasts, neither is there any famine."

"Is it good food?"

"One eats it."

"Do you supply any of your own?"

"Coyotes, jack rabbits, desert cats, our fowl, and sometimes a horse that is no longer fit for riding. The deer and sheep we used to find here have long since been killed or driven out by the soldiers."

"Why do you not hunt in the mountains?"

Dango Crisley said dully, "Who leaves our desert lands may, at the whim of the soldiers who watch over us, be banished to a foreign land or even shot!"

"How do you get the piñon nuts?"

"Some, always with a guard of soldiers, are given permission to go and trade."

Jonathan looked away to hide the bitterness in his own eyes. He had longed to return to his people, and except for Helen, Ee-Lah, he had found a hollow shell of what his people had been. Again his thoughts returned to Father Harvey's instructions; let Jonathan return and teach.

Knowledge was a miraculous thing, but teaching it meant far more than just drilling into any individual an ability to parrot words or figures. It was possible even for a dullard, if he applied himself, to learn every rule in the grammar book. But before there could be any constructive teaching, there must be a will to learn that he had not seen.

As though reading his thoughts, Dango Crisley said, "Our people do not like this life, but we had no choice. We saw our babies die because there was nothing to feed them. We saw our women captured and mistreated. We saw our warriors go into battle with bows and arrows, stones and clubs, because there was no powder or shot. And we saw that we must submit."

"Cross Face fights on."

"True. But few of our warriors dare join Cross Face."

For a space there was silence as Dango Crisley contemplated the miracle of this man who was still a symbol of freedom to his tribe. When he spoke again, his tone was apologetic.

"Just to be alive is no small thing."

"I know."

"Would you care to rest now?"

"Thank you, Uncle."

Jonathan curled up on a pallet and stared into the darkness above him. But though he was tired, and did not move or make a sound, sleep would not come. Rather, came a keener awareness of the apathy, despair, and lack of spirit that were so evident here at Quartz Flat.

He remembered stories of how one Apache often undertook some daring deed which ten braves of any other tribe would not attempt. Ten Apaches used to carry out some expedition which no fifty warriors of another tribe would even dare try. Almost their only occupations and certainly their greatest pleasures had been hunting and battle. Hardship was accepted in the course of things and they were proud of wounds received in war. Personal courage was always esteemed, and he who combined courage with ingenuity was invariably honored. It was a great feat to steal another's horses. To steal horses, kill one or more of the enemy whose property they were, and escape unhurt, was to achieve the very pinnacle of glory.

Jonathan shuddered. The fate that had transformed the Hawk Apaches into the spiritless dwellers of Quartz Flat was terrible indeed! Finally he fell into a dream-troubled sleep.

In his dream, again he saw Father Harvey and heard that good man's words. "Be a teacher and I promise you that, as surely as did the Israelites, your people will emerge from the wilderness." And Jonathan heard his own reply, "But, Father Harvey, you do not understand. My people need houses and food and a way of life to their liking before one may teach them anything."

"That is what I meant, Jonathan," Father Harvey said. "Teach them to build adequate houses and grow crops for food, for in the end your people and the white man must be as one." Jonathan was about to explain that the desert land which had been allotted the Hawk Apaches was too arid to grow crops when he was awakened by the morning smell of smoke in his nostrils.

He looked toward the fire to see the girl, Helen, intently spreading flour on a tanned sheepskin. She looked up, and her white teeth flashed against her dark skin as she smiled.

"Good morning, Jonathan."

"And to you, Ee-Lah."

"I hope you slept well."

"Very well, thank you."

He continued to watch the girl, bending over the flour and every now and again casting something aside. Looking at what was obviously going to be a meager breakfast, he knew that last night the fatted calf had been killed at least figuratively and he had feasted royally. He watched her, puzzled.

"What are you doing?"

Helen looked up and grimaced. "The flour is wormy. Father doesn't mind but I do. I try to find all the worms and throw them away."

Jonathan said, "Who supplies the flour?"

"Mr. Dollarson, the agent for this reservation."

"Has anyone told Mr. Dollarson about the wormy flour?"

"I do not know. It would change nothing if they did."

Jonathan said no more, but suddenly his heart sang. Teach, Father Harvey had said, and perhaps Mr. Dollarson was the first who needed instruction. As soon as he had finished breakfast, which consisted only of Helen's tortillas and water, he started back to Quartz Flat. There he entered the depot-commissary and looked about.

On both sides of the building were shelves stocked with food and other goods. Four roughly dressed miners, a couple of drifting cowboys, and a uniformed sergeant of cavalry were waiting to buy. A thin, almost bald man who seemed to have colorless eyes was waiting on the trade. That must be Mr. Dollarson, Jonathan decided. There were a number of newspapers scattered on a table from which one leg had been broken, and which was temporarily propped up with an

old singletree. The papers were several days old, but one headline attracted Jonathan's attention.

CROSS FACE STRIKES AGAIN!

Shortly after dawn yesterday, Cross Face and about 80 of his renegade Hawk Apaches swooped down on Fort Belton. Forcing the five herdsmen to seek shelter inside the stockade, the raiders made off with an estimated 300 horses, mules, and cattle. A hastily organized posse overtook the raiders at Skunk Wash, but found themselves hopelessly outnumbered and forced to retreat. All troops that can be spared have been sent to the area. Major Jensen's statement to our reporter was: "This time Cross Face blundered badly. He can't possibly take that stock out of here and we'll get both him and his band. The days of Apache raids are about over."

The item was headed by a pen and ink drawing of Major Jensen, twirling his mustaches and looking fierce. In spite of himself, Jonathan laughed. He knew that even at the height of their powers the Hawk Apaches had seldom had more than a hundred warriors in the field, nor had they needed so many. Now, with most of them on the reservation, it was absurd to suppose that Cross Face had been able to muster eighty to attack Fort Belton.

"You see somethin' funny, 'Pache?" a cold voice asked.

Jonathan turned to see the sergeant of cavalry standing beside him, his mouth a taut line. The sergeant's face, the right cheek of which bore two scars that might very well have been inflicted by an Apache lance or knife, was flushed with anger. Cold fury sparked his pale eyes.

"I said," he repeated, "do you see somethin' funny 'bout that?"

"Why no," Jonathan said appeasingly, "except that Cross Face couldn't have had eighty men."

"Oh! So you know how many he did have?"

"Of course not! How could I?"

Jonathan looked quickly about, but the other men in the room were merely watching indifferently. Their faces reflected no sympathy and certainly they'd offer no help.

The sergeant dug cruel fingers into Jonathan's right shoulder.

"What *do* you know about Cross Face!"

"Nothing! I just came in yesterday!"

"You come from Cross Face?"

"No! I came on the train! Let me go!"

"Tell me!" the sergeant snarled. "Else I'll choke it out of you!"

Jonathan swooped suddenly. His left hand snaked out to grasp the singletree that formed one leg of the table, and the table came tumbling. Almost in the same motion, Jonathan was up again. With all his strength, he hit the sergeant over the head with the singletree. The hold on Jonathan's shoulder relaxed. The sergeant's eyes glazed and he began to stagger backward.

But even before he settled limply on the floor, Jonathan was out the door.

TWO *Cross Face*

Even as he ran, Jonathan realized that his chances of living in Quartz Flat were forever gone; the most superficial investigation would reveal his identity. Any reservation Apache who so much as talked back to a soldier might be given an opportunity to mull things over in jail. But anyone who hit a sergeant of cavalry had better travel fast and far.

Jonathan counted on a little confusion, which would mean a little delay, while the miners, the cowboys, and Mr. Dollarson recovered themselves and grasped exactly what had happened. But there would not be much delay. As was indicated by their sun-scorched faces, their clothing, and their manner, the cowboys and miners were frontiersmen who would think and act quickly. Jonathan would have precious little time.

Even before bursting out the door, Jonathan had decided that he must not run across the desert. At least, not by day. The only hiding places, and they contained little cover, were dry washes. Men who knew what they were doing could find him and run him down in short order. He would take a chance on flight if he could get one of the horses, but two windows overlooked the corral and all the men inside were armed.

As soon as he was through the door, Jonathan ducked low so that he could not be seen from the windows, ran to the rear of the building, and gratefully noted some old tarpaulins bleaching there. They were ragged and frayed, but at that moment no sight more pleasing could have greeted Jonathan's eyes. He ducked beneath the tarpaulins and lay still.

He breathed softly. Despite the stifling heat the sun had generated beneath the canvas, he moved no muscle. Even when he felt a scorpion crawling over his leg, he did not move. He knew from its feel that it was one of the larger scorpions, those that could inflict a painful but not fatal sting. The little, hard-to-see death scorpions, the kind that stung almost before they could be felt, were the ones to dread.

Jonathan was worried by more than the scorpion. Should he be discovered here, and killed, it would be an ignominious death. He had no weapon with which he might at least try to take one of his enemies with him, as befitted an Apache. If he were found out, he could only fight as best he could with his bare hands.

About fifteen seconds after Jonathan crawled under the tarpaulins, the men came out of the building. He could only hear them, but Jonathan knew from the sound of their voices that there was nothing hysterical in their actions. These were desert men, and would be as relentless as a hunting cougar that knows the approximate location of a newborn fawn.

"He's out thar some'eres," one of the miners said. "All we got to do is find his hidey-hole."

Somebody else asked, "You goin' to fetch the sojers, Doll?"

"I'd better," Mr. Dollarson said. "The sergeant needs a doctor, and the more men we have, the better our chances of running that hellion down. All you boys got guns?"

A cowboy drawl answered, "Guess nobody's short."

"Well, if you run across him I certainly hope he doesn't try to escape."

A general laugh went up and another voice spoke. "He prob'ly will. Fact, he's sure to if prodded a mite. It'll save fetchin' him in an' hangin' him here."

There was the sound of a trotting horse, evidently Dollarson's, and it was followed by a short silence. One of the miners broke it.

"Guess I'll ketch me up a horse an' sashay out to flush that varmint."

"We'll go too," others chorused in.

"What about you, Jess?"

"I'm stayin' right here," the cowboy drawl declared. "They's a heap of things I'd as soon do as ride 'round the desert when it's so hot even the lizards are holed up."

A miner asked curiously, "You know whar he is?"

"If I did," the cowboy said irritably, "I'd go fetch him. But he's as likely to be about here as out in the desert."

"Be careful," a voice warned. "All he needed was a lick an' a shake o' time to bump the sarge down."

"I don't aim to hunt him," the cowboy laughed. "Leastwise, I don't aim to 'thout they's at least twenty feet betwixt us an'

Ol' Roarer cocked an' ready. Let the sojers ketch him. That's what they're paid for."

Footsteps went toward the corral. There were sounds of saddling up and the measured beat of horses moving slowly into the desert. The cowboy who did not want to go went back into the building; there sounded the hollow beat of his boots thumping across the floor.

Still Jonathan did not move a muscle in the scorching furnace his hiding place under the tarpaulins had become. He tried to ease the heat and tension by making plans. With all except the injured sergeant and the cowboy gone to hunt him in the desert, he might attempt a break now. But exactly how far into the desert had they gone? Was someone waiting, in the hope that he would show himself? Besides, even though the sergeant was injured and supposedly helpless, the cowboy was still in the building, and he was armed. Added to these factors were a distrust of day and a liking for night that were part of Jonathan's very nature when trouble threatened. He decided to wait.

Because he had made no effort to keep track of passing time, Jonathan did not know how long he had been under the tarpaulins when he heard more horses approaching. His ears told him that there were more than ten horses and fewer than fifteen, and they were accompanied by a wagon.

"Here we are, Lieutenant," Jonathan heard Mr. Dollarson say. "I guess the others saddled up and went after the young devil."

The lieutenant's voice was sharp with reproof. "You didn't leave a wounded soldier alone with a rogue Apache in the vicinity?"

"Why no," the agent floundered. "I'm sure someone stayed. That is, they must have stayed. I'm sure—"

Mr. Dollarson was saved further embarrassing explanations by the cowboy.

"Sojers, by gum! About time, too!"

"Where is Sergeant Grimshaw?" the lieutenant demanded.

"Inside," the cowboy said truculently.

"Get him into the wagon," the lieutenant ordered.

There were sounds of men entering the building, mingled groans and grunts as they lifted the injured sergeant onto a stretcher and placed him in the wagon.

The lieutenant said, "Corporal Hagerty, take two men and escort the ambulance." Then he addressed someone else. "Are you ready, Manuelito?"

"I ready," an Indian voice answered.

Jonathan's heart sank. They had brought Manuelito to track him! Once a renowned warrior and great hunter, Manuelito would still have eyes that had not died with his spirit. An Apache could track a jack rabbit across dry desert. For the first time, Jonathan wished he had not remained hidden. He should have gone when he had only the cowboy and the sergeant to oppose him. Now there were soldiers, many more than he could fight even if he had a rifle, and there would be no escaping Manuelito. The lieutenant spoke again.

"You understand that you will receive five horses, and great honor, when you lead us to this man who struck down a soldier?"

"I know."

"Then find him!"

About to crawl from beneath the tarpaulins and make a run for it, Jonathan delayed when he heard the lieutenant speak again.

"Are you sure he went into the desert?"

"You want another tracker?" Manuelito demanded sulkily.

"Not if you're sure you're right."

"Then we go."

Jonathan felt a flood of gratitude. Beyond any doubt, if Manuelito did not already suspect where Jonathan lay hidden, he

could find him in a matter of minutes. But in spite of surface appearances of a complete loss of manhood, Manuelito still had loyalty to his people. With no risk to himself, he might have gained both wealth and favor by betraying Jonathan. At definite risk, for the soldiers would punish him severely if they even suspected that he was leading them astray, Manuelito had chosen to help another Hawk Apache whose plight was desperate.

Because there was nothing else to do, Jonathan continued to wait in complete silence. After a while he heard the miners and the cowboy who had gone with them return to the corral, turn their horses loose in it, and go back into the building. Finally a chicken clucked its drowsy evening song, a cactus wren in a nearby cholla thicket chirped lazily, and Jonathan knew the sun was going down. Twenty minutes later a blessed coolness made itself felt on the sun-scorched tarpaulins, and for the first time in hours, Jonathan could breathe easily. After another half hour, he peered cautiously out.

The short-lived desert twilight had come and gone and a star-sprinkled night was here. Light from an oil lamp flickered through the building's windows, and somewhere a dog barked menacingly. Jonathan deliberated.

He had no way of knowing how many soldiers had joined the hunt, but some had stayed behind. Manuelito had assured the lieutenant that he would find Jonathan, and no great number of men were needed to capture or kill one unarmed youth. The low-pitched voices of the soldiers who had not joined the hunt, and of the miners and cowboys, drifted through the open windows.

"Ee-ow-w!" suddenly yelped the cowboy who had not gone on the hunt.

Mr. Dollarson's voice said sharply, "Be quiet!"

"Ee-ow-w!" the cowboy yelled again. "All these sojers can't ketch one lil' ol' 'Pache!"

Jonathan crawled out and started quietly away. His destination was the corral, but he stopped first at the well to quench his burning thirst and soak his clothing with water. Cautiously he resumed his journey toward the corral. When a white horse snorted softly at him, Jonathan went into action.

Taking one of the bridles that were looped over the corral posts, he bridled the white horse and held it while he opened the gate. Vaulting bareback onto his nervous mount, he hazed the rest of the horses that had been in the corral through the gate, then worked his own to the center. If anyone started shooting, as might happen very shortly, he wanted to offer the smallest possible target.

There was sudden silence in the building, then a babel of excited voices, and a knot of men burst through the open door. A shot rang out. The horses, already nervous, broke into a mad gallop and Jonathan let them go. There were more shots and more frenzied shouting, but Jonathan paid little attention. As far as he knew he had all the horses, and if he could also have a few minutes' start he was safe. No one on foot could follow him through the night, though of course they'd find his trail in the morning. But tomorrow's problems could be met when they arose.

After two miles, Jonathan let his horses draw gradually to a trot and then to a walk. He grinned cheerfully while his heart resumed a normal beat; at last he understood why his people were such famous horse thieves. There was enough excitement and danger in it to satisfy the most adventurous.

A coyote shrilled in the distance and nearby a desert owl squawked a raucous call to its mate. Other than that there were few sounds, certainly none of pursuit, and Jonathan tried to plan his best course. Where could he go? Certainly he could not return to the reservation. His only hope was to find Cross Face and his renegade band. But where was it? According to the newspaper article, Cross Face had raided Fort Belton and made off with some stock. It stood to reason that anything he had stolen would bear the brand of United States ranchers. If Cross Face tried to sell or trade his plunder, and almost certainly he would, the only logical market lay in Mexico. Jonathan rode south toward the Mexican border.

As a child, moving from place to place with his nomadic people, he had come this way more than once. But six years' absence had made his recollection of landmarks hazy, and he feared to venture near the water holes he knew because the white men would know them too and beyond any doubt pursuit had already started. With morning they would locate his tracks and satisfy themselves that he was headed for the Mexican border. The miracle of the telegraph would shortly inform soldiers along his route. Every water hole would be guarded. Jonathan kept his horses at a slow walk to husband their strength. Tomorrow, he probably would have need of all they could offer.

Heralding the birth of a new day, the stars paled and ragged outlines of the gray mountains became more distinct. Jonathan drove his stolen herd into a canyon with gently sloping walls. As he climbed the other side, the sun rolled like a huge ball of fire across the summits of the eastern mountains. Mounting the crest, Jonathan glanced behind him. For a

moment he sat stupefied, unwilling and unable to believe what his eyes told him was true.

A dozen cavalymen came into the canyon he had just crossed and rode on at a fast trot. Jonathan's head reeled. He had considered himself safe from pursuit for a day or two, but he was safe no longer. The soldiers were undoubtedly a patrol that had come across the tracks of his horses by pure chance, but that would be no help if they caught him with his stolen herd. At any rate, the soldiers were upon him and he must run for it.

Jonathan kicked his mount with both heels and shouted, "He-eee!"

The horses broke into a run, then a gallop. When two of the slower beasts fell behind, Jonathan made no attempt to recover them. Abandoning stolen horses went contrary to his very nature, but more than just escaping with his whole band of horses was at stake now. If the soldiers caught him, his life might well be forfeit. Jonathan kicked his mount again and harder. The herd thundered down the opposite side of the crest from which he had seen the soldiers, climbed the next hill, and Jonathan risked another backward glance.

Just appearing over a rise, the soldiers were closing the gap between them slowly. But they were closing it surely, and Jonathan urged his captured horses along with another shout. Threading their way among a veritable forest of shoulder-high prickly pear and towering saguaro, the herd was now strung out single file. Jonathan took his place at the rear, chivying them along. He'd already lost two horses, but was determined to keep the rest as long as possible.

The Indian who appeared before him did so so suddenly that Jonathan instinctively reined in his mount. The stranger carried a rifle, had a blanket draped over his shoulders, and an axe and knife at his belt. His long black hair was bound by a buckskin thong about his forehead. Privation and hardship had etched lines on his young face, but he differed from the Apaches at Quartz Flat only as a wild hawk differs from a tame one. His dark eyes were alert but friendly.

"You are Jon-A-Tha?"

For a moment Jonathan sat speechless, and then he knew. Perhaps by smoke or fire signals, heliograph, or even usurping the white man's telegraph, Cross Face had constant and almost instantaneous communication with Quartz Flat. That accounted in part for his ability to elude soldiers; he often knew where they were and where they were going. He already knew of this young Hawk Apache who was in such trouble, and had sent help.

"Yes, I am Jonathan," he said.

"I am Pepe. Come on foot, for we go to Cross Face, and your horses are too easy to follow."

Jonathan dismounted. Pepe removed his blanket, waved it, and the already frightened horses stampeded. Calmly, as though there were no enemy within a hundred miles, Pepe draped the blanket back over his shoulders and started into the cactus.

"When we reach Cross Face," he said, "you will be given another horse. We have many."

Jonathan asked, "What will the soldiers do when they overtake these?"

"Ride hard and wildly, for they will think they have you in their grasp. So doing, they will help wipe out any tracks we may leave. It is too bad not to keep the horses, but this way is best."

Jonathan asked a question that had been troubling him. "Will Manuelito be severely punished when the soldiers find he led them astray?"

"Manuelito knows how to take care of himself. He is not as witless as he seems," Pepe added dryly.

Meantime he had been keeping them on the boulder-strewn ground. When the soldiers thundered past a few hundred yards in their rear, Pepe paused to watch. There was a difference in his manner now, a burning hatred that could be sensed, and Jonathan understood. This was the land of the Apache. The whites, and not the Indians, were the invaders and Pepe felt as any brave man who loved his home might feel when that home is invaded. Jonathan hoped his coming would not bring further trouble.

"When the soldiers overtake the horses," he said anxiously, "and find that I have escaped, the scouts will come."

"We are concealing our trail. Even should they come, they will have much trouble."

"I see."

The sun became hot, and Jonathan grew more and more thirsty. Pepe stopped, used his axe to slice the thorns from a fat

barrel cactus, cut the cactus apart, and gave a piece of the juicy pulp to Jonathan and kept one for himself. They sucked the pulp, which was thirst-quenching even if not palatable. With such barrel cactus available, a man might travel the burning desert all day and never suffer from thirst.

With noon, Pepe took a handful of parched corn from a pouch at his belt, and divided it between them. Jonathan nibbled the strength-giving food as he walked, and even though they had come a long way without resting, his heart lifted and his step lightened. In the distance he saw pine-clad mountains, and in his mind he heard the pines murmuring softly as a wind passed through them. In imagination he saw snorting deer, lordly elk, an icy stream, and he felt a new understanding of his people. Not the desert alone and not mountains alone, but both, belonged to the Hawk Apaches. Jonathan felt that he had truly come home.

With night, as they entered the pines, Pepe doled out another handful of corn for each. Jonathan breathed deeply as the cool breeze fanned his cheek, and smiled when a startled deer snorted and leaped away. As they mounted higher, the breeze became colder. Presently Pepe stopped and gave the cry of a barred owl that has strayed from its hunting companion.

Farther up the mountain, the owl's partner answered. Satisfied, Pepe continued to climb. Jonathan followed, and a few minutes later his nose detected wood smoke. Topping a rise, he found himself looking down on Cross Face's band.

They were encamped in a natural bowl near the top of the mountain, where fires built could be seen only from the rim of the depression itself. There was a pond fed by seepage from the surrounding slopes, and a natural meadow in which a large herd of horses and mules grazed. Nine people sat around a fire, and various shadowy shapes indicated other members of the band here and there.

"Is this all?" Jonathan asked Pepe in astonishment.

"This is all."

Pepe told him there were nineteen warriors, of whom eleven had guns. The rest were armed with bows and arrows, lances and knives. There were also three women and five children. Aside from the band's own mounts, there were nearly a hundred horses and mules plundered from Fort Belton. Jonathan remembered the newspaper story that had placed the stolen stock at three hundred and the number of raiders at eighty.

"Come with me. I will take you to Cross Face now," Pepe said.

More than a little awed, Jonathan went forward to meet this renowned warrior who, while leading so few, could strike terror into the hearts of so many. Wearing a captured cavalry uniform and with a blanket draped over that, Cross Face looked like a figure carved from the granite that formed the core of the mountain upon which his band was camped. A scar ran from the left eye to the right cheek and another from the right eye to the left cheek. The cross that had named this man, so Jonathan understood, had been slashed by a cavalryman while Cross Face stood a prisoner in chains. But despite the hardness, the cunning, and the cruelty that were evident in his features, there was a quality of proud and defiant inner strength.

"I have found Jon-A-Than," Pepe said.

Cross Face nodded, the gesture of a warrior leader toward an unproven boy, and Jonathan was led away to find a bed in the pines. The next morning he chose a pony that suited him and, when they broke camp, took his place on the trail drive. There was no excitement and little to do. These animals knew their masters and the scouts who rode out each morning returned each night with the report that there were none to oppose them.

The white soldiers probably knew that Cross Face would try to run the stock plundered from Fort Belton into Mexico, but not even the Army's Apache scouts had guessed that he would take other than one of the short and direct routes. Instead, before even starting south, he had swung a long way to the east. Now, with only his own followers knowing his exact location, he had a clear path to the border.

On the third day they crossed into Mexico. Some hours later it was Pepe himself who came racing in on a lathered pony, shouting from the back of his weary mount.

"They come! Make ready to fight!"

THREE *Closing Circle*

Pepe dismounted, and when he did the pony he had been riding drew a series of sobbing breaths and staggered a few steps, to stand with drooping head and heaving sides.

"How many come?" Cross Face asked as quietly as if he had been expecting the news.

"Ninety or more, all mounted and all armed with guns."

"Bandits?"

"Soldiers."

"Soldiers are bandits," Cross Face said sourly.

"Shall we," Pepe asked, "send the women and children back with our horses and prepare an ambush here?"

Cross Face shook his head. "That is what they expect. Do they come fast?"

"Fast. They have news of us, surely."

Nobody spoke while Cross Face gave himself to serious thought. All the oncoming soldiers could possibly know was that a relatively few Apaches were bringing stolen horses and mules into Mexico. Being Mexican soldiers, their first objective would be to get the herd and their second to kill Apaches if they could do it without suffering casualties. Cross Face squatted, caught up a stick, and drew a rough map of the area in the dirt.

"Where are the soldiers?" he asked Pepe, pointing at the map.

Pepe marked the place where he'd seen the Mexican force. Cross Face studied it gravely, visualizing the whole terrain. Some two miles behind them was a rough broken area between two rocky canyons, forming only a single narrow crossing for a herd as large as this. The Mexican commander would expect the Apaches to lay an ambush and send the women and children back with the herd. The broken area was the logical place for the Mexicans to intercept it. They would try to circle the ambush, kill the women and children, take the horses and mules, and then, if the dismounted warriors could not be hunted down, they could be forced to run and would cause little trouble on foot.

Cross Face indicated the broken area with his stick.

"Let the warriors fall back to this place and prepare an ambush. Let the women and children stay and start the herd running when the Mexicans are near. Let our ambush be ready where our enemies will not expect it."

Several of the warriors nodded their satisfaction and Jonathan's eyes glowed with admiration. Not for small reason was Cross Face a leader of his people and a confounder of others!

"It is a good plan," Pepe said.

"You stay, Pepe," Cross Face ordered, "and help the women with the herd. Should anything go wrong, fire your rifle—try to kill a Mexican if you must shoot—and we shall return. If necessary, turn the herd and stampede it into them."

"I understand."

Cross Face nodded at Jonathan. "You stay too, for you have no weapons which will be useful in a fight."

Before Jonathan could reply, the warriors had whirled and were galloping back in the direction from which they had come. Three big black mules and a roan gelding turned to follow them until one of the women cut them off and drove them back into the herd. Pepe exchanged his spent mount for a fresh one and turned to Jonathan.

"I will ride on ahead. Bring the herd."

Jonathan's tongue was dry in his mouth as they continued into Mexico. But he understood the reason for such a seemingly insane move. The ambush must not look like one, and if they turned back now, it might. Pepe had gone to scout the soldiers' positions and would know exactly when to turn. In a few minutes he appeared, his pony at a canter.

"Turn them here," he ordered, pointing.

Nobody moved with undue speed. With the smooth precision of experts, they merely turned the herd and started it running. There was no enemy in sight.

One of the women, who carried the smallest child across her saddle bow, shouted shrilly.

"He-eee!"

Led by the three big black mules and the roan gelding, and trailed by the exhausted pony Pepe had ridden, the herd broke into a faster run. But there was no suggestion of stampede. Everything was perfectly under control and would remain so unless and until the Apaches must save themselves by driving the loose horses and mules into the Mexican troops. Pepe swerved to lash the lagging pony with a rope, and the weary animal caught up with its herd mates. Jonathan looked behind, half expecting to see the Mexicans in close pursuit, but there was nobody.

Then he saw them, not behind but off to one side.

Led by an officer who rode a superb stallion, wore a rich blue uniform heavily decorated with gold braid, and waved a sabre in his hand, the Mexicans came in at a forty-five degree angle. Just as Cross Face had anticipated, they had circled what they thought was the ambush and were trying to take the herd. Experienced horsemen on good mounts, they were grouped rather than in loose formation and they were coming faster than the herd was running. But just then the driven horses and mules began to run more swiftly and Jonathan realized that the Apaches had deliberately been holding the pace down. The trap was set. The herd, as bait, must not arouse suspicion.

Jonathan felt cold, and though he tried to tell himself that fear had nothing to do with it, he knew that he *was* afraid. However, more than fear was involved. His childhood had been spent with the Hawk Apaches, but for six of his adolescent years he had been under the influence of Father Harvey, who had taught him that he must not kill. But if the Mexicans caught up, as they seemed certain to do, he must kill or be killed, and he had no weapon.

A rifle cracked, and a bullet whistled past. Jonathan sucked in his breath. Something had gone amiss, for the Mexicans were near enough to shoot. Then Pepe reined in his pony and Jonathan felt a quick alarm. Only the women and children went on with the fleeing herd. Jonathan fought down his fear. Pepe, who had saved his life, was obviously in trouble. Regardless of the consequences, he must now go to Pepe's aid. Jonathan looked back to see the Mexicans standing in their saddles as they urged their mounts to give every possible ounce of speed. The Mexican military formation was not as precise as it had been, but their numbers seemed endless.

Then came a burst of firing from another direction, and four saddles emptied. A soldier dropped his sabre and clung desperately to the saddle horn. A horse screamed, reared to paw the air, and fell over backward, bearing its rider with it. There was a moment's lull during which, as though swept by some invisible wind, three more saddles emptied. Jonathan saw the arrows that killed those three men, but never heard the twanging of the bow strings that launched them.

Under Pepe's command, the plan had worked perfectly. Even though Pepe had allowed himself little more than a hair's breadth of margin, the Mexicans had been tricked into concentrating on the herd that seemed almost within their grasp, and on nothing else, when they ran into the ambush.

Trying to rally his men, the Mexican leader on the big stallion made his horse rear, waved his sabre, and shouted orders. The rifles cracked again and two more soldiers fell. Then, rising from behind a boulder and making ready to shoot again, Jonathan saw Cross Face and a white-haired old man who, because all his family and relatives had been slain, professed to have no identity and therefore no name. Both shot at the same time and the officer fell.

As the leaderless soldiers swung about in confusion, Jonathan found himself beside a young and obviously terrified Mexican on a bay horse. Because he didn't know what else to do, Jonathan flung himself from his horse and tried to wrap both arms around the Mexican. He succeeded only in knocking the soldier from his saddle onto the ground, where the young Mexican drew a revolver.

Jonathan sprang on him again. His right hand closed about the other's wrist, and for a moment they strained against each other. The soldier dropped his weapon, and, in plunging for it, Jonathan lost his hold. Snatching up the weapon, he twisted to see the young soldier running, and leveled the revolver. The soldier tripped over his own sword, fumbled with the buckle of the belt that held both sword and cartridges, unbuckled and dropped it, and ran on. Lowering the revolver, Jonathan watched with relief as the young soldier snatched the reins of a riderless horse, mounted, and raced away. Jonathan walked over to retrieve the sword and cartridge belt, and put them on.

The Mexicans were now in headlong retreat. Having already caught some of the riderless horses, the Apaches were rounding up the rest and looting the fallen. Pepe came up beside Jonathan, leading two Mexican horses.

"You now have weapons," he noted approvingly. "It is a good thing to kill an enemy and take what was his."

"Yes," Jonathan agreed uncertainly, unwilling to admit that he had not killed the owner of the weapons. "What now?"

"Go back over the border; these soldiers will rouse others." Pepe looked enviously at the sword. "I have always wanted such a thing. Will you trade for a good knife?"

The sword slapped against Jonathan's knee and gave him a sense of being off balance. A knife would serve him as well, perhaps better. Besides, he both liked and was indebted to Pepe.

"I will trade, but I want the bullets for the revolver."

"Yes. Those you keep."

Jonathan unbuckled the sword, slipped the cartridges from the belt, put them in his pocket, and gave sword and belt to Pepe. He put the sheathed knife Pepe gave him in return on his own belt.

The plunder was now complete. With each man mounting the horse whose rider he had killed, and the rest walking, they started north on the path taken by the women and children. High-spirited because of the enemy's defeat, all except Jonathan and the old man with no name happily discussed the battle. The old man never talked, for one who did not exist could have no voice, and Jonathan remained silent because he was troubled. Regardless of what else they might encounter, it seemed to him that every person here had an ultimate rendezvous with violent death. Wherever they turned, an enemy awaited. The only alternative was to choose what to them would be worse than death and go live in Quartz Flat.

Led by the warrior who had captured the officer's splendid mount, the horsemen raced ahead to advise the women and children of their overwhelming victory. The rest walked, and dusk had fallen when they came to the place chosen for that night's camp. It was a high knoll that commanded a view of all the surrounding country. There was a water hole and plenty of grass for the horses, but no fires had been lighted because they could be seen for a very long way on this black night. Jonathan nibbled parched corn and looked longingly at forested mountains to the north. It seemed to him that he should not only be able to go where he pleased in this high, wild country, but to walk without fear.

Attended by guards, the horses had been turned loose in the grass. They had run far and fast, and were contented enough just to rest and eat. Four pickets had been sent to the four points of the compass, and a motionless sentry stood on the knoll's highest point to await any signal the pickets might send. The rest of the Apaches sought their blankets, but Jonathan, too troubled to sleep, took a walk in the darkness.

He approached the feeding horses, called out to identify himself when he was near, and went on. Go back and teach, Father Harvey had instructed. But why should he even try to teach these rebels that they were wrong when he was convinced they were not? White men took great pride in their love of country and their willingness to defend it with their lives. Was an Apache a rogue or renegade because he stood for the same principles and ideals? Jonathan decided dismally that he could teach his people nothing save the inevitable doom of the Indian. Yet he was unwilling to accept that doom. There must be a way if he could but find it.

The next morning, with two spare horses for each man, Cross Face and five others left the band and rode eastward. Under Pepe's command, the rest drove the remaining horses and mules almost due north. Jonathan drew his mount in beside Pepe's, staring curiously after the departing men.

"Where do they go, Pepe?"

"Hunting. Ranches, villages, army posts, wherever Cross Face chooses."

"You mean they've gone raiding?"

Pepe shrugged, but said nothing.

"Where do we go?"

"Into the mountains where, I hope, we may rest. But for you, every one of us has lived in the saddle for fourteen weeks."

"And yet Cross Face and those with him have gone out again?"

"We need food. Besides, some of us would rather raid than rest."

"How about you?"

Pepe said practically, "Someone must show the way, and I know it."

"If we are going into the mountains, might we not hunt wild game to eat?"

"Since we cannot move about freely, we can no longer depend on game. We need beef."

"We could eat horses."

"You talk like a white man!" Pepe scoffed. "What Apache would think of eating a horse if he could ride it or trade it?"

"Trade? Where can we trade?"

"I don't know now," Pepe admitted. "Once it was easy to take stock like this into Mexico, then bring Mexican stock here. But it is no longer so."

Jonathan fell into a moody silence. Before the white men came, Apaches had lived partly by hunting and partly by raiding other tribes. After the white men brought horses and cattle, the Indians had been quick to steal both in the United States and sell in Mexico, and reverse the process by stealing Mexican stock to sell in the States. But it was plain that even those who never thought beyond tomorrow were realizing that such a state of affairs could not last forever. Jonathan stole a worried sidewise glance at Pepe.

"What will we do if soldiers find us in the mountains?"

"Run or fight."

"If we run, how will Cross Face find us?"

"Should we be driven from one rendezvous, we always have another, and another, and another. We've been chased from as many as five in three days."

"But when you run, do you not leave much of value behind?"

"Yes," Pepe admitted. "We have had to abandon many good horses."

That night they camped in the foothills, and the next morning rode toward country that made Jonathan puzzled. It was rugged, rocky, broken land, some of which rose so steeply that a man on foot might have difficulty climbing it. Jonathan saw no places where horses could even hope to ascend, but Pepe rode confidently on. As far as Jonathan could see, they were headed straight toward a wall that rose so vertically and was so rocky that only brush grew on it. But just when it seemed certain that Pepe intended to try the obviously impossible feat of taking the horses up the wall, he turned and traveled west in its shadow.

Presently there was a break in the wall, a narrow canyon down which rushed a mountain stream. When they came to it the herded horses stopped and snorted their distrust. They tried to swing back, but the Apaches anticipated the move and forestalled it. The unwilling horses were forced into the stream and up the canyon. As soon as the last free horse had gone, the riders entered. The canyon was so narrow that nowhere could more than four horses walk abreast, and in places they had to string out single file. With riders behind them, the herd could not turn.

Jonathan had to fight his trembling mount into the snow-fed stream, and for the first few minutes needed all his horsemanship to keep his mount from whirling into the horse behind. Becoming more accustomed to this strange mode of travel, the pony quieted. Jonathan looked about.

At the beginning, the canyon's precipitous walls were formed of rock ledges, and save for brush and a few clusters of small pines, there was little vegetation. Farther up, the rock ledges became progressively lower and great ponderosa pines appeared. The stream dwindled to a trickle, and they climbed out of the canyon onto a high plateau.

They emerged into a meadow where rich grass grew belly-high to a horse. The loose horses were already crowding hungrily into it. About four miles long by two wide, the meadow was hemmed in on its far side by another belt of pines, above which rose a craggy, snow-covered peak. Just inside the forest on the near side of the meadow was a row of bark-thatched huts, evidently built by Cross Face's band on some previous visit, for most of the riders were straggling toward them. Jonathan was about to follow when he was startled by two closely spaced rifle shots.

He whirled to see that Pepe and the old man with no identity had ridden well out into the meadow. A herd of about twenty-five cattle that had been lying in the grass, hoping to escape detection by so doing, were running like deer. But

two of the herd lay where the Apaches' bullets had dropped them.

Jonathan trotted his pony to Pepe's side and asked, "Are there wild cattle up here?"

Pepe was reloading his rifle. "They are wild now, but were not so when we brought them here."

"You brought them?"

Pepe snorted. "Did you think they'd herded themselves up that canyon? We leave some here, some there, with good grass and water. These the soldiers have not yet found. Do not ask foolish questions, but show that you know how to use your new knife."

Jonathan helped skin and butcher the two cattle, and by the time they'd returned, others had gathered wood and built fires. Along with the rest, Jonathan roasted a chunk of beef which he held over the fire on a green stick, and found it good. Then he explored their camp. He wondered about a great quantity of rawhide thongs he saw in one of the huts, but asked no questions. Sooner or later he would find out for himself why the rawhide was there.

He noted five tethered horses, knew that they were to be used for catching more mounts when needed, and turned his own loose. The pony nickered with pleasure and trotted out to join the feeding herd. As they finished their meal, the other Apaches, who obviously felt safe here since they posted no pickets, curled up in the sun and went to sleep.

Jonathan was too restless to sleep; this camp might be an old story to all the rest but it was new and interesting to him. Revolver and knife at his belt, he started across the meadow, where the feeding horses scarcely bothered to move out of his way.

Jonathan noted that more than just wild cattle had grazed here. Deer and elk sign were plentiful too, and he looked toward the forest. Probably, as was their usual custom, both deer and elk fed largely at night and lay up in the forest by day. Since Pepe was not sure when Cross Face would come, and did not know if he would bring anything when he did, it would be a good thing to get a bull or buck. Jonathan crossed the meadow and entered the forest.

He felt at peace, and was happier than he had been at any time since his return to Quartz Flat. This, and not forever being alert for instant flight or fight, was the way an Apache should live. It was the life that had haunted his dreams when he left Father Harvey to return to his own people.

Suddenly sensing that something was moving near him, he halted in his tracks.

He was aware of danger a split second before he saw or heard anything. It was a deep instinct, a sixth sense that is possessed by all wild creatures and primitive peoples, that warned him. Jonathan drew his revolver and whirled to face the she wolf that was leaping straight toward him.

Silently she had slipped from the hollow trunk of a tree, hoping to strike her enemy before he was aware of her. Flaming eyes bespoke her determination as she aimed at Jonathan's throat.

Jonathan fired, slipping aside immediately afterward. But there was too much heart, too much brute energy in her rush, for the bullet to stop the she wolf in her tracks. Even while dying she swerved with her enemy, and her fangs slashed Jonathan's shoulder. Then she fell dead at his feet.

Shaken, scarcely aware of the blood that ran down his shoulder, for a moment Jonathan stood still. Then he went slowly forward to kneel and peer into the hollow tree.

A single fat wolf cub blinked solemnly at him.

FOUR *Wolf Cub*

The tree was a great oak, an alien among these pines, and the trunk was not hollow because it was rotten but because of abnormal growth. The hollow was roughly circular, about three feet in diameter, and filled with oak leaves that the wind had carried in. The she wolf had arranged these to suit herself, heaping them around the edges and packing them in the center, and she had further padded her bed with fur pulled from her own body.

Panting slightly, the cub sat on his haunches. He was only about twelve weeks old, but because he had been the only one to draw his mother's milk, he was unusually large, and as fat as a bear about to go into hibernation. His baby eyes had an innocent stare, and he was still covered with fuzz rather than fur. A white strip began at either shoulder and curved over his neck to form a semi-oval. One ear was pricked up and the other cocked over. He had not even started to form the lean body of an adult wolf, and he looked oddly like a baby lamb. His eyes were alive with curiosity and his manner was one of eager affability and friendliness.

Jonathan felt a rising sadness. He had not wanted to kill the she wolf and wouldn't have had she not attacked him. Wolves and Apaches had much in common. Both needed space and freedom, and both languished if deprived of either. A wolf or an Apache would fight as hard as possible, in any way he could, when fighting was necessary. But neither chose to fight when cunning would better serve.

"I did not mean to kill your mother, little one," Jonathan said softly, "but had I not, she would have killed me."

The wolf cub stood on all fours, whined, and wagged his tail like a dog. Too young to know much about enemies, he had no fear.

Jonathan glanced briefly at his shoulder, and saw that his shirt was soaked with blood. But it had started to coagulate, and was seeping instead of running freely. There was pain, but nothing unbearable. Obviously the wound was not serious, and Jonathan returned his attention to the cub.

He was again sitting on his haunches, but his wagging tail rustled the leaves that formed part of his bed. His fixed gaze remained on Jonathan, and the young Apache pondered. No human could draw aside the veil that covered the future. Nevertheless, he believed that everything in one's life was foreordained; from birth to death, every event, from the most trivial to the most important, must occur as it would. Though all people were capable of changing their lives, even the changes were already destined to occur. Had it been meant that Jonathan find this cub?

He stretched out an inviting hand, snapped his fingers, and said gently, "Come to me, little one."

The fat cub waddled forward, sniffed at Jonathan's fingers, licked them with a sticky tongue, and continued to wag his tail. Jonathan drew him gently out of the tree and cradled him on his unhurt arm. The cub stretched to sniff at and lick Jonathan's chin, then settled contentedly down.

"Since I have killed your mother, little one," Jonathan promised, "I shall care for you."

He considered the possibilities. Always supposing that it was inclined to adapt itself, a wolf could be no small asset. Of course, it must be of the right temperament. Most young cubs were friendly, but all changed as they matured. Some reverted to the wild as mature instincts asserted themselves, others gave their masters the same loyalty that a dog might. But they were very different from dogs—far more keen and alert as well as wilder—and to chain or cage one meant to break its spirit. Like dogs, their intelligence varied with the individual. But a clever wolf had few equals and no superiors. They were far more powerful than any except the biggest and strongest dogs. A full-grown wolf could kill a big buck and even give a bull elk real trouble.

Jonathan started back toward the meadow, watching the cub in his arms. Baby though the wolf was, he missed nothing. When a bird flitted from a nearby tree, or a breeze set a limb in motion, or a deer slunk from their line of travel, the cub knew. He was aware of the horses in the meadow long before he could see them, and when they finally broke out of the forest, the cub looked long and intently at the distant camp. Then he sighed softly and settled his head on Jonathan's arm.

An inward glow warmed Jonathan's heart, and he felt a rising conviction that at last the pattern of his life was forming. He felt a genuine kinship with the baby wolf and could not rid himself of the idea that his finding it was meant to be. Somehow he felt that, if he had such a friend beside him, he would be more capable of finding a way to teach the Hawk Apaches how to avoid the dilemma of either being hunted renegades or leading an empty, spiritless existence at Quartz Flat.

The cub turned his head, stared steadily toward a rocky pinnacle, and Jonathan saw a familiar figure. It was Pepe, who was honing an edge on his new sword. As Jonathan came nearer, Pepe stopped work and looked up.

"Hallee!" he exclaimed.

The word expressed both concern and astonishment and was inspired by the blood on Jonathan's clothing no more than by the cub he was carrying.

"A fitting name!" Jonathan replied. "He shall be called Hallee!"

"You bleed!" Pepe said. "What happened?"

"The she wolf slashed my shoulder, but I killed her and took her cub."

Pepe put the sword carefully in its sheath and came forward. His usually hard eyes softened and a smile twitched his lips as the cub glanced suspiciously at him and shrank back against Jonathan.

"If he will stay with me," Jonathan said happily, "this young wolf will be a good thing to have!"

"A very good thing," Pepe agreed. "Now let me see your wound."

Jonathan put Hallee on the soft grass, squatted down, and the cub crouched between his knees, looking about the camp. Missing nothing, his inquisitive glance darted from one place to another. His flaring nostrils, seeking scent, caught it and filed it away. The cub examined the fire, the huts, the sleeping Apaches, even Pepe's sword.

Pepe, returning with a gourd of water and a bit of cloth, knelt beside Jonathan and chuckled throatily.

"Hallee wants to know and he is finding out. Now, let us find out about this wound."

"That hurts!" Jonathan exclaimed. "Must you be so rough?"

"Apaches are not supposed to feel pain," Pepe scoffed. "It is only because drying blood has fastened your shirt to the wound. Now—"

Pepe yanked the shirt off and Jonathan winced. Then he relaxed as Pepe applied soothing cold water. Hallee, having identified the camp and everything about it, sprang at a fat grasshopper, pinned it between his paws, and bit at it experimentally.

"He is more agile than a young dog," Jonathan said proudly.

"Most wolf cubs are," Pepe observed. He inspected Jonathan's shoulder. "The she wolf slashed deeply but not dangerously. Still, to be safe, I must hurt you again."

Jonathan grimaced as Pepe thrust the blade of a broken knife into the fire and knelt beside it. When the blade glowed red hot, Pepe grasped the handle again and came to Jonathan's side.

"It will be over quickly," he promised.

"This time I will try to be an Apache!"

Jonathan gritted his teeth as the searing metal sealed his wound and stopped the bleeding. Sweat bathed his whole body, but not again did he cry out. Pepe cast the knife aside and at once applied a soothing compress of cold water.

"I am happy," Jonathan said grimly, "that a she wolf does not slash me every day!"

"You did well," Pepe told him. "Ha! See Hallee!"

A warrior who bore the imposing name of Jose Sixteen Horses had awakened and was sitting up. Retreating between Jonathan's knees, Hallee watched the man closely while a soft growl bubbled from his baby throat.

"I think now that he will stay with you," Pepe said. "He accepts none other."

Jose Sixteen Horses' eyes fastened on Hallee. He rose excitedly and came over.

"A wolf cub! Will you trade him to me? I will give you a horse of your own."

Jonathan shook his head.

"Two horses."

No.

"Three horses."

No.

"Five horses!" Jose said recklessly. "Choose the five from among those that are mine!"

"Not for all sixteen horses."

"I cannot blame you," Jose said sadly. "If he were mine, I would keep him."

"Hallee does not like you," Pepe pointed out. "He likes only Jonathan."

"That I see." Jose looked at Jonathan's shoulder. "Did you kill the she wolf to get that cub?"

"Yes," Jonathan admitted, "but I did not wish to. She attacked me."

"We do not kill wolves unless we must," Pepe observed approvingly. "They are too much like us."

One by one the rest of the warriors awakened, and several of them tried unsuccessfully to bargain for Hallee. Then they fell to trading among themselves, with the most spirited arguments occurring among those who still had no firearms and those who had a surplus. One warrior gave thirteen horses for a rifle and ammunition; another gave eleven. A third, who lacked both horses and other trade goods, received a rifle and ammunition by binding himself to take care of the donor's horses for a year, to bring him a saddled mount when he needed it, to prepare and serve his food, and otherwise to perform all the chores which ordinarily the warrior did for himself.

Jonathan gained a new appreciation of the life these fugitives led. The most precious article they could own, even more valuable than the best of horses, was a good rifle. But any sort of firearm that would shoot was a prize eagerly sought. He was glad that he had his revolver.

The Apache children came running over, and like children the world over when they discover a puppy, exclaimed gleefully over Hallee. Like puppies the world over, Hallee trusted the children even though he had confidence in no adult except Jonathan, and willingly frolicked with them. A child threw a stick, and Hallee raced to pounce on it and worry it with his sharp little teeth.

That night, with Hallee snuggled contentedly beside him, Jonathan slept near the fire. The next morning he went hunting.

He carried Hallee on his arm more to watch the cub's behavior than with any thought that he might help in the hunt. But the trait that had been evident yesterday was even more apparent today. Hallee knew when a mouse scooted in front of them. He was aware of a hawk wheeling overhead, a rabbit leaping away, and even of the insects that buzzed or hopped or flew. Each time something attracted his attention, he indicated its presence by turning his head toward it and flicking his ears forward. When they entered the forest, he wriggled on Jonathan's arm, sat up, and stared absorbedly. Jonathan halted. The wild cattle, that had not again come into the meadow by day, thundered away.

Jonathan paid strict attention to the cub. His own senses were sharp but Hallee's were far keener and by some method of his own the young wolf always knew when anything was near or approaching. The next time the cub wriggled excitedly, Jonathan drew his revolver. Peering cautiously around a tree he saw a young elk, a spike bull, about sixty feet up the slope. Jonathan held perfectly still. A revolver was an unreliable weapon with which to kill an elk and he had no cartridges to waste.

Presently the feeding bull raised its head and, chewing a mouthful of grass, came a few yards farther down the slope. Jonathan raised the revolver, steadied his arm against the tree, aimed at the bull's head, and fired. The bull dropped, kicked wildly for a few seconds, and lay still. Jonathan struggled to slip the revolver back into its holster, for Hallee suddenly went berserk.

He wriggled and twisted, snarling continuously while he raked Jonathan's arm with baby teeth. His eyes were bright with fear and both ears were laid back. Finally getting the revolver in place, Jonathan petted the cub and talked soothingly. Hallee stopped biting and snarling, but his eyes remained bright and his flanks heaved spasmodically. For the first time, he had a wolfish appearance.

In spite of the fact that he must have heard the shot that killed his mother, Jonathan knew that it was the revolver that had terrified him. The first shot had been some distance away, and further muffled by the hollow tree. This one had been near and loud. Jonathan continued to stroke him and talk soothingly until Hallee quieted, then went up to his game.

It was a fat young bull, and the shot that brought it down had struck squarely between the eyes. Hallee gave it a thorough inspection, sat interestedly near while Jonathan dressed his game, and even came over to snuffle the offal. When Jonathan caught him up and started back to camp, Hallee rode contentedly on his arm.

Pepe met them. "I heard a shot. What was it this time?"

"I killed an elk."

"Good! Very good!"

"Will you help me bring it in?"

"Yes."

Jose Sixteen Horses said, "I too shall help."

They mounted three of the tethered horses. Hallee, obviously delighted with this new and novel mode of travel, rode in front of Jonathan's saddle while they went to bring the elk in. Jonathan considered how to go about training him.

Hallee apparently had intelligence of an order rarely found in a dog or even a wolf. Possibly, even though his finding the bull elk might have been sheer coincidence, he could even be trained for hunting. But that was unlikely. Hallee was a cub now, and amenable. When he became an adult he'd want to do his own hunting, and he'd also want to keep any game he caught. But what about training him with other things? A child had thrown a stick, and Hallee had chased it.

Reaching camp, Jonathan unloaded his meat and loosed his pony. Then he sought a secluded place, found a small stick, and threw it. Hallee excitedly raced after it. With patient coaxing, Jonathan got him to bring the stick back. Jonathan threw it again, and again, and each time persuaded Hallee to bring it back. Then Jonathan left the stick on the ground, took the cub under his arm, walked twenty feet, put the cub down, and pointed to the stick. Hallee looked perplexedly at him.

Jonathan sighed and started all over. After the third lesson, Hallee would bring the stick when Jonathan merely pointed. At the end of three days, in spite of the fact that he often made mistakes and had to return for the right object, he would usually bring anything at which Jonathan pointed. Jonathan taught him to stay by putting him down, shaking a finger at him, and carrying the pup back countless times when he followed his master. Then Jonathan put the next step of his plan into effect.

Among the horses was a brown mare, a patient and gentle creature that had long since ceased resenting anything. She was often used to carry the sick or wounded because she was so easy to handle and responded to the slightest touch of the reins. Jonathan bridled her, put the dangling reins in Hallee's mouth, shook at the cub the finger that signaled him to stay, retreated fifty feet, and waved the arm that bade Hallee come. While the complaisant mare followed unprotestingly, Hallee brought her to Jonathan.

Jonathan exulted. Cross Face's band lived by stealing horses and cattle. If Jonathan could teach Hallee to herd both, and to respond to arm signals rather than spoken orders, he would be of inestimable value. A wolf who knew what he was doing and how to do it could run off as many horses or cattle as a man, and far more quietly.

On the eighth day, Jonathan was stretched in the sun with Hallee beside him when the cub rose suddenly. Making no noise, Hallee walked a dozen paces toward the head of the canyon, staring straight ahead. He sat down, tail flat behind him, and continued to look toward the canyon. Jonathan turned to Pepe, dozing beside him.

"He scents something."

Instantly alert, Pepe murmured a quiet order. Warriors snatched up their arms. Three of them mounted tethered ponies and hazed the grazing horses out of sight. When they returned, all took up hidden positions in the forest.

Ten minutes later, led by a big red bull, a herd of hard-driven cattle emerged from the canyon into the meadow. Cross Face followed, but there were only four men with him now. The warrior named Lupito was missing. As they came out of their hiding places in the forest, the encamped Apaches did not speak of Lupito. All knew that whoever went raiding ran unavoidable risks. The captured cattle went out to grass while the riders swerved toward the huts.

Pepe said quietly, "It is good to see you here, Cross Face."

"It is good to be here."

The returned raiders reeled with weariness. They dismounted, and others cared for their horses and turned them loose.

Cross Face turned to Coyotito, a warrior who had not been with him.

"Go watch the canyon. Do not relax."

As Coyotito trotted toward the canyon, Hallee retreated between Jonathan's knees and identified and catalogued each of the returning raiders. He put his trust in none, but tolerated them because his master accepted them. Cross Face paused to look down at him.

"Is the wolf cub yours?" he asked Jonathan.

"I killed its mother," Jonathan explained, "because she would have killed me if I had not."

"A wolf is a good thing to have," was Cross Face's only comment.

Morning light was dim over the meadow when Jonathan was awakened by Hallee's anxious whining. He sat up to see the cub, very alert and shuffling nervous paws as he stared hard toward the canyon's rim. Jonathan reached out to touch Pepe, who came awake at once.

"Something comes," Jonathan warned.

"Watch. I shall awaken Cross Face."

Pepe and Cross Face leading, Hallee padding at Jonathan's heels, they went through the forest to the canyon's rim and found Coyotito dead with an arrow through his throat. A long line of soldiers was wading up the creek. Cross Face turned and spoke softly.

"You have a new name, Jon-A-Tha. This young wolf has been a brother to you and to us. Henceforth let all men know you as Wolf Brother!"

FIVE Forced Retreat

As befitted the terrain, the soldiers were in loose formation, with each man making his way as he thought best. These were no slipshod Mexican conscripts, but tough American cavalrymen. They did not carry their rifles with the awkward self-consciousness of raw recruits, but with ease born of practice. They were obviously veterans who knew how to fight, and they were coming to do so. Cross Face counted forty-three; his band was outnumbered more than two to one, and only part of his warriors had rifles.

Cross Face scowled bitterly. He had driven his stolen cattle through streams and over rocks and hardpan. He had split the herd, had the smaller units driven in various directions, and reassembled at a prearranged point. He had not come directly to this rendezvous in the mountains, but had taken a devious path. But the tracks of so many cattle were difficult to hide, and his band's hiding place had been found out.

He must have been trailed by an expert, probably an Apache scout with the Army, for no one else could have led soldiers here so soon. Cross Face's black eyes narrowed in fury. That also explained Coyotito's death; the scout had known not only that there would be a picket but about where he would be, and had slipped on ahead to kill him silently with bow and arrow. The soldiers were dismounted because horses might make too much noise and alarm the Apaches. Obviously they planned to take Cross Face and his band by surprise. They would have done so, too, if it had not been for the alert cub and his young master, whom Cross Face had gratefully renamed Wolf Brother.

They stole quietly away from the rim and Hallee fell silently in behind them. Cross Face worried. The Mexicans had been lured into an ambush and decisively defeated, but these men were no peons. They were professional soldiers, they outnumbered the Apaches, and even if they could be lured into an ambush, which he doubted, they would never panic as the Mexicans had. He had fought American cavalry before.

Though the three came silently, the rest of the Apaches were alert and ready. Cross Face issued a quiet order, and presently the three women and five children gathered up as many of the rawhide thongs as they could carry and disappeared in the forest. Cross Face looked about, then summoned Jose Sixteen Horses. After a moment, Jose approached Wolf Brother.

"You are to come with me."

"What are we to do?"

"I will show you."

Led by Pepe and Cross Face, the rest of the warriors were running toward the canyon. Wolf Brother wondered why he had been left behind. Those men were going to face bullets. He was not. But orders were orders. Following Jose's example, Wolf Brother helped strip the saddles and unfasten the picket lines from three of the tethered horses, and while the liberated animals wheeled to join the herd, they mounted the other two.

"Drive them," Jose ordered, as though he were speaking of an ordinary stock drive. "Drive them far enough so the soldiers will find them with great difficulty, if at all."

The long-rested horses tossed their heads and raced skittishly off as the riders bore down. But except for a couple of yearlings that raised stiff tails over their backs and loped away, the hard-driven cattle that the raiders had brought in started protestingly. Entering whole-heartedly into the spirit of the thing, Hallee ran behind them, nipping their heels. Urged on by Hallee and the riders, the cattle began to run. Jose waved a blanket and shouted raucously.

"Caa! Caa! Caa!"

Wolf Brother swerved to chivy on a lame cow that was falling behind and Hallee came to help him. They drove the cattle into the forest, where the running horses had already disappeared. There the lame cow stopped and lay down. When Wolf Brother tried to urge her to her feet, Jose reined in beside him.

"Let her alone. If the herd strings out, the soldiers will have to round up each separately. Pick up no more stragglers."

Wolf Brother nodded his understanding. Though he hadn't thought of it before, he realized that it was sensible to drive the fastest animals at top speed and let the slowest drop out where they would. Sooner or later they'd get together again, cattle with cattle and horses with horses. But it would take time, and a bunch of scattered animals would certainly be harder to find than a compact herd. Wolf Brother turned uneasily in his saddle when a burst of rifle fire broke out toward the canyon and another, stronger volley answered. The Apaches had fired first, undoubtedly from ambush, but there was

no indication as to how the battle was going.

The cattle were now scattered over a distance of a mile and a half and some of the horses had dropped out. Hallee licked his fingers while Wolf Brother raced toward the last bunch of about forty horses. Led by Cross Face's stallion and a roan gelding, they were the fastest and best of the herd. They kicked their heels, tossed their heads, and ran on. Finally Jose drew to a halt.

"It is far enough."

"As you say."

Without another glance at the herd, Jose whirled his mount and raced back toward the Apache camp. As he followed, Wolf Brother felt a little closer to understanding these fugitives who, far from having a home, never even had the assurance of undisturbed rest. In the most isolated retreat, they must at any moment be ready to abandon their possessions and fight for their lives. It was the price they paid for rejecting the confining emptiness of life at Quartz Flat.

Near the edge of the forest, Jose stopped, stripped saddle and bridle from his mount, left them where they fell, and indicated that Wolf Brother should follow his example. Wolf Brother did so, but not without uneasiness. It seemed to him that, in freeing all their mounts, the Apaches would be hard-pressed to catch any. They were voluntarily abandoning their only means of moving swiftly from place to place, but there must be a reason for it.

Jose leaped and shouted at their mounts, and the horses wheeled to race away.

Toward the canyon, the battle had subsided to a sporadic exchange of shots. But in the direction of camp, a thick column of smoke rose. Hallee at his heels, Wolf Brother followed Jose into the meadow and saw seven men at the huts, led by Pepe. Working swiftly, but with no trace of panic, they were throwing bridles, saddles, spare blankets and clothing, everything except their personal arms, the remaining rawhide thongs, and such items as they could carry with them, into a blazing fire. Wolf Brother approached Pepe.

"What happened at the canyon?"

"We hit three soldiers, but I cannot tell if they were killed or merely wounded. When our bullets came among them, they hugged the near side of the canyon wall so we could not see them without exposing ourselves. The old man who had no identity did so and now truly ceases to be."

"He was killed?"

"Yes, but it was he who hit one of the soldiers. Burn everything except those rawhide ropes and what you see with them. We want the soldiers to find nothing useful when they arrive."

"The huts too?"

"Yes. The forest is too wet to burn."

Wolf Brother seized a burning brand, touched it to one of the huts, and ran to another. The bark-thatched structures literally exploded into flame, but though fire mounted high enough to scorch the lower branches of the pines beneath which they were built, they burned fiercely for only a short time. Fire crawled into the forest only as far as heat generated by the burning huts dried pine needles and other litter. Finished with the huts, Wolf Brother looked sadly at the charred rubble which had been almost the whole possessions of these fugitives. Pepe thrust several coils of rawhide into his hands.

"Loop them over your shoulders and come with me."

As they left the burned huts, Pepe explained.

"Cross Face and those with him are holding the soldiers. When they are no longer able to do so, they will fall back and take up positions behind us. Then the warriors with me must stop them. Understand? We must hold out until nightfall."

"I understand."

"But you are to have no part in the battle, Wolf Brother."

"But why?" Wolf Brother said indignantly. "I have my pistol—"

"Cross Face so orders!" Pepe snapped. He pointed. "Follow that path and you will come to where the women and children wait. Wait with them. But should you see that the battle goes against us, and we cannot hold until night, you are

to escape even if no one else does."

"I can't do that!" Wolf Brother blurted.

"You must do it. It is an order!"

Wolf Brother said miserably, "All right, Pepe."

Hallee at his heels, he walked disconsolately down the little path to where the women and children awaited on the rim of a sheer cliff. They looked at him, Wolf Brother thought, somewhat contemptuously. But not for long, for the women were busily plaiting a rawhide rope. When it was finished, they hung it over the cliff, and tied the other end to a strong tree.

Feeling useless, Wolf Brother listened to the firing, that sometimes came in bursts and sometimes was scattered, and wished mightily that he were in the battle.

The desert night descended so suddenly that at first he was unaware of it, and knew it only because he realized that there was no more firing. Alerted by Hallee, Wolf Brother waited with knife in one hand and revolver in the other. But it was Pepe who finally came through the darkness.

"It is over for a while," Pepe said in a low voice. "Even soldiers such as these know better than to follow Apaches into the darkness. They will wait until morning, for they think we are trapped. That is what Cross Face wants them to think."

One by one the rest came—most of them. But they finally knew that Jose Sixteen Horses would never again bargain or fight, nor would a warrior known as Tall Man, and Leon the Lame sat with head pillowed on his knees as he fought to draw breath into bullet-punctured lungs.

In the darkness Cross Face tested the rope with his hands, then spoke softly.

"A warrior must descend first."

Wolf Brother said quickly, "I will go."

"You are no warrior," sneered a scornful voice.

"He is," Pepe asserted.

"You say that, Pepe?"

"I say that, and if he takes the wolf cub with him he will be able to discover if any soldiers await us. Hallee knows before we do."

"Well said," Cross Face agreed. "Take the cub, Wolf Brother, and go."

Wolf Brother buttoned the flap of his holster, slid Hallee inside his shirt, grasped the rope with both hands, wrapped his legs around it, and slid over the wall. He knew that, if he were able to look below and see the distance he must descend, he would be frightened. But night and inability to see made a difference. He might be going down ten feet or two hundred.

He slipped, and grasped the rope so tightly that he burned his hand. Then he discovered why the thong had been loosely braided in such a fashion. Should anyone tire on the way down, he might easily slip his hand through the braid and rest without exerting much effort; the thong would hold him. Wolf Brother taught himself the art of descending a wall by holding himself away from it with his feet. Finally his toe brushed shale. He released the thong and looked about.

The night seemed suddenly alive with enemies, and he drew his revolver. But Hallee remained calm, and after a moment Wolf Brother reassured himself that there was no one about. Guiding the smallest child, one of the women descended. Then the other two came, each with a child, and the oldest children followed without aid. The warriors started to come down.

From the darkness above him Wolf Brother heard a rasping sob. The rope quivered. Something thudded limply on the ground, and Wolf Brother realized what had happened. With a bullet through his lungs, Leon the Lame had fallen. One of the women, Leon's sister, gave an anguished little cry but quieted at once. She went to kneel beside her brother while the warriors continued to descend. Pepe came to Wolf Brother's side.

"It was Leon who fell?"

"Yes."

There was heartbreak in Pepe's voice. "He would let no one help him and, had he stayed on top, the soldiers would have killed him." He went to the dead warrior and talked gently to the woman. Then he bent down and groped around in the dim light reflected from the cliff.

"Wolf Brother is the only warrior who lacks a rifle. Give Leon's to him."

"No!" the woman said. "Give him another."

"We have no others to spare. We could not bring those of Jose Sixteen Horses or Tall Man for none know where they fell. Nor could we take any arms from the fallen soldiers for we were too hard-pressed. If you give the rifle to Wolf Brother, he may kill a soldier."

"As may I!" the woman said. "I keep my brother's rifle!"

There sounded a scraping as warriors began to dig a grave with their knives. Twenty minutes later Cross Face came down the rope.

"There are no more of us on top, only the soldiers."

"You found them?" Pepe asked.

"They have gone back to the head of the canyon and built big fires, for they are sure there is no other way out."

"Leon the Lame fell," Pepe told him. "We have buried him."

Not speaking, Cross Face started down the slope. The rest fell in behind, Hallee wriggling in Wolf Brother's arms. The pines whispered, and a roosting bird in one of them cheeped fretfully. They waded the stream where it flowed out of the canyon, mounted a little rise, and looked down on a fire that winked in a meadow.

"The soldiers who stayed behind to guard the horses," Pepe whispered to Wolf Brother. "If they are sure they have us trapped, and if we are lucky, they may be few."

"And if they are many?"

"We must attack anyway, for without horses we are lost, and the only ones we may get are those the soldiers have."

Cross Face turned in the darkness, whispered six names, and the six warriors he summoned went to join him.

"I too!" Pepe hissed angrily.

"You are hurt," Cross Face said shortly. "It shall be as I say."

Wolf Brother stretched forth a hand and felt sticky blood on Pepe's shirt. Pepe shook off his hand and muttered surlily.

As the seven disappeared, Wolf Brother kept an intent gaze on the fire. He knew that the seven were merely scouting, but suppose there were as many, or more, soldiers here as had gone up the canyon? Was any officer with a knowledge of Apaches so confident that he was sure he had them trapped? Would he leave a lightly guarded camp in such a place? Wolf Brother doubted it.

There was a shot that sounded like a snapping fire in the distance, a little lull, and then a series of shots. All were faint; the camp must be much farther away than it seemed. Uncertainty ruled the watchers. Then Pepe, who had been as tense as a mountain lion with quarry in sight, said, "Come! We must see if they need help!"

They raced toward the camp. As they neared it, they saw tents, a great heap of baggage, a long picket line of horses. Mounts were already being saddled by Cross Face and his warriors.

"The woman started it," Cross Face muttered angrily. "We might have failed."

"What woman?" Pepe asked.

"Leon's sister. Unknown to us, she followed. You should have watched her more closely."

Pepe said contritely, "I am sorry."

"She fought fiercely," Cross Face admitted grudgingly. "Of ten soldiers that were here, she killed four."

"Where is she?"

"Gone to join Leon. Choose a rifle, Wolf Brother, for here are many."

Wolf Brother caught up a rifle, joined Pepe in breaking open an ammunition case, and filled his pockets with cartridges. Somebody put a torch to the tents, and by its light the woman's body was lifted up and tied on a horse. The ten soldiers were left where they had fallen, a grim reminder to their commanding officer that the trapped Apaches had escaped. Wolf Brother snatched up an army coat, stuffed food into an empty saddle bag, and went to saddle one of the horses.

"Come with me, Wolf Brother," Pepe told him, "for we ride together."

"Aren't all of us going?"

"Yes. But except for you and me, and we pair off only because you do not know the trail, we will all take different ways. Thus there will be many trails to confuse the soldiers."

"Where will we meet?"

"It is called Cutulla Springs. Come now."

Wolf Brother mounted his horse, balanced Hallee in front of him, and set off with Pepe. Besides the horses they rode they drove four more, as extra mounts. Dawn was faint in the sky when Pepe led them into a brushy canyon where a seepage of water provided a welcome drink for man and horse and supported enough grass to give the horses food. With night they went on, and on the fourth day rode their weary horses into Cutulla Springs.

All about was desert waste where serpentine ocotillo cactus waved thorny arms and stately saguaro grew in grotesque shapes. But Cutulla Springs, a ten-by-twenty-foot pool in which tiny fish swam, supplied enough water to support a few giant cottonwoods and an extensive patch of green grass that contrasted sharply with the desert's somber hues.

Nobody else had arrived, but two hours later, riding one horse and driving three, a warrior named Half Hand arrived. More and more came until there were eleven men and forty-one horses. They lazed in the shade of the cottonwoods, hunted wild cattle that the Apaches themselves had formerly brought here as tame ones, waylaid desert deer that came to drink from the springs, and talked of everything except that which was uppermost in their minds.

Cross Face had not arrived, and with each additional day of his absence, the phantom of fear weighed a little more heavily on those who had. Cross Face was their Messiah, the only leader they had, and without him they were nothing. On the thirteenth day, driving eleven horses, Cross Face came in.

"We are all here," he announced wearily.

Pepe asked, "All?"

"The soldiers caught some. The women and children are at Quartz Flat. I myself took them, at night."

Pepe asked, "Won't the agent know who they are and where they came from?"

"The agent's a fool," Cross Face said contemptuously. "He pays no heed to the comings and goings of women and children. But he has found out and imprisoned Manuelito. That is why we did not know that the soldiers were coming when they caught us in the mountains."

There was something about Cross Face that Wolf Brother had never seen before. For the first time he saw the leader of the renegades not as a demi-god, but as a tired, aging man who faced an insurmountable problem, knew it, and worried greatly. In taking the women and children to Quartz Flat, he had not only acknowledged his inability to care for them any longer, but admitted his awareness of the only fate that could be in store for him and those who followed him.

SIX Trapped

Rifle in hand and a wreath of scrubby cedar boughs around his head, Wolf Brother crawled toward a cedar that grew on the near side of a lichen-encrusted boulder. The boulder, in turn, rested on the very edge of a steep-walled butte whose summit was about six hundred feet long by four hundred wide. On the top of the butte there were a few more discouraged cedars, a scattering of brush, and many boulders and heaps of boulders. Nothing more.

The only permanent inhabitants of the butte were mice that built nests in the deep recesses among the boulders, and jerky-tailed chipmunks that darted from crack to crack, but they were not as numerous as they had been. The Apaches had caught and eaten as many as they could and had even started to scrape away the lichens on the boulders and eat them too. The boulder toward which Wolf Brother was crawling had not yet been scraped because it was on the very edge. An incautious move near it might be the last, for it was within easy rifle shot of soldiers at the foot of the only path leading to the summit.

Coming beside the cedar, Wolf Brother inched erect. As soon as the cedar boughs on his head protruded above the boulder's rim, he stopped and held perfectly still. The wreath of boughs, he hoped, blended well with the tree. But it had not been there before and anything strange on this butte now was very likely to be tested with a bullet. Drawing no fire, Wolf Brother raised himself far enough to see.

He looked out upon a great expanse of broken country whose chief feature was a whole series of buttes similar to the one upon which he lay. His eyes sought the soldier who, on the butte directly opposite, sprawled in such shade as he could find.

Wolf Brother sighed. Doubtless it was not the same soldier. But it looked like the same one who had been sprawled there, in much the same position, for the past nine days. Every night, as soon as darkness made it safe to move, four soldiers came to the foot of the little path and stayed there all night. The soldier on the neighboring butte by day and the soldiers at the foot of the trail by night guarded the only possible exit from Wolf Brother's butte.

There was no use in shooting at the soldier. Every one of the nine trapped Apaches—all that remained of Cross Face's band—had tried not once but several times. Though the first bullets had made the soldier scurry, the last ones were still so far off that he scorned even to move. The soldier had, in fact, within four feet of his post, painted a target to taunt the Apaches. Nor could the soldier be rushed and overwhelmed. Just behind the butte on which he was stationed, ready to fight at a second's notice, were never fewer than thirty of his companions.

For the hundredth time Wolf Brother tried to think of a way out of this trap, and for the hundredth time convinced himself that there was none.

It had happened the day after they left one of their camps, and there had been many since the fight on the mesa, for they dared not stay in one place too long. They'd had a cooking fire every day and, for warmth, a camp fire every night, and though they'd always used dry wood that sent up little smoke, there was always the chance that some passer-by would smell it. Or some rider's horse would smell their horses and then, if the rider was faster than the Apaches, the news would be out and the cry would be up. They'd started through this waste land and, in rounding the very butte upon which they were now trapped, had run directly into soldiers rounding it from the other side. Due to freakish wind currents, not even Hallee had known they were there until they appeared.

Reacting first and fastest, the Apaches had stampeded their driven horses into the soldiers, sent their saddle mounts after them, and climbed the butte. Now there was an impasse for, though the soldiers could not get up, neither could the Apaches get down. But every advantage lay with the soldiers. With ample food and water, and an indefinite supply available should they exhaust their present resources, they could maintain their position as long as necessary. The only food left on the butte was lichens and the fast-dwindling supply of mice and chipmunks. The only water lay in whatever gathered after rainfalls in pockets among the boulders.

Wolf Brother edged away and glanced briefly at Half Hand, whose turn it was to guard the upper end of the little path. But with the Apaches trapped, the soldiers did not have to come up and there was small likelihood that they would. Half Hand was nearly asleep.

Lying in the shade of a boulder, Hallee followed Wolf Brother with his eyes. Like the Apaches, Hallee had had little to eat and now, if ever, he might be expected to turn wild and leave. But he had not.

Sharing the boulder's shade with Hallee, Pepe sat up as Wolf Brother approached. Like the other Apaches, he spent most

of his time doing his best to hide what he felt.

"Is the soldier still there?" he asked.

"Still there," Wolf Brother said.

Pepe said, "I hope he is sitting on a cactus, for watching that would provide much joy. I go to see."

Pepe moved off to look at the soldier and Wolf Brother looked sadly at his friend. Then a shadow fell over him and Cross Face was there.

The leader of the renegade Apaches had spoken little the past few days, and only when it was necessary to issue orders. He was gaunt, and even he could not hide the worry that gnawed at him and showed through his sunken eyes. He had kept himself aloof from the rest, but now there was something in his manner that made Wolf Brother think a decision had been made.

"I would speak with you, Wolf Brother," Cross Face said formally.

"I listen, Chief of the Hawk Apaches."

Cross Face sat down and was silent for a moment. Then he asked, "Will you answer a question with a straight tongue?"

"Why—of course."

"If you had never had trouble by hitting the soldier, would you have come to join me?"

Wolf Brother was bewildered. He had promised an honest answer, but the question was one to which he had given no thought and to which he had no ready reply.

"I have never even thought about it," he said after a moment, "and that is an honest answer."

"Then I can tell you that you would not have joined me," Cross Face said. "You know that my way of life is not the right way."

"What would I have done?" Wolf Brother asked doubtfully.

"You would have tried to find a trail that would lead your people from the lost places where they dwell to the good places where they may again know life. Though you are young, you would teach and guide them."

Wolf Brother turned astonished eyes on the old renegade. Go back and teach, Father Harvey had said, and now Cross Face was saying the same.

"What should I teach them?" Wolf Brother asked.

"If I knew," Cross Face said sadly, "I would have taught them myself. But all I knew was that not all of us could submit to the white man like a herd of cattle. Hope had to live in Apache hearts, for without hope there is no life. As long as our people could point to some who refused to be herded and chose to fight instead, they could hope that some day they themselves might do the same. But I knew the end had come when I took the women and children back to Quartz Flat."

"And what is the end?"

With a gesture, Cross Face indicated the barren top of the butte. "This."

"You think, then, that there is no escape?"

"If we escape from this butte, it is still the end. But we will escape this time, for we must get you safely away from the soldiers."

Wolf Brother was startled. "Why me?"

"Because the future of the Hawk Apaches rests with you," Cross Face said quietly. "It will be a long and hard battle even though it will not be fought with guns. There will be little glory for you, but you must still do it."

"Do what?"

"I have already told you that I do not know, and I see now that you do not. But some day that knowledge will be yours. You must be the next leader of our people. That is why, though I do not question your courage, I have kept you away from what danger I could."

"That is why you would let me have no part in the fight on the mesa!" Wolf Brother exclaimed.

"That is why," Cross Face agreed. "Meanwhile, always hold your head high and walk and speak proudly. You must find a new way, for the old one is forever gone and will never come again. I know also that someone must point out that way to our people. If they trust him, they will follow the one who can show them the right path."

"That is you, Cross Face."

"No!" Cross Face said emphatically. "It is not I! Nor, had you done what I have done and seen what I have seen, would it be you! Reason tells me that not all white people are bad any more than all Apaches are good. But because of what some white people have done, my heart tells me to hate all of them and my heart overcomes reason. At first I killed our enemies reluctantly. Now I do it gladly, and look forward to when I may kill more. I cannot change. If I knew what to do for the Hawk Apaches, and did it, and a white man interfered, I would do my best to kill him. Thus I would bring our people more trouble than peace. But you, Wolf Brother, have not yet learned hatred. I say again that I do not doubt your courage, for many times you have proven both that and your wisdom. Because you do not have hatred, and are courageous and wise, you must take upon yourself the burdens that Cross Face can carry no longer."

"You think in such a fashion and still consider yourself lost?"

Cross Face said calmly, "No. It is because I understand myself that I know I am lost. I cannot and never will think of white men without bitterness, and that is very foolish because they are too powerful. We cannot fight them any more than we can level the mountains. Wolf Brother, give me your sacred promise. Promise me that you will dedicate your life to the Hawk Apaches."

"I cannot, Cross Face." Wolf Brother nodded toward the soldiers' encampment. "Who can promise even to live?"

"That is true," Cross Face conceded. "But if you do live, will you always bear yourself proudly and always do what you may for our people? Will you consider them above yourself or above any of us here?"

"That I promise."

"It is well said. At the right time we will try to escape, you above all. But first let the soldiers think we are starving and unable to fight. Then the attempt shall be made, not at night when they will be expecting us, but in daylight when they will not. I shall know the time."

Pepe, still beside the boulder, turned and beckoned. Cross Face and Wolf Brother crawled up beside him and saw two soldiers on the neighboring butte now. One raised a bull-like voice.

"We want a parley!"

"What says he?" Cross Face demanded.

"They wish to talk."

"They may," Cross Face agreed, "if they send just one man."

Wolf Brother shouted back Cross Face's answer. There was some hesitation and the soldier called again, "You promise to send him back safely?"

Wolf Brother translated for Cross Face, and when the leader nodded, Wolf Brother shouted assurance of safety. The concealed Apaches stared in wonder as a white soldier started across the open space between the two buttes.

In his early twenties, he carried himself with a military bearing that dignified his lieutenant's uniform. He bore no arms, not even a sword, and walked with a confident assurance that brought admiring murmurs from some of the Apaches. For all he knew, this man was going to his death. But he was doing it bravely.

He came within range and Half Hand cocked and leveled his rifle.

"No!" Cross Face snapped. "He has been promised Apache safety!"

Grumbling, Half Hand lowered his rifle and the young officer continued to advance. Suspicious of this advancing stranger, Hallee slipped away to hide behind a boulder. The nine Apaches assembled near the head of the path, and presently the young officer faced them.

His cheeks were pink and plump, and his sandy mustache scarcely more than downy fuzz. But his manner was that of a man. His jaw was firm and there was no fear in his bearing or in his eyes. He spoke slowly and clearly.

"I am Lieutenant Allison and I command this detachment. Who is your chief?"

"Cross Face," Wolf Brother answered.

"Cross Face!" Lieutenant Allison's military assurance gave way to astonishment. "You are Cross Face's band?"

"We are."

"But—! These are all of you?"

"These are all."

Lieutenant Allison recovered himself and turned to Cross Face.

"I come to offer peace."

Wolf Brother translated and gave Cross Face's reply. "Peace on what terms?"

"You will have to stand trial, but the verdict is certain to be more lenient if you surrender voluntarily. In addition, as ranking United States Army officer present here, I myself shall testify in your behalf and ask for clemency."

Wolf Brother translated to Cross Face, and as he heard the reply, a warm glow of pride flowed through him. A weary old man, hopelessly trapped, and with no prospect of anything save more hardship, Cross Face still spoke as befitted a chief of the Hawk Apaches. Wolf Brother turned to Lieutenant Allison.

"Take your men away and we promise not to hurt them, or make war upon them, now or in the future. We shall go to Mexico and fight Mexicans."

"You what?" the amazed Lieutenant asked.

"Those are Cross Face's terms."

"But they're incredible!"

Wolf Brother turned to Cross Face, talked, and swung back to Lieutenant Allison when the chief shook his head.

"Those are Cross Face's terms."

"Very well, sir." Lieutenant Allison snapped to attention and saluted briskly. "My terms stand. When you are ready to accept them, you have only to declare yourselves and come down unarmed. Your position here is hopeless."

He wheeled and started back down the little path. The Apaches watched silently. Though any one of them might have put a bullet between his shoulders, none raised a rifle. Great courage was always to be esteemed.

And the Apaches knew now that they had no monopoly on it.

Lichens had been scraped from all the boulders, all the mice and chipmunks had been trapped and eaten, and the sun was rising on the twenty-first day of siege, when the Apaches started down the little path. Stripped almost naked so their brown skins would better blend with the copper-colored butte, they carried only their knives and rifles. Cross Face led, then Pepe, then Half Hand, while Wolf Brother and Hallee brought up the rear.

They reached the bottom of the little path undetected, and moved quietly along in the shade of the butte. Looking like parts of the earth, they flitted from boulder to mesquite bush and from there to another boulder.

Then it happened.

It was the first morning in two weeks that Lieutenant Allison had decided to give his troops dawn cavalry drill. They swept around the butte, in close order, fully armed. Unable to bear such a strain, Hallee fled and by so doing drew attention to the fugitives.

The Apaches dropped behind whatever cover was available, but there was little of it. When the cavalry-men's volley came, Pepe slumped limply across the red boulder from behind which he had been about to shoot, and Half Hand gave a heart-broken cry.

"Ah-h!"

Wolf Brother looked, and saw Cross Face on the ground with blood running out of his black hair and down his face. Wolf Brother stared, unable to believe his eyes. Cross Face was dead. Then the cavalry was upon them, and Lieutenant Allison was kneeling beside Cross Face. The Apaches stood stony faced, watching him. The young officer rose.

"Just creased. He'll live and I'm glad of it," said Allison thankfully. His eyes moved from the recumbent Cross Face to his gaunt Apache followers. "It was not pleasant to imagine what must be happening to you fellows." He issued crisp orders. "Sergeant Hathaway, precede us to camp and see that food is made ready at once. Dugan and McCullum, get a stretcher and bring the wounded man."

As he stumbled with the rest toward the army camp, Wolf Brother could think only that he had seen the last of Hallee. The young wolf was the only one of the whole renegade band who would continue to live wild.

SEVEN *Betrayal*

The cell at Fort Larned into which all eight Apache prisoners had been crowded was less comfortable than the unused mule stable adjoining it, and smelled worse.

The walls were adobe brick; the roof, eight inches of sun-baked mud supported on cottonwood poles. The inside dimensions were nine by nine feet by sixteen feet high, which gave it resemblance to a tower. Of the two explanations for its height, the more credible was that soldiers had been ordered to build the walls higher and higher because the then-commanding officer was a firm believer in the theory that Satan finds work for idle hands.

The second report attributed the height of the cell to the fear that some agile prisoner would escape through the window. If that were true, whoever had been responsible for constructing the one-room prison was a cautious man indeed. The single window was about ten feet from the floor, and even if it had not borne a latticework of iron bars, it was so narrow that even the leanest prisoner—always supposing he'd been able to reach the window and remove the bars—could not have wriggled through. Over the years spiders had crossed and criss-crossed the bars with their webs, and dust, gathering on the webs, formed a screen which even at midday permitted only dim light to enter.

The floor was carpeted with straw so old that it had broken into short, brittle lengths that were packed in some places, loose in others, and emitted a musty odor. Even mice, indefatigable foragers that can find food if there is any, had long ago gleaned the last bit of grain and forsaken the place. But the straw remained a lair for countless bugs, beetles, and cockroaches. There was a shaky wooden table just big enough to hold a pail for drinking water. Built of rugged timbers and reinforced with iron bars, the door was supported on massive hinges, secured with a heavy lock, and had a center panel that could be opened for the passage of food and water and such refuse as the Apache prisoners wished to dispose of.

Built many years ago as a guard house, the cell had long been condemned as unfit for disciplining soldiers. But it was here that the Apaches wondered and brooded about their fate. There were two compensating factors, however. Because of its massive construction, the cell was never unbearably hot and the food, the same rations the soldiers ate, was both plentiful and reasonably palatable.

Aside from asking Wolf Brother what he knew of the white man's brand of justice, and being assured that he knew almost nothing, the bullet-creased Cross Face had lapsed into a moody silence. The rest said little for there was little to say; according to the straws Wolf Brother was thrusting into a crack between the bricks, this marked the seventh day of imprisonment. They all spent most of their time staring into the semi-gloom and pondering the reasons for the continuance of this state of affairs.

When first captured by Lieutenant Allison they had been treated, if not with cordiality, at least with respect. They had been denied nothing, including an alert guard twenty-four hours a day. Then, when they arrived at Fort Larned they had been clapped summarily into this dungeon. Wolf Brother wondered if white men did this to all prisoners of war, and suspected they didn't. They were here because they were Indians. With better facilities available, no white man, he thought, would ever be confined in such a place.

Dimly through the thick walls Wolf Brother heard footsteps and glanced disinterestedly at the door. Besides each other, the only people they'd seen since they entered the cell was the mess detail who handed their food and water through the panel and took their refuse out. But more than a few men came now, and Wolf Brother's interest mounted.

A key clicked in the massive lock, the door groaned on unoiled hinges, and Wolf Brother blinked in the dazzling sunlight that flooded the cell. Then his eyes became adjusted and he looked out to see a squad of soldiers standing at attention.

A little behind them was the cold-eyed, mustache-twirling commandant, Major Jensen, whose uniform indicated that he was now a colonel. Attending him was another officer and Sergeant Grimshaw, the non-com whose skull Wolf Brother had so effectively dented with a singletree when he made his escape from Quartz Flat. Near the officers stood a fussy, irritable little man who was mounting a big camera on a wooden tripod. The photographer was accompanied by a deferential young reporter.

"Ten days!" the photographer shrilled. "Ten days to get here so the *Bulletin's* readers can see what this lousy Indian looks like!"

"I regret that you were inconvenienced," Colonel Jensen said.

"Inconvenienced! Ha! That so-called train broke down eight times in one day! Then, after we transferred to the stage, that broke an axle and there went another day!"

"Travel does present hazards," Colonel Jensen agreed.

"Such hazards I can do without!" He swung belligerently on the younger man. "You get your story?"

The reporter said apologetically, "Not quite all."

"Well! What's holdin' y'up?"

The young man smiled to cover his embarrassment and turned to Colonel Jensen. "Now, sir, how long had you trailed these Apaches?"

"Twenty-three days," Colonel Jensen said without flinching. "We found their trail at a wagon train where they'd killed two men and stolen cattle, and simply stuck to it."

"Did you know it was Cross Face?"

"Of course; Cross Face's mark is unmistakable."

"Were you leading the soldiers at the time?"

"Well ..." Colonel Jensen hesitated. "Let us say that I was superior officer. But had it not been for Lieutenant Allison—by the way, he deserves special mention—Sergeant Hathaway, and Corporal Stark, the capture would have been immeasurably more difficult."

"Not to mention a few odd and not at all necessary privates and such!" the little photographer jeered. "That right, Captain—Oh! Par'n me! Colonel Jensen?"

Colonel Jensen tried to wither the little photographer with a look, but that hard-bitten taker of pictures was immune. The young reporter flushed and hurriedly continued his interview.

"And when you finally overtook the renegades?"

"They were in superior numbers, but—"

"May I ask their numerical superiority?"

"Approximately three to one. They were about a hundred to our thirty-two."

"Did they charge you?"

"They laid several ambushes first, but we drove them out of each. You may, young man, assure the readers whose taxes support this Army that we stand firm against all odds at all times. Finally the Apaches charged."

"And you captured all survivors?"

"All, of whom Cross Face was one. I regret the numerous Apache casualties, but we had no alternative."

"And your own casualties?"

"Private Doerflinger suffered a shoulder wound."

Wolf Brother listened with contempt to this man who not only claimed honors for a battle in which he had never participated, but who exaggerated the account beyond all reason. But because he had met Lieutenant Allison, he knew that not all Army officers were of the same stripe. This man just happened to love glory.

"Now you got your story," the little photographer said plaintively, "fetch 'em out an' lemme get my pictures! Then we can beat it and leave the West to heroes like you!"

"Bring out the prisoners," Colonel Jensen ordered.

A soldier beckoned, and the eight Apaches emerged from their cell into blinding sunshine. Because Sergeant Grimshaw was present, Wolf Brother prepared for the worst. But though Grimshaw's face was thunderous and his eyes filled with hatred for all Apaches, there was no flicker of recognition. Wolf Brother decided that it was partly because he himself had changed; a boy had run away from Quartz Flat but a man had returned. Also, it was partly because all the Apaches were dressed somewhat alike and probably looked alike to the white men's untrained eyes.

The little photographer draped the black hood over his head and shoulders, squinted through the finder, and called, "All right, Chief Dirty Ears, make like an Apache."

"What says he?" Cross Face asked Wolf Brother.

"He trembles in the presence of a warrior so mighty," Wolf Brother translated shamelessly. "He would capture your image in his black box so that his people might know the likeness of Cross Face."

"And it is in his power to capture my image?"

"It is. I have seen some of these images."

Cross Face shook his head in disbelief. "The white man truly has marvels of which I know nothing."

He drew himself up and stared haughtily at the camera. Following their chief's example, the rest did likewise. A few minutes later the little photographer stood up and wiped his sweating face.

"Thanks, boys," he said amiably. "Now you can go back and play with your marbles."

A soldier beckoned the Apaches back into their cell, but before the door closed, Wolf Brother heard Colonel Jensen say, "If you need more pictures of myself and staff, we shall hold ourselves available."

"No thanks," the little photographer replied. "I already got two, and that's plenty. Just get us a wagon, horse, mule, goat, or anything else that goes away from here!"

Two days later they were taken from their cell again. Under guard, they sat in the sun all day while an artist sketched them.

Six days after the artist departed, they were taken out for trial.

Soldiers escorted them to a building normally used for storing surplus harness and saddlery. It had been chosen as a courtroom because it had only one window, which lessened the likelihood of any attempt at escape. The stored articles had been transferred elsewhere, and a desk and chairs moved in for the military. There was a backless wooden bench for the Apaches. A guard with a bayoneted rifle stood at attention in front of the window, another beside the door.

Standing unobtrusively near the back of the room was a young civilian, the only one present, who was notable both for his height and his gentle brown eyes.

The presiding officer, stone-faced Colonel Jensen, sat behind the desk. He was flanked by two other members of the court martial, a captain and a major whom Wolf Brother had never seen. There was a respectful middle-aged clerk to record the proceedings, and an Apache scout to act as interpreter. The prisoners' counsel, Lieutenant Allison, was reading a document spread before him.

The escort halted, its corporal motioned toward the bench, and the prisoners seated themselves. The squad of soldiers moved into position behind the bench.

Wolf Brother looked around, and saw a newspaper prominently displayed on one wall. Two-inch headlines declared that the following was *COLONEL JENSEN'S OWN STORY*. The sub-heading was entitled *ARMY OVERCOMES TREMENDOUS ODDS*, and the lead paragraph, set in large type, read: "The recent conquest of Cross Face and his followers, last renegade Apaches to roam the Southwest, is an epic that will forever inspire patriotic Americans and lift their hearts. Personally led by Colonel Marcus Jensen, only thirty-two American soldiers accepted the challenge flung at them by more than one hundred Apaches and did their part so heroically that there were only eight of the outlaws left to take prisoner. One American soldier, Private Harry Doerflinger, was wounded ..."

Wolf Brother laughed inwardly. This was the story as Jensen had told it, with a few embellishments by the young reporter that did nothing to detract from Jensen's glory and the Army's heroism. There was a picture of the eight Apaches that the sarcastic photographer had taken. When Wolf Brother drew their attention to it, Cross Face and the others were fascinated and a little terrified by the magic involved in transferring their likenesses to paper. Such a miracle was beyond their comprehension.

The court entered formal session and the clerk, in a monotonous drone that might have put everyone to sleep were it not for the portent of what he was reading, began to present the charges. They started with the first raid of which Cross Face was suspected.

"January 18, 1884, an attack upon the Cuthbert ranch. Josiah Cuthbert killed and eight horses stolen. January 24, 1884, an

attack upon the town of Four Crossings. Two men wounded and forty-one horses stolen. February 16, 1884, an attack ..."

The clerk droned on, turned to the next sheet and to the next until he had run through the imposing sheaf of papers in his hand. Wolf Brother listened in amazement. He did not know much of what had taken place before he joined Cross Face, but he was definite as to what had occurred afterward. The renegades had been as much as a hundred miles away from more than half the crimes attributed to them, and he knew nothing about many of the rest. The clerk needed fifteen minutes just to read the charges. When he had finished, the Apache scout condensed the whole recital into a single sentence.

"You are charged with many killings and woundings of people and many thefts of cattle and horses. Do you understand?"

Cross Face looked with utter loathing at this Apache who had given his allegiance to white men.

"We hear."

He added an epithet that made the scout's eyes blaze. The interpreter restrained himself and turned to Colonel Jensen.

"They know."

"Tell them," Colonel Jensen said, "that under Article 4, Section 8, of the treaty made with the Hawk Apaches, it was stipulated that any who left the reservation granted them at Quartz Flat, unless they had official permission, might be exiled. Any who made war on the white man might, at the discretion of the military commander in charge, be exiled or shot."

The scout interpreted and turned again to Colonel Jensen. "They know."

"Ask them how they plead. Guilty or not—"

"Just a moment, sir!" Lieutenant Allison broke in. "I object to a plea of guilty on any evidence so far presented!"

"Very well, Lieutenant," Colonel Jensen agreed. "We are here to administer justice. How do you wish to proceed?"

"If I may, I wish to question some of the individual charges."

"You may do so."

Lieutenant Allison held out his hand for the sheaf of papers upon which the charges were written and chose one at random. He turned to the interpreter.

"Ask them if they raided the town of Four Crossings on the 24th of January, 1884."

The scout relayed the question and Cross Face answered stonily, "No."

Lieutenant Allison chose another incident. "Ask them if, on the 11th of April, 1885, they attacked a wagon train at Sweet Water Springs and killed four men and stole seventy cattle."

"No!" Cross Face answered the interpreter.

"One moment please," Colonel Jensen interrupted. "Ask this man if he is Cross Face."

The scout put the question and Cross Face answered, "Yes."

"And these are his followers?"

"Not that one." Cross Face pointed contemptuously at Wolf Brother. "We found him wandering in the desert, and gave him a choice between dying and accompanying us."

Half Hand, who did not know that Cross Face had given his mantle of leadership to Wolf Brother, but who was quick to sense something out of the ordinary, echoed, "He speaks the truth."

"They speak no truth!" the Apache interpreter shouted. "I took part in the battle on Dark Mesa and I saw that one—" he pointed at Wolf Brother "—and shot at him. He was accompanied by a gray wolf cub!"

"Sir," the sergeant of the guard detail said, "Private Maloney requests permission to speak."

"Permission granted."

"I was in the fight on Dark Mesa too," Private Maloney said vehemently, "and I saw the same 'Pache. He wasn't shootin', but he was carryin' a lot of the rawhide what we know now they used for goin' down the cliff. And he did have a wolf cub."

Colonel Jensen looked at the defense counsel. "Well, Lieutenant?"

Lieutenant Allison did not falter. "I do not deny that these men are guilty of crimes, or that they have transgressed the law as we know it. But I ask the Court to consider their situation. Were we to be attacked by some enemy, any enemy, would we not resist with all the ingenuity and means at our command? Would we, in fighting, respect any laws the enemy laid down for us? Can we forget that this land belonged to the Apaches, and that we took it by force? I commanded the troops that fought these men. For an incredible twenty-one days, with almost nothing to eat and little water, they withstood our siege and then finally nine men attacked thirty-two. Whatever else they may be, they are brave men. I wish also to point out that the power of the Apache to make war is, or soon will be, forever broken. Sir, I ask that the youngest of these prisoners, the one indicated by Cross Face, be freed to join the Hawk Apaches on their reservation. I ask the Court's clemency for the rest."

"Well spoken, Lieutenant," Colonel Jensen said. He conferred with the officers beside him, then cleared his throat. "We see no evidence to indicate that the defendants are not all equally guilty, but we recognize the plea for clemency. It is the sentence of this Court, therefore, that the eight defendants appearing before it shall be transported to Fort Gammage, in the State of Florida, and to be confined there, or in such other place or places as the military sees expedient, for the remainder of their natural lives."

The prisoners listened to the interpreter's translation in silence, nor did any of them speak as they were escorted back to their cell.



EIGHT *Exiles*

So early in the morning that the web-covered window admitted no part of the thin gray light, Wolf Brother was awakened by the slow beat of horses' hoofs and the sound of men's voices. He sat up to listen, and saw that his companions were awakening, too. They remained quiet on the musty straw, listening.

The key clicked, the door opened, and the light of early dawn illumined all except the darkest corners of the cell. Sergeant Hathaway stood in the doorway and pointed at Wolf Brother.

"You come first."

Wolf Brother rose, walked past the sergeant through the door, and stood dumbly. He had neither will nor means to resist. This, he thought, was how a tame cow must feel when led to the slaughter. He looked about him apathetically.

There was a squad of soldiers drawn up in front of the cell. Behind them, their saddled and bridled horses stamped nervous feet or swished restless tails. Fresh, the horses knew they were going somewhere and were eager to start. To one side of the soldiers was a transport wagon to which were hitched four mules. The wagon was commanded by a bearded buck private who, as he presently proved when the team jerked convulsively, knew all the words that command a mule's respect.

"Get in the wagon," Sergeant Hathaway ordered.

Wolf Brother climbed over the tail gate and saw that a bench had been constructed along one side of the big vehicle's box. A chain with eight sets of leg irons attached ran the length of the bench and was bolted at each end. Provisions and blankets were stored on the wagon's other side. Sergeant Hathaway and a private climbed in and, while the sergeant stood guard, the private knelt to lock Wolf Brother's leg irons.

Wolf Brother sat quietly as Half Hand was brought out, then Cross Face. They had just finished chaining Cross Face when a soldier came from the barracks and hurried toward the wagon. Wolf Brother recognized Sergeant Grimshaw, who hated all Apaches just because they were Apaches.

"Got a minute, Dud?" Grimshaw called.

"Sure." Sergeant Hathaway turned to a corporal. "Take over, Lamson. Bring them out one at a time and lock the cell behind you each time."

Hathaway went to one side to confer with his brother sergeant, but Wolf Brother heard clearly what they said.

"Report in sick," Grimshaw urged, "and the Old Man'll let me take this detail."

"No thanks." Sergeant Hathaway's voice was cold. "I'm taking it."

"But, Dud," the other pleaded, "what do you owe these dirty 'Paches?"

"I've been ordered to see them safely to railhead, onto a car that will be waiting, to send the horses and wagon back with Pendelton, and to guard the prisoners as far east as Buffalo Springs. I propose to do it." He added, as though it were an afterthought, "I also propose to kill anyone who tries to interfere. That's what I owe them."

As Sergeant Grimshaw walked back toward the barrack, swearing fiercely, Wolf Brother recalled his own flight from Quartz Flat and shivered inwardly. If he had been captured and did not try to escape, he remembered, he was to be goaded into it. Thus they would not have to bother with hanging him. Obviously Sergeant Grimshaw wanted charge of the detail so all eight Apaches could be killed while "escaping."

Cross Face murmured, "Do they plot against us?"

"The one who left does," Wolf Brother answered. "But the warrior in charge is a brave man of good heart. He will have no part of any evil plan and we must do nothing to hurt him."

Cross Face said testily, "How may we hurt anyone without even knives in our hands and with chains on our legs?" His voice softened. "At least we can see the mountains from here."

But Wolf Brother kept his eyes turned steadily toward the bottom of the wagon box. The sun on the mountains, the scent of pine, a snorting deer, a leaping trout, the people he had left behind—for all of these his heart had ached while he lived with the gentle Father Harvey. Only now, however, did he realize that together they meant freedom and freedom meant

life. But he had been condemned forever to stay away from them. While the bearded private started his mules and the soldiers mounted and deployed on either side of the jolting wagon, Wolf Brother could not bring himself to lift his eyes. He thought of Pepe, who had found death in the band's last fight and who now seemed fortunate because he had died as a warrior should. But thought of Pepe brought memory of Pepe's fierce courage, and Wolf Brother raised his head high. A soldier riding on the wagon's other side looked suspiciously at him, but Wolf Brother met the soldier's eye squarely. As long as one could be proud, Cross Face had said, all might hope. He would be proud for Pepe's sake.

As though Wolf Brother's new spirit communicated itself to the rest, the dejected prisoners began to talk softly.

"I do not know what it is like in this Florida," Pablo Running Deer said. "Whatever it is, I shall not let the white men know if I am afraid."

"Nor I," Half Hand agreed. "But I wish I had died with Pepe."

Wolf Brother kept his head erect and his eyes proud. He must never despair, for Cross Face had given him leadership. It was probably many days' travel to Florida, and perhaps an opportunity for escape would present itself before they arrived. If not, there would surely be one after they got there. For all the dismal present, there was hope in the future.

They stopped at noon and the chained prisoners were given food and drink. That night, while half the soldiers stood guard and half slept, the Apaches dozed in their chains. In the middle of the third day, seventy-six miles from Fort Larned, the lurching wagon rolled up to an isolated siding where a little knot of people waited by the prison car.

The crowd was all men, and in an ugly mood. They surged toward the Apaches, but withdrew when the mounted soldiers pushed forward to protect their prisoners.

A gaunt man with one eye called, "'Paches cost me this eye, sojers. I want it back."

Ignoring the muttering men, Sergeant Hathaway had the wagon backed up to the waiting box car. One at a time, the leg irons were unlocked and two soldiers escorted each Apache into the prison car.

The first in and last out of the wagon, Wolf Brother entered the car to see his seven companions behind a framework of iron bars near one end. Except that the table which held the water bucket was new, the straw was clean, and there was no window, it might have been the cell at Fort Larned. The rest of the car was given over to cots for the soldiers and provisions for all.

With nightfall, the armed men who remained outside muttered more loudly. The soldiers rolled the doors shut until there was just room enough for an armed man to stand in each, and propped the doors with timbers. Finally, in the distance, was heard the rumble of a train, and presently its glaring headlight stabbed the night. It drew up beside the car, went slowly ahead, and after the switch was thrown, began to back. The prison car quivered as the train coupled onto it.

The train puffed on and left the angry, shouting men behind.

The prison car was shunted onto the Buffalo Springs siding at mid-morning the next day. Glad to be rid of the responsibility, Sergeant Hathaway and his men prepared to relinquish their prisoners to Sergeant Kleinschmidt and a squad from the local garrison.

Kleinschmidt, just approaching his twenty-first birthday, had become a sergeant because he mingled a talent for hard work with a bent for painstaking detail. This, coupled with a determination to have no career but the Army, had won him prosaic advancement while others were winning their stripes on the battlefield. But Kleinschmidt had always dreamed of excitement, and was sure that this assignment would provide it. Presenting his credentials to Sergeant Hathaway, he entered the car and viewed the famous captives who were to be his responsibility for the next leg of the journey.

Cross Face, who fed on his own bitterness because Wolf Brother had been convicted along with the others, and who had tested every board and every bar in the prison car fifty times without finding any weakness, was sleeping with two others in the straw. Their cheeks puffed in and out in rhythmic cadence and snores ranging from high tenor to deep bass sounded in uneven unison. Having removed his shirt, Pablo Running Deer was absorbed in picking lice from it. Diego and Juan Biggers, brothers and two of the West's most talented horse thieves, sat side by side sailing straw spears at a loop of straw. Despite a lack of fingers, Half Hand had his arms stretched wide and was forming intricate patterns with a

length of string that had come his way. Wolf Brother, watching Half Hand, heard Kleinschmidt sigh dejectedly. So did Sergeant Hathaway.

"Don't be fooled by their looks," he warned his younger brother in arms. "There's more devilry in these eight than you'll find in the usual eighty."

"Is it so?" Kleinschmidt asked hopefully.

"It is," Hathaway assured him. "They're all yours, Sergeant, and keep your eyes on 'em."

Kleinschmidt's detail boarded the car, grinning at sight of the supposedly desperate men about whom they had been warned. Sergeant Kleinschmidt took his detail severely to task.

"Be alert, men. There's more devilry in those eight men than in the usual eighty."

"Yeah. Sure, Sarge," said a young private watching Half Hand rearrange his string pattern.

"I mean it." Kleinschmidt tried to sound sincere, but couldn't, because he didn't believe it himself. "Watch every move."

"That's what I'm doin', Sarge."

Wolf Brother understood. Hathaway's soldiers had not relaxed their guard at all; they'd fought Apaches and knew them. Kleinschmidt and his men lacked first-hand experience, and thought that the listless men who lolled in the straw couldn't possibly be the fierce band of raiders whose name was already legend. Wolf Brother would remember that.

Rifles beside them, an indifferent soldier sat in either door. The rest, having had their fill of staring, repaired to the cots and discussed in animated tones the girls whose hearts they hoped to capture. The hot sun turned the car into a scorching furnace, and there was little motion within but an occasional slap at a buzzing fly. Then came a voice from outside the car.

"Is this where they have the Apache prisoners?"

Sergeant Kleinschmidt himself stepped to the door. "Good morning, Dan. Do you want pictures for your paper?"

"Morning, Johnnie," replied the editor of *Buffalo Tracks*. "I'd like pictures and a story too if I may."

"Certainly. Come on in."

A young man with a pad in his hand, a cased camera on his shoulder, and a crusader's look in his eye, swung into the car and looked at the prisoners.

"They don't seem too ferocious. Do any of them speak English?"

"Not to my knowledge."

Wolf Brother, who might have spoken, preferred to remain silent.

"Do you know their story?" the editor asked.

"Nothing that hasn't already been printed."

"I have all that," the young man said ruefully. Then he brightened. "I'll run the story from a different angle! These men come from Fort Larned?"

"Yes."

"How far is that?"

"Including the distance one must travel by wagon, approximately three hundred and twenty miles."

"How far will you escort them?"

"To Dendra City, two hundred and sixty miles."

"Ah!" the editor beamed. "A long cross-country trip. What would you do if one broke loose, Johnnie?"

"If any of them try to run away, our orders are to shoot."

"Good!"

The editor snapped questions at Sergeant Kleinschmidt and wrote furiously. A half hour later he tucked his pencil and

note pad in his pocket and looked up.

"I should have a picture, but the light's rather poor in here. Can you take them outside?"

Sergeant Kleinschmidt thought this over. "I don't see why not."

Already bored and eager to snatch at anything that might offer relief from the stifling heat of the car, the happy guard detail sprang to action. The soldier at the far side rolled his door shut, locked it, and all leaped out the other door to take up positions. Sergeant Kleinschmidt unlocked the cell door, stood courteously aside, and motioned. The Apaches who had been asleep sat up and yawned. Kleinschmidt motioned again.

"Come."

Wolf Brother led the way to the door and looked out in surprise upon the crowd that had gathered. Vivid in his memory were the hate-filled faces of the armed men he had seen when they first boarded the prison car. The people here, men, women, and children, were largely curious. Far from hostile, they even seemed friendly. They talked excitedly, smiled, craned their necks, and seemed almost embarrassed to see fellow humans in such straits.

Cross Face said wonderingly, "These are not enemies. They do not fear Apaches."

As he jumped to the ground, Wolf Brother knew Cross Face was right. These were peaceful people who had never fought Apaches or dreaded their raids, and as such they had no fear. However, as Wolf Brother's companions landed beside him, Sergeant Kleinschmidt warned the crowd away.

"Stay well back! They may not look dangerous, but they are!"

The editor, now turned photographer, had set up his tripod and was fixing his camera on it. He ducked beneath the black hood, peered through his finder, and emerged from the hood again.

"There isn't any action," he complained. "Can't you get them to do something characteristic of Apaches, Johnnie?"

"I'm afraid not. I don't speak their language."

"Hey, 'Pache!" somebody yelled in what he hoped was an Indian dialect. "Be baddee mannee! Gettee toughee!"

"What says he?" Cross Face asked.

Wolf Brother said contemptuously, "He is playing the fool. He wants us to appear dangerous."

Cross Face thought this over. Then, without warning, and swift as a striking wolf, he whirled on Half Hand, seized his right arm, bent it, and flung his companion to the ground. Half Hand rolled to meet him, the spectators gasped, and at that moment, the alert photographer snapped the picture he wanted. Bayonets fixed, the startled soldiers prodded the Apaches back into their prison car and the photographer took a picture of that.

As they were herded back into the car, Wolf Brother looked sharply at Cross Face. Even a strong man might crumble under the trials Cross Face had endured. Had the leader of the Hawk Apaches finally lost his self control?

Three days later, on a siding where the prison car had lingered for the past nineteen hours, one of their guards gave the Apaches a copy of *Buffalo Tracks*, pointing out their picture. Wolf Brother read the accompanying article.

The story went on in great detail, much of which had occurred only in the editor's imagination. But if pictures speak the truth, the one of Half Hand on the ground, Cross Face bending like a cat over him and soldiers rushing in with fixed bayonets, proved the truth of the article. The editor speculated on the villainous nature of one who would attack a fellow prisoner with the obvious intent of killing him. He warned all in their path to beware of the Apaches, gave the prison car's itinerary, and concluded with a lengthy resume of the numerous crimes attributed to the band.

"What says the white man's writing?" Cross Face inquired.

Wolf Brother translated it. Without a word, Cross Face turned over and went to sleep.

NINE *Flight*

The prison car was on another siding, where it had been the past four days. Indeed, Wolf Brother remembered, in the forty-three days that had passed since leaving Fort Larned, the car had been on one siding or another for at least twice as much time as it had ever been in motion. Wolf Brother computed the distance they had come as more than fifteen hundred miles.

During the past month of their long and monotonous journey, Wolf Brother had been concentrating on a baffling problem. Cross Face, one-time master strategist and fearless leader, had degenerated into a ham actor, apparently willing to do anything to please the audience. What was his reason?

The story of his attack on Half Hand in Buffalo Springs had spread like wind-driven fire in dry grass. At Dendra City they had been met by a horde of people and no fewer than three photographers. Again, with no provocation as far as the onlookers could see, Cross Face had attacked Half Hand. But the Buffalo Springs editor already had that scoop and these photographers could not use it again. Sensing that he'd let his public down, Cross Face had seized Juan Biggers' long hair, twisted his head back, and apparently was in the act of throttling him when the soldiers pulled them apart.

Reaching Cassville, Cross Face butted Pablo Running Deer's stomach with his head and sent Pablo staggering. At Leaping Springs, he made a break for freedom, but a mounted soldier easily rode him down. Arriving at Bowhead, he repeated his attack on Half Hand. Fort Williams, where Cross Face had orated in an impassioned manner, was a disappointment. It might not have been had the audience understood even part of what he called it. Wolf Brother understood the words, but was baffled by the reasons for the continued strange actions of Cross Face.

He achieved his greatest triumph at Gibney. The soldiers appreciated Cross Face's dramatic bent and one Corporal Lerner wanted to get into the act, which automatically meant getting into the newspapers. He arranged with Cross Face to leap upon and choke him. Cross Face entered into the spirit of the thing so enthusiastically that, after soldiers finally dragged him away, it was a full five minutes before the sputtering corporal could draw a full breath. With his hands once more about a soldier's throat, Cross Face had merely done what came naturally. But the incident revived flagging interest.

Now, with Gregson coming up, Cross Face's public would expect another performance. What would he do, Wolf Brother wondered, and, more importantly, why?

Under veteran Sergeant Moss, the guard detail was lolling on the cots, grumbling about the monotony of the wait at the siding, and speculating on how long it would be before they reached Gregson, where they would be relieved. Moss was indulging his hobby of whittling, and only occasionally glanced idly at his apathetic prisoners.

Sergeant Hathaway and his men, having had experience in the field against Apaches, had appreciated their hidden qualities and acted accordingly. Kleinschmidt and his men had tried to understand. But as the prison car got farther from Fort Larned, each change of guard had considered the eight Apaches with progressively declining interest. More and more the prisoners had come to be regarded as a queer but not at all bad lot which, at the obscure whim of some High Brass, was being transported from one place to another.

Even Moss, who in his younger days had fought Apaches, did not take them very seriously. Time had dimmed some of Moss's memories and brightened others. The only Apache skirmishes worthy of the name were the ones in which he'd participated. These prisoners were definitely second-rate. Wasn't Cross Face himself putting on an act for the photographers? And didn't every man in the guard detail know it?

It was Moss who had discovered that Wolf Brother spoke excellent English. Wolf Brother's comments about Cross Face and his followers had only strengthened Moss's conviction that Apaches weren't what they used to be and that all the precautions about the prisoners were a waste of time. But orders were orders.

Moss put the finishing touches on the wooden dagger he had carved, and glanced toward the prisoners. Cross Face, who had been watching him, spoke to Wolf Brother.

"Ask him if I may have the wooden knife. For the next image makers we meet, I will pretend to stab you."

Wolf Brother shrugged and pointed to the wooden dagger. "What are you going to do with that, Sergeant?"

"That?" Moss gave the trinket a second glance. "I don't know."

"We'll be in Gregson after a while. There will be photographers, and Cross Face hasn't yet stabbed anybody."

"Who'll he stab?"

"Maybe me."

Moss said thoughtfully, "A stabbing, eh?" Then he chuckled. "By jiminy! A squad from Gregson takes over as soon as we're in and, according to orders, Sergeant Cartwright heads it! I'd give a lot to see Billy's face when Cross Face pulls a knife! Here." He passed the dagger through the bars of the cell.

"What says he?" Cross Face inquired.

Wolf Brother translated, then examined the knife admiringly. Moss had a genuine talent for carving. Though made from soft pine and utterly harmless, the dagger looked, or would when enough dirt was worked into it, remarkably similar to the real thing. No one standing any distance away could possibly guess that it was not genuine. Wolf Brother handed the dagger to Cross Face, who started rubbing dirt into it.

Finished, Cross Face examined the dagger at length and minutely, then hid it in his clothing. He turned to Wolf Brother.

"You do not forget the promise you made to me when the soldiers trapped us on the butte?"

"I do not forget."

"If you escape, you will always think first of our people? You will do what you can to lead and guide them?"

"You have my promise."

"Remember it well."

Two hours later, a train stopped beside them. It moved slowly forward, backed up the siding, coupled onto the prison car, and resumed its journey. An hour after daylight the next morning, the train started slowing for Gregson.

Sergeant Moss, who had been chuckling over the consternation that would be the lot of the detail from Gregson when Cross Face pulled a knife, was now cautioning his men not to betray the plot. He called to Wolf Brother.

"You got it, bub? He's not to pull that knife before the next guard detail takes over. I don't want 'em thinking he got it from us."

"I understand and so does Cross Face."

As the train's speed decreased, the guard detail crowded into the door with those behind peering over the shoulders of the ones in front. The train drew to a rattling halt. New faces and uniforms appeared at the car's open door and Moss smiled happily. As he had hoped, none other than his old friend and rival, Sergeant William Cartwright, was in charge of this detail.

"Hello, Billy," Moss said. "Why the blazes are they stopping us out here in the middle of nowhere?"

Sergeant Cartwright shrugged resignedly. "Some fool idea them newspaper fellers got. Now they want picters of the Injuns in what some photographer told me was their natcha-ral habeetat."

Moss surveyed the surrounding terrain. "A field of wheat is an Apache's natural habitat? Well, come sign in, Billy, and congratulations! This is one detail I sure hate to hand over."

"Yeah!" Cartwright said sarcastically. "I bet!"

Cartwright boarded the car, attested with his signature that he was as of that moment assuming responsibility for the prisoners, and called in his detail. As all new guards did when they first viewed the Apaches, the soldiers crowded in with keen interest which speedily became resignation. Moss and his men left.

Presently a bearded face appeared in the doorway.

"Can you bring them out for those pictures now, Sergeant Cartwright?"

"Just a minute; these men are dangerous."

At a word from Cartwright, his detail left the car and deployed beside it. Cartwright unlocked the cell, motioned, and the

prisoners filed toward the open door.

Before them a field of unripened wheat flowed into the distance like a small lake with rippling green waves. At its far boundary, a line of willows marked a river's course. A half-mile away, the town of Gregson spread out peacefully under a thin blue haze. The hundred or more people who had come to see the Apaches were trampling the borders of the wheat field as Moss and his men ordered them to stand back. A photographer had his camera set up and another was making his ready. Cartwright's men stood in front of the spectators, facing the prison car in a half circle. Moss's detail was in a group off to one side.

As the Apaches jumped to the ground, Cross Face murmured, "The knife awaits and the time is here, Wolf Brother. Be ready."

Both photographers were trying to compose their pictures. One turned querulously to Cartwright.

"Can't we get them without getting the car too? Can you move them a little ways out into the wheat?"

"Good idea," the second photographer approved.

Cartwright motioned and the Apaches moved into the waist-high wheat. Again the photographers tried to compose their pictures.

"Please pull your men just a bit farther away, Sergeant," the first one asked. "I'd like to get the prisoners only on this first picture."

Cartwright gave an order, the soldiers stepped a few paces backward, and again the photographers disappeared beneath their black hoods. They waited, and Wolf Brother knew what they waited for. Except for the oration at Fort Williams, Cross Face had proved himself a violent man given to violent deeds. The photographers wanted some action.

"I strike now, Wolf Brother," Cross Face whispered.

As though some magician had placed it there, the knife appeared in Cross Face's hand and was snaking toward Wolf Brother's heart. Even as he felt it strike and crumpled into the wheat, Wolf Brother heard a quick command from Cross Face.

"Through the wheat to the river!"

Wolf Brother crawled swiftly away, unmindful of the waving wheat that marked his progress. He heard an Apache war whoop, a stern command to halt, the cracking of rifles, and felt a cold sickness in his stomach. In order to create a diversion and give Wolf Brother more time to escape, Cross Face had launched what in all likelihood was his last attack on his enemies. Wolf Brother was more than halfway across the wheat field when he heard an excited shout.

"Where's the kid he knifed?"

Wolf Brother began to move more slowly, parting the wheat stalks with his hands and holding them firm until he had passed. He still had time; everybody would have a different idea about the supposed knifing and they'd look in various places before deciding that there was no dead, or even wounded, victim. Probably, since such a thing would not be easy to explain, neither Moss nor any of his men would mention the wooden knife.

Above the tall wheat, Wolf Brother saw the waving top of a willow and heard the river murmuring when there came another shout.

"Spread out, men. He can't be far."

Abandoning caution in favor of haste, Wolf Brother scuttled forward. Even though his chances were slim regardless of what he did, he wanted to reach the river. If the soldiers had any reason to suppose that he remained hidden in the wheat, they'd beat down every stalk. Coming to the river's sloping bank, Wolf Brother half rose, leaped to a sun-dried boulder, and from that into the river.

He waded westward in the sluggish, roily stream, wondering what to do next. This was full daylight, in thickly settled country, and it was foolish even to hope that his pursuers would not visit the river too. After he had waded three hundred yards he saw a tree on the bank.

It was not a willow but an ancient sycamore. Flood waters had washed dirt from beneath its spreading roots and left what looked like a small cave. Before emerging from the river, Wolf Brother removed his clothing and wrung it as dry as possible. One of the soldiers, or even a chance passer-by, might wander up the river bank at any time; no telltale

splashes must reveal his fugitive's lair.

Leaving the river, Wolf Brother stepped only on stones, and when he moved one even slightly he replaced it exactly as it had been. If pressed into service, none of his Apache comrades would find him if they could, but the soldiers might have Indian scouts available. Wolf Brother stepped over the rank foliage growing between the tree and the river. He crawled into the dark cavern beneath the sycamore, turned to brush carefully over any dirt he had disturbed, and waited.

He held still as only one of his birthright and experience could. The tedious hours that passed so slowly were not even an annoyance compared with the glorious reward of escape back to his own country and people that would be his if he succeeded. He felt a quiet inner serenity and peace. Cross Face, in giving Wolf Brother his freedom, probably had sacrificed his own life. If he returned to the Hawk Apaches, Wolf Brother must never forget his promise. He did not yet know how to guide or teach his people, but Cross Face had assured him that the way would be shown.

Twice during the day people walked up the river bank but on the other side of the sycamore. The first were silent except for the sound of their footsteps. The second, evidently soldiers, grumbled.

"Look at the river, they said!" one complained bitterly. "Well, we're lookin' at it! I had it to do over again, I'd plow my old man's farm forty-nine hours a day afore I'd join this fool Army!"

"You said it, brother!" the second answered feelingly. "They find the knife?"

"Not a sign. Mebbe it's still stickin' in him, but there wasn't any blood."

"A knife in the gizzard can't hurt any worse'n my feet!"

Twilight fell, and with it a bullfrog that sat on a half-submerged log began to roar its evening song. Wolf Brother marked the frog, but did not leave his sanctuary until darkness. Then he unraveled a thread from his shirt, ripped away a small bit of cloth and fastened it to the thread, and tied his makeshift line to a pole that the river had cast up. He crawled to the log, saw the frog, extended his pole, and dangled the bit of cloth in front of the roarer's nose. The frog snapped up the supposed insect and Wolf Brother tugged gently. Too much strain would break the thread, and if the frog chose it could spit the cloth out.

But it didn't choose and the thread held. Wolf Brother killed his captive, ate it raw, and reviewed his plans.

He was far safer by night than by day if only because any pursuers would be unable to see as well in the dark. But he was still more than fifteen hundred miles from Apache country and all he knew of the land between consisted of brief glances he'd had from the moving train. He dared not follow the railroad back because there were far too many soldiers stationed along it and all of them would be alert. Insofar as possible, while he walked westward, it was better to stick to the back country. Since he knew too little of what lay ahead to make any effective plan, he must meet each day according to what that day brought.

He started briskly westward along the river. Grim though the situation was, the fact that he was free again made his heart sing. He might yet fulfill his promise to Cross Face!

Twenty minutes later, in the direction from which he had come, a hound began to bay. Wolf Brother paused to listen, and apprehension mounted. He had never heard of a dog that hunted men, but after a moment he knew that this one was hunting him. He could tell by its mournful baying, which rose at spaced intervals, that it was on the path he'd taken across the wheat field. Coming to where Wolf Brother had entered the river, the hound fell silent as it worked out the trail. Then its thunder rose afresh as it discovered the cavern beneath the sycamore. Wolf Brother started to run.

He did not fear the hound; one who had had his own wolf could never be afraid of any domestic dog. Nor was he greatly afraid of soldiers who might be following. But thought of losing his regained freedom was a red-hot knife that seared his very soul. At the same time, he did not run blindly or with panic. He'd been too long with Cross Face to permit that. When he came to a swamp, a tangle of brush and trees made damp by trickles from the river, he turned aside and ran into it.

Great trees lifted night-shrouded silhouettes above him. Here and there, where there were no trees, stars painted their own image in pools of water. A heavy-bodied serpent slithered out of his way and a disturbed night bird squawked raucously. As Wolf Brother ran on, the hound's baying told him that it was running much faster than he and coming rapidly nearer. Wolf Brother turned to place his back against a huge maple.

Presently he saw the dog.

It came through the swamp, a big, black, ear-flapping, pendulous-jowled creature whose snuffling was plainly audible. Crouching to fling himself upon it, Wolf Brother straightened up in astonishment as he saw the dog's actions.

Six feet away, the hound stopped and raised its head. Then it padded forward with wagging tail and eager little whines. It reared to put both front paws on Wolf Brother's shoulders and lick his face. Sitting back on its haunches, it continued to wag its tail and sighed blissfully when Wolf Brother stroked it to keep it quiet.

Wolf Brother was thunderstruck. Familiar only with the dogs of the Southwest, which almost without exception were savage, he did not know that this was a bloodhound, one of a breed whose reason for being and passion in life is to track men. Men are their friends, and when they find one upon whose trail they are set they are merely pleased, never vicious. Nor could Wolf Brother know that, when set on a man's trail, bloodhounds are usually leashed. Some of the men they set out to find are desperate, and well able to kill hounds that run too far ahead of their masters. This dog had simply been loosed by a soldier who knew little about bloodhounds. All Wolf Brother realized was that not again must his pursuers lay their hands on a dog that possessed such a marvelous ability to track men.

Tearing a strip from his shirt, he strung it through the hound's collar and kept the other end in his hand. The hound followed docilely at his heels as he struck back toward the river bank.

The next day they lay up in a little thicket of pines on a hill near the river. Wolf Brother slept lightly, troubled by dreams of the great upland mesa where he had found Hallee and spent such delightful days. The mesa was wild and free, and in his dream Wolf Brother saw himself returning to it. All was as it had been before the soldiers came, with life as an Apache should lead it.

In the late afternoon, awakened by the hound's hungry whining, Wolf Brother cautiously sat up to look around.

All about was farm land given largely to grain crops, with comfortable houses, big barns, and spacious granaries. Only here and there were occasional trees or scattered groups of cattle, and all of these were confined by fences. Dirt roads criss-crossed the area. It would not be an easy place to leave without detection.

The hungry hound whined again. Wolf Brother quieted him by petting him and forced his mind away from his own hunger pangs. The nearest farm, the center of which was a white house and big barn that made a little island in a sea of grain, was just beneath him. Fat chickens and turkeys scurried about behind the barn.

"We will not be hungry long," Wolf Brother murmured to the dog.

With night, leaving the worried hound tied to a tree, Wolf Brother slipped quietly out of the pines and approached the farm. Turkeys clucked querulously from their perch on the lower branches of an oak. Wolf Brother glided toward them. In the same instant, he closed one hand about a turkey's legs and another around its throat. The bird died without a sound and almost without a struggle.

Then, from laundry that hung on a line, Wolf Brother chose a heavy shirt and pair of trousers for himself.

Three weeks later, the now-gaunt hound beside him no longer in need of a leash, Wolf Brother mounted a rocky, sparsely forested knoll. It was the first time he had dared travel by day, for there seemed to be few people here. An hour before Wolf Brother had seen his first deer. They were smaller than the mule deer with which he was familiar, and differed in their manner of running. Nevertheless they were deer, and Wolf Brother liked this sign of diminishing civilization better than anything he'd seen since his escape.

He reached the knoll's crest and stood quietly. In the valley beneath him was a tiny, weather-beaten shanty near which stood a shed. No smoke came from the shanty's chimney and he could see no one, but freshly split wood was evidence that somebody lived here. It followed, therefore, that here was a chance of stealing food. With his hand on the dog's head, Wolf Brother went forward and began to scout cautiously around the shanty.

"Howdy, stranger."

Wolf Brother whirled. The man who stood behind him, and who had probably come from the shed, was old enough to be Wolf Brother's grandfather. But he stood erect as a boy and carried his long rifle with the ease of long practice.

"Want somethin'?"

"I was hoping for some food."

"Then c'mon in an' git some."

Wolf Brother sat at the old man's table and ate heartily of fried wild rabbit, corn pone, green beans, and fresh tomatoes. The old man fed the dog, then thoughtfully studied Wolf Brother, paying particular attention to his clothes and his appetite.

"Injun, ain't ya?"

"Yes."

"Got some'pin' 'bout Injuns."

From a closet he took a newspaper and spread it on the table. The picture on the front page showed Cross Face wielding the knife on Wolf Brother, and the accompanying headline screamed, *CROSS FACE KILLED! COMPANION ESCAPES!* The first paragraph read: "In the full light of morning, Cross Face, chief of the renegade Apaches who have been sentenced to exile in Florida, drew a hidden knife and attacked one of his comrades, Wolf Brother by name. It was a complete surprise, for no one knows where the knife came from. After striking his companion, Cross Face attacked attending soldiers from the Gregson Barracks, and was shot to death. During the excitement, Wolf Brother, probably badly wounded, escaped by crawling across a field of—"

"I can't read it," the old man said. "But my boy, who fetches me the papers, told me what it said." He paused reflectively. "In my young days, I was West fer quite a spell."

"You were?" Wolf Brother asked uneasily.

"Yep. Met some Injuns, too. They wasn't 'Paches, like these, but Comanches. But they was about the whitest red men I ever knowed. Old she grizzly clawed me up, clawed me plenty. I'd never of pulled through if the Comanches hadn't took me in and kept me a spell. I've liked Injuns ever sinst."

Wolf Brother breathed easier. "You have?"

"Yep. You know, if I was that Wolf Cub, or whatever his name is, I'd never go straight west. That's what they figger he'll do and they'll be waitin'. I'd go south and then west. And if I had long hair, like it shows in the picter, I'd cut it short."

"I guess you're right," Wolf Brother said uncertainly. "Well, thanks for the meal. I'll be going."

"Nice, frien'ly hound you got thar," the old man added.

"Yes, he is."

"Ol' man like me kin use a frien'ly hound. Would ye trade fer a load o' vittles and a good knife?"

"If you would like the dog, I'd be glad to trade."

An hour from the old man's shanty, Wolf Brother stopped and used his new knife to hack his long hair as short as possible.

TEN *Dark Mesa*

A grim brood of mountain peaks reared forbidding slopes on both sides of the narrow, frozen dirt road down which Wolf Brother walked. A storm of feathery snowflakes, sweeping down from the peaks, swirled about him in sharp gusts. But Wolf Brother paid no attention to the ice underfoot, the deepening snow, the wind that clawed at his threadbare clothing, or even the hunger that tormented his belly. His battle was won.

Though he was yet a long way from his people, he reckoned that there were a thousand miles between him and the place where he'd escaped the prison car. Those miles were not without their troubles, but now he was here, back in the West, and his harried journey lay behind him. The distance still to be traveled was considerable, but it should not be troublesome. Trains ran to Quartz Flat, Indians rode the trains, and if a young Apache passenger had once belonged to Cross Face's band, who would suspect it?

Three miles ahead lay the cow town of Ogilvie. If Wolf Brother stopped in the town, wrote a letter to his uncle, Dango Crisley, and requested funds to complete his trip by rail, they'd be forthcoming if every Apache at Quartz Flat had to contribute his little hoard. Dango Crisley's daughter, Helen, would be able to read the letter even if no one else could.

Wolf Brother's step was light on the frozen road as he entered Ogilvie.

The town was built on a series of low knolls, for the people who lived there favored plenty of elbow room and had built their homes accordingly. Only the buildings on Main Street, the business section, were close together and as a consequence they looked uncomfortably crowded. Every business place was fronted by the inevitable hitching rack and every house had its corral and shed or barn for horses. The new snow, heaping in fluffy piles on Ogilvie's buildings and fences, softened their outlines and gave the place an appearance of sleepy peace which it seldom presented otherwise.

Entering, Wolf Brother's curiosity was aroused by the lack of activity. There should be horses at the hitching racks and men on the street, but he saw only a few women and children. He glanced backward to make sure his retreat was open, then reassured himself. If Ogilvie expected trouble, probably a not infrequent occurrence, the men would not leave their families to meet it alone. They must be absent for another reason.

Bending their heads against the snow, nobody even glanced at him as Wolf Brother walked down the street to a store. Snow was gathering on the windows, but there was not yet enough to hide the gilt sign hanging behind the small glass panes:

THOMAS WOODSON
GENL. MERCHANDISE
& NOTIONS

After a little hesitation, Wolf Brother entered. At first he was uncomfortable in the heat from a pot-bellied, wood-burning stove in the center of the store. Then he began to revel in its comfort, and while the proprietor watched him closely, started wandering up and down the counters to look for the articles he wanted. He found them at last, neatly tied piles of paper and bundles of envelopes on a side counter. Without turning his head he waited beside them. Accustomed to the shopping habits of Indians, and understanding that Wolf Brother had finally found what he wanted, Thomas Woodson came to serve him. Wolf Brother lifted a forefinger.

"One, eh?" the proprietor asked genially.

He caught up a pile of paper and a packet of envelopes. Wolf Brother shook his head and again extended a forefinger. The proprietor sighed resignedly. It seemed to him that, if an Indian knew how to write at all, he'd be so proud of the accomplishment that he'd be forever writing letters. But all his present customer wanted was one envelope and one sheet of paper. Thomas Woodson extracted them from their respective parcels, took one of Wolf Brother's few coins remaining from his pay for working on a construction project, and watched the young Apache to be sure he took nothing else as he left the store.

As Wolf Brother walked down the street toward the post office, where he knew pens would be available, he composed a letter in his mind:

Beloved Kinsman:

As you must know, I am no longer a captive. I have made my way on foot to the town of Ogilvie.

No, that wouldn't do. While there was small chance of the letter being intercepted, suppose it were? Then he'd find a detail of soldiers to recapture him. Wolf Brother began again:

Beloved Kinsman:

I regret that I did not follow your wise advice and stay at Quartz Flat rather than look for work on ranches. Now I find myself both friendless and without money in the town of Ogilvie. If you will send me, in care of general delivery, enough money to pay my carfare home, I pledge my word to repay every cent, and give you my affection forevermore.

That should do it. No casual person could read anything in such a letter except that an Indian turned cow hand had failed and was stranded. Maybe even Helen would be puzzled. She must know by this time of Wolf Brother's escape, but she had known him as Jonathan. If he signed the letter Jonathan Cross, for himself and Cross Face, Helen would understand that the fugitive who had fled the prison car, and of whose subsequent fate the Apaches would be ignorant, had reached Ogilvie and needed help.

Wolf Brother made his way to the post office, entered, went to a writing bench, and picked up a pen. As he did so, he looked up, and the pen slid from suddenly nerveless fingers back into the ink well. A little to one side and just above eye level was a rectangle of stiff paper bearing his picture, beyond a doubt. Below the picture was a printed block of type:

WANTED!!

Wolf Brother,

no known alias

This man, one of Cross Face's renegade Apaches, is wanted for escaping official custody on July 11, 1887. Thought to be armed and known to be dangerous. If seen, do not try to apprehend him but notify nearest Army Post or U. S. Marshal. \$1000 reward for information leading to his arrest.

As unostentatiously as possible, Wolf Brother made his way out of the post office and onto the snow-covered street.

The men who lived here not only knew Indians, but some of them had probably had first-hand experience with Apache raids. They would not be deceived by the fact he had cut his hair. If they were undecided, they had only to call in a sheriff or marshal, who would hold him until his identification was established beyond doubt. Wolf Brother decided grimly that not again must he fall into the hands of any official.

Suddenly, like a tantalizing glimpse of Heaven, he saw in his mind the great plateau, or mesa, where he had found Hallee. It was true that soldiers had driven the Apaches from it, but before the soldiers came Wolf Brother had enjoyed what now seemed the only happy days he had ever known. The mesa was a haven, one made for a fugitive Apache, and if he could reach it—

"Hey, Indian!"

Wolf Brother curbed his first impulse to run and turned to face the man who, to get out of the pelting snow, was standing in a narrow alley between two buildings. Beyond him and behind the buildings were two horses hitched to a light wagon. The man was tall, a little gray, but his jaw was firm, and his face bronzed from sun and wind. His dress and his manner indicated that he was a rancher.

"Ever handle cattle?"

"Some." Wolf Brother thought of the numerous herds he had helped Cross Face's men drive.

"Can you ride?"

Yes.

"Want a job?"

"Well—" Wolf Brother cast about and finally came up with the stock reply of cowboys when they were down and out. "I had to sell my saddle."

The rancher's eyes roved over Wolf Brother's tattered clothing. "Looks as though that isn't all you had to sell. Before I say anything else I'd better tell you that this is no tenderfoot job. This early storm caught us with a lot of cattle up in the mountains. We have to get them down before it's too late. If we fix you up with some decent clothes and a horse, do you still want a job?"

"Sure thing."

"It's a deal!" the rancher said crisply. "I came back to Ogilvie hoping to find some drifters who'd help! Everybody else who can climb on a horse is already out! Get in the buckboard, and let's go! If we don't get those cattle down all I'll have left is a saddle, and you're the last man in Ogilvie who can sit one."

The June sun was warm as Wolf Brother rode his pony toward the forested foothills. He watched eagerly for the great wall Cross Face and his men had descended by rawhide rope on that troubled night when they had no other choice, and finally he saw it. It was the same wall and yet it did not seem the same. That night was so long ago that it was as though it had happened in his imagination. But Dark Mesa was as alluring as it had ever been in his fondest dream.

Between Wolf Brother and Ogilvie lay another long road, one whose length was not measured in miles alone. Day after day, changing horses every two hours, then as the snow deepened every hour, and killing three mounts under him when he had no change, Wolf Brother had been in the saddle fifteen hours a day while he helped to bring storm-marooned cattle from exposed mountains to sheltered valleys. It had been back-breaking work to drive cattle that had no wish to move, to dig trenches through drifts they couldn't possibly break, to lift exhausted beasts and get them going again, and even carry late-born smaller calves across his saddle bow.

It had not been easy, but it had been done and appreciated. When the rancher, whose brand was RJ but whose name Wolf Brother had never known, offered him the few dollars he had due, Wolf Brother had asked if he might have a horse instead. He'd been given the horse, as well as saddle, bridle, grubstake, and a hearty note of recommendation to a rancher who lived along the route Wolf Brother proposed to take and who'd be needing hands for the spring roundup.

Wolf Brother had also acquired some knowledge.

The RJ ranch was sixteen miles from a highway—unless the rutted trail leading into it might be dignified by such a title—and though some of the hands working there had never broken even a minor law, there were others who couldn't possibly afford to live anywhere near a highway. They never asked questions and, unless it might be one that did not concern their personal lives, never answered them. Their co-workers respected such an attitude. Except that the white men did not consider Indians quite their social equals—besides Wolf Brother there were two Navajos—nobody cared who Wolf Brother was and nobody would have cared had he been Cross Face himself as long as he did not intrude on anyone else's private business.

Riding on, Wolf Brother had kept to the back country. He'd worked the spring roundup at the Cross T. Then he had joined a trail drive, where he performed as efficiently as anyone else until they were one day out of the town to which the herd was being driven. There he drew his wages and departed.

Now, almost two years after his escape, he was at last in sight of the mesa that had haunted his every dream. He was no more able to turn his eyes from it than he was able to quiet his singing heart. It was there, and only there, that for a brief period he had lived as an Apache should. He had an almost desperate conviction that there, and only there, could he again live as a free Apache. And perhaps, in the years to come, when the search for him had been given up, he could find some way to return to his people and keep his promise to Cross Face.

That night Wolf Brother made his camp in the foothills. As his leaping fire crackled he tried valiantly to conjure up the ghosts of those who had fallen in the Dark Mesa battle and of Leon the Lamé, who had died in descending the wall. He failed. His dead companions' spirits now abode elsewhere and all Wolf Brother found was peace. It was a good omen. War and death lay behind him. Happiness lay ahead.

In the gray of early morning Wolf Brother saddled and bridled his horse and rode into the narrow canyon up which Cross Face's band had driven their plundered horses and cattle. But again, though all of his former comrades lived in his memory and always would, he did not feel their presence. It was as though a fierce storm had whirled over this place and wiped it clean, leaving only peace behind.

Wolf Brother broke out of the canyon into the upland meadow and his singing heart turned to a lump of lead.

A small but well built peeled-log ranch house stood where the Apache huts had been. To one side, six horses gazed curiously at Wolf Brother from a pole corral. Farther up, partly in the forest's shade and partly in the meadow, was an uncompleted branding pen. A dozen cattle grazed placidly in the meadow.

Dully Wolf Brother looked at the rider coming toward him. In his early twenties, he sat his horse with a naturalness born of long hours in the saddle. His clothing was sturdy but worn, as were his boots. Jet-black hair showed beneath a pushed-back hat and there was more than a faint suggestion of Indian blood in his strong face.

Wolf Brother said quietly, "I hadn't known you were here. I'll go."

The other's white teeth flashed in a smile. "You do, and your blood or Pete Whitman's will color this here grass. I ain't seen a man in so long I'm startin' to nicker like a horse."

In spite of his disappointment, Wolf Brother began to warm to this friendly young man. He said, "I came back because I was here once before."

"That so? Injun, ain't you?"

"Apache."

Pete's smile flashed again. "I'm part 'Rapahoe myself, from Wyomin' way. I hear tell that some of your kinfolk was raisin' all kinds of hell 'round here not too long past."

"I guess that's right," Wolf Brother said noncommittally.

"I know it's right. My Uncle Dorrance, then in the Army, was in an Apache fight right here on this mesa. He brought me up here when I decided to take up ranchin' on my own these six months past. 'This'll make the best darn' ranch in the West,' Uncle Dorrance said, and it is, 'cept ..." Pete was suddenly silent.

"Except what?"

"Cept how am I gonna run it when I ain't got any money to pay hands? There's most a thousand head of wild horses and cattle runnin' 'round here. Some of the horses'll string with any I ever saw, and there's a market for both them and the cattle. But how the blazes can one man be a roundup crew?"

"I'll work," Wolf Brother said impulsively.

"I already told you I got no money."

"Can't I come in on shares?"

"Ee-yow!" Pete threw his hat in the air and his horse jumped nervously. "An Apache and a part 'Rapahoe pullin' in double harness! What about that?" He looked seriously at Wolf Brother. "You know where we can get any more to come in on the same deal?"

Wolf Brother's heart leaped in sudden hope as he remembered the dispirited Apaches at Quartz Flat. Teach, Father Harvey had advised. Teach, Cross Face had pleaded. What better than to teach his people how to live again? If some of them, only a few, could live and work here, it would put heart in the rest. Could it be in any way possible?

"How many?" he asked, trying to keep the excitement out of his voice.

"Many's we can get. We ketch the wild stuff that's here, we'll have 'nough money for an honest-to-john spread. 'Sides, I got me a notion that this ain't all the wild stuff runnin' loose."

"I have the same idea," Wolf Brother said dryly, thinking of the herds left at various places by Cross Face's band. "As for more help, if anybody can talk sense to Dollarson, the agent at Quartz Flat—"

"Never thought of that!" Pete whooped. "But Dollarson ain't the agent at Quartz Flat now. Mebbe eight-ten months past a young feller come in hell-bent to do things. He done 'em, too. His name's Morton, and he's allus tryin' to get a squarer shake for the 'Paches. They even made him a member of the tribe."

Wolf Brother was now unable to control his excitement. "Do you think he'd come have a look? If we can show him that there's a living here maybe he can arrange to have some Apaches come!"

"No harm to try!" Pete said hopefully. "You look things over here and I'll ride in and see Morton. Help yourself to grub."

He wheeled his horse and was off. Wolf Brother excitedly unsaddled his horse, put it in the corral, saddled one of Pete's, and rode out to reconnoiter. Every now and again he flushed small bunches of cattle or horses. The next day he rode from dawn to dark, still looking. He had yet to explore the whole mesa, but already he agreed with Pete's estimated thousand.

A half hour before the next nightfall two riders came up the narrow canyon. As they rode nearer, Pete called out, "This is Jack Morton, the agent at Quartz Flat. Jack, meet my new partner."

Wolf Brother came face to face with the young civilian who had attended the Apaches' trial. In the same instant, he knew he was recognized.

ELEVEN *Homecoming*

Morton's seat in the saddle and the easy manner in which he kept his spirited mount under control stamped him as an experienced horseman. He seemed much older than Wolf Brother remembered. Perhaps it was his weathered face, perhaps his deep-set eyes, which gave an impression of seeing and knowing all.

Sure in the first moment that the agent recognized him, Wolf Brother was now not so certain. He, too, had changed since the trial, and on that day he had been only one of eight Apaches Morton had seen. What he thought was recognition might be only his imagination. Morton's first words gave him added assurance.

"So Pete is taking you on as a partner?"

Wolf Brother nodded. "Guess he felt sorry for me."

"He says you're an Apache?"

"That's right."

"What tribe?"

"Hawk."

"Haven't seen you around Quartz Flat."

"I've been in the East."

"Hm-m. Ever get to Florida?"

"Why no." Again Wolf Brother felt that he had been recognized, but he sparred back. "Last job I had was helping the Lazy Hat boys take a trail herd into Coyote Springs."

"That's hardly the East."

"It seems so from out here."

"It may at that," Morton admitted. "How'd you find Dark Mesa?"

"I just stumbled onto it."

Morton said dryly, "You're a good stumbler. The only way up here is through Dark Canyon. Do you know this used to be an Apache stronghold?"

"Did it?"

"It sure did. That's how these wild herds got started. Stolen stock. Now, from what Pete tells me, there are nearly a thousand horses and cattle running wild on Dark Mesa."

"That's about it, according to my count."

"And you aim to round 'em up, sell 'em, and use the money for a ranch?"

"That's right," Pete put in eagerly, "but we need more hands, like I told you."

"You'll find a market," Morton said. "There's always one for cattle, the Army pays top prices for horses that meet its standards, and no rancher ever had enough really good working cow horses. But if I understand your plan correctly, everybody who throws in will be a working partner on a share and share alike basis?"

"Jest on the wild stock," Pete explained. "I already got a few head of my own."

"So suppose fifteen or twenty Hawk Apaches want part of it? You'll be spreading yourselves pretty thin."

"No, we won't!" Wolf Brother exclaimed. "If we round up everything on Dark Mesa, there are at least a dozen other ranges with wild herds and—" Too late, he realized what he was admitting. "That is," he floundered, "Pete thinks there are and there may be."

Morton looked at him sharply, but let it go. "Well, I want both of you to understand that I have to be shown. We'll look around tomorrow. If it is as you say, I'll go back to Quartz Flat, lay your proposition before the tribe, and send you some hands if they want to come."

"You can do that?" Wolf Brother asked hopefully.

"It won't be exactly according to rules," Morton admitted, "but I'll let them come because I think the Apaches deserve a break. It will be at least a year before anyone except me counts noses at Quartz Flat, and I take care of all the reports. If you're self-supporting within a year, whoever tries to interfere won't have much public support." He chuckled quietly. "Why should taxpayers be called upon to support Indians who are already supporting themselves? But in any event, I'm sticking my neck out a very long way. If there's any more land involved, Pete will have to take it up in his own name, and the rest of you will have to trust him far enough to do it."

"We will," Wolf Brother promised.

Morton looked him right in the eye. "There's another little matter. As far as Apache raids are concerned, things are quiet now and have been since Cross Face was captured. If any of you get interested in horses and cattle that *aren't* wild, you won't get out of jail for the next nine hundred years, and probably I won't either. More to the point, you won't have another chance such as this, ever."

Wolf Brother said quietly, "You have my personal promise that there'll be no Apache raids."

"How can you back such a promise?"

"The last war leader was Cross Face, and finally even Cross Face couldn't hold out. The Hawk Apaches know the arrow is broken."

"Well, I'll take your word for it. Tomorrow we'll see what offers, and it better be good."

That night, Wolf Brother lay sleepless on his bunk and stared into the darkness over his head. He had an instinctive desire to rise and steal away. Surely Morton knew who he was, and he could be planning to take Wolf Brother back with him. Fighting down this conviction, he told himself that, even if it were true, he had no choice in his course of action. Regardless of anything else, Morton must be convinced of the possibilities here. The agent had promised he'd let the Apaches come if conditions warranted, and he had to be trusted to keep his promise. If he turned Wolf Brother in and sent him to rejoin the captives at Fort Gammage, it would not be too great a sacrifice. At least Wolf Brother would have kept his promise to Cross Face to try to lead the Hawk Apaches back to the life which should be theirs. The decision brought peace and sleep.

In the pre-dawn blackness, Wolf Brother was awakened by the smell of cooking food and opened his eyes to see a tallow candle flickering on the table. Elbows on the table, chin pillowed in cupped hands, Morton sat on the backless wooden bench and watched Pete, who was kneeling before the fireplace, holding a long-handled skillet over the flames. A Dutch oven was shoved into the coals and a blackened coffeepot bubbled on its suspending hook.

By the time Wolf Brother was dressed, Pete had lifted his skillet of sizzling steaks, laid skillet and contents on a flat stone in the center of the table, put the Dutch oven of biscuits beside it, and poured scalding black coffee into thick mugs. They ate and drank hungrily, for they had a full day ahead of them. When they were finished Wolf Brother and Jack Morton took the dishes outside to scrub them with sand and rinse them in the stream. The day had brightened by the time they returned, to find Pete tinkering with his rifle.

"Expect to meet rustlers?" Morton grinned.

"Mebbe some four-footed ones," Pete explained. "There's a few wolves hereabouts, and I want to get 'em 'fore they pull down too many colts and calves."

Wolf Brother looked out the window, turning his face from the other two. He thought of Hallee, and for the hundredth time wondered if the wolf had survived his transition back to his wild state. Probably not. Wolves, hard-hunted and hard-hunting, were the spiritual kinsmen of renegade Apaches. But this new land had no place for renegades, and just as the warring Apaches had had to go, so would the wolves.

They bridled and saddled three horses and started out. Pete kept his rifle slung across the saddle bow.

A new day was brightening fast, and the rising sun shone on the tops of the peaks surrounding the meadow. Presently they saw a dozen little mares with colts at their heels, all shepherded by the magnificent stallion that had been the Mexican captain's mount. Jack Morton's eyes gleamed, for these were horses to make any rider's heart beat faster.

"If you catch that stallion," he said to Pete, "I'd like first chance to buy him."

"When we catch him, he's yours as a gift."

Morton chuckled. "If you catch him, all I want is first chance to buy. If you're going to make out up here, you can't be giving your stock to me or anyone else. Break him to ride, and any horseman would give five hundred dollars for that stallion. Many like him up here?"

"Not many as good," Pete confessed, "but quite a few good ones."

The stallion, who had been watching the riders, whirled, nipped at the nearest mare, and took his harem racing into the forest. They came across another bunch of horses, then a herd of rangy cattle that ran like deer. Farther up the meadow, more horses and cattle faded out of sight.

Pete swung out of the meadow onto a beaten path so easily graded that the horses climbed it with no effort at all. It was one of many such paths used by wild horses and cattle going to and from the meadow, for every now and again they heard the snort of a horse or the pounding of hoofs as unseen animals raced out of their way. Ascending to timber, they saw in the alpine meadows several scattered bunches of horses and cattle, which probably considered themselves safe because few men penetrated these solitudes.

Going back to the forest, Pete cut a zigzag path that took them toward the head of the meadow. Everywhere was sign of cattle and horses. They'd even crowded out the elk and deer whose home this had been, so that there were few game animals.

At noon they stopped beside a spring, ate and rested while the horses grazed, and went on. Swinging across the meadow, they entered the forest on the south side as the sun began to lower. Pete stopped.

"Seen enough?" he asked Morton.

"They're here," the agent admitted, "and in great plenty. You fellows have hit on something."

They returned to the ranch house, cared for their horses, and went in to start up the fire for supper.

"There's no need for any more palavering," Morton admitted. "There's a good thing here for you fellows and others, since you're willing to take them. You may be able to find more wild herds, but I know you can count on this one, and it's as big as you claimed. I can't promise to send any Apaches and won't order any to come, but I'm sure of a few. You'll vouch for their staying out of trouble?"

"We will," Wolf Brother promised.

"Good. Now it so happens," Jack Morton went on, "that I think Cross Face and his men received a sentence of unmerited severity. It also happens that my father is Senator Morton. He sees eye to eye with me and for almost a year has been working to have the remaining prisoners released and sent back to Quartz Flat. If he's successful, and the prisoners are released, do you want them?"

Too startled to speak, Wolf Brother looked at his new partner.

"Sure thing," Pete grinned. "If this here Cross Face outfit started these herds, it oughta be cut in on the deal."

Morton said, "Then that's the way it'll be, I hope. Meantime, it might help if the Indians at Quartz Flat knew that a full-blooded Hawk Apache was already here." He looked directly at Wolf Brother. "I didn't get your name."

"Jonathan," Wolf Brother told him. Then, because the events of the past seemed here joined to the future, he added, "Wolf. Jonathan Wolf."

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Buckskin Brigade
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Desert Dog
Rebel Siege
Wild Trek
Snow Dog
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Trailing Trouble
A Nose for Trouble
Chip, the Dam Builder
Wildlife Cameraman
Hidden Trail

[The end of *Wolf Brother* by Jim Kjelgaard]