

PRIEST KILLER

By

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Prologue

Alisaii!! Listen!! Listen to what happened in the spring of 1674, four years before the great revolt, in the Hopi village of Oraibi:

During the New-Fire ceremony, while the men sang in the secret kivas, their ears keened to spirits sighing in the frost-hard streets above, a soldier left the mission and entered the village where the women slept--protected, they thought, by strong stone walls and lines of sacred cornmeal.

But the soldier trod on the cornmeal and climbed the ladder into the village leader's home, taking the chief's only daughter, his only daughter who was only yet a girl. The soldier dragged her to the church, to the room where a priest was waiting. Does it matter to the story that the priest was a squat, greasy man with thick, grasping fingers and small greedy black eyes? Would the evil had been any less if he bore smooth features and a pleasant demeanor?

The girl was not stupid and, though young, was not naïve. When the soldiers thrust her in front of the priest, she held tight to a bone knife concealed beneath her robe. When the priest grabbed at her, she struck.

Here is where the story branches, where it splits apart like a stream hitting a dam of mud. The Hopis say that in the struggle between priest and girl, the knife, like so many a high-minded intention, betrayed its sender and entered her body instead of his. The Spanish account never mentions the knife at all, or the lustful priest, or even the younger, faithful priest who, horror-struck by what his superior had done, carried the girl back to her family and nursed her back to health.

Both stories agree that the girl saw a vision and made a prophecy. The Virgin Mary herself appeared to the girl say the Spaniards. The Hopis claim that as she lay there bleeding from two-heart, treacherous knife, the girl saw the Corn Mother, and beside her, a strange new kachina holding a crucifix and wearing a single earring.

The Virgin/Corn Mother spoke: "Tell all who will listen that the land will soon be destroyed because the people have not shown reverence to the priests."

Both accounts agree on the words of the prophecy, though, in the way of things, they each ascribe to the words an opposite meaning, for the Hopi and the Franciscans both had priests, and who can know even now what the Virgin/Corn Mother meant?

What we know is this: the prophecy formed a dam not of mud but of words, and when the dam split, the land ran red with blood.

When we reach the Upper World, that will only be a beginning. Things there are not like things here...In the Upper World you must learn to be true humans.

--Hopi Emergence Myth

Chapter 1

Tucson, Arizona, 2007

It was just a phone call, as unassuming as the butterfly whose flight stirs the air into hurricanes half a world away. Perhaps, Tom thought later, if his vision had been clearer, he might have seen the air quivering with change when he pulled the receiver to his ear. Perhaps, if he had been listening, he might have heard the shudder of a fault splitting open three hundred years deep and stepped back from the precipice. But blind and deaf from years among the Anglos, he danced on the edge, unaware of how far he might fall.

"Hello," he said.

When he heard the voice on the other line, his heart sank. Lucille. He thought of the dream he'd had the night before. He remembered nothing about it except that it concerned Honshoki, his great-great uncle. The dream had lingered with him throughout the morning and with it an inexplicable sadness that he hadn't been able to shake. Now Lucille was calling. Honshoki must have died. He had been frail enough when Tom had last seen him three years before. By now he had to be in his mid-nineties.

It was the worst possible time, he thought, fighting back a panic at the thought of having to go to the reservation for the funeral. Not now. Not after the fight with David, his foster father the night before. And then, ashamed, he wondered when would be a good time to lose his great-uncle, who had also been a friend.

But if Honshoki had died, it was hard to tell from Lucille's conversation. His great-aunt switched back and forth between Hopi and English in a rambling narrative that Tom couldn't follow.

"I don't have much time," he said, jumping in after she'd gone on for some time. "I'll be late for school."

"You talk like an Anglo." Lucille meant that his interruption was too rude to be proper Hopi behavior.

She launched into another round of explanation and eventually Tom realized that Honshoki was neither dead nor gravely ill. The relief he felt was palpable, but he

wondered how much of it was concern for his uncle and how much was that he wouldn't have to go to the reservation after all.

"You've got to stop him. Everyone is saying he has gone crazy," Lucille said, switching back to English, which she spoke with the chopped accent of one whose first language is full of glottal stops. "This is the last thing that the village needs on top of everything else."

Tom shifted the phone to the other ear. "Everything else?"

"Everyone is saying that Honshoki has betrayed the villagers and that the only reason he is still alive is that he is a powaka," she continued.

A witch. Tom felt the familiar twinge of shame at the superstitiousness of his people. "Do they say who was hurt by Honshoki?" Tom asked.

There was a long silence. "Your father and Jimmy," Lucille said finally. "They are saying that Honshoki has only lived to be so old by stealing the time they would have lived if they hadn't been in the accident."

Tom searched for something civil to say. It was alcohol that killed his father and brother. Alcohol and snowy roads. "And does he say Honshoki caused my mother to drink herself to death, too?" he asked, realizing too late how bitter he sounded.

Another silence. Then Lucille said, "They say that Honshoki sent you away so you wouldn't tell anyone what he had done." She added, "Maybe if you hadn't left Oraibi..."

If you hadn't left Oraibi. It always came back to that.

"Why does anyone care?" he asked, suddenly tired at the thought of being drawn into reservation politics. "Is someone trying to take over Honshoki's position?" Honshoki had been the village chief in Oraibi for over half a century.

"Assh," Lucille said with a loud sigh. "This is what I've been telling you. It's the dance. Honshoki has called a dance and everyone is saying he has no right."

"I don't understand what I can do--" Tom began, but his aunt interrupted him.

"Wait. I'm going to put him on now," she said. "You talk to him yourself." She clunked down the phone before he could say anything else and shrilly called Honshoki's name, as bossy as any Anglo. Tom bit his lip in frustration. The fact that his uncle hadn't rid himself of Lucille long ago ought to be ample proof to the villagers that he wasn't any witch. She was Honshoki's niece, but she acted as if she were his wife, aunt, grandmother and mother-in-law.

And then Honshoki came on the line. "Tom?" The old man's voice quavered as if exhausted by the distance it had to travel from Oraibi to Tucson.

"It's me, grandfather," said Tom, giving him the traditional title of respect. "What's happening?"

"I need you to come home, just for a couple of days." Honshoki's voice cracked and he coughed for a minute.

Home, thought Tom. Where was that? A few days ago he would have said here with David and Toni Wellman in Tucson, but after last night he wasn't sure.

"It's a bad time of year, grandfather. Finals are in two and a half weeks." He didn't add that Toni had helped him get a summer job doing Spanish translation, or that he was in line for a scholarship if he could keep his grades up his senior year. Or that he'd rather walk barefoot across the Sonoran desert than go back to the reservation right now.

"I need you," Honshoki said, the words barely audible. "Just a short visit, this weekend. Please, my nephew."

The old man's voice, so frail, weakened Tom's resolve. David Wellman's words from the night before echoed again in his head, bringing fresh waves of dismay. "It's your heritage," his foster father had said. "That's all. I just don't want you to lose it." And now Honshoki was asking for the very thing Tom had sworn--in words too loud and angry to have come from a Hopi--for the very thing he'd shouted he'd never do: return to Oraibi. He cleared his throat to find his voice.

"Why don't you tell me what's going on and maybe we can work it out over the phone."

Silence. Tom waited patiently for his uncle's reply, not realizing until Lucille's voice startled him that Honshoki had put down the phone.

"Did you tell him?" she demanded harshly.

"Tell him what?" asked Tom. "I still don't know what's going on."

"That he can't call this dance. Badger Clan owns it. A Bear Clan man has no right to sponsor it."

As if he could tell Honshoki what to do! Into the silence, Lucille said in a low, angry voice, "If you were still here, maybe the people wouldn't talk."

There was no answer to this. Tom was tempted to hang up on her. But his uncle's quavering plea stuck in his mind. "Please, my nephew," he'd said. Honshoki, whose voice had never shaken with such need, who had never before asked him for anything, was now asking for exactly what David had wanted. David, who had stalked out of the room after Tom's outburst the night before, slamming the door with uncharacteristic anger, saying, "It's your heritage. That's all."

That's all. Tom sighed and steadied his voice. "Tell him I'll come up this weekend." And then, before she could say another word, he slipped the phone back on the receiver.

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Dinner that night was almost unbearably awkward. David greeted Tom with an unusual heartiness when he sat down to the table. It was clear he was trying to make amends, and Tom was grateful that he hadn't, after all, packed his bags after the argument the night before, though he'd lain awake till morning considering it. Even so, cheerful conversation was beyond him. He kept his eyes on his plate of beans and tacos and said nothing for most of the meal, distressed that he was unable to respond to Toni and David's efforts to include him in their small talk. Only Nina, ten and not yet burdened by adolescence, chattered happily, evidently unaware of the tension that lay between her parents and foster brother. Tom half-listened to her, his attention on David,

until she suddenly stopped speaking, looked him in the eyes, and asked, "What did Lucille want?"

Neither David nor Toni had asked about the phone call, though they must have been wondering--calls from the reservation were rare. Nina had grabbed the phone on the first ring, as usual, and had shouted for Tom, informing him and the household at large that the call was from Lucille. They must have speculated, as had Tom at first, that Honshoki had died or was critically ill.

"It's about Honshoki," he said, and when David and Toni looked predictably alarmed, he added hastily, "He's okay. I mean he's not sick or anything." He recounted his conversation with Lucille in a flat tone. "I told her I'd go. For the weekend," he ended, avoiding David's eyes.

Toni sighed and nodded sympathetically--she knew how he hated trips to the reservation, but David laughed out loud.

"So, the rez is brimming with rumors and intrigue. What else is new?" He grinned, obviously delighted with Tom's decision, and Tom wondered again, as he had all through the night, how much of David's affection for him came from the fact that Tom was Hopi. Would David Wellman, with his doctorate in anthropology specializing in Hopi studies, would he have been so willing to informally adopt an Anglo or Chinese kid? It was convenient for a Hopi scholar to have the only nephew of a village chief living with him. And understandable that he'd get frustrated when Tom lost interest in pursuing his "heritage."

Tom picked up a napkin, wiped the grease off his hands from his last taco, and said, to fill the silence, "How could people say grandfather is a witch? He couldn't hurt anyone if he wanted to. He's too--"

"Feeble?" Nina asked, between mouthfuls of refried beans.

"Feeble!" David smiled at his daughter. "He's what? Ninety-five? And probably stronger than I am now."

He rose and carried a stack of dishes to load into the dishwasher. Toni began clearing the table.

"I guess you're not aware of Honshoki's reputation," David said.

"As village leader?" Tom asked.

"As..." David turned from the dishwasher looking genuinely surprised. "You never heard what happened at the New-Fire Ceremony? Let's see, it was before you were born, I guess, but I thought you would have heard about it."

Tom shook his head.

"Another story!" Nina said, rolling her eyes in mock exasperation. But she quickly rinsed off her plate and then settled beside Tom, ready to listen.

David was famous or infamous, depending on how much time one had, for loving stories. In this, Tom felt, he had a spiritual if not physical kinship with the Hopis. He left the dishes and took a seat across the table from Tom, and then waited until Toni joined him before he began.

"I don't know if you remember, but the New-Fire Ceremony takes place in November as part of the initiation and Wuwuchim rites."

Tom shook his head again. He'd left the reservation shortly after his own initiation when he was eight. Since then, his visits had been too short to allow participation in any of the ceremonies. He'd planned it that way.

"Well," David scratched at his beard, now more white than blond. "On a certain night, members of the One Horn and Two Horn Societies roam the streets, checking to make sure no one is outside. All the roads and trails into the village are marked off with cornmeal and closed, with the exception of one which is left open to allow the spirit people to enter the village."

He paused for dramatic effect, and Tom waited patiently, as if David were a tribal elder reciting an old legend.

"It was on such a night that Honshoki disappeared. A strange man was seen by some of the One Horns out in the streets of the village. They chased him, ready to kill him with their spears as they are required to do, but the man eluded them, running down the single open trail and then vanishing. The next morning, Honshoki was missing. Four days later, he returned to the village on the same trail, wearing only a breechclout and carrying an ancient mask. An ancient mask that no one in the village had ever seen before."

"Did the One Horns know they were chasing Honshoki?" Tom asked.

"What's a breechclout?" Nina demanded simultaneously.

"A breechclout is a strip of cloth that's used as underwear," David said to his daughter, and then turned to Tom. "It was too dark to see the man's face. But when he was gone the next day..."

"Where did he say he'd been?" Tom asked.

David raised his eyebrows and smiled. "He wouldn't say. He never told anyone where he was for those four days. But rumor was that he visited the Underground. The land of the dead."

Tom was surprised he hadn't heard this story before, but then he'd lost his friends--his sources of gossip--when he'd left the reservation. "He probably hid out in one of the caves beneath Oraibi. Though, I don't know why he'd want to do that."

"Could be." David never discounted a story, and he kept such things as whether he did or didn't believe it private. "Don't forget that he had that mask. Wherever he went, his return caused quite a furor."

David smiled again. "So you understand why there might be some in the village who think he's capable of being a witch."

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Later, driving alone from Tucson to Oraibi in the Wellmans' old Toyota pick-up, Tom noticed that the drought, which had stolen the last of the green from the Tucson desert, worsened the further north he traveled. By the time he reached Holbrook, the little vegetation that hadn't shriveled to dust and blown away was a uniform, defeated

brown. In better times, this stretch of land had always looked barren; now it was desolate, a piece of moon scenery.

It matched his mood, which had been soured by David's eager helpfulness as Tom prepared to leave. Would he be eager to welcome Tom back if it became clear this was his last trip to the reservation? This gloomy question preoccupied for the entire three hundred-plus miles of the trip, so it was a relief when he finally arrived in Oraibi. He got out of the truck, took a deep breath, and was surprised by a surge of nostalgia. Tucson was already hot and hazy, but at 7000 feet, Oraibi had the deep blue skies and the cool, crisp air typical of northern Arizona's high plateau country.

He locked the truck, but didn't feel ready to see his uncle. Instead, he walked behind the village to the southwestern edge of the mesa where he had sometimes ventured as a child. Beyond him stretched a vast desert punctuated by mesas and odd-shaped lava outcroppings. On his right, to the southwest, lay Flagstaff and the San Francisco peaks, a white-capped pyramid against the horizon.

Honshoki knew this as sacred land and had stories to tell about each landmark and every type of animal that lived there. Tom stared at the vista before him. He saw only rocks and sand.

A sudden cry startled him. He whirled around, but found nothing near him. Then it came again, eerie and lonely as Maasaw's call, and an early childhood fear shocked through him, memories of racing home in the dark in terror. He shivered, half expecting to see the god of the underworld himself, with his mask of rotting, burned flesh. But

Maasaw never appeared in daylight. And then Tom winced at his own sudden lapse of rationality. Maasaw was nothing more than a superstition, a childhood boogeyman. He looked again until he finally found the source of the sound. A burrowing owl stood half-submerged in a prairie dog hole a few feet away, its rust and white mottled feathers blending into the desert floor so that it was almost invisible. The owl stared at him with unblinking, yellow eyes. Then, with a cry and a fluttering of feathers, it disappeared into the sand.

Only an owl, thought Tom in embarrassment as his heart slowed back to normal. Rocks and sand and owls. That is what he saw before him and anything else was imaginary, made-up, wishful or perhaps delusional thinking. He should have known that instantly, and in Tucson he would have. But it was different here. Almost as if the sand and rocks and animal life colluded to engender superstition.

He returned to the village and found little changed since his last visit. There were more tourists, and new signs to contain them--"Absolutely no photographs" one sign commanded, and "Visitors may not walk past the last street."

A tour group, making their way across the plaza, strolled into earshot. "...the oldest continuously inhabited city in the United States," said the guide, a young man who looked Hopi. Tom, taking in the crumbling stone houses sitting among occasional piles of rock and rubble, thought that Oraibi looked its age. The exterior facing to the houses hadn't been replastered for as long as he could remember, and years of rain, snow, and blistering sun had eroded away not only the facing but much of the mud

mortar between the rocks, so that they jugged out irregularly and sometimes fell to the ground. There were some new buildings--gray block homes sprouting TV antennas and electric wires--but they seemed out of place, squat gray rectangles that contrasted starkly with the warm cream of the limestone.

And then he heard the tour guide again, evidently answering a question. "No, the ruin you see on the south end of the mesa is of a Mennonite church, built in 1902 and destroyed by lightning in 1912. The Catholic mission was torn down in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680." He gave a little laugh. "You might call it our Independence Day. That's when all the Pueblos, Hopis included, rose up against Spanish. Not a single stone of the church was left standing and every priest was killed."

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Later, after dinner, Lucille closed the window facing the street, shutting out the sound of the guide's voice as he led yet another group of tourists through the village.

"Some are saying he's a witch," she said with a nod toward the window. "He is only eighteen and already he has a new truck."

Superstition hangs in the air here like a virus waiting for a host, Tom thought.

Lucille took the leftover stew to the kitchen, a makeshift counter with a sink in the other room, and then returned for the emptied bowls.

"I hope you talk him out of this crazy idea," she said to Tom. "A Bear Clan man has no right to sponsor this dance." She turned to Honshoki. "Which you know."

Honshoki, who had said nothing throughout the entire meal, ignored this remark as well. Tom was relieved when Lucille left after dinner and he and Honshoki were finally alone. They moved to the old brown couch and chair on the opposite end of the room. Small, shrunken, his head barely extending over the back of the chair, Honshoki looked old and tired.

Then Honshoki straightened a little and with a flash in his eye that was anything but tired he asked, "Do you know why the Yowe kachina wears only one earring?"

"Yowe?" Tom asked, not familiar with the term.

"The Yowe--the Priest Killer kachina. Do you know why he wears only one earring?"

Tom shook his head. He'd never seen that type of kachina. He waited for Honshoki to tell him, but his uncle surprised him again.

"There is going to be a Ram's Head dance in early June here. I'd like you to dance in it."

Tom stared at him. Dance in it! It was the last thing he expected. Flustered, he said, "You heard Lucille. She says most of the people here think it's a bad idea."

Honshoki gave a slight smile. "There are some who are running on about it. But it is my decision." He forestalled Tom's next question by saying, "Men from all the different villages have agreed to dance, including your uncle Stanley. I only need one more." Honshoki touched Tom's arm lightly with his hand. "You."

Tom looked at him in dismay. By now, if he had lived on the reservation, he would have become a member of kachina society or one of the three others available to men. But he hadn't joined any of them, nor had he wanted to. "I don't belong to any of the societies. I'm not qualified."

Honshoki waved his argument away. "Some things matter more than others."

And in the things that really mattered, he was the least qualified of all. "I can't," Tom said in a low voice, the words sticking in his throat. "I've been gone too long...I just can't." He turned his face to the floor and whispered, "I don't believe in the dances, in any of it, anymore."

He thought Honshoki would react with shock or with anger--with some show of emotion. When Curtis, a Zuni friend he knew at school had told his parents, there had been fireworks. Of course, Curtis had put it more crudely--"I don't see how a bunch of fat men jumping around in colorful costumes can influence the weather," he'd said.

But Honshoki gave no indication that he'd heard. "I'd like to see my nephew dance before I die." After a pause he added softly, "So forgotten things can be remembered."

So that was it, thought Tom. Honshoki hoped the dance would somehow bring back childhood memories and beliefs, and infuse Tom with a desire to return to Oraibi. It wouldn't work--his memories made him want to stay away--but how could he tell Honshoki that? Without his influence, Tom's mother probably would have bowed to Lucille's wishes and kept him on the reservation. Honshoki took a lot of criticism from

the villagers and from the tribal council, not to mention continual nagging from Lucille, because of his decision to let Tom leave. And now he wanted him to come back? Surely he of all people should understand that some paths led in only one direction.

But he looked at his uncle, now eleven years older, frail, and in need of help--his uncle who had defied the Tribal Council to let Tom live with the Wellmans--and he thought of how thrilled David would be to see him in a dance. Maybe he could do this one thing for both of them. One last thing, and then he'd make it clear to David he was done with Hopi ceremonies. And if David loved him only because he was Hopi--well, what did it matter? He had one year of school left, and then he'd be on his own. It didn't really matter.

He cleared his throat and tried to speak, but it took a moment for him to find his voice. "I can't come for practices until after graduation."

Honshoki's face split into a grin. "There'll be time. Stanley can help you with what you've missed."

"I just hope I don't ruin it." He said it expecting Honshoki to protest, but the old man's face suddenly grew solemn.

"That's a chance we'll have to take."

Only much later, as he was driving back to Tucson, did Tom realize that Honshoki had never told him why the Yowe kachina wore only a single earring."

Only those who forget why they came into this world will lose their way. They will disappear in the wilderness and be forgotten.

--From the Hopi migration myths

Chapter 2

They danced the first dance without masks at dawn, while the cool of night still lingered. Honshoki directed the dance dressed in jeans, boots, and a western shirt, topped off with an enormous turquoise necklace that seemed oversized for the small, wiry man. This maskless dance was for the dead, and so the villagers locked their doors and covered their windows, and early-rising children played warily in the middle of the room with their backs to the plaza. Weary from a night spent in the kiva singing and assembling his mask and clothing, Tom was grateful for the bracing air and the chance to do the dance once before the Wellmans arrived to watch.

He had spent most of the previous two weeks in the kiva with the other dancers, practicing the songs and the dance steps, repainting his mask and rattle, refreshing his

Hopi, and renewing old acquaintances. He'd learned there were to be two Yowe kachinas in the dance along with eighteen Ram's Head kachinas. Over three-fourths of the dancers had come from other villages.

After the dance for the dead, they all returned to the kiva, climbing down the ladder into the long, dark room. A fire burned in the pit behind the ladder--something Tom thought they'd all regret as the day got warmer.

Tom made his way to the narrow bench in the back where he had stored the bundle of clothing he'd worn to the kiva the night before. Next to his bundle lay the kachina mask and the spruce bough ruff that would go around his neck for the rest of the day. He sat down beside the mask, self-conscious in just his kilt and breechclout. The kilt, a front and back panel woven from black wool, was similar to a skirt with no sides. It allowed a clear view of the only underwear he was wearing, his breechclout, a long, old, yellowed strip of cotton about a foot and a half wide that fit between his legs and tied front and back to a thong around his waist. Some of the other dancers wore boxer shorts under their kilts. Tom would have preferred that, but Honshoki had insisted on the breechclout, although he'd given no reason for doing so. "Wear it, my nephew," was all he'd said.

Memory was a funny thing. Before the practices began for the dance, Tom had been inside a kiva only twice, once for his initiation over in Shongopavi, and once here with Honshoki on the day of the accident that had killed his father and brother. He hadn't thought about either time in years, but now, with the hard stone of the bench

beneath him, the air thick with dust and sweat, the chatter and laughter of half a dozen conversations, the memories crept back. Was this why Honshoki had been so insistent that he dance? So that he could sit in the kiva and remember these things long forgotten? It was in a kiva that he'd received his secret initiation name, Tawayamtewa, or Sun Has Risen, that he'd felt the whip on his back during the ritual flogging, and gasped from the pain, trying not to cry out. The priest was supposed to strike him four times but after the second, Honshoki had taken his place.

"This is a good boy," he'd said. "I'll stand in his place." And so, as was the right of any uncle or ritual father, Honshoki had bared his back and absorbed the lashes meant for Tom.

And on the day of the accident, Tom had pressed his face against Honshoki's bony frame, the old man's voice low and comforting as Tom wept. Memory was a funny thing. He had cried inconsolably that day, and yet now he remembered little of his father and brother, remembered much more vividly the feel of Honshoki's arms around him. And he was glad, after all, that he'd agreed to dance.

In spite of the early hour, it was hot. Tom opened his bundle and wiped his face on his T-shirt.

"One dance and you're hot?"

Tom looked up in surprise. Stanley, his uncle, grinned down at him. Stanley had more or less watched over Tom through all the practices. He was bare from the waist up, as was Tom, their skin rubbed green with a dye. Stanley was about a hundred

pounds heavier than Tom, and his belly hung in folds over his kilt. Tom suspected he'd come to see that Tom got his mask on correctly and on time. Part of his duties as an uncle. But he made them seem like those of a friend.

Tom tossed his shirt back into his bundle and Stanley's eyes filled with amusement.

"That sun is only going to get hotter. You'd better start thinking cool." He pointed to the ruff and mask. "I'll help you with this."

Tom nodded and tried not to squirm while Stanley fit the spruce bough ruff around his neck and then pulled the mask down over his head, tying it on each side to the ruff.

Though he had tried it on before, he had a moment of claustrophobia as the mask covered his face. His field of vision was reduced to two small rectangles, and the spruce boughs scratched at his skin. But he was surprised, even after handling it in the kiva, at how light the mask was, and how securely it rested on his shoulders.

Stanley stepped back and gave him an appraising look and then a pat on the arm, and turned to put on his own mask. He wouldn't speak to Tom again until the mask was off, because once in the costume, the dancer was not spoken about or thought of as himself, but as the persona of the kachina. Anyone referring to the dancer would call him "Tom's friend."

When Stanley had his own mask on, he motioned Tom to the end of the line that was already forming in front of the kiva's opening. Stanley's mask, like his own, was

green, with an oblong, protruding mouth, and a pair of horns painted black with green zigzags that curved back like those of a mountain sheep.

Tom took his place at the end of the line, the tortoise shell strapped to his knee rattling with every step. He watched the kachinas exit one by one, impatient until his turn finally came, and then he climbed out into the light, into a wall of heat. He remembered Stanley's advice to think cool. Pure fantasy.

They marched single file into the plaza, rattling and ringing, lining up facing the west, eighteen men dressed as curly-horned sheep, eighteen supplicants asking for the rain that makes good grazing, asking that no wanderers stray from the flock. Honshoki sprinkled corn pollen into the air, and the drums pulsed into life. The dance had begun.

At first, Tom went through the motions in a fury of thought, worrying over each step, acutely conscious that Honshoki, standing to the side of the line of dancers, would be watching, that the Wellmans had driven up from Tucson just to see him dance. Gradually, though, the music of it conquered him--the heavily accented steps, the clack of the tortoise shell rattles and the unbending bass of the drums. His body relaxed into the rhythm, moved with it, and the words and motion melded into a single force, pulsing, swaying, suspending time and thought by the sheer power of being. When the dance stopped, Tom realized he had no memory of it, only a strange, exultant feeling deep inside him.

The drummers changed directions and the dance began again. The rhythm captured his body, as before, but this time his mind stayed free, removed from his

motions, so that he was aware of the heat and dust, aware of the old women with the brilliant, Spanish-style fringed shawls over their heads sitting on fold-out chairs in front of the old stone houses, aware of the countless observers lining the roof-top, legs overhanging and feet tapping in air to the beat of the dance, aware of the tourists scattered among the crowd, trendily dressed and looking determinedly open-minded. He didn't see the Wellmans--too many people and he couldn't really look--but Tom knew they were somewhere in the crowd. He didn't worry about it. The euphoria of the first dance clung to him, draping him as if it were part of his costume. He kept his feet in the right rhythm and his voice on the right words, while he watched the line of rams' heads in front of him, saw the Yowe kachinas doing their own steps off to the side, saw Honshoki tossing the corn pollen and singing out instructions to the dancers.

And then, an enormous Yowe drew alongside him and began dancing just ahead of Tom on the outside of the line. He must have been over six and a half feet tall. Tom couldn't remember seeing anyone that size in the kiva before the dance; he couldn't remember ever knowing a Hopi that tall.

The Yowe stayed beside him, mimicking him, dancing the same steps, and singing, too, his voice a deep, resonate bass that cut through the noise of the dance. Was he dancing beside him deliberately? Tom wondered. A caution to the new dancer to do everything right? Tom threw himself into the motions with renewed effort.

Like the other Yowes, this one wore a black, embroidered kilt, was bare-chested except for a turquoise necklace, and had a foxskin cape over his back; like the others,

this one held a Franciscan staff and cross in one hand, and in the other, a large bone knife.

He was like the others but different. It wasn't only his size, but an intensity he radiated, as if the colors in his costume and skin were of a deeper hue than the others.

Too much skin, Tom noticed suddenly--the Yowe was wearing nothing underneath the split kilt, not even a breechclout. Tom wondered what the tourists thought of that.

And then there was the knife, at least a foot long, and stained red with what looked like blood. Only it can't be blood, Tom thought, because in this heat it would have dried and turned black.

The dance stopped; the drummers made one last change of direction. For a few moments, all Tom could think of were his aching legs and the sun burning down on his back and arms. He wondered how Stanley kept going with his extra weight. He stole a glance at the Yowe and was surprised to find him gone. Must be behind me, he thought. Then Honshoki's call came; the drum's pulse pounded once more, and once again Tom was dancing. And the Yowe was beside him.

He isn't wearing a mask. Tom wondered why he hadn't noticed that earlier. Perhaps because the Yowe's face was marked in the same way as the mask--slashes of turquoise paint over his eyebrows and running in parallel stripes down his cheeks. And his ears were painted as red as those on the other Yowes' masks.

Red paint. That was what he had thought was blood earlier. But when he looked at the knife to confirm it, he felt sick. Red drops ran off the knife and dripped into black puddles on the ground. He could have sworn it was blood.

A call from Honshoki and the dance ended. The kachinas filed slowly out of the plaza and back to the kiva, and Tom, at the end of the line, looked for the tall Yowe, but the kachina had vanished again.

Down the ladder, back into the dark, which was cool by contrast, but not cool enough. Tom struggled to take off his mask, bumping against one man and then another, the press of bodies against him making him feel faint. Finally he got the strings on his mask untied, and lifted it from his head, holding it carefully in front of him.

There seemed to be twice as many people as there had been before the dance. He squeezed his way toward the far end of the kiva where his bundle lay, wanting to get out of the crowd and sit down. He had about forty-five minutes to rest until the next dance began.

And then he saw the Yowe. He stood against the back wall of the kiva near the bench beside an open doorway that came up only to his chest. Tom couldn't remember a door there, but now it was clearly visible. Had it been covered before and he hadn't noticed it? The Yowe waved at him in what was plainly a gesture to come.

But was the wave aimed at him? He glanced around but found no one else looking in the right direction. The Yowe repeated the gesture. Tom stared. Why would the kachina want him? He started walking toward him, wondering if Stanley knew who

the man was. But as soon as Tom moved nearer, the Yowe turned his back and ducked through the doorway.

This is crazy, Tom thought. He made his way to the back, set the mask by his bundle, and then turned to the doorway. Even in the kiva's dim light he could see that removing whatever had covered the opening had generated a lot of dust. It hung in a haze around the doorway, which showed ragged edges as if it had been chipped out of the kiva wall. He stuck his head through and peered in, but saw nothing. The room was dark. No sign of the Yowe. But the room, this room he'd never known about, intrigued him.

He stepped cautiously through the opening onto a stone floor and paused, his eyes not yet adjusted to the dark. Then he saw something--a glint about fifteen feet in front of him. Metal, he thought. The silver from the Yowe's necklace reflecting the light from the kiva.

"Did you want me?" he asked and walked toward it. Too late he realized that where there should have been floor his feet met air. And he fell headlong, into the darkness.