

Fourth book in a series beginning with
Where Heaven and Earth Meet

Alone on the Prairie



By George Harvey

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Leonid Meteor Storm of 1833, 1888, Edmund Weiß

Chapter 1

Fear Strikes America

Dr. Bertram Caldwell dined as he usually did on Tuesdays, with his friend Father Leo Bouchard. When the meal was over and talk had run its course, he returned to his own apartment in a building just across the street. He did not feel quite ready to retire for the night, so he decided to read for a while.

He poured himself a small glass of sherry and went to his book shelves. He taught natural philosophy at St. Louis University, and most of his books were about various branches of science. As he looked for one that might interest him for an hour or so, he became aware of noise on the street. At first he thought some misbehaving students were quarreling, and he expected the disturbance to die away, but instead, it grew steadily louder.

Determined not to have his evening disrupted, he chose a book almost at random and took it to his easy chair. He settled down, put his feet up on his ottoman, and took a sip of wine. The voices were getting more strident, however, and before he could relax, someone was pounding on his door.

By the time he got to the door, it had come to sound like a riot might be breaking out, and he felt some trepidation. He was set to ask who was there, when he heard someone calling his name, "Dr. Caldwell! Dr. Caldwell! Please come quickly!"

When he opened the door, he saw a large number of people milling about. They appeared to be cowering in fear, first looking upward, then trying to cover their heads. When he looked up, he saw what made them so afraid. Meteors were falling so fast it was astonishing. Their trails seemed to fill the night sky.

People were crying out in some fear, asking, “What is this?” “Is there anyplace that’s safe?” “Is this the end of the world?”

Father Leo appeared. He also seemed a bit frightened, though Dr. Caldwell could not tell whether he was more frightened by what he was seeing in the sky above him or by the behavior of the people around him. A believer in both God’s mercy and science, Father Leo acted calm. He told one person, “Let’s find out what Dr. Caldwell says, before we get too excited.”

Dr. Caldwell looked at the sky. He had never seen anything even remotely like what was unfolding above him. He had never even heard of such a thing. He knew a bit about meteors, but what he was seeing was more than bizarre. They seemed to be countless.

He would reassure the people around him. These were just meteors, and they were only frightening because there were so many of them. Some people needed than that to calm down, however. He told them, “There is no need to be frightened. It is just strange to see so many meteors at one time.” As he said this, he looked up and wondered whether what he was saying was really true.



Hundreds of miles away in Mississippi, a gang of bounty hunters had captured a number of runaway slaves. The bounty hunters had once been highwaymen, but they had seen members of a competing gang lynched by an angry mob of law-abiding citizens who wanted to rid their town of crime. To avoid coming to the same end, they had turned to catching runaway slaves. Their lifestyle was a lot like robbing travelers, but it was legally sanctioned.

The gang settled down for the night. Men were put on watch with double-barreled shotguns and told to shoot to kill any slave who tried to run off. The order was given plainly, as a forceful reminder to the slaves that a white man could kill a runaway without fear of consequences from the law.

A couple of hours before midnight, one of the watchmen looked up at the sky, and what he saw terrified him. He roused the others, and all of them were quickly as frightened as he was. It seemed the sky itself was falling. Someone cried out that he would not stay where they were. It was too dangerous. Another asked him where he would go. The reply was that no place could be more dangerous than where they were. They fed each other's panic until they all ran off, each in his own direction.

The slaves were also terrified, but they had been used to fear. They also ran off, but they headed north together. The sky might or might not be falling, but they were going to Canada. If they had to face the end of the world, they would face it as free men.



A farmer in New Jersey saw the sky and immediately drove all his livestock out of the barn and latched the doors shut. He was afraid that the building would be hit by a falling star and set on fire. Once it was burning it would be impossible to get the animals out. At least some had a chance of survival, out in the open.

A fire marshal in Virginia rang the bells for a fire alarm. When the firemen showed up, he told them that no fire had yet been reported, but he felt certain that reports would come in soon. He wanted to be sure they were ready when that happened.

People all over the country gathered their families to pray. They called loved ones out of bed to prepare, though they did not know for sure what to prepare for. Perhaps it was to meet their Maker.



That was the night of the Great Leonid Meteor Shower. It could be seen in every part of the United States where the sky was clear. It started on November 12, 1833, before midnight. It hit a peak within two hours, and then it diminished slowly until dawn.

Of all natural events in the American history, it might have caused the most widespread fear. It was seen almost everywhere, by a huge number of people, and it set most of them into terror. There were some people who slept through it, but most of them lived in places where the sky was cloudy.

Of course, most people had seen falling stars before, and some of them had seen nights with multiple meteors. But this was not just one meteor here, followed by another one there. The shooting stars fell in numbers too great to count.

Many people who saw the sky that night were afraid of being struck dead. This was true regardless of upbringing, education, or social status. Many people expected wildfires and property damage from falling stars. They expected animals to be killed, homes destroyed, ships sunk, and cities laid waste by fires. Some people had the idea that after this night, there would be no stars left in the sky.

Some people quickly became much more religious, and many who already were religious believed that they were seeing some sort of omen of doom. Many Americans, ignorant and educated alike, believed that the judgment day might be upon them.

Scientists found it hard to describe the event. Some said the meteors were about half as numerous as snowflakes in a snowfall. Some said that forty might have been visible simultaneously at times, only to be followed immediately by more. Some estimated that about eight were visible per second, on average. At that rate, an observer could have seen about a quarter of a million meteors in that one night.

People asked questions, but the scientists had no answers. They knew that the objects falling were not stars. They knew that meteors fell to the ground, and those that did were called meteorites. But the scientists could not explain why there were so many. And they had no way to predict such an event.

The fear did not last long. The sky seemed normal the next night, comforting those who had worried that the stars would all be gone. There were almost no reports of damage or fires resulting from them. In fact, no one seemed to be hurt.

Ordinary people calmed down a bit. Some admitted that their fear had been needless. Many who had said the world was coming to an end seemed willing to consider alternatives.

The Great Leonid Meteor Shower of 1833 was an important event for science, because it was a starting point for the systematic study of meteor showers. Through that study, scientists came to see that comets and meteor showers were related, so the event also gave rise to a more systematic study of comets.



There was one group of people in North America for whom the meteor shower was a cause for joyful celebration. Pawnee tribal leaders had told their people for many years that if they pleased the gods, a great display of meteors would be seen on a date that would be November 12, 1833 to most Americans. They were watching for the meteor shower, and they sang and danced as the meteors fell.

The Pawnee priests knew a lot about meteor showers. They knew the annual dates for a number of them. They had known all about the Leonid meteor showers for generations, perhaps for centuries. They knew that the Leonids were especially numerous at regular intervals, and they had long predicted the event of 1833.

The knowledge of meteor showers was just a small part of their astronomical expertise. The Pawnee traditions were largely oral, but they kept records in pictures, including maps of the night sky.

Before the people in the rest of the United States first noticed the meteor shower on that night, many of the Pawnee had come out to watch for it. While ordinary people, throughout the country, stood

aghast at terrible celestial events, the Pawnee were celebrating with joy and honest pride. For those people, the falling stars were a sign of the great favor of Tirawa, the Father in Heaven.

Tirawa is the Creator God. Earth Mother is His consort. There are numerous other gods, including the stars they saw in the sky. And human beings are descendants of the stars.

Pawnee traditions were not simple, however. Understanding them required devotion to study. There were people of the tribe, priests and medicine men, devoted their lives to maintaining the traditions.

Scientists get their information by plodding through observations and hypotheses, tested by careful calculations. Their science follows the scientific method, and that is a system to be respected. But science uses numbers to make abstractions for study, and many scientists focus on abstractions of nature to the point that they get out of touch with nature itself.

The Pawnee elders, religions leaders, and even ordinary people had all been able to learn things by looking to nature and consulting their extensive traditions. And if these did not tell them what they they wanted to know, they still had other ways to find things out. In some cases, they could be given guidance by spirit animals.

Some of us may find it strange to think of living with nature, guided by spirit animals. But those who find that hard to picture should remember that Pawnee spiritual leaders, not scientists, had predicted when the meteor shower would come, decades before it happened.





Mountain Juniper, 1917, Mary Vaux Walcott

Chapter 2

A Guest From Heaven

One of those who celebrated the Great Leonid Meteor Shower was a young man who in time came to be called Ralph Livingstone. Like others of his tribe, he regarded his personal name as something not to be shared lightly, so we will just call him by the European name he later took, a name he shared rather easily.

Like many of the others in his village, he was elated by the meteor shower because it showed the great love Tirawa had for his people. The effect it had on him was profound. It even imposed on his sleep, bringing him vivid dreams.

One dream especially made him think he should consult the priests. Many Pawnee people have dreams in which spirit animals come to them to convey important ideas. Ralph had a dream in which a spirit wolf gave him a message.

The spirit wolf's appearance was noteworthy. Its fur was nearly all black, but it was grizzled, with white tips to the hairs. Its muzzle was almost white, and there were light gray areas of fur at the bases of its ears. Ralph was especially struck by its piercing yellow eyes. They made him feel that the spirit wolf could see into his soul and knew everything he had ever done.

The spirit wolf told Ralph he had been chosen by Tirawa, the Father in Heaven, for one special task. It was an honor he was allowed to decline, but he was the one Tirawa most preferred to take it. He would be asked to walk a long way to the west, perhaps for a week, find a particular stone, move it to a specific place of safety, and conceal it there. After that, he would be its caretaker, visiting it as he was needed. And one day, he might live near where it was hidden.

When Ralph reported this to the priests and elders of his tribe, they took care to consider it. He was not the only one contacted by spirit animals on this subject. Others had been told about the task, each about the part he could take in it. Only one would do the work. One other could go with him, but not on the day he found and moved the stone. Others could give advice and support.

Together, the people who had seen the dreams worked out what their tasks were. And they all felt great pride at being called to help in the work of the Father in Heaven.



It happened that among all the meteors of the Great Orion Meteor Shower that had fallen to Earth as meteorites, one that landed in western Nebraska was very special. It had hit the ground at a such a low angle that instead of burying itself in the ground, it bounced and rolled across the land until it fell into a stream. The meteorite was in shallow water, in a place where people might come into contact with it. It had to be moved so that would not happen.

The effects of contact could change a person profoundly. For a very few people, the effects could be a great gift, but for most people, the same effects would seem to be a curse. Because of this, its location and its nature were to be kept secret. Those few who were intended to receive its effects would be shown a way to it. However, someone would have to prevent those not intended to receive its gift from coming into contact with it. If they did come into contact, he would have to be there to help them cope with the effects.

Ralph took on the task that Tirawa had wished for him, feeling the honor of it. He had to find the meteorite in a stream that fed into the Republican River, a little more than two hundred miles from his village. The place was nearly at the edge of the lands where the Pawnee hunted.

To get there, he would travel on foot to avoid attracting the attention of anyone who happened to be out on the prairie, who might notice someone on horseback. His route would change often, to be hard to predict, and he would conceal his footsteps.

In time, he would come near to the place where the meteorite was waiting for him. At that point, his spirit wolf could guide him to the stone. He would have to go into the cold water of late November to retrieve it. And then, he would be guided to the place where it would be concealed.

Ralph's journey was really just careful walking until he found the stone. Then he had the problem of moving it. It weighed about a

hundred pounds, and he had to lift it from the stream. Fortunately, the stream was barely flowing, and it was very shallow where the meteorite lay, only a foot deep. The late fall weather was very cold, however. Ralph found the stone easily at the place he was shown by his spirit wolf. It was nearly spherical and rather smooth, though it was covered with large, rounded pits. It was mostly iron.

After getting the stone, he dried himself and warmed up at a fire he had already built. He was then shown the place to hide the meteorite, at the foot of a juniper tree, in a patch of sage brush. Prairie dogs had dug a depression in the earth, just about the size of the stone. There, under the vegetation, it would be accessible, but only by those who knew where it was.

Ralph was not fully prepared for the effects that contact with the stone had. Those who advised him were aware of what was likely to happen, but since they had never experienced anything like it in their own lives, they could not give him much specific advice. All they could tell him was that once he had become subject to the effects of the meteorite, he would have to be very careful that his thoughts were always well ordered, kind, and compassionate. He was to avoid anger, especially.

Ralph's work would not end with moving the meteorite. He would have to be ready to return to it at any time, whenever there was some sort of need. As unlikely as that might seem, such events did happen from time to time. Fortunately, a spirit animal could usually warn him of the coming of such an event in time, so he could walk the long way to prevent an emergency.

The spirit wolf also told Ralph something about the nature of life. He said that those who live in biological bodies tend to view anything that is not living in a biological body as dead. "But I can talk to you," the wolf said, "because I am not dead. I do not have a physical body, yet I am alive. A spirit is alive, even without a body."

Ralph was not surprised by that, but he did not expect what came next. The wolf told him, “There are also other kinds of life – kinds that human beings find hard to recognize. The meteorite has a type of life. You might not understand, but its history and experiences are with it as both knowledge and feelings. You should regard it as a living stone. As yet, it has no understanding of life on Earth, but it has its own wisdom about things it learned over the ages when it lived in the heavens.”



Not long after that, Ralph's spirit wolf returned. Ever since Ralph had made contact the meteorite, he was constantly affected by it, and one result was that he could see the spirit wolf quite easily while he was wide awake.

Ralph was told that missionaries were starting to be active in the areas of the central plains where the Pawnee lived. The spirit wolf suggested that Ralph be friendly and learn from them, because the Pawnee tribe would have to ally itself with White people.

Ralph had heard disheartening things about White people. When he asked whether they could be really good allies, the spirit wolf told him this: "As a group, they are utterly untrustworthy. Few of them have any sense of honor, and those who do are treated as though they were foolish by the others. White people will promise many things, but most have no interest in keeping their promises. They will do whatever they wish without thought to duty or moral obligations.

"They will demand that you give them land, but when you give it to them, they will only demand more. They will tell you to disarm, promising that they would protect you, but when you are attacked, they will only rarely help, so your people will die, with no defense, at the hands of your enemies. They will try to stop you from hunting,

promising to give you food. But they will not provide even half of the food they promise, and your people will starve.

"They will try to bring the traditional Pawnee way of life to an end, claiming that their ways are better. They will try to educate you, so they can make you more like they are. But to do that, you would have to be driven by greed, as they are.

"They will try to make you cast your religion aside and take up theirs. They will tell you that our Father in Heaven had a Son, who was one with the Father. They will say the Son came to teach, to heal those who suffer, and to save the souls of all people. They will tell you that He performed many miracles and preached goodness and love for all. In that there is truth.

"But their own ancestors murdered the Son of the Father in Heaven. They blame this on the ancestors of others. And though He preached love, they will tell you it is good to despise others because of that false blame."

Ralph was appalled. "Why would we want to ally ourselves with such dishonorable, evil people?"

"The White people are very destructive. They will destroy the land. They will make the water unfit to drink and the air unfit to breathe. They would destroy the heavens, if they could get to them. They will not think of leaving anything for anyone else, not even for their own children. But Tirawa wants to save them, so they may help save the Earth. Like you, they are the Children of the Most Highest.

"To save them means teaching them better ways. The Pawnee people can help Tirawa by teaching a better way of life, based on dignity and honor, rather than wealth and greed. That way of life can save the Children of the Most Highest, as it saves all things on Earth.

"They can learn from other nations, but you have a special message. You can be important for saving many lives and for saving much of

what is in nature, but to do that, you must show friendship even to those who have a deeply flawed sense of right and wrong, even to those who harm you, that you can teach them honor."

Ralph said with a sense of wonder, "So we must be friendly with people who have no honor, and with people who would destroy the lives of their own children out of greed, as they destroy the Earth."

"It is sad, but yes. Your people will surely suffer cruelly. You must all be patient. But great good can come because of your suffering. This is your sacrifice, but through it, you can create a great good."

Because of that council, Ralph learned as much as he could about the ways of White people. To accomplish that, he undertook to adopt the ways of the White people, when he could do so with honor.



Ralph was very busy for quite a while. Given his mission with the meteorite, he was instructed very carefully by his elders to be a medicine man. That seemed most fitting, but it required a lot of attention, because the Pawnee traditional systems are not easy to learn. His mission, however, made his education unique.

He married a woman who understood the nature of what he was called to do and how she could help. When missionaries arrived in 1834, both of them started to study Christianity and the English language. They learned to read and studied the Bible. In the eyes of the missionaries their case was an important success. Indeed, it was especially important because nearly all of the Pawnee stubbornly resisted conversion.

Finding that he would be given a Christian name, Ralph wanted to choose it carefully. He consulted a friendly man in the missionary group, John Fraser, about the names. John had brought books on names with him to the mission, because he had expected requests of just this type.

Ralph explained that the names he chose should reflect his nature and history, referring to two things. One was the advice of a wolf, and the other was a living stone. After a short study in his books, John told him that the name Ralph means “wolf council.” John did not have to look up Livingstone, which was in use in northern England and Scotland. So Ralph was baptized with those names. His wife chose to be called Juniper, after the tree that gave shade to the living stone.

The missionaries hoped other members of the tribe would follow the examples of Ralph and Juniper, but that did not happen. Indeed, Ralph and Juniper had their children baptized and taught English, but they did not help the missionaries convert other people.

Making them feel worse yet, the missionaries discovered that Ralph and Juniper had no intention of giving up their tribal religion. When John asked about this, and Ralph asked, “Why would you care? We all worship the same God.”

John pressed him on this, and Ralph told him, “Jesus was asked how to pray. He gave us the Lord’s Prayer. It is a prayer to the Father in Heaven, who the Pawnee call Tirawa. And the thing that makes the prayer Christian instead of Pawnee is its language.”

John Fraser was exasperated. He asked, “Why don’t you just be a Christian like we are? Why do you need more than that?”

“My spirit animal guided me and my family to Christianity, but he did not suggest that I should give up being Pawnee. And he did not say anything about converting others of my tribe.”

John found this really hard to understand. Nevertheless, only days passed before he had a dream of his own. In it, he was approached by an angel who brought a wolf to speak with him. The wolf told him that Ralph had a mission from God, and John should help however he could. But if he could not help, at least he should not interfere.

The angel spoke, quoting scripture: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Somewhat overwhelmed by this dream, John Fraser felt he was compelled to bring the matter up to Ralph. He started by telling Ralph that he had dream, in which a wolf spoke to him.

Ralph stopped him right there. He said, “The wolf you saw, was its fur nearly all black, but with white on the tips of the hairs? And did it have a white muzzle and gray under the ears? Did it have yellow eyes that seemed to peer into your very soul. Is that what the wolf looked like?” When an astonished John said it was, Ralph said, “I believe that was the same spirit wolf who visited me.”

When John showed his shock, Ralph just said, in a matter-of-fact manner. “Well, he must have had some sort of message for you. Did he say you should do something?”

John said simply, “Yes.”

“Maybe that is what you should do.”





Missouri River Bluffs, Joseph Rusling Meeker, 1881

Chapter 3

Young Willie Livingstone

Ralph and Juniper had three children. Mary was born in early 1834, Martha came along in 1836, and William in 1840. All of them were baptized soon after birth, and all were raised in both the Pawnee and Christian religions. All of them were taught to speak Pawnee and to speak, read, and write English.

Ralph's spirit wolf told him Willie should be made ready to follow him as the guardian of the meteorite. He made sure Ralph saw that it would be best if Willie were taught to be a medicine man or spiritual leader, for both the Pawnee religion and Christianity. Also, Willie should be raised to take advantage of whatever opportunity might present itself for his education in both religions.

In about 1846, the missionaries who were teaching Mary, Martha, and Willie decided that they would be more effective elsewhere, because they had almost no success preaching to the Pawnee. They could only point to the Livingstones as converts, and they were quite unsure about whether that was really a success.

Ralph, however, felt it was important that his children to continue their education in Christianity and English language, so he asked to be allowed to go with some of the missionaries to their new home.

John Fraser and some others were going to live in Kansas, to help with Indians in an area on the Missouri River, just north of Fort Leavenworth. Those they would be teaching were mostly from the East and already Christians. Many of them were Lenapi, and the Livingstone family joined them.



The Livingstones spent the next several years with Indians who lived almost as though they were White pioneer families. They had log cabins with fireplaces and they raised garden vegetables. They still kept some of their traditions, however. They foraged for the wild plants that grew around them, and they hunted along the banks of the Kansas River.

For the Livingstone children, this was a time when they lived among Indians on the Prairie, but they were of unfamiliar tribes, and the way of life was more European than Indian. The Livingstones were the only ones who spoke their Pawnee language. They always spoke English with anyone outside their own family.

Mary was well enough educated that she was almost immediately helping in the school, teaching the younger children. She soon made a reputation for herself in that capacity, and in 1851, when she was not quite eighteen years old, a Presbyterian group suggested that she teach at another school for Indian children, most of whom were orphans of various tribes.

That school was at a mission on the Missouri River in northeastern Kansas. There, she met a young missionary named Malcolm Gordon, and they were married after a somewhat hurried courtship. By the middle of the next year, they had started a family of their own, with a little girl named Hanna. As Mary and Malcolm Gordon started their lives together, Ralph and Juniper Livingstone stayed in Kansas with their two younger children.



In about 1856, three things happened that affected the Livingstones. First, it became clear that young Willie should start more intensive instruction in the Pawnee religion. He was to learn as much as he could about the subject.

Second, partly due to the persistent interest of John Fraser, Willie was singled out by his missionary group as a possible candidate

for a more thorough Christian education. They hoped that Willie would be made ready to be a Christian minister, who would bring that religion to Indians, especially to his own tribe.

Finally, Ralph's spirit wolf told him that Willie would very probably be invited to take on the work of guardian of the meteorite, and he should be prepared to live alone near it on the prairie. This would take a special commitment on Willie's part, because living alone on the prairie was something the people of his tribe would not normally do. He would have to learn how to live alone on a land that could easily become hostile with little warning. Ralph's spirit wolf told him that Willie would have guidance given to him by his own spirit animals while he was living alone.

Ralph had been teaching Willie the Pawnee religion, but his family would have to return to Nebraska for other leaders in the tribe to take part in a more thorough education. So the Livingstone family moved once again to a Pawnee village, and Willie soon started a more intense education in his tribe's beliefs.



Even as Willie was studying the tribal religion, the missionaries were busy getting ready to send him away to study theology. Two schools were chosen because both were willing to accept Indians, and both could provide exceptional educations. Both had faculty members who hoped to see the souls of the American Indians saved, and so they were prepared to give Willie whatever help he might need. A benefactor helped bring these opportunities about. Sebastian Fraser was John Fraser's wealthy cousin, and while he had never been tempted to go into the field as a missionary, he was willing to part with some of his wealth to help.

Willie would start by going to Harvard, where he could study liberal arts. With a degree from Harvard, he would be able to go on to Chicago Theological Seminary for his master's degree. The seminary

said that Willie would only need to have earned his degree from Harvard to be admitted, and Harvard said it would accept him based on the endorsement of the missionaries and the promise of Sebastian Fraser that he would support the effort.

Truthful man that he was, John Fraser had told Sebastian of the possibility that Willie could earn a master's degree and then return home to be a priest or medicine man in the tribal religion. When Sebastian asked John why he should favor the effort in that case, John answered that he thought it was the will of God that Willie be educated, and some important good would come of it. Sebastian's faith in John's opinions was enough to gain his support.

Of course, there still had to be some thought given to the idea that Willie could live alone on the prairie. By this time, Willie had been seeing spirit animals in his own dreams, and they would guide him. He would not live on the prairie until it was necessary, however, and he could live in the village until that time came.

Also, it was not a given that he would always be alone. Both Ralph's spirit wolf and Willie's spirit animals said a time might come when another person, also a person of spiritual importance, might join him there. Of course, that person would have to be able to deal with the effects of the meteorite.

Willie had one sad event in his life about this time. That was the death of Malcom Gordon, the husband of his sister, Mary, and father of his niece, Hanna, now called Annie. At this time, Mary was visited by a spirit wolf, who told her she had to learn the path to the place where Willie would live on the prairie, near the living stone.

Willie took her there, so she would know the way. Since the path was so long, nearly two hundred miles, she told Willie that she did not think she would be able to retrace it by herself unless she had a written description of the way. He obliged her with a written guide for the route. The spirit animals said this would be important one day

for Hanna. The written instructions consisted of a list of markers that a traveler would see along the way, each a special natural feature.



Willie's spirit animals were noteworthy. He did not have just one, as most people seem to have. Instead he had many. They were prairie dogs, and they almost always came to him in a large group. They were almost always quite thrilled to be doing something important, even if they didn't know quite why it was important, and this led to all of them talking at once, excitedly. They sometimes yammered on for several minutes before leaving. And sometimes, in their wild rush to talk, they actually forgot to deliver the message.

Fortunately, there was another person who checked to be sure that the spirit prairie dogs actually delivered the message. She seemed to be a sort of spirit mother, perhaps the diva, of all prairie dogs, though most Christians who saw her image might have thought she was an angel. If she felt the need, she would visit Willie personally to see that he got the message her "children" had for him. She told Willie that it was important to their spiritual growth that they learn to do such things as communicate with others, but it was certainly important also that he actually got the messages.



Historically, the Pawnee have always lived in villages. Their lifestyle is built around the community, the clan, the tribe, and above all, the things they hold sacred. It was not easy for the elders to address the fact that Willie might live all alone on the Prairie. They believed that the very idea was strange. To deal with that, they devised a support system to help. Groups hunting in the area where he lived could take things he might need out to him. They gave him these things as they passed through the area.

Willie was not required to stay at a home on the prairie all the time. He would return to the village where his family lived, and he could

travel elsewhere, as he later did on several occasions. But most of the time, he would live near the meteorite.

Willie's main job was not to protect the stone, but to protect people who came along from coming into contact with it. This was a matter of increasing importance as more and more people passed by. The living stone was near what would soon become routes for cattle drives. When they were no longer used in that way, they would have roads laid down near them. So, the chance of some poor stranger stumbling across the stone would grow as time passed.

People could visit him. Some came because they needed the very unusual council he could give. Others came by chance, because they were lost, or for some other unforeseen reason. In any case, the prairie dogs let Willie know to be ready. And he could be out near the stone to prevent the strangers from getting too close to it.

Willie started learning about the meteorite by visiting it. Ralph took him to it so he could be prepared. Getting there was a long trip from their village near the mouth of the Platte River to a place on a stream feeding the Republican River in western Nebraska. They would walk that distance, just as Ralph had traveled when he went there for the first time.

Along the way, Ralph told Willie some of the things he would need to know to be the keeper of the meteorite. Ralph told Willie it had fallen from heaven to Earth, and a place had been found nearby where it could reside. He told Willie that he had been guided to it and had moved it to its hiding place.

Ralph also told Willie that as he kept watch over the meteorite, it would have effects on him that he might not imagine. Ralph had told very few people about this. He had kept nearly everything about the stone secret, except what he told a few of the priests.

Ralph had experienced the effects of the living stone when he found it, as a young man. He said it was as though his eyes and ears were

opened to perceive a different world, a bigger world that had been with him ever since.

Such an experience could be very confusing, Ralph said, and it required great self control. Importantly, the natures of what he saw and heard varied in accord with his own intentions or mood. Bad feelings put everything around him into turmoil, and to avoid being confused and distracted, Ralph had to to push aside any bad feelings he might have. When he was thinking calmly, without anger, envy, pride, or other self-centered emotions, the whole world was less confusing, and far more beautiful. This meant that he had to practice constantly to control his thoughts and feelings.

In time, Ralph had realized that he could see and hear not only what was attracted to him by his own thoughts, but also the things that were attracted to those who were near him. This was very useful. Many people can hide their natures and their malicious intentions, but very few can hide what their true natures attract to them.





Raising a block of Chicago buildings (Edward Mendel, 1857)

Chapter 4

Willie at Harvard

In 1858, Willie went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Harvard University was, just across the river from Boston. Since he had no experience at all with transportation by rail and had never even been in a town larger than Leavenworth, Kansas, Jan Broz, a missionary to the Pawnee, went with him.

For the trip, Jan was dressed in his clerical attire, and Willie had been given a suit. Jan planned this to keep opposition to an Indian's presence on a stagecoach or railroad to a minimum. It was clear that they were travelling for religious reasons, and in a time when fervor was still common, few people objected.

Willie and Jan started the trip riding to Omaha on horseback. From there, they got to Council Bluffs, Iowa, by taking a ferry across the Missouri River.

Iowa was rather thinly settled, so the only lighting for traveling at night was the stagecoach's own lamps. That was not enough to travel in the countryside at night, so the coaches were only out during daylight. Stopping often, they could only spend ten hours on the road each day, and that limited them to about sixty miles. Willie and Jan spent four uncomfortable days going from Council Bluffs to Iowa City, about fifty miles from the Mississippi River.

The trip took place in the heat of summer, and stagecoaches were often crowded. With four passengers, there was enough room, but there were times when there were six people on board. Willie felt a need to make himself as small as possible so he would not impose

on other people. He soon asked to be allowed to ride with the driver. He found that being out in the air was much more to his liking.

Willie and Jan Broz slept at stage inns. Such places could sometimes be quite comfortable, for those who could afford comfort. But for anyone else, things were not quite as pleasant.

Willie did not like the sleeping quarters in the inns, so he found places outside them that could be more to his taste. In some places, this meant sleeping on a bench or a porch rocking chair. One thing that he simply would not do was sleep in an area where people had been drinking alcohol. He could see such places were filled with ghosts who took pleasure in confusing people and creating havoc. He would simply not enter them.

When they reached Iowa City, Willie saw a train for the first time. He was astonished at the size of the locomotive. The drive wheels were nearly as tall as he was. He knew they were made of iron, and he compared them to the meteorite for size. He wondered how they could be moved to be attached to the axels.

Looking at the interior of the car, he counted the rows of seats and thought there must have been room for over sixty people. He knew the train had five cars, and it crossed his mind that all the people in the village where he lived could be carried by this one train.

Willie and Jan went by rail to Davenport. There, they changed to a train that would go to Chicago. The first thing this train did was to cross the Mississippi River on a bridge. Jan told Willie that it was only two years old, but it already had some history, as it had been at the center of a law suit. When it opened in May of 1856, it was the first railroad bridge to cross the Mississippi River. Then, after only a few weeks, it was struck by a steamboat and needed extensive repairs to open again in September.

Jan told Willie a bit about that suit. Since Willie understood almost nothing about civil law, Jan had to explain how the court worked,

with a judge, a jury, and lawyers who represented the two sides of the case. Jan was especially interested in the suit, because he had traveled across part of Illinois with one of the lawyers, a man who eventually won the case. For a long time, Willie did not remember the name, but he was reminded of it later, when he heard that the same man, Abraham Lincoln, was running for president.

Even after hearing about the bridge from Davenport, Iowa, to Rock Island, Illinois, Willie was astonished to see it. It was over a quarter mile long, with a section that could be moved out of the way for steamboats, so they could go by it.

This part of their journey, at two hundred and fifty miles, was about the same length as the trip from Council Bluffs to Iowa City. But where the stagecoach trip took four days, the ride by train across Illinois would be over in less than eight hours. Willie was amazed at the speed of the train as it moved. Riding on a train, he could not imagine anything going as fast as he was, aside from hawks or eagles. Owls, he thought, would be slower.

They left Iowa City early in the morning and were able to reach Chicago late on the same afternoon. Fortunately, Willie could see a bit of the city before they left the next day to go to New York. What he saw on that afternoon filled him with awe at the engineering abilities of the American people.

At the time they were there, Chicago was in the early stages of a massive transformation. The city was only about thirty years old. It had been settled before 1828, but it was not laid out until 1830. In the early days, Chicago had grown almost incredibly fast because of its location, accessible by boats from both the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.

Unfortunately the city was built on very low, swampy land. It was barely higher than Lake Michigan, and this meant that the roads did not drain well. As buildings left less and less land open to drain

the water from rain away, the roads were even wetter than they ever would have been otherwise. The wet conditions were not merely inconvenient; they were bad for people's health.

By 1857, Chicago's population had grown to about ninety thousand. With so many people, something had to be done about the muddy roads. So the citizens decided to raise the roads by four and a half to ten feet. Of course, to do this the major buildings all had to be raised also. When Willie arrived, he saw large buildings and even whole city blocks of buildings up in the air on jackscrews. In some places, thousands of jacks were being turned by hundreds of workers. Even masonry buildings were being raised.

Amazingly, while the shops, hotels, and office buildings were being raised on jacks, normal business was still going on inside them. People were shopping in stores that stood up on jackscrews even as workers turned the screws to raise them. Patrons slept in hotels as they were being jacked up. Some, who did not understand how quickly the work was being done, asked desk clerks why the stairs at the entrance were getting steeper each day.

Willie and Jan were a bit unnerved by the activity, almost expecting a building to collapse. Fortunately, they were able to spend the night in a house that was still firmly on the ground, the home of a friend of the missionary society. They were glad that they had the chance to see the work, but they were relieved to get away from it on a train to New York.

In the short time he was there, Willie had been astonished at the sheer number of people who had lived in Chicago, but he soon found that it was small, compared to New York City. He had not expected the constant bustle of the city, which had eight hundred thousand people living in it. Over night, he was waked up several times by sounds of people on the street.

At one point, Willie went out and looked at the sky at night. He saw that most of the stars were missing. He mentioned this to Jan, who told him that the city lights and the haze of smoke, even in the summer, had made it hard to see stars. Willie found this sad. His upbringing had emphasized the importance of stars, and in the bustle of civilization, they were lost to view. He knew that White people did not guide their lives to be in accord with the stars, but he found himself wondering what did guide them. Studying Christianity did not prepare him to understand this. He wondered whether they might be losing their way.

In the years leading up to the time that Willie got there, there had been a lot of activity to try to create a park in the heart of Manhattan. When he was there, the work to establish that park was in full swing. Buildings that had been on the park's land were torn down. A huge amount of earth was moved for landscaping.

Central Park was to be a half mile wide, and two and a half miles long. It seemed to Willie that the area was full of workers trying to create something that looked almost like nature, in the midst of a city otherwise bent on excluding nature altogether. He saw that there was a point to the park, but it felt in some way false. The park was not nature, but just something made to look like nature. Perhaps it was a counterfeit of nature. But people might have needed it.

At the end of the day, Willie and Jan went to a wharf where the next leg of their journey would begin, taking them to Boston. They did not go by rail, because there was no direct rail connection between the New York and Boston. The best rail connection ran to Albany, where they would have had an inconvenient train change.

The way they went was much more pleasant. A trip on the Fall River Line started with a steamship, which went overnight from New York City to Fall River, Massachusetts. From there, the line's passenger train ran the rest of the way to Boston. It was the way most people preferred to travel between the two cities.

Jan and Willie arrived at the pier in Manhattan in the late afternoon and took their places on the ship's deck chairs. They landed at the Fall River wharf at about 5:30 the following morning. They had nearly two hours to have breakfast, before the Fall River Line's train left from the wharf to go to Boston. They arrived at South Station at about 8:30 in the morning.

To get to Harvard University, which is across the Charles River in Cambridge, they took a railroad quite unlike the ones they had been on. The Boston Metropolitan Railroad is said to have been the most extensive conveyance of its type in the country. It was quiet and free of smoke, because its cars were not drawn by loud, sooty steam engines. They were drawn by horses.

Willie was deeply impressed by his travels. He was in awe of the sheer size of the United States, its cities, its farms, its forests, and most of all its transportation system. He considered what he felt was the nearly insignificant size of the villages of his tribe. He often wondered what he could possibly do of any significance in such a world. Whenever that happened, his spirit wolf came to remind him that his work was important to Tirawa.



Willie very soon began the rather challenging business of attending classes and lectures with large numbers of other students at Harvard. The classroom experience was like nothing he had ever had before. He understood that a university class had its own rules of etiquette, and he wanted to understand them before he would draw attention to himself. So at the start, he was very quiet.

He started out learning the basics of English composition. This was not very hard for him, and it was much easier than most of those helping him had expected. They had not really understood that Willie had spoken English all his life. Some were very surprised to

discover that he had been reading and writing English since he was five years old.

He took courses in French, which he found rather easy, because of his bilingual upbringing, and French was so very like English, a similarity lost on most students. His study of philosophy was not easy, largely because his own background made the subject seem so very odd. It started with a discussion of a belief that all things were made of water, which was new to him but made sense. But it quickly turned to logic, which seemed artificial. Nevertheless, he studied it carefully, because he knew it was important to Western thought.

He learned more advanced mathematics than he had ever imagined, and this was more difficult. He received some valuable help from tutors who patiently explained to him nature of algebraic variables, a concept that did not come easily. He was puzzled by the fact that one could establish the value X , only to find that it lost its value entirely for the next problem.

One subject Willie found very interesting was astronomy. He had the opportunity to do this after a couple of semesters. He soon became a friend of a Dr. Eli Becker, who taught an introductory course in the subject. Willie found Harvard's observatory exciting, and in time, he was actually able to study objects in the sky through the university's massive fifteen-inch refracting telescope, the largest in the United States, seeing stars, planets, and nebulae in greater detail.

Willie had brought with him a large paper copy he had made of a Pawnee sky chart. He wanted to see how an astronomer would react to it. The feelings Dr. Becker had about it illustrated the differences between the Pawnee and European ways of thought. Willie often thought about the experience.

Dr. Becker commented briefly on the fact that the Pawnee chart was not really very accurate. He noted that the "pointer stars" in Ursa Major did not line up with Polaris as they should. He then asked

about a large group of stars, observing that western astronomers did not recognize a constellation in that place.

Willie told him that the Pawnee people called it the Council of Chiefs, and patterned their villages after the stars in its shape. He said one of the missionaries thought the group was a drawing of a constellation called Corona Borealis.

Dr. Becker said he thought it was more likely to be a representation of bright stars of several constellations. "After all, why would you include Corona but ignore Cassiopeia? That wouldn't make much sense at all." Willie could see that Dr. Becker put great importance on how bright the stars and constellations were.

Dr. Becker then turned his attention to a rather dense group of stars near Ursa Major. "What are these? There is no constellation that looks like this. And they are placed where there really should be no constellation at all."

Willie told him that the same missionary had asked about them, and was shown where they were in the night sky. The constellation was Coma Berenices.

"Why would you put Coma Berenices on the map at all?" Dr. Becker asked. "Do your people have telescopes? The stars in that part of the sky are not bright enough to stand out. It's a part of the sky that had no name until someone wanted to flatter an Egyptian queen."

"The map is not made to be accurate for astronomical measurement," Willie said. "It is mean to be a visual record of parts of the sky that are important to the Pawnee people. Coma Berenices has to be on the map because of its importance, not because it is bright."

Dr. Becker smiled at this. "You might really like to look at Coma Berenices in a telescope. It is stunningly beautiful in even a small telescope, and in a large instrument, it has a vast array of fascinating objects leave us rather mystified. They are not stars. They're called

nebulae, and we can only wonder what they are. Astronomers get to see such things because they see astronomy as a science and have equipment to study the sky. Your people clearly do things for other reasons, and to them it is the basis of a mythology."

Willie answered this, "There are a some of other differences also. Our tribal leaders had predicted the great meteor shower in 1833 long before it happened. In fact, people were out waiting for it, when it began."

"When did they do that?"

"I don't know, exactly. I think it must have been before 1800."

Somewhat astonished by this, Dr. Becker asked, "Have they made any other predictions?"

Willie then told him that some of the Pawnee knew about stars that would not be visible in any telescope, because they were black. He had not intended to mention this. It was knowledge that might not have been meant to be shared with people outside the tribe.

Dr. Becker did not need to think to know that a black star could not be seen. He believed that it could not be studied, and so it probably had no value for science, even if the idea was true. He smiled a bit at its absurdity, and then he forgot all about it.



Willie learned a lot from many people while he was at Harvard, but he especially remembered one short set of humorous lessons taught to him by a mathematics teacher, Mr. Ethan Evans. They were called "Harvey's Laws" after the person who first presented them, a person who seemed not otherwise to be memorable in any way.

According to Mr. Evans, Harvey's First Law is, "If a large enough group of people believe something over a long enough period of time, it is probably safe to regard that thing as having some basis in

reality.” He explained that it was not really a law at all, but rather what might better be called an epigram.

Harvey’s Second Law builds on this, saying, “If a large group of people suddenly agree on the truth of some new idea, any connection between that idea and reality is most probably purely coincidental.” Again, it is an epigram, not a law.

Harvey’s Third Law states, “The likelihood of something extremely unlikely happening is extremely high.”

Willie did not understand how this could be. Mr. Evans explained it. “Suppose you have a small thunderstorm of the type that just pops up on a sunny afternoon. Suppose it hangs over a square mile of land, which you have mapped into quarter-inch squares. That land would have something over 64 billion little squares.

“Each square would have a one chance in 64 billion of being hit by the first drop of rain. We might call that extremely unlikely. But we can be sure that the first drop of rain will fall, and just as surely, it will fall on one of the squares. So the likelihood of a one-in-64-billion event happening is 100%.”

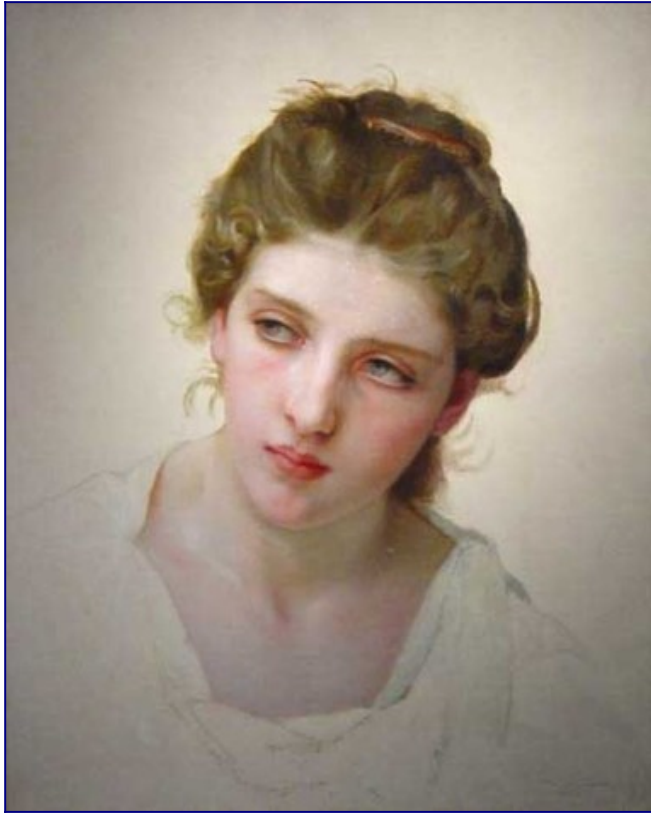
Willie asked, with a puzzled look, “What good is that?”

“It is the answer to the question people ask when something unlikely happens, ‘What are the odds?’ Harvey’s Third Law tells us not to be fooled by low probabilities.”

Finally, Harvey’s Fourth Law is, “There are things that Harvey’s Third Law doesn’t explain.”

Over the course of his lifetime, Willie actually did occasionally use Harvey’s Laws from time to time, as silly as they seemed to be.





Etude de tete de Femme Blonde de face, 1898,
William-Adolphe Bouguereau

Chapter 5

Charlotte Norway

Charlotte Norway was born in Weymouth, Massachusetts, in 1860. Her parents had been hoping for a son.

Since she was not what they wanted, they never noticed anything extraordinary about the things she did. If she had been a son, they would have shown the pictures he drew to their friends, but because she was a girl, they did not share her work. That is a form of neglect,

but it hurt them as much as it hurt her. People would have envied them if they had cared to take pride in her. But they didn't.

Charlotte enjoyed drawing pictures of houses in perspective when she was not yet five years old. At the same age, She was fond of drawing pictures of dogs and cats as accurately as she could.

Her interests went beyond art, however. She was five when she found out about numbers, and they became a new source of interest. She was fascinated by what happened as she worked with them.

By the time she was six, she was learning to multiply, and she noticed patterns in multiples of nine. She wrote a table of integers from one to ten, along with columns showing what happened when they were multiplied by numbers from one to ten. She quickly saw a pattern in column under nine. From one line to the next, the tens digits increased by one as the ones digits decreased, also by one. She performed a few tests with larger numbers and came to see that the digits in multiples of nine always added to multiples of nine. When she discovered that, she understood that magic was real.

She learned very quickly that other people did not really understand her. She was not bothered much for herself, but she felt sorry for them, because she knew they could not enjoy the magic.

In time, she found out about geometry, with its fascinating axioms and theorems, which led to proofs she could do herself. When she was twelve, she started borrowing books about geometry from the local high school. She studied them, and when she read that there were many ways to prove the Pythagorean theorem, she produced a one of her own.

To check her work, she took it to a math teacher, Mr. Taft. He spent a bit longer studying it than it took her to create it. Then he said, "This is impressive. You did this?" She answered that she had. He tested her by asking for an explanation. When he was convinced that

it was her work, he wrote a note to her parents to tell them what their daughter had done.

She took the note home and showed it to her father. He read it and told her in a stern voice, “Mr. Taft is a very busy man. Don’t bother him again.” Her mother just told her to obey her father.



Charlotte’s family moved to Boston when she was still twelve. The move gave her new things to study. She found there were libraries and museums full of interesting things to learn about. It seemed she spent years in them.

When she was fourteen, Charlotte started taking interest in the science courses at the high school she attended. In particular, she started borrowing slides of organisms from a biology teacher to look at them under a microscope in the laboratory. She was not a student of his, but he was happy to help a girl who was so curious.

When she saw how beautiful the cells of some plants were, she started drawing pictures of them. She drew them as she saw them, but without much understanding of what she was seeing.

The teacher saw that she was not getting everything quite right, so he explained some of it to her, and he taught her a little biology as he did. With better understanding, she was able to make more accurate pictures. When she finished a drawing, she showed it to him for his remarks.

Charlotte worked with pencil to do the drawings. When she had one that she was happy with, she would take it home and work it into an ink rendering. When that was done, she would bring it back to the laboratory, where she could color it with Conté crayons.

Coloring inked drawings was something she really enjoyed, and she started to use the technique for perspective drawings of the streets and buildings in Boston. She soon saw that the pigments of the

crayons were covering the inked lines, making them appear dull. So she devised a procedure of doing the coloring first and following that with drawing in ink.

To do this, she started with her original sketch, which was done using pencil. Then, she would duplicate it on fresh paper with very light pencil lines as an under-drawing. These lines provided guides for areas that were colored. Finally, she applied the ink to make the whole image sharp.

This process could be a challenge, because the wrong choice of crayon could make inking difficult or even impossible. The Conté crayons were made of clay and pigment with a binder. Charlotte had to experiment with brands of crayons to find one that would neither blot the ink nor block it from going down onto the paper.



When Charlotte was eighteen, she went to a commercial art studio to see about getting a job. The studio did specialty work, producing perspective drawings of buildings based on floor plans. The owner, Mr. John Dickson, looked through her portfolio and was impressed enough to hire her as an apprentice. Of course being an apprentice did not mean that she would make enough money to live on, but she was still able live with her parents.

Mr. Dickson gave her some instruction on perspective theory. She saw that while the theory worked, after a fashion, it was derived from imperfect observation, without any real mathematical basis. It consisted of rules of thumb, and from a mathematical point of view, it was just an incomplete jumble of ways to approximate things.

After she puzzled over this, she came to see that the problem was that perspective drawing were done using the wrong dimensions. When we make things, we use length, width, and height, but those are not the same dimensions we use to see the world. And we should use the dimensions we see with to draw things.

Using these insights, she worked out her own theory of perspective drawing based horizontal and vertical angles from straight ahead. She created a firm mathematical basis for perspective drawings.



About four months after she started work at the studio, an architect came in for a set of drawings. Mr. John McKeever had the plans for three buildings along a single street, separated by small lawns. He asked if he could get them all in a single drawing to show how they would look from the sidewalk in front of the middle building.

Mr. Dickson told him he was sorry, but that was not possible. The rules of perspective limited the drawings in some ways. A rendering had to be less than ninety degrees wide to avoid obvious distortions, and sixty degrees was a better maximum width. What Mr. McKeever wanted would be almost a hundred and eighty degrees.

They discussed this only briefly before Charlotte broke in. She said, “Actually, there is a way to produce accurate perspective drawings of whatever width you want.”

Mr. Dickson was annoyed that an apprentice would insert herself into a customer consultation, especially to make such an untutored assertion in such a rude manner. He told her, “Miss Norway, please stick to your work.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Dickson. I was just trying to be helpful.”

“Well, you aren’t. The rules of perspective don’t work that way.”

Charlotte felt compelled to reply. “That’s because the rules are not based on real mathematics. In fact they’re not systematically derived at all. They’re just rules of thumb that work within rather narrow limitations. Sort of.”

“Miss Norway,” Mr. Dickson said rather emphatically, “Please stick to reality. We want things that work, not some sort of dream.”

“It’s not a dream. I have the mathematics all worked out.”

“Miss Norway!”

Surprised by what she was saying, Mr. McKeever wanted to find out what she was talking about. He intervened. “Excuse me please, Mr. Dickson, I am very curious about this and might like to hear what Miss Norway has to say. Do you mind?”

Mr. Dickson rolled his eyes, shook his head, waved his hands, and said, “No.” He sat on a stool at a drafting table and pretended to study a drawing that happened to be there.

“Please, Miss Norway, go ahead. You said you had this worked out. Please tell us what you have.”

“The problem is that traditional perspective drawing works with the wrong set of dimensions.”

Mr. Dickson put his elbows on the table and covered his eyes with his hands. He moaned very softly.

Charlotte went on, “We think that we live in three dimensions, length, breadth, and height. Those are very useful dimensions if you want to put up a building or design a machine. But they are not the dimensions we use to perceive things. And renderings should look like what we perceive. Don’t you think?”

Mr. McKeever sounded puzzled as he said, “Okay.”

“Now, there are lots of dimensions. Longitude and latitude are two. They are all you need to measure the surface of the Earth. If we know the longitude and latitude of Boston, then we can locate it on the globe. So globe’s surface is two-dimensional because we need only two dimensions to locate things on it.

“Let’s imagine we start by facing south. We can find the positions of everything we can see by measuring the longitude – degrees right or left from due south – and the latitude – degrees up or down from the

horizon. Everything you can see can be referenced with just two dimensions: longitude and latitude.

“Of course, to measure something precisely in space, we need three dimensions. The third dimension is the distance to the object. But we can ignore perceptions of distance for renderings. We can’t get the distances well at all by just looking, and they aren’t used for perspective drawings. A person with one eye doesn’t perceive them, but might draw just as well as anyone else.”

Mr. Dickson was shaking his head slowly. He sat with his hands still covering his eyes.

Charlotte went on. “Because we see in longitude and latitude, what we see can be mapped on a sphere, which I call the ‘Sphere of our Perceptions.’ If we use that understanding and the dimensions it implies, we can do drawings that are of any width.

“We can formalize the mathematics of the traditional perspective drawings as projections of the surface of our Sphere of Perception onto a plane tangent to it at a point. The direction lines – the lines that follow the train tracks to a point on the horizon – are straight. But if a view is too broad, it will have distortions. And if we try to make it much too broad, it isn’t even possible.

“On the other hand, we can project the surface of the sphere onto a cylinder tangent to it along a great circle, such as the horizon. After we do that, we can cut the cylinder on a meridian and unroll it to create a plane surface. In this case, which is rather like a map using the Mercator projection, the problem with wide angle distortions disappears. The one thing that people might find unusual is that the direction lines are no longer straight. They follow curves.”

Losing patience, Mr. Dickson took his hands down from his eyes and said, “The direction lines are straight! We can prove it! Put a ruler on a direction line in a photograph! It’s straight!”

“Mr. Dickson, a camera projects the Sphere of Perception onto a plane at the camera back. It is the same projection we see in our perspective drawings. But you can see that the projection lines are curved just by looking at them.

"If you stand on a railroad track, facing a vanishing point, the tracks angle downward from that point. But when you turn ninety degrees, you can see the same tracks look horizontal, down at your feet. Another ninety degree turn, and the tracks are angling up again, but in the opposite direction to what they had been. Over a hundred and eighty degrees, each track goes down, levels off, and then goes up again. They are curved. In fact, they happen to follow sine waves.”

Mr. Dickson just shook his head and covered his eyes with his hands again.

Mr. McKeever glanced at Mr. Dickson and started to feel uneasy. He worried that Charlotte might have got into significant trouble by speaking up the way she did. He asked her rather slowly, “Have you actually done drawings like this?”

“A few. But they’re a lot of work.”

He thought about this for a few seconds. He was definitely feeling that he had pushed her into getting her employer angry with her. He wanted to stop the discussion. He said, “This is really interesting. In fact, it is fascinating and I want to hear more about it. But I am sorry to say that I don’t think I could use it just now.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I need a rendering that I can show to a group of investors. If I tried to use a drawing 30 degrees tall on the ‘Sphere of Perception,’ and 180 degrees across, it would be six times as long as it is tall. A drawing two feet tall would have to be twelve feet long. It would be hard to frame, hard to transport, and hard to hang, and hard to talk about with the people I want to invest in the project. The concept is

really interesting. It's a beautiful concept, but I would not be able to justify buying one. At least not at the moment."

He turned to her employer. "Mr. Dickson, your assistant may be brilliant, but she has convinced me that you are right. I need three separate drawings."

The two men concluded a brief discussion of the order, and then Mr. McKeever left the studio.

About five minutes after that, Charlotte also left. She carried with her a portfolio full of the drawings she did on her lunch breaks and a box full of personal odds and ends. She was so upset and angry that she had tears running down her cheeks. She was quite surprised to find Mr. McKeever sitting on a bench in the hall. He had stayed and waited in case she came along.

"Are you all right, Miss Norway?"

"I just got fired."

"I was afraid that might happen, and I blame myself in a way. That's why I waited." He paused, and then he continued. "But there may be some good news for you out of this."

"How could that be?"

"Well, your old employer might not have understood what you were saying, but that was because he never learned about mathematics. He's an artist, and that's the way lots of artists are. I understood what you were saying, for the most part. I got it well enough to see that it was real. I believe I could honestly recommend you for either of two openings I know of. Are you interested in looking into them?"

"Please!"

"Okay. I know an architect who is looking for an apprentice and a studio owner in search of a commercial wildlife artist. I assume you can do wildlife." Charlotte nodded. "Of course, if I were you, I

would choose a career in architecture. In fact, if you did, you could be the first woman to become an architect in this country. But you might prefer to be an artist. Would you like to know more about these? Which do you think you would like to look into first?”

“I think I might like to be a wildlife artist. Are these real offers?”

Mr. McKeever chuckled. “They are real. Miss Norway, I feel like I have contributed to your losing your job, and I would like to take you to the studio to introduce you. The owner is an old friend, and he has asked me to keep an eye out for talent.”

Charlotte and Mr. McKeever set out almost immediately, walking to a studio that turned out to be only four blocks away. Before she went in, she read the sign – just to know it was real.

Boston Nature Engravings specialized in sets of prints of flora and fauna. After a field artist did ink drawings and watercolors, another artist made a reversed engraving of the drawing. Images were then printed, which reversed them back to their original orientation, and watercolor artists hand-colored the prints, using the field artist’s watercolors as guides to the colors. The work was very popular, and the shop was always busy.

The studio was owned and operated by a Mr. Jonas Tenley. He was very interested when Mr. McKeever came in with a potential artist. Seeing that Charlotte was carrying a portfolio, he asked to see what she could show him.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Tenley,” Charlotte explained. “I didn’t put all these together with the idea that I would be applying for a job. It is just personal drawings I do in my spare time.”

“Ah,” Mr. Tenley said with a smile. “But that might be all the better. I would be ever so grateful if you show me what you have done. May I see?” He was so friendly that Charlotte felt quite comfortable letting him look at her work.

Leafing through the drawings, Mr. Tenley came to a one of a squirrel holding on to a small tree trunk in an unusual-looking pose. “Was the squirrel hiding from something?”

“Yes. A cat had just come into the yard.”

“Why wasn’t the squirrel hiding from you?”

“Squirrels seem to forget you are there, if you stay still for a while. When the cat came along, the squirrel might have been set to forget about me already. The cat took all its attention, and he moved to hide from it. So my model held still as I drew the picture.”

Looking further, Mr. Tenley came to a drawing of a mushroom that had been partly eaten by some animal. He studied it, smiled, and went on.

He stopped to look at a drawing of a fox. He thought it seemed odd. He asked what it was that made it look unusual.

“That’s a gray fox,” Charlotte said. “They have shorter snouts than red foxes. I saw it one evening over by the Fens. They climb trees really well, you know, better than cats. They’re also very shy. People don’t usually see them.”

Mr. Tenley nodded and said, “Ah. Of course.” Then he found one of her wide-angle renderings.

Mr. McKeever spoke up. “I heard Miss Norway describe how she does renderings like this. She developed the technique herself for wide angles. That was why I brought her to you.”

Mr. Tenley sounded very amused, as he said, “So she could use it to do wide-angle pictures of animals?”

“Well, ...” Mr. McKeever started.

Mr. Tenley cut him off, chuckling as he did. “Miss Norway, could you work on a trial basis? When could you start?”

“Today, if you like.”

“Could you travel away from home for a week? Your expenses would all be paid, but you would have to travel alone. The trip would be to do flora and fauna of Cape Cod. If you do as well as these drawings suggest, I could give you regular work.”

Charlotte was really surprised by the offer. It paid twice as much as the position she had just lost. She took it and spent the next week doing ink drawings and watercolor paintings on Cape Cod. After that, she was hired full-time. Her first assignment was to go back to the Cape to do more work there, and then on to Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket.

After she finished that assignment, Mr. Tenley sent her to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. He always tried to send artists to warmer climates during winter, unless the work had winter scenes.

Spring brought another surprise. Mr. Tenley asked Charlotte whether she might like to do studies of flora and fauna of the Great Plains. This was to be a special assignment, funded by a man, a benefactor, who wanted an extensive set of engravings relating to the area. The problem was that Mr. Tenley wanted to have some assurance that the artist who took the assignment would be able to stay on the job for a long time, at least two years. He wanted the style of the art work to be consistent, so he did not want to have multiple artists.

He said the job would possibly expand to include more than just flora and fauna. At some point, it could have portraits of Indians, men at work, railroad operations, riverboats, towns, cities, and a lot more. Her expenses would be paid, but if the job expanded as he hoped, it could last five years or even longer.

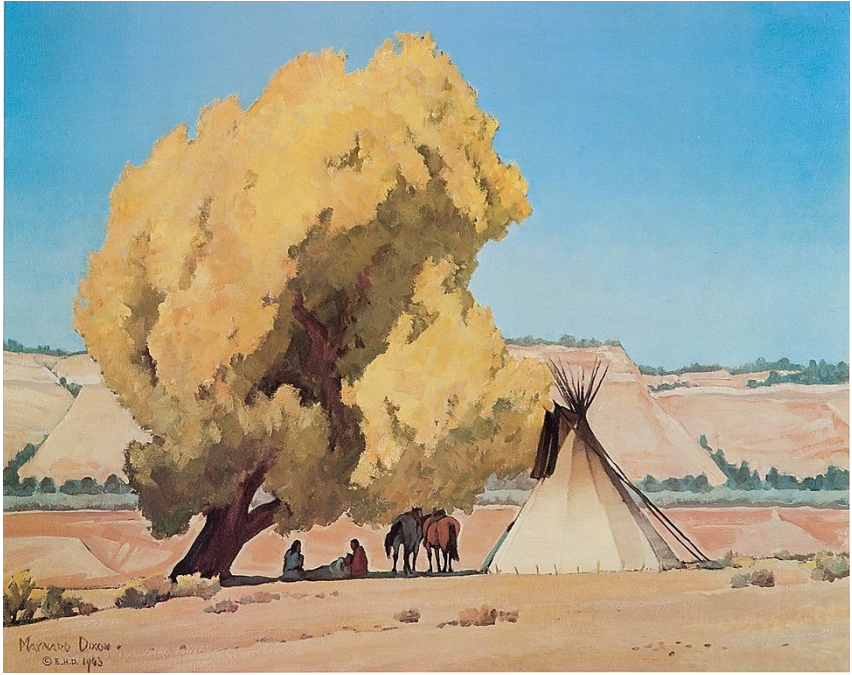
During the time she was to be on the plains, she would work at sites between Canada and Mexico, between the Mississippi River and the mountains. She would send drawings and paintings to the studio in Boston at least every week or two, together with notes about each

image. She would give details on where the images were done, as precisely as she could. And she would need to give information on where she would go next, so they would know how to contact her. Her work would start on the route of the Union Pacific Railroad, but after that, for the most part, she would be able to go wherever she wished, whenever she wished to go there.

The benefactor would have to confirm the order, Mr. Tenley said, and that could take years or not happen at all. Nevertheless, he wanted to let Charlotte know of the possibility.

In later years, she sometimes thought about being fired. She often chuckled when she did. It was painful at the time, but she was very glad that it had happened.





Lazy Autumn, Maynard Dixon, 1943

Chapter 6

A Home on the Prairie

Each summer, during the four years he studied at Harvard, Willie Livingstone went back to the village where his people lived in Nebraska. There, he worked hard to learn the Pawnee traditions, which were both so like and so unlike those of Christians.

His studying left nearly no time for anything else. When he was not studying, he was on the trip between home and Harvard. Much of the time in travel was by stagecoach, which he did not enjoy at all, but he did learn to use the time for contemplation.

It is not that Willie's life in Boston was all work. There is one thing about the Boston area that Willie enjoyed above everything else, and that was seafood. Whenever he could save up enough money, which really was not so much, he would walk across the bridge to Boston, for oysters at the Union Oyster House. It was a treat that he missed later in life.

After Willie was awarded a degree from Harvard in 1862, he went to the Chicago Theological Seminary to earn a master's degree. While he was there, he was especially interested in world religions and the similarities and differences among them.

One thing that really fascinated him was the term "Chosen People," and its implications. He saw that the Hebrews of the Bible were the chosen people, but they were not given special treatment to make them successful or powerful. In fact, they were not considered at all special by most other groups. Willie asked himself, what were they chosen for? What does it mean to be chosen? Being chosen seemed

to mean the Hebrews would be a light to the heathen. That was a joy to some of them, but probably to only to a very few.

They were not chosen to be an example of how people could be especially happy, or wealthy, or better off than those around them in the view of common people. Being chosen seemed almost to mean that they were intended to be the objects of other people's hatred. It certainly was not meant to be a blessing of riches. Perhaps it was a blessing of opportunity to prove their worth. Perhaps It could be a gift of honor in Heaven, in the afterlife.

Willie's father believed Tirawa had chosen the Pawnee to take a place in saving the Earth from people who had no honor. They were given no guarantee that they would benefit in any material way. On the contrary, it seemed they would be treated despicably by White people, and Willie wondered whether this might be *because* they were chosen. In this respect, they could be very like the Hebrews.

He never mentioned in his thesis that he regarded his own Pawnee people as a chosen people of the American plains. As he pondered, he thought perhaps they were not the only chosen people. Perhaps some people were chosen for one thing, and some for another.



In the spring of 1865, Willie earned his master's degree in theology at the Chicago Theological Seminary, and then he went back to Nebraska to make his home. He planned to live a sort of double life, partly in his village in the eastern part of the territory and partly near the living stone. He travelled to the stone's site at least twice each year, and as he did, he prepared a permanent home there.

Some of the missionaries who taught him expected that as he taught his people, he would present them with conventional Christianity. He did that, though in a way they did not expect. He included things that were relevant to the Pawnee culture and spiritual beliefs.

In this, he felt he was doing what other Christian ministers had done in the past. The distinction was that while his observations were based on Pawnee traditions, those of most Christians he knew were at least partly made up of European pre-Christian traditions. Willie focused on the things his tribe had held sacred for as long as they could remember, such as maize and stars. He respected spirit animals, both his own and those of other people. By contrast, Christians based in European traditions focused on Christmas presents and decorations, Easter eggs, and philosophical and ritual concepts that arose from ancient pagan religions.



At that time, railroads were being built, and America was changing because of them. North Platte, Nebraska, was established in 1866 with the expectation that the Union Pacific Railroad would soon arrive. The rails got there in 1867, and soon after that they got to what is now Ogallala. That town was only about a hundred miles from the living stone. Modern American life was moving onto the prairies, and things would change.

Some of these communities did not grow very quickly, even though they were important rail stops. They became more important rather suddenly, when the Union Pacific and Central Pacific met in Utah on May 10, 1869. Then, like the other towns along the route, Ogallala had a station that connected passengers with San Francisco and New York. The world was changing.

Trains were passing only a hundred miles from the site of the living stone, where it lay under its juniper tree on the prairie. The Father in Heaven knew that cattle trails would soon pass near the stone, and in time, roads would be laid down near the trails. The job of guarding the stone was getting to be more important.

Willie started to feel pressure to spend more time out on the prairie. A number of spirit prairie dogs visited him to say that he would soon

be needed out near the living stone. And so, early in the summer of 1867, Willie went once more to where the stone was living, to start making his home in the southwestern corner of the state. At first, he was only living there part of the time, trying to understand the land so he could put his home in the best place possible.

His hope was to live in a small version of the type of earth lodge his people lived in when they were at home in their villages. Such a lodge would take much more time to build than it would in a village, because the materials he would need for it were not easily available. Until he could finish it, he lived in a tipi, as the Pawnee did when they were hunting in groups out on the prairie.

Pawnee lodges used a lot of relatively light roof poles, but the poles rested on four vertical posts stout enough to bear most of the weight of the roof, and these four could be quite heavy.

There were very few trees on the prairie, and Willie was reluctant to cut any that were there. He thought that the poles would best be brought to the site of his lodge from areas where trees were more abundant. The people of his tribe understood this, and brought posts to help him. They regularly visited, bringing things he needed.

As it was built, his lodge was also be a bit different from the lodges Pawnee people built in their villages. Most obviously, it was quite small. Like some other lodges, it had a door and windows that faced the four directions. In Willie's lodge, however, the windows were glazed, and the door was solid and hung on hinges. This made his lodge less drafty. Willie's lodge was actually rather cozy.

Thinking about this, he considered that White people did have their own kinds of wisdom. Then he chided himself because such thoughts were uncharitable. White people might lack charity, but he did not need to. And he did not really need to reassure himself about the value of their science and engineering. With his lodge closed in, he would need far less fuel to be warm.

The windows and door were important for more than ventilation and light. They were portals for viewing the sky, important for keeping in touch with nature and the heavens. The windows were set up to be removed easily, so he could see the sky without glass in the way.

All of these things were subjects of much thought. Willie did not feel pressure to build the lodge in a hurry.



The growth of the nation was not uniform. On the plains, it started with a few railroads that stretched westward like threads from the Missouri River. As the rails were laid down, towns were established along them. But the railroads were far apart, and the areas between them were broad.

The railways started to be built in earnest with the end of the Civil War. As they proceeded westward, towns were created along them, a few of which became railheads. Trails came from up from Texas so cattle could be driven to the railheads.

With the railroads in the area, farmers could settle on the land, and of course they fenced the land. When that happened, they blocked the older trails, making them difficult for cattle drives. Newer trails opened, each a bit farther west than the one it was replacing. And so, Ogallala became the terminus for a new trail from the south, and it passed close to the living stone.



Though Willie did not actually move to live out on the prairie full time yet, he was already acting as custodian of the living stone, as people passed it increasingly often. In 1867, when he started living near it in his tipi, most of the time.

That year, the spirit prairie dogs gathered around him to tell him that a man was coming, so he acted to keep the visitor away from the

living stone. Willie was already staying in his tipi, so he was just about ready for the visit.

The man was Jim Clarke, who had decided to take a short cut to find a young woman he had fallen in love with. It was an unwise journey, through wild country. The land was almost completely deserted of human population, apart from hunting parties of various tribes. But Jim was young, not yet twenty-one, and for people his age, love just about always seems to triumph over wisdom.

By the time Jim got near Willie's tipi, he had lost his horse, and he had no idea which way to go. He had sunk into despair, having come to understand the real possibility that he might not be able to find his way back to civilization before his life came to its end.

When Willie was warned of the visit by the spirit prairie dogs, he saw that he could help, not just keeping the young man from danger, but showing him which way to go. When Willie asked the prairie dogs what they could tell him about the horse, they explained that the animal was actually rather near.

The horse, a mare named Daisy, really had not wanted to get away from the young man. He had treated her well and even gave her lumps of sugar. But when they got separated, he got frightened and yelled for her, frightening her in turn. As Jim wandered across the prairie, Daisy had stayed near enough not to lose him, hoping that he would calm down and be nice again.

Willie understood the underlying situation as soon as he heard the news. He returned to his tipi and changed his clothes. He thought Jim would feel threatened if they met while he was dressed as an Indian, so he put on a pair of overalls and a gingham shirt. Dressed in this way, he looked like a farmer, though his hair was long and braided. Also, when he spoke English, he sounded just like any American with European ancestry.

Willie saddled his horse and rode out to meet Jim. Jim's joy at being found was clear as soon as Willie was in sight. Willie asked him immediately, "Are you lost?"

"Oh, am I lost! Where am I?"

"Out in the middle of the prairie, pretty far away from anywhere. But we can get you back to where you want to go, I think. Don't you have a horse?"

"I did, but she ran off."

"Well, let's start by finding her."

"I can't find her. I spent two days trying. Do you have anything to eat? Do you have water?"

Willie reassured Jim, saying, "I have food and water, but what's your name?"

"I'm Jim Clarke."

"Nice to meet you, Jim. I'm Willie Livingstone."

"Nice to meet you, too."

"Let's start with your horse. Did you get along well with her? Did she like you?"

"I think so. I don't know why she ran off."

"My guess is that she just liked the idea of a little freedom. And then, when you tried to call her, you sounded frightened, which made her frightened, too. And then, when you got demanding and called to order her to come to you, you scared her more. Of course, I could be wrong. Did you ever give her lumps of sugar?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Lots of people give their horses lumps of sugar, from time to time. Did you call her with a really friendly call when you wanted to give her sugar?"

"Yes." Jim was starting to look curious.

"Do you have any sugar on you?"

"No, I ate it."

"Well, I have a couple of pieces of rock candy in my pocket – for emergencies. Let's see how she likes that."

"But she's not here."

"She could be if you call her nicely. My guess is that she's just over that rise." Willie offered Jim a piece of rock candy. Then he said to the very puzzled looking Jim Clarke, "Try calling her in the way you would to offer her a lump of sugar. Don't make it be loud, just make it friendly – loving even."

Jim called out, "Daisy. Sugar, Daisy. Come for sugar." His tone was slightly subdued, but it certainly sounded endearingly warm.

After about twenty seconds, Willie pointed to the rise. Daisy was just coming over it. The truth is, even before Jim called, some spirit prairie dogs alerted her to fact that he would call, so she had been heading in the right direction already.

Jim was flabbergasted when he saw her. "How did you do that? How did you know she was there?" He looked wide-eyed at Willie.

"It's what some people call an 'informed guess.' That's the same rise you came over. I think she was following you." Willie went on, saying. "Now, let's get you some food."

"Oh, thank you!"

"I should tell you a couple of things," Willie said. "First off, I'm a Presbyterian minister. In fact, I have a degree from the Chicago

Theological Seminary. But the second thing is that I'm also Pawnee, and while I'm out here on the prairie, I live in a tipi. So don't be too surprised by that."

As Willie said this, Daisy was ambling up to them. She was still wearing the saddle she had when she ran off. They walked to the tipi, which was not far, and Jim was really happy to get some food. It was mostly corn and buffalo pemmican. Daisy was really happy when her saddle was taken off. Jim and Daisy stayed for the night, and then they headed south, following directions Willie had given to Jim so he could get to where he wanted to go.



Willie began building his lodge in earnest in 1869. He was given supplies, almost everything he needed, by Pawnee hunting parties that passed into the area where he lived on their hunting trips. The visits were planned, and they knew what to bring.

The first things they brought were posts, poles, windows, and the door. Soon, they brought a small pot-bellied stove and stovepipe that Willie had asked for. Fuel would be important, of course, but it did not have to be wood. The Pawnee visitors always asked what he might think he needed. They did not know exactly why he was there, but they did not that it was important. They wanted to help.

Willie built his lodge just on the far side of a rise from the stream where the living stone had been found. It was about half a mile north of the stone itself, which was same side of the rise. Because of their placement, neither was visible from the stream, and the distance between the lodge and the stone ment that visitors could stay with Willie without being affected easily by the stone.

Willie did not have much in the way of demands on his time, and building his lodge was not urgent, so his time living in a tipi was rather contemplative. Nevertheless, his lodge was ready to live in long before winter of that year.



Over the next few years, Willie had several unplanned visitors, most of whom were lost. There were events, however, that we should mention. One was in August of 1873. A Pawnee hunting party was attacked nearby, in what is now called Massacre Canyon. Willie was warned by spirit animals that a large war party was approaching, but he was not told that a Pawnee hunting party was near. He put a note on his door and went to town for safety.

He was angry when he found out that the war party had attacked the hunting party and killed a large number of its people. He felt he should have been warned that the Pawnee hunters and their families were there, so he could have warned them. Anger, however, was not an option, as he knew. It attracts spirits a wise person would avoid.

He was told that there was an important reason that he had to stay alive, and if he went to warn them, he would almost certainly have been killed. He was reminded that we are really spirits, and our physical bodies are just places to stay while we are on Earth. Those who died in the massacre returned to their true home in heaven. He gave these ideas a good deal of thought.



Over the next several years, a number of people came by, some accidentally, and some not. A couple of these people were important in Willie's story. The first came with one of the the early cattle drives on the Great Western Cattle Trail, which was opened in 1874, not many miles from Willie's lodge. The visitor was Father Dónall McGowan, a Roman Catholic priest.

Father McGowan was intent on saving souls. In this, he was quite self-sacrificing. He had often heard of the licentious behavior of cowboys who went on cattle trails, and especially when they got to their destination and were paid.

He was horrified when he learned that they spent almost all their money in saloons and brothels, exhausting what remained of it in card games. He decided to save the souls of the cowboys.

In the first year the Great Western Cattle trail was in use, he got permission from a cattle owner to join a drive to give spiritual support to the cowboys. The drive had twelve cattlemen, a cook, a man who took care of the horses, and one priest. It also had nearly 3,000 cattle.

The man who organized the drive told him he would have to sleep near the chuck wagon. He understood the reason for this when the cattle stampeded for the first time. Immediately, the cowboys sprang into action, turning the direction of the stampede until all the cattle were running in a great circle. And so they ran, until they were worn out. Fortunately, the chuck wagon was in the middle of the circle, and was never in danger of being overrun.

Father McGowan was not in much fear of bad behavior during the drive. The cowboys were not permitted to drink alcohol, because they always had to be ready for anything. There were no women to distract them. But they did play cards, and he broke up card games whenever he could.

He also scolded them whenever he heard them swear. And he tried to make them pray before they bedded down. After a stampede, he got some to say prayers of thanksgiving for being saved.

Late one afternoon, a cowboy came up to him and asked if he was feeling well. He said he was, but the man said he looked ill and took him to the cook, who did healthcare on the drive. The cook said he looked pale, and gave him some medicine to help him sleep.

He woke up the next day feeling very confused. At first, he was not even sure where he was. He was alone, and that felt wrong to him. After puzzling for a couple of minutes, he remembered that he had

been with cowboys, cattle, and horses, but they were nowhere in sight. He started to wander.

By the time the spirit prairie dogs alerted Willie, Father McGowan was already sitting under the yew tree near the living stone. When Willie learned what had happened he ran immediately to help.

Later, he scolded the spirit animals for allowing the priest to get to the stone, but they told him they had been told not to alert him, because it was important that Father McGowan encounter the stone itself. Why that was, they did not know, but they were doing what they were told to do by their spirit mother.

Father McGowan was nearly delirious with fear when Willie found him. As Willie approached, the priest pleaded with him. "Make them go away!" He said he was surrounded by mischievous spirits. He could see and hear them, and he cowered in fear of them.

He saw that Willie was dressed as an Indian. That being the case, Father McGowan expect that Willie could possibly be as bad as the sprites. He was very surprised when Willie told him to say the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23. As he said them, the mischievous spirits went away.

Father McGowan looked astonished, but he was still very fearful. Willie told him, "They are attracted to impure thoughts, including fear, and they amplify those thoughts by making people more afraid, but they retreat from goodness. It's almost like they feed off fear. When you keep your thoughts on things that are good, they are unlikely to bother you. You will have to learn to do that always, to keep your equanimity."

In time, Father McGowan became a good friend. He told Willie the story of being left on the prairie, and he was saddened by Willie's observation that the cowboys probably intentionally drugged him and left him to die a cruel death. Leaving a man with no horse and no gun on the prairie could only be regarded as a horrible crime. In

fact, in many places it was taken as a premeditated act of murder. But Father McGowan came to understand that the cowboys might have thought he deserved such an end.



Over the years, Willie wondered many times why the spirit prairie dogs had not told him that Father McGowan was coming until after he had already been affected by the living stone and was seeing the spirits that were around him. It took him years to learn why this was.

It happened that Father McGowan had a trait that Willie never knew about because it was never made obvious while the priest was at Willie's lodge. There were times when Father McGowan had intense dreams, sometimes night after night, and when that happened, he talked, quite coherently, in his sleep.

After Father McGowan stayed for a while with Willie, he went to the Apostolic Vicariate of Nebraska, which had its headquarters in Omaha. He worked there for a while, and then Bishop O'Connor sent him to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

In Cheyenne, Father McGowan was known for his many acts of kindness. One of these was to provide shelter during December of 1883 to a man named Jack Whittaker, a man many people in that city called "Crackerjack."

Jack was a trickster, a professional cheat and fraud, but no one had warned Father McGowan about that. And while Father McGowan was putting him up for the night, Jack heard a clear monolog about the living stone. He never told anyone about this. But he took on a sort of life's goal to find the stone so he could get spirits to help him trick people.





Passenger Station, Cheyenne, Van Brunt & Howe, 1886.

Chapter 7

Charlotte in Cheyenne

From 1878 to 1882, Charlotte Norway took assignments to draw and paint scenes of flora and fauna of various places. She worked for a summer on islands off the coast of Maine. Another assignment was on the coasts of all the states on the Gulf of Mexico. That job took nearly a year. She spent six months in Cuba, doing nature drawing and painting. While she was there, she also drew and painted the old buildings in Havana, just because she enjoyed them. She sent them to her employer, who published them on her behalf.

Early in 1883, she was back in Boston. There, she consulted once more with Mr. Tenley. He had news about the job he had told her about the day he hired her.

After seeing her work over the some years, the benefactor decided to commit to the project on a larger scale than he had planned. He had worked as an engineer, laying out the final route as tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad were being laid down. He wanted prints relating to any subjects she might choose along the route between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Promontory Summit, Utah, where the last spike had been driven in 1869. He had worked along the entire way, and he wanted to be able to show his friends what it looked like when he first got to the new country, how his work had changed it, and what it was like as Charlotte was doing her artwork.

He wanted to give engravings from her artwork as presents. They could also be sold commercially, possibly as a set. But he loved the plains, and would support engravings of other parts of them, from Canada down to Mexico.

Charlotte was given quite a lot of latitude on this assignment. She was told that flora and fauna should be included, but she was also to depict the railroad itself, any of its equipment, buildings, and the land it passed through, both countryside and towns.

She could draw or paint equipment however she might like to show it. She could render things that were old or new, in operation, under repair, or out of commission. Her benefactor admired the spirit of independence he saw in her work, and he did not want to take that away from her. He asked that the dates and places be noted, but aside from that, he wished only that she would portray the things that moved her.

Charlotte could also choose where her own home would be during the years she would be on the prairie. This was rather exciting to her, because she had not had a real home in years, and she could choose one for herself, with freedom she had never experienced. She did all the research she thought she needed to make a sound decision, and she enjoyed every bit of it. After looking at information about the states and territories of the prairie area, she decided where she would live. It was to be Cheyenne, the capital of the Territory of Wyoming.

That might not have sounded very exciting for most men, but for a woman, in 1883, Cheyenne was the capital of Freedom Territory in the United States of America.



Wyoming had been settled in an uneven manner. When the Union Pacific Railroad was being built, small teams of men, including Charlotte's benefactor, moved ahead of the tracks to prepare the way for them. Other men lay the tracks down and stayed in camps near where the work was being done. The camps had places to eat and small enterprises in them where workers could buy any small things as they needed.

Elsewhere in Wyoming, a number of people had been attracted by rumors of large deposits of gold. When the stories of gold turned out not to be true, most of these prospectors moved off, but some had seen the possibilities of the land, and they stayed to establish their own homesteads in the new territory.

Of course, some women came along with the men, but their numbers were very small. At one time, there were five or six times as many men in Wyoming as there were women. This was a serious problem for anyone who wanted to have a family.

A single woman could make a living by taking in laundry, sewing, cooking, or other work, though her wages would not be high. But she would be likely be courted ardently by so many men that she would start to feel like they saw her as an object to be possessed.

On the other hand, she could make quite a lot of money as what was called a “painted lady,” if she had good luck. Such women were not really considered social outcasts in much of Wyoming at that time. There were towns in the territory where a majority of women would have been considered disreputable in other parts of the country.

Towns were founded but most grew slowly. Cheyenne got a big boost in 1867, when word got out that it would be the Union Pacific Railroad’s regional headquarters. That news guaranteed Cheyenne would be a major city in the area. While Denver grew fast because of Colorado gold, Wyoming grew more slowly, based on its being a rail hub. We might note that Denver’s first passenger train ran to Cheyenne.

Most men had long since seen that there had to be a way to attract women into the region. By the time Wyoming was ready to become an organized territory, they had found it. They could attract women by giving them the same rights that were given to men. And equality brought the territory some of the most self-confident and courageous women in the country.

In 1869, Wyoming, which had only been a territory for a bit over a year, passed a law giving women their rights. For the first time, they could vote and hold office. Wyoming was not just the first territory to make this a law, it refused to back down when the Congress tried to force it to reverse its stand.

The independence this law gave women went beyond participating in government. For example, women were able to have authority over the things they owned. In other states, women's possessions were controlled by their husbands. But not Wyoming.

Cheyenne had other advantages. It was a major stop on a rail system connecting it conveniently with the rest of the country, Charlotte could easily travel to Denver, to the south, or to much of Nebraska and Iowa, to the east. She could go west to Sacramento, if she ever had time to go there. And of course, she could ride back East to Boston to visit her family and her employer, a very long trip that would only take a few days.



When Charlotte first arrived at Cheyenne, she immediately set about finding a place to stay. Having spent years traveling, she knew that bigger hotels in cities were often busy and loud, especially if they had saloons or gambling houses in them. But the cities she visited on her trips nearly always had smaller, more relaxed places to stay. Sometimes there were quiet hotels, especially suitable for traveling women. Charlotte was looking specifically for a boarding house, however, where she could settle for a long time.

She asked the manager of the railroad station about boarding houses. She told him that she might be staying for years. He remembered that and included in his daily gossip, because Charlotte was very pretty. He sent her to an establishment run by Mrs. Emily Blackburn, whose husband, a minister, was trying to start a church.

Charlotte found the Blackburn house easily. When she asked about a room, Mrs. Blackburn wanted to know how long she might stay. Charlotte told her, “I don’t know. It depends on the situation. I was hired by an engraver in Boston to do artwork showing the flora and fauna of the plains. He believes it might take five years for me to do all the artwork he wants.”

Mrs. Blackburn raised her eyebrows at this and repeated softly the words, “five years.”

Charlotte went on. “The thing is, I’m not limited to flora and fauna. I will also be doing towns and cities along with railway and riverboat transportation all over the plains. So I will have to travel a lot. I want my things to be safe while I am gone, and I will probably be off for a week or more at a time. Also, I will be going out on the prairie for days at a time, so I will need a horse.”

“You plan to camp on the prairie for several days at a time?” Mrs. Blackburn seemed dubious.

“Yes.”

“You are going to need more than a horse.”

“How so?”

“You will need one horse to carry yourself, and another to carry the things you take along.”

“Oh, I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Have you spent much time riding?”

“Occasionally.”

“Where do you come from?”

“Boston.”

“What you really need to start with is an education. I bet you only rode sidesaddle.”

Charlotte had not thought about this, but it was true. “Don’t women around here ride sidesaddle?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Ride a while sidesaddle out on the prairie, and you’ll understand. Women around here don’t do it much.”

Charlotte was struck by the realization that she had things to learn, just to get around. “Do you know someone who can teach me about all that?”

“Yes. But it’s about more than just riding. Do you know how to defend yourself?”

“How do you mean?”

“Do you know how to use a gun? In Cheyenne, a lot of women carry guns for defense. Some men really are predatory, unfortunately, but they know there is a chance that a woman has a gun on her, because a lot do. That makes Cheyenne safer for all women, all the time.

“If you camp out on the prairie alone, you are far more likely to run into trouble. You should think about having a gun especially for that. Or do you plan to have someone who can go along with you to fend off dangerous animals and people?”

“I’d never thought of that either.”

“Now’s the time.” Mrs. Blackburn nodded her head sympathetically and smiled as she said this.

“Do you know someone who can teach me to shoot?”

“One of my friends is a journalist, Ruth Dawson. She has had to get around on her own quite a lot. Maybe you could ask her. In fact, she might help with just about everything you will need to know.”

Charlotte worked out rates with Mrs. Blackburn. She would rent a bedroom and a room to store things at fixed rates. She would pay extra for the times when she was staying at home, because the rent would include meals and use of a common room and laundry facilities.

While that worked out well, it made Charlotte feel a bit lost. She had always found learning easy, but she had always learned things she found interesting. Now she had to learn things she found a bit off-putting. She had always assumed that she could easily learn what she needed to learn. But it was clear that when it came to staying out on the prairie, she had no idea where to start.

Later that day, Charlotte met Ruth Dawson, a woman about thirty years old. Ruth wrote about the Indians in the area for a magazine back east, and because of that she often went out to the countryside for days at a time. She had intended to do some interviews of Indian women in coming weeks. She told Charlotte the best way to learn about living on the prairie was to do it, and she invited Charlotte to go with her on the trip.





General George Crook on the Trail, 1891, Frederick Remington

Chapter 8

Women out on the Prairie

Surprisingly, the first thing Ruth did was to get tell Charlotte, “We have to get you some proper clothes for riding and work.”

“I have some dresses I use for work.”

“Are they in a trunk?” Ruth had a skeptical look about her.

“Well, a bag. Why?” Charlotte seemed skeptical.

“Leave them in the bag. You aren’t going to want to wear any of those dresses out on the prairie.”

“Not going to wear my dresses?” Charlotte thought Ruth must have been joking.

“You can’t ride a horse properly in an ordinary dress. Not for work.”

“Because I will be riding astride the horse.” Charlotte remembered what Mrs. Blackburn had said about riding.

“I would suggest that you try riding sidesaddle for a few days on the prairie, just to know what that is like, except I don’t think you could find a saddle to do that around here.”

“But if I’m not wearing a dress, what will I wear?”

“I wear knickerbockers for riding.”

“Knickerbockers?” Charlotte looked very puzzled. It was not clear from her expression that she even knew what knickerbockers were.

“You must know what knickerbockers are. Bloomers. Pantaloons or Zouave breeches for women. Surely you’ve seen them.”

“In old pictures. Aren’t they a bit out of style? And without a dress?”

“Styles are not the same in Cheyenne as they are back east. People wear things that are practical around here. Knickerbockers are practical, especially if you leave the dress home. You’ll also need long stockings. Really, they should go all the way to the knickerbockers. And you’ll need riding boots. You can wear a dress over the knickerbockers, of course, but it would have to be short – no lower than mid-calf, so it can be hitched up easily while you ride. And it shouldn’t hinder motion as you mount or dismount.”

Ruth thought a moment, and then she continued, “I’m planning to go out in about a week or ten days. If we go out shopping right away, we should be able to get all these things quickly enough, and you could go with me. It would be best by far if your first trip out is not alone. We should start with the boots, I think.”

Ruth took Charlotte to a cobbler, who told her the boots could be finished in less than a week. Then she went to a dress maker. “In other parts of the country, you might have to go to a men’s tailor. But here, a dressmaker knows all about making knickerbockers and bloomers. She’ll have patterns for them, too.”

After the cobbler and the dressmaker, Ruth took Charlotte next to a gunsmith. He was Thomas Brandt, a man who spoke with an accent that sounded German. Ruth told Mr. Brandt what Charlotte would be doing. He immediately asked Charlotte, “What will you be doing for meat, when you are out on the prairie?”

Charlotte stared at him blankly. Ruth told her, “I always take dried beef, when I go out. And a few eggs – they can keep for a week if you haven’t washed them and it’s not too hot. Maybe cheese. You could hunt, of course, and have fresh meat any time. Do you shoot well?”

“I’ve never shot a gun.”

Ruth told Mr. Brandt, “She won’t be hunting. But she’ll need at least one revolver.” Ruth went on after a short pause, telling Charlotte, “I have two revolvers. One is small. I carry it in a pocket under my dress. The other is big. I carry it in a holster, when I’m alone in the wilderness, just so people know I’m armed.”

Thomas asked, “What are those? I seem to remember selling you a .32 caliber Smith & Wesson. Is that one of them? And what is the other? Is it .44 caliber?”

“Yes. The other is a Merwin Hulbert .44 army revolver. I wear it in a holster so people can see that I’m able to defend myself, when I’m out on the plains.”

“Well, we should start with the smaller one,” Thomas said. “For used guns, I have a couple of Smith and Wessons in .32 caliber. I also have some others in .22 caliber and one in .25, but I don’t think either of those calibers is powerful enough for serious self-defense unless you are ready to fire three shots or more. I don’t like that idea, because I think it’s unkind. If you shoot a person three times, it is too likely to cause an infection that would kill him. It is better to stop a person with a single shot. But not to the torso. I have a Colt House Model revolver also, in .41 caliber. It is not powerful, but it is enough to make a man regret getting too close to you.”

Charlotte took active interest in the mechanical designs of the guns she would carry. She was especially curious about the design of the Smith & Wesson revolvers, though she thought the action looked weak. She considered the Colt House revolver, which was not much larger, but Ruth told her, “I carry the .32 when I’m in town. It’s very light, and the ammunition is easily available.”

Mr. Brandt commented, “I’ve never heard of one failing, unless the person using it did something really stupid.”

“Such as?” Charlotte had no idea what was stupid.

“One person tried to fire one when it was completely covered with mud. And I mean completely. The bullet has a hard time pushing that mud out of the way. The gun came apart.”

Ruth said Charlotte should carry her new revolver in her pocket for everyday use, in town. Then she said Charlotte should buy at least two other guns, One would be a large revolver, hopefully not to be used, but just worn in a holster to be visible, the way she carried one so people would know she could take care of herself. The other would be a rifle, big enough to defend herself against a large animal, such as a buffalo, a bear, or a human attacker.

Mr. Brandt suggested that Charlotte buy a Colt Single Action Army revolver he had in .44-40, and a Winchester Model '73 in the same caliber. That way here ammunition supply would be simple. To be sure, .44 caliber was light for use against a bear or bison, but it was a repeater, so she could shoot the animal several times, giving her a fighting chance, if she aimed carefully. Other carbines were a .56-50 Spencer, which was a repeater of .50 caliber, despite its name, and a .577 Snider Enfield someone from Canada had sold him while he was on the way through town. Both had been cavalry carbines, but they were obsolete for military use.

Charlotte found the Spencer very difficult to work. Mr. Brandt said he was not surprised by this, but he wanted to offer it to her, because he thought it was the best choice, if she didn't like the .44-40.

She liked the .577 Snider-Enfield. It had a big bullet, even compared to the .50 caliber. Mr Brandt tried to talk her out of this, because a Snider does not have an ejector, and that makes them a bit difficult to reload quickly. To operate it, she would have to lift the block and swing it to the right, then pull it backwards to extract the spent case, and then pull the case out of the carbine manually or flip the rifle over sideways so the cartridge case would all out. It is not hard if you are used to it, but you have to get used to it.

Charlotte asked about .577 Snider ammunition. Mr Brandt could sell her some cartridges for the rifle. If she kept the cases after she shot them and washed them soon enough, he could reload them. If not, he could get her more. He owned a Snider-Enfield and enjoyed hunting with it. He loaded his own ammunition. But he still thought the .44-40 was a better choice. Charlotte decided to take his advice, and so she bought the Winchester '73.

One other thing that both Ruth and Mr. Brandt stressed was that guns and spent cases need to be cleaned as quickly as possible after they are used. She would have to keep a flask of water for them, so she could wash them as soon as they were used. The guns needed to be dried thoroughly, and then she would use oil to prevent rust from forming.

Later in the week, Ruth took Charlotted to a nearby farm and taught her how to load, shoot, and clean the guns she had bought. She found that she enjoyed shooting, and she became good at it.



After they left the gunsmith's shop, Charlotte commented to Ruth that her parents would probably feel scandalized at the thought that their daughter would be sleeping out on the prairie, ready to defend herself with her own guns.

"Why do you think that?" Ruth asked.

"Well, they would think it was dangerous. Also, I'm sure they've heard of Calamity Jane, and I can tell you that they would not want me to follow in that woman's footsteps."

"Probaby not. But I can assure you that you and I and Calamity Jane are not the only women who go out on the prairie and can defend themselves."

"Oh? Who else is there?"

"Well, one rather famous woman is Martha Maxwell. She's a hunter who lives in Denver. She has a museum full of stuffed wild animals that she took. She does her own taxidermy. I've never see her shows, but I am told that she has a bear and a mountain lion that she shot herself, along with smaller animals, down to a chipmunk and even a hummingbird."

Women in the West lived differently from those in Boston.



Ruth took Charlotte out on her first trip to the prairie only have few days after she had everything ready. The last thing she got was her boots, and she was wearing them when they left the city.

One of the first things Charlotte asked Ruth was how she could feel so confident when they were out among the Indians. Ruth told her, "I was introduced to them by General Crook, who told them I was honest. They hold General Crook in high regard, and since he introduced me, they trust me to be honest. They know the things I write about them are as close to the truth as I can make them."

Charlotte was mystified. She asked, "Who's General Crook?"

"A few years ago, I think it might have been in 1877 or '78, there were a number of Ponca Indians who left their reservation in Indian Territory to bury the son of one of their chiefs on their traditional lands. He had died of starvation on the reservation. A third of the people there had died of starvation." Ruth had a look that was both sad and angry.

"General George Crook was ordered to capture them and force them to go back to the reservation. He captured them, but when he saw their condition, he knew that sending them back in the condition they were in would be tantamount to cruel murder. They would have had to walk hundreds of miles. So instead, he held them captive and saw that they were well fed."

Charlotte felt queasy as she heard this, but she did not say anything.

"When his superiors found out that he had not sent them back yet, they ordered General Crook to send them off to the reservation immediately. He disobeyed. Instead of sending them back to the reservation, he found them lawyers who would represent them, to bring a writ of *habeas corpus* before a federal court in Omaha.

"You should understand that the lawyers he found were not merely members of the bar. One of them was the head attorney of the Union Pacific Railroad. And both of them represented the Chief, Standing Bear, and the others in his group *pro bono*. They brought a suit against General Crook. The case is 'Standing Bear v. Crook.'"

"They sued the man who was helping them?"

"He knew that would happen as he got the lawyers ... And I should also mention Suzette La Flesch."

"That sounds like the name of a dance-hall girl."

"La Flesch is a French name that means 'arrow.' Standing Bear could not speak English, so she translated for him. She is amazing. Every girl growing up should learn about her."

Charlotte was intrigued. "Why?"

"She was the first woman to earn a certificate to teach on an Indian reservation. And in court, the translations she provided for Standing Bear were compelling. I want to tell you that I feel honored that she is a friend of mine. Her father was educated in St. Louis, and she is just the oldest girl in a big family of Omaha Indians.

"Anyway, in 1879 the judge, Elmer Dundy, found he was faced with a dilemma about the writ, because the Indians were not considered to be persons under U.S. federal law."

"Wait a minute! Indians were not persons? How could that be? The slaves had all been freed for fourteen years, and the Indians were not persons?"

Ruth answered in a tone that was almost dreary, nodding her head. "I see you understand. Anyway, that was what the law considered. But Judge Dundy decided that they *were* persons, and entitled to the rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

"In 1879, Judge of the US District Court made a decision affirming the rights of American Indians as persons under the Constitution. They were being detained by General Crook illegally." Ruth smiled. "I think there actually have been a few people who were really glad that they lost a suit against them. And I'm pretty sure General Crook was one of those."

Charlotte felt puzzled about this idea. "Glad to lose a suit? Why?"

"He saw an injustice was happening, and he wanted see it was made right. He brought the suit about so Standing Bear could win his rights. But for that to happen, Standing Bear had to go to court. That meant someone had to be sued. And General Crook, who really was keeping him captive, was the only person he could sue. I don't think the General actually had to lose anything personally, though."





Sunset on the Plains, ca 1887, Albert Bierstadt

Chapter 9

A Spiritual Leader

As the years went by, Willie Livingstone had often thought of the spiritual leader he might meet, with whom he might share his lodge on the prairie. He thought such a man would have to be very special, a person who loved the nature of the plains, but also who could deal with the powerful influences of the living stone.

He did not go out looking for the person. He knew if that really was to happen, the time for it would come about. He did ask the spirit prairie dogs about anyone who might come along, but they acted as though they did not understand what he was talking about. He asked them to talk with their Spirit Mother to see what she might be able to tell him, but she only advised that he be patient.

In time, the spirit animals told him the person he was waiting for was on the prairie. They said he should ride toward Cheyenne.

Willie asked what he should wear. He considered this important. People would see him differently, based on what he wore. He could wear traditional Pawnee Indian clothes, but he was disinclined to do that on a trip to Cheyenne, because many of the Indians in that area would see a Pawnee man as an enemy. He could dress as an ordinary farmer, not to meet someone formally. He had a black suit and hat that would tell most people he was a preacher. That was true. He had been ordained as a Presbyterian minister. But he disliked the suit because it was uncomfortable, and he did not want to get into all sorts of theological discussions.

He asked about what would be best to wear, and was told by the spirit animals that he could wear whatever he wished. They seemed to believe the issue was unimportant. Willie scolded himself a bit for asking a rather trivial question and decided to put the suit into a pack. He would travel as an ordinary farmer. He asked when he should leave, a less trivial question, and he was told he could go any time.



We might consider Father McGowan a bit at this point. So far, Willie had never gained a good understanding of why the spirit animals had not given him a warning that Father McGowan was near the living stone. He had asked them several times over the years why that had happened, but had no adequate answer.

Truthfully, Willie probably would not have understood anything a spirit prairie dog could have said to answer the question. The answer was too complicated for them to comprehend. Father McGowan's coming had not been announced, partly because he was a priest. It was partly because he was inclined to be a missionary. And it was

partly because of something he did from time to time, something he never thought about. He talked in his sleep, quite coherently.

With no memory of having done it, Father McGowan told a man named Jack Whittacker all about a living stone. He said it enabled a person to see the spirits around him. He even told Jack where it was, though without precise directions to it. He only said it was near the Republican River, in western Nebraska.

Jack thought about this and quickly imagined possible advantages it could give him. He saw himself playing cards with a spirit friendly to him looking over the shoulders of other players and telling him what hands they held. He decided that he wanted to find the living stone and learn what it could offer.

He started this work by acting religious to gain Father McGowan's confidence. Then Jack played on that confidence to get as much information as he could about Father McGowan's travels. He started by asking a question that seemed very innocuous. "Father, I hear that you occasionally go for visits out on the plains. Is that true?"

"Yes, occasionally, why do you ask?"

"I have an old friend I want to visit. But I want to understand travel before I go out on the open prairie. Is it dangerous to go alone?" Jack knew a great deal about traveling on the plains already, but he wanted to know what the priest would say.

"It can be. In my experience, sometimes Indians are dangerous, but some white men can be even worse. It's good for anyone to plan in advance. Do you have a gun?"

"I have a Smith & Wesson army revolver and a .50-70 Remington rolling block carbine."

"Sounds like you're set already for whatever might come along."

"Well, yes. But my friend says his cabin is about fifty miles from nowhere. Since I don't own a horse, that means I would have to rent one. Do you rent a horse when you go out."

"Yes."

"Where do you get the horse? Is there a good stable?"

"In Cheyenne, Dahlan's would be good. You know, the one across from McClure's Hotel. But I don't usually rent a horse here. I usually start out going by rail to get closer to my destination. It's almost always cheaper than renting a horse for the whole way."

"Is it easy to get a horse in a small town?"

"Well, take Ogallala, for example. It's is not big, but it's easy to rent a horse. Actually, anywhere there's a regular rail stop is likely to have a livery stable."

Knowing that the living stone was in Nebraska, Jack had studied maps of that state. He knew precisely where Ogallala was, along with other cities along the railroad. He asked, "Whereabouts is Ogallala? Is that near North Platte?"

"It is a couple of hours by train. Maybe less. But if you want to go to North Platte, you wouldn't get off the train at Ogallala."

"Well, my friend said he was about fifty miles from North Platte."

"Ogallala is about fifty miles from North Platte. Which direction is he?"

"I don't remember, exactly. I think he said south-west, but it might have been south-east. I guess if its south-west, it would be better to get a horse at Ogallala, wouldn't it?" After talking a bit more, Jack arranged to accompany Father McGowan to Ogallala the next time he traveled there.

In due course, that time came, and the two set off together. They both got off the train at Ogallala and went to a hotel. The next morning,

they each got a horse. Jack told Father McGowan he was going south-east. Father McGowan started first and went due south. Jack was tracking him within thirty minutes.



With the experience she was getting, Charlotte Norway had become increasingly confident about riding out on the prairie alone. She started her work in Wyoming, along the route of the Union Pacific. Then she moved her work to Colorado. She took a train to Denver. It had an energy that bustled in a way that Cheyenne did not. She spent a week at work in Colorado, and went back to Cheyenne, very happy to leave move on to less hectic places. She went to Nebraska next. She liked the quiet of the plains.



Willie's spirit prairie dogs did not tell him anything about anyone heading his way. He rode for a couple of days toward Cheyenne. He could have saved a little time by going to Ogallala. However, even though he understood the advantage of rail travel, based on previous experiences, he felt that he did not approve of the idea of railroads when they could be avoided.

He had seen the damage trains could do. They threw sparks from their smoke stacks, and if the countryside was dry, the sparks could start fires. Trains were loud, and their smoke was dirty. Willie had long thought people could be productive and happy without them. In fact, he thought such things could set up a divide between people and their maker. Besides, he had been told to ride to meet the spiritual leader. He was not told to take a train.

In good time, the spirit prairie dogs came to him in a great deal of excitement. They told him that the person he was seeking was not far off, to the east. He rode off in that direction, expecting to find a holy man. Instead, he came across a young woman who had just started to paint a watercolor of a flower. She had two horses. And she had a

large revolver in a holster hanging from her belt. Willie was mystified that any woman could be so trivially minded that she would go out onto the prairie, where she would need to camp, just to paint a picture of a flower, while she wore a big revolver.

He was annoyed that he would have to spend any time dealing with her. Nevertheless, he felt obliged to find out who she was and why she was out on the prairie. When he asked, she told him, "My name is Charlotte Norway. I have been commissioned to draw and paint the animals and plants of the prairie. But I can defend myself, and though I would regret very much killing anyone, I also brought a shovel." As Charlotte said this, she wore a very sweet smile.

Willie tilted his head down and asked, "To dig a big hole?"

"I hate the very thought." Her smile was unchanged.

"I wouldn't want to put you through so much work. I am sorry my showing up you in mind of it. But I am looking for someone. Have you seen anyone hereabouts, by any chance?"

"No one but you. Who are you, by the way?"

"My name is Willie Livingstone. I am a Presbyterian minister, who happens also to be Pawnee. I have been told that a spiritual leader is nearby on the prairie. Could you, possibly, tell me anything about that?" Willie gave his head a slow, inquisitive shake.

"Sorry. I don't know anything about spiritual things. I've never even been to church." Charlotte was used to men making advances, but she had never found even one whose intellect impressed her. Men were people to be tolerated, at best.

Willie was getting distressed. Clearly, this was not the person he was looking for. He bid her farewell and rode off to the east. He stopped to eat and think, and he rested a bit while he ate some of the food he had packed. When he went on, he noticed the tracks of two people going south. As he thought about this, he felt very confused.

The next day, the spirit prairie dogs came and told him the spiritual leader was still out on the prairie, but had travelled farther to the south. He went back to the tracks he had seen, but after following them for a couple of miles, he just came across Charlotte again. This time, he asked her if she would mind if he dismounted to talk with her for a while.

"I don't mind at all! Please be careful where you sit. I am using that plant as a model." She pointed to it. Willie noticed that it was one of many that looked nearly identical.

"As I said yesterday, I am looking for a spiritual leader." Willie decided he should be more open with her. "Like many members of my tribe, I occasionally get guidance from spirit animals. They told me to find the person I am looking for on the prairie, near here."

Charlotte gave this a little thought. Then she said, "I don't know anything at all about that sort of thing. That is entirely new to me. How would I know a 'spiritual person,' if I come across him? And what is a spirit animal?"

Willie had to be honest. "I don't really know how you would tell who he was. I wasn't given any information or description. I could be looking for someone is from my tribe, or some other tribe, White or Black, or even Chinese, for all I know. So as silly as it sounds, I was looking without any idea of what the person I was looking for might look like. I had been expecting that the first person I came across would be the person. But it looks like I was wrong."

"I was first?" She had a dubious look.

Willie nodded.

"Well, sorry to disappoint." She shook head dismissively. "But as I said, I don't know anything about spirit animals. I understand *real* animals and plants. I know how to draw and paint, but only what I see. I can do other things, but I don't know anything about spirits."

Willie left soon after that, feeling frustrated. Charlotte was very glad he had left and hoped he would not show up again. Both of them had work to do, and each was rather intent on doing it.



Willie spent several days on the prairie, looking for the person. He found Charlotte several times. At first, she acted rather suspicious of him. Then gradually, she seemed more tollerant. In time, she became rather pleasant, greeting him by name. But she soon told him that he would not see her any more, because she would be going back to Cheyenne.

During that same time, Willie tracked Father McGowan and Jack Whittacker, not knowing their identities. The tracks looked like they might be travelling together. But Willie soon understood they were not together, because the tracks of one horse were alway on top of the other's. They might be travelling in single file with the same person always in the lead, but Willie came to think one person could be trailing the other. He felt uneasy. That felt sinister.

Of course Willie did not know the identities of the two riders. The spirit animals had been silent about them, and Willie had not even thought to ask. Then, he saw that the tracks were heading in the exact direction he would go, if he were heading home. This perplexed him a bit, but only for a couple of minutes. As he thought it over, Father McGowan, showed up, riding north toward him.

Father McGowan had ridden to Willie's home. When he found that Willie was not there, he headed back to Ogallala. Willie found this out when they met. Willie was slightly alarmed, when he heard this, and he asked, "Was another person with you?"

"No. Why?"

"Father McGowan, if no one was with you, then someone is tracking you."

"I didn't see anyone." Father McGowan was also starting to get a bit alarmed.

As they tried to figure out what was going on, a small party of spirit animals arrived to give Willie a message: "There is a man visiting the living stone."

With his ability to see spirits, Father McGowan heard this, too. They rode together as quickly as they could to get to the living stone. Based on more information from the spirit animals, they both understood that the man was quite beside himself with fear.

They also tried for a brief time to figure out who this man could be. When Willie asked who Father McGowan had told about the trip, he learned that the only person was Jack Whittacker. "But why would Jack want to follow me?"

The spirit prairie dogs took this as a question for them. They left and soon returned, saying, "Because you talk in your sleep."

Willie and Father McGowan spent some time discussing this as they rode. At first, Father McGowan said he could not understand at all. Usually, he could see the sorts of spirits that hung around people and could judge them by the way the spirits acted. The ones that were most often around Jack Whittacker were always very friendly.

Willie looked suspicious. "Just like Jack, himself?"

"Yes." Father McGowan was curious.

"Maybe Jack and the spirits with him were all humbugs together."

"But why would he want to find the living stone?"

"I suspect we will find that out when we find him. And my guess is that he isn't going anywhere in the meantime."



The next day, Willie and Father McGowan did indeed find Jack. He was still within sight of the juniper tree. He was so frightened that he had pulled most of his clothes off and much of his hair out by the roots. He had been very mistaken in his belief that he would be able to profit from the gift of the living stone.

Jack had enough of his wits about him to see that Father McGowan was there with another man. He immediately begged for help. Father McGowan started praying. Willie followed Father McGowan's lead, and they went on together. Jack started to calm down. He also came to think of Father McGowan as his savior.

Things were pretty chaotic for a while. After Jack calmed down, and got his clothes back in order, he sobbed a bit, drank some water, and started to tell his story. Then he sobbed a bit more and listened for a few seconds as Willie told him, "Your evil thoughts are attracting evil spirits." He nodded and tried again. He sobbed, ate a bite of pemmican, and started again.

It took days to put Jack back into shape. During those days, he came to learn that there were reasons why his life was unhappy, and they resulted from his own misdeeds. The wealth he could gain, and the control he managed to achieve over people, had never satisfied him, except to give him something he could point to as a sort of triumph. But his triumphs were always negative, and the satisfaction they offered was more like a hangover than anything else.



In time, when Willie told Jack he could do better, Jack replied, "But what can I do? I don't know how to do much of anything but gain people's confidence by telling lies." Jack looked down and his face told its own story of dejection. He could do menial labor, but he felt he was really too smart for that to be satisfying.

"What kinds of lies do you tell them?"

“I make things up that will scare them, or I tell them things that will excite their greed.”

“Can you move them without trying to get them to act out of greed or fear? Can you do that without trying to cheat them?”

Jack replied, “I need to earn a living, just like everyone else.”

“There are ways a good storyteller can earn a living. And some of them earn a good living at it. Mark Twain is one. Have you ever read his books?”



In time, Jack and Father McGowan were ready to leave. They would go together back to Cheyenne, and Willie came to think he should probably go with them. He had still not found the spiritual leader. The spirit animals were telling him he should go look again, though he was starting to lose hope of ever meeting such a person.

Something was going on, however. At the last site where the three men would camp before they got to Ogallala, Willie started getting visits from spirit prairie dogs. They were telling him that someone was near the living stone and he should return home at once. Willie asked in alarm who the person was.

The spirit animals told him the person was the great spiritual leader. Willie almost went into a panic. His home was days away, and the latest emergency was barely coming to an end. The prairie dogs told him, however that there was no particular rush. This was not an emergency and would not turn into one.

When Willie told Father McGowan and Jack why he had to return home, they both offered to accompany him and help any way they could. But Willie trusted the spirit animals' story that there was no emergency. He wanted both of the men to return to Cheyenne, and he especially wanted to see Jack start a more productive life. There was an uneasy aspect to this, because Jack seemed dependent on

Father McGowan, and Willie was not really sure that dependence was good, but he would see about that in time.

A few days later, Willie rode up to his lodge and discovered, to his surprise, that Charlotte Norway was sitting there, finishing up a painting she had started earlier, so she could ship it to Boston.

Willie glanced at the painting and could see clearly that it was the juniper tree. There was no indication in the painting that the living stone was concealed beneath it, though the sage brush was there. He marveled a bit that Charlotte was able to be in such good spirits. He thought something very fortunate had prevented her from getting hurt.

She was completely unsurprised, however, that he was there. When he asked her about that, she answered, “I knew you were on the way. Some prairie dogs told me to expect you.”





American Bison, 1898, Lydekker, Richard

Chapter 10

Charlotte and Willie

Willie Livingstone had never felt more completely surprised. At a distance, when he first saw Charlotte at his lodge, he expected that she had somehow not got close enough to the living stone to be affected by it. When she said prairie dogs told her he was coming, he became confused and wondered how that could have happened.

He suddenly realized that he had to adjust to a new way of thinking, especially about her. He inclined his head just slightly, and said, "Prairie dog." It was not a question.

"I think it must have been one of your spirit animals, perhaps a 'spirit prairie dog.' I can't imagine what else it could have been."

"So let me understand this. Are you telling me that you are spiritual, after all?"

"I don't know. Maybe I am and I never realized it. I am just acting on the same principles I always use. I believe in what I can see, hear, or feel, remembering that people can be fooled. If I can talk with a spirit prairie dog, then either it's real or I'm imagining it. In this case, a spirit prairie dog told me you were coming. And here you are.

"That could be entirely coincidence, a false confirmation. Or it could mean that I have to reconsider my ideas about spirits. I am not quite sure what to think about this yet, but I am inclined to believe the spirit prairie dog is not a product of my own imagination."

Willie asked, "When did you get here?"

"I arrived the three days ago. I camped out next to your lodge – it is your lodge, isn't it? I didn't want to go in, because it's private. I think people should respect the privacy of others. I have a tent, and I am used to sleeping in it, just as I usually do. There are some really beautiful examples of plants growing around here that I can draw and paint, so I have been working. It's what I do."

Willie was a bit perplexed, but largely by own his curiosity. "When you went near the living stone, didn't you see fearful spirits around you?"

"Fearful? Really?" Charlotte looked very surprised.

"That's what seems always to happen."

Charlotte inclined her head slightly, as though she found this hard to believe. "They were the most pleasant people I have ever been with. And the most beautiful. Why would anyone be afraid?"

"It seems that nearly everyone sees spirits who are threatening and hostile to the point of being evil. They mock and humiliate anyone around them. And they threaten. A lot of people just break down with fear. And then I have to help them get over it. Sometimes that's not easy."

"I find that so hard to believe. Why would mean spirits gather near the stone. It is such a pleasant stone! I never realized a geological feature, a piece of the Earth, could be so nice!"

Willie responded thoughtfully, "It isn't a piece of the Earth." She was silent but looked curious. Willie continued, "It is a meteorite. It fell from the heavens."

"Oh! I should have understood that! It told me it had been in space, travelling around the Sun for millions of years. For some reason, I thought it meant that as a metaphor. I hadn't taken it literally. Clearly it meant that it was not from this planet. How thoughtless of me!"

This perplexed Willie even more. "It told you?" The stone had never told him anything. And, in fact, no one had ever said that it could talk. "I knew it could give people strange gifts, but I never knew it could talk."

"Really?" Charlotte found this hard to believe, too.

"I had thought it was just a thing that could have effects on people, like a chemical, or a strong scent, or intense heat, but in a way that was profoundly powerful. I never knew it was a being, with thoughts it could express."

Charlotte considered this for a few seconds. Then she said, "Well, it can talk, but I don't know I would call it a being. Certainly, it's sort of incomplete, as a being."

"How is that?" Willie found this conversation utterly mystifying.

"Well, would you call a bean a vine? Or would you say an egg was a chicken? The stone told me that years ago it had been moved and planted in the Earth. It said it has been getting ready for all the years since then, to come forth into the world and act on its own."

"As some sort of animal?"

"I don't think so. I don't think it would have a body. It might be more like a sort of nature spirit," the words were coming to Charlotte as she spoke them. "Perhaps it's the child of the Father in Heaven and the Mother Earth, here to have an effect on all of us, in fact all things on Earth, human beings, animals, plants, but also rocks and rivers and rain storms." She smiled as she thought about those last few words and how they sounded, an example of alliteration.

Willie said rather slowly, as his words came to him, "The birth of a of demigod." And then it occurred to him that he seemed always to be learning things from a woman who was not at all spiritual and who had never even been to church. A woman he had thought was trivially minded. He wondered that he could hear such things from such a very pretty woman. He thought that he might be learning so much new from her because he had a lot of things to learn.



There was a reason why the Earth needed a living stone as the seed for a what Willie thought of as a demigod. The Earth was changing under the pressures of actions of human beings.

Few European Americans knew what was happening, and even fewer cared. Even fewer than that thought the changes might not be good. Progress, many people believed, meant conquering nature, subjugating it, making use of it, altering it, and even destroying parts of it that didn't serve their purposes.

Some people, Willie thought, destroyed parts of nature, because they thought destroying those things would be to their own benefit. They were often people who counted themselves believers in God. But they were destroying God's creation. Would true believers do that?

The Pawnee, along with all the other tribes, saw the changes with a horror that few other Americans could understand. Sacred land was altered to benefit the economy. Sacred forests were cut to build railroads. The Railroads were used to transport things snatched from

sacred lands. The land was being exploited, partly for wealth, but partly out of hatred some people felt toward those who had lived on the land long enough to understand how sacred it was. And some of those people hated God in Heaven.

This was not just a matter of what things the Indians held sacred. It was also a matter of their survival. To make controlling the Plains Indians easier, the great herds of bison were being killed off rapidly. The hunts that provided tribes with a large amount of their food, had supported them less and less, until there were nearly no bison left. Only a few hundred animals remained to feed all the people in all the tribes on the plains.

The Indians had to stop hunting to preserve what was left of the bison. Otherwise, they would have to stop because there would be no bison left at all. Either meant ending the hunts they depended on for much of their food. This increased their dependency on the government of the United States. And that government did not seem to care at all what happened to them, even to the tribes, like the Pawnee, it called friendly.

Willie told this to Charlotte. He could understand the position of his own tribe, even though he had lived apart from it for much of his life. He was able to understand the position of White society, because he had been educated in it.

“I am an anomaly in many ways,” he finally said. “I am a minister of the Presbyterian Church, with a master’s degree, and I am a Pawnee medicine man.” He shrugged as he went on. “I live alone on the plains, but I’m a member of a tribe whose members’ homes are always in villages. So I live like a wild man from a tribe that has always been civilized.” He wondered about this as he said it.

“It makes me feel alone. There is nowhere I am entirely at home, but I can relate to just about any group of people in the country.” He

paused, and he chuckled as he added, “Well, maybe not some. The railroad workers from China seem pretty foreign.”

Charlotte’s curiosity was aroused. She asked, “Where did you get your degrees?”

“I got my bachelor’s degree from Harvard. My master’s degree is from Chicago Theological Seminary.”

Charlotte was prepared to believe this, but she checked. “So you went to Harvard.”

“Yes.”

“You must have spent four years living in Cambridge. Or maybe in Boston.”

“Why, yes.”

Charlotte smiled, as she thought of this. “Tell me. What do you miss about that area?”

With no pause, Willie said, “The Union Oyster House. I went there as often as I could. That was not all that often, but it was important to me in a place that seemed so foreign. Things I found comfortable in Nebraska were not around, but at least I could take comfort in a few things I had never had back there.”

Charlotte had been to the Union Oyster House only twice. But she understood. She had tested Willie and found he was being truthful, at least to some degree. He was getting comfortable with her being there, also. They chatted a bit about the Boston area.

Charlotte suddenly realized they really should be talking about something else. Even as they chatted, the story of the living stone was going on, developing. That left her with a lot of questions. “Why did the living stone come to Earth? Do you know?”

Willie guessed. “Maybe to save the bison. And maybe other things that are being killed off. Passenger pigeons. Heath hens. Other

animals and plants that are nearing extinction. Maybe to save rivers and the mountains and the plains from being destroyed.

“The reach of people bent on getting wealth will go everywhere it can. Everything and every place has to be protected. The Earth was not created by us, and it was not created to satisfy our greed. In that sense, it never was ours, and it never can be.”

“I think some people who own land would disagree.”

“Do they think God will honor their deeds.” Willie found this line of thought amusing, but also interesting.

“Do I? No. I know next to nothing about God, but if God created the Earth, then it is just fraud for people to claim that they own it. They may own deeds or titles, but those are just evidence of fraud, in a society that thinks it can decide who owns things that were created by someone else.”

Charlotte and Willie wondered out loud what part could they play in the birth of a demigod. As they talked, they came to see that they had to be ready to be the midwives and nursemaids, ready to be the teachers of an untutored power. And when the time came, they had to be ready to assist it as they could. It was something they really had no way to prepare for.

This seemed heady. But they would not be giving up the things they believed. Their principles would not be bent or cast aside. There would be no challenge to their integrity. They might be tempted, and they might be tested, but they would not abandon what they knew was true and good. In fact, they realized, the things they knew to be true and good were their best preparation for what they had to do.

That night, Willie was unhappy about Charlotte having to stay in her tent, when there was his cozy lodge for her to sleep in. He offered to let her take the lodge, and he would be quite happy camping out himself. After all, she was his guest.

Charlotte said she would not hear of his having to leave his home. She asked if he snored, and hearing that he believed he did not, she said they could both stay in the lodge. She would be comfortable with that.

She was a thoughtful woman, Willie noticed. And She was as kind as she was pretty. And she was clearly the smartest person he had ever met. She was fascinating.

She was also getting comfortable with some unfamiliar territory of her own. All her life, she had been accustomed to people failing to understand her. Women tended either to ignore her or belittle her out of jealousy. Some men seemed to want to control her emotions, but they all had such limited minds that they were never able to get her gain her interest. She believed most men were utterly untrustworthy, and trust had to be at the foundation of a relationship.

Willie and Charlotte were so different. They were twenty years apart in age, but that seemed inconsequential. Charlotte had no religion and had always found the subject uninteresting, until now. That was all right, because Willie had two religions, and he could share either or both with her.

Then there was a matter of a night when they both learned the same profound spiritual lesson. It was the secret of what might be called “joyous depletion.” Some people seem to know all about that just by instinct. Charlotte and Willie got to it by cooperative discovery.



After a week, Charlotte suddenly realized that she had to return the horses and go back to Cheyenne, or people would think something was wrong. As she thought of this, she was amused to think that not only was nothing wrong, but things were very right, possibly for the first time in her life. But she had to let them know at least part of how she was doing.

She went to Denver, where she returned the horses and shipped some tubes of drawings and paintings to Boston, along with a letter saying she might soon take up residence in Nebraska. She did not know yet how she could be contacted, but she would find out and send the directions as soon as she could.

When she got back to Cheyenne, she arranged to keep her storage room for the time being but gave up her room so Mrs. Blackburn could let it out.

Before she left, Willie had asked her to find Father McGowan for him, to see that he and Jack Whittacker had got to Cheyenne without further problems. She found that everything was all right.

Father McGowan, was curious about her, however. Willie had told him about a woman he kept meeting on the prairie, saying also that he thought she must be at least a bit crazy to go out there draw and paint pictures of flowers. Clearly, Charlotte was that very same woman, but she seemed extremely intelligent. Also, she had just spent a week living with Willie in his lodge.

Father McGowan saw that she wanted to live with Willie. He was only slightly surprised by this. They were the West, after all. It was a place where morals could be strict in one place and free in others. The fact that Willie would have a woman live with him was not hard to understand. The fact that she would be Charlotte, who he had criticized for being “trivially minded,” and who was twenty years younger, seemed to make that a bit unlikely. But Father McGowan could see that she had attracted some really delightful spirits to her, and he guessed that Willie saw that, too.

Charlotte also met Jack Whittacker, who was still very dependent on Father McGowan. She believed this might not be good for him in the long term. But she understood.



Charlotte went back to Willie's lodge in only a few days. For this, she bought herself two horses along with all the tack she would need to ride one and use the other as a pack animal. They would live at Willie's lodge at least much of the time.

She took two days longer on the trip than she might have, so she could stop to draw specimens. When she got to the lodge, she already had a couple shipping tubes ready to send off.

Willie told her that she did not really need to go to Cheyenne or Denver to ship her artwork. She could go to a place called Gorse, which was only a few hours away by horse. His niece, Annie, lived there, with her husband, Gus. In fact, she would be able to ship the tubes from their store.

Charlotte was very curious about Gorse, a place that could save her a lot of time. She quickly set about working on getting Willie to take her there. It did not take much effort.





Milkweed (Asclepias), 1924, Mary Vaux Walcott

Chapter 11

A Visit to Gorse

As they rode to Gorse, Willie told Charlotte about how Annie and Gus had met on the prairie. Gus had found Annie injured very near the site of a massacre that happened that same day, and when realized it had happened, they got away from the area as quickly as they could. They spent four nights on the prairie, and each night they both had the same dream. They married after knowing each other for not quite five days.

Charlotte found that story, like a lot more about her life, fascinating. She had high expectations about Gus and Annie. They sounded like they were so alike, and so different. It made her feelings about Willie seem almost normal.

This made her ask herself what her feelings about Willie were. To start with, they were very different from anything she had ever felt before about anyone. Certainly her experience with men she had known was that they were at best indifferent to her feelings and, at worst, downright predatory.

Willie was the single exception. He had shown her respect and even deferred to her feelings. When he offered to let her stay in his lodge, his intention was to let her be more comfortable while he stayed in a tent.

Willie was also strongly focused on some things that he believed were important. He had thought they set him apart from others, until he realized what her experience with the living stone was. Clearly, he was not trying to take advantage of her, he was treating her as a human being.



As they set out on their ride, Willie told Charlotte, "There are a couple of ways to get to Gorse. In the old days, and even today if you have a reason to do it, you could go south from the lodge, turn east on the road you come to in about two miles, travel about four miles on that road, and then turn onto a road going south. That road takes you straight to Gorse. Easy. But a little slow compared to the way we will go.

"When we get to the road going east, we'll keep going south for about another mile. There, we'll come to a railroad, and we'll follow the tracks. They go straight to Gorse, with a road beside them most of the way."

Charlotte asked, "Why wouldn't everyone go along the tracks?"

"You might get stuck if you tried to follow the tracks in a wagon or buggy. The railroad has a bridge, and a horse can't cross it. So you'd have to ford the river. But almost no one uses the ford, and while it might be easy on horseback, it might not be easy for a wagon."

"Why can't you take the bridge? Surely you could hear a train when it's a long way off, in time to get off the bridge."

"No, the problem isn't trains. The big problem is that the horse would have to step very carefully on the ties. On land, a horse might step on a tie or on the roadbed, and that's not a problem. But there's no roadbed on the bridges, and the ties just have openings between them. Maybe you could train a circus horse to walk on a bridge. But horses that draw a wagon? I don't think so. They'd be likely to break their legs."

"Oh. That makes sense." Then she changed the subject. "How big is Gorse? Do many people live there?"

"I think it might be over four hundred now. I haven't kept up. It's a nice little city. It has a street that runs through it north and south, almost straight but it has a very slight curve at the south end. There are a few side streets. They all go to farm fields, except for the one we'll come in on.

"There is a single store, Altmann's hardware store. Old Friedrich Altmann is the actual owner. He's Gus's father, but Gus works with him as an equal, and Annie keeps a bakery in the store, too."

"A bakery? In a hardware store?"

"This is not like most hardware stores." Willie laughed as he thought about this. "Old Friedrich wants it to attract settlers into the area, so he stocks it with everything that anyone might want. You can buy a hammer there, but you can also buy cloth, a rifle, a vanilla cake, or even dynamite."

"Dynamite?"

"Farmers need dynamite sometimes, so the store sells it. But only on special order. And they never bring it inside the store itself. It is kept in a shed designed to fall apart safely in the event of an accident, without parts flying all over the place. Gus designed it. He's pretty good at that sort of thing." Willie thought for a moment, and then he said, "Honestly, I don't know that it was ever tested. How would you test such a thing?"

"I think you'd build a shed outside town for a test and blow it up. If the test works okay, you'd build a second shed in the town. Of course, some parts of the first shed might survive to be re-used."

Willie shook his head. "They don't teach you about that sort of thing in any school I ever went to."

"You mean like Harvard or the Chicago Theological Seminary? No one is likely to teach you that as part of an education in art, either." Charlotte was getting amused. Willie had two degrees. She never finished high school, but she never felt intimidated by degrees.

Charlotte and Willie were still just beginning to learn about each other, and Charlotte wanted to know more. So the subject went to their relationship. Riding along, they were able to talk mostly without distraction. She had wanted Willie to understand that she had never had a love interest in her life, but she had not felt easy about saying so until this ride. It seemed a good time to talk.

"Willie, I know you might think this is hard to believe, but I have never felt that I was in love before."

"Surely there have been a number of young men who wanted to court you. You are very pretty, after all."

"Too many."

"Ah. Well, I know you might find this hard to believe, but I never felt like I was in love before, either."

Charlotte shook her head slightly in disbelief. "You must have had women interested in you."

"Oh, yes. I did. Probably more than I would have had if I were born into an ordinary American family. But you see, that's the problem. You had men interested because you are pretty, but I think the women who were interested in me might have thought I was exotic. It's a feeling I couldn't reciprocate.

"A lot of people aren't interested in a relationship unless it is based on a real feeling of love. That even includes some men. I'm one of them. I couldn't allow myself to fall in love with a woman unless I could see the two of us spending a lifetime together. And in my case, that meant *three* of us living together – two of us and a living stone that, sooner or later, would show her all the spirits around her. And I believed she would have to go through being frightened half to death, unless I could prepare her. Maybe I could do that the way my father managed to prepare me. Maybe.

"But there was one other thing, too. Would she be ready to live with me in a lodge on the prairie, all by itself? I had always thought no woman of my tribe would be likely to find that easy, because all of us live in villages. And I thought that European American women would be likely to feel the same way.

"It was something I accepted early on: I would probably never have a wife, or even a lover. When I was told that a spiritual person might live with me, I always thought it would be a relationship purely of friendship between me and some spiritual man."

Charlotte looked a bit amused, as she said, "Are you disappointed to find it turned out to be me?"

"Well, it does mean I might have to sweep the floor of the lodge more often."

Charlotte looked puzzled. "Willie?"

"Yes."

"The floor of your lodge is dirt."

"Oh, so it is. Sorry. But it still needs sweeping sometimes."

Charlotte just chuckled.



After riding for a time beside the railroad tracks, and fording one nearly dry stream, Willie and Charlotte came to the road. It came up from the south and turned east, running along the tracks. After another hour, or a bit less, they found themselves at the Gorse station. "This is the flag stop for Gorse," Willie told Charlotte. "The station agent is about two hundred yards to the south along Center Street."

"Why not have the agent at the station?"

"The train only goes through Gorse once each day, except Sunday, when there's no train at all. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the train heads west. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, it heads east. There is no need to keep someone at the station full time. The hardware store is open all day, so it made sense to put the agent there, despite the distance."

"Ah yes. Of course. The agency is the hardware store. I want to see that hardware store." It might have been the first hardware store ever to capture Charlotte's interest.



As Charlotte and Willie rode down the street together, the people in Gorse seemed quite uninterested. This was unusual, because they

were usually very attentive to the people going through. If they had focused on Willie, many would have recognized him, because he had been there many times before. But they didn't.

Charlotte and Willie were all the way down to the hardware store, walking up to the porch, before anyone took notice of them. Gus Altmann was sitting there with Annie. She didn't see Charlotte and Willie because her back was to them, but Gus noticed and said, "Annie, look who's here!"

She turned and jumped up, exclaiming, "Uncle Willie! How nice that you've come for a visit! And you have a friend!" She stepped toward Charlotte, and said, "Have we met?"

Annie and Charlotte both held out their hands in greeting but in an unusual way. Each of them held out both hands together and took the other's. It was not a handshake, just holding hands in a way that looked very affectionate. They did not notice the singular nature of their greeting, but Willie and Gus did.

"Here," Annie said, "please sit down. Gus could you get another chair, please?" She turned back to Charlotte and Willie. "You must be hungry, would you like something to eat? I have a rabbit and shallot pie that I made early this morning."

Annie explained that she had boned the meat because she had an idea that it should be specially made just so, as she prepared it. About five minutes later, all four of them were eating.

Neither Annie nor Gus asked the one question both found intriguing: Why had Willie brought this rather beautiful young woman with him on a visit? The subject was soon brought up by Willie himself.

"Annie," Willie asked after a while, "do you know why I have lived so many years out on the prairie alone?"

"No," Annie said. She looked very curious. A number of people had speculated about it because almost no one knew a reason.

Willie asked Charlotte, “How much do you think we should tell them?”

There were only two things he could be asking about. She didn’t know which, so she just shook her head and asked, “Do you mean about us living together in your lodge? Or ... or ... the other thing?” She wore a very pretty, innocent-looking smile as she said this.

Willie looked up toward the sky and shook his head. Then he came back to Earth and said, “Okay, we’ll get back to the one about us, I guess. So I’ll just start with ‘the other thing.’ It’ll help when we try to make sense about the bit about us.”

He told Annie and Gus, “I think some of the things I’m going to tell you should never become widely known, so please let me know if anyone else comes into earshot.

“I live alone on the prairie because I am the guardian of a living stone. In fact, that’s where our family name comes from.”

“My mother’s family name is based on a living stone? An actual living stone?” Annie sounded a bit incredulous. “You mean actually alive?”

“Yes. And, in fact it can talk with people, as Charlotte found out.” Willie shook his head incredulously and said, “I hadn’t known.” Charlotte nodded. Willie continued, “The problem is that the stone gives a gift that very few people can handle without guidance. In fact, Charlotte was the first person who could just deal with it.”

She said, “I’m not really sure why.”

“The stone gives people the ability to see all the spirits around them. Which spirits come into focus depends on the person’s state of mind. Most people are put into fear, as soon as they see the spirits, and they see spirits who seem to enjoy being near people who are afraid. They make it worse.

“My job was to intercept people before they got to the stone. If they do get to it, I have to bring them out of fear and teach them how to control the thoughts in their own minds. I have had to do that with a few people. Usually, my spirit animals warn me that people are on the way, but sometimes they don’t. Charlotte’s experience was ... well ...” He looked toward her.

“My experience. Yes. The spirits that I saw were the most delightful people I have ever come across. And the most beautiful to see.”

“And she discovered that the stone could talk.”

“It was not much of a discovery. The stone just started talking to me.” Willie was silent, so Charlotte continued. “It told me all about its past. It had spent millions of years in space. Willie’s father found it, as a meteorite, and planted it in a place where there was little chance that anyone would come across it by accident.”

Willie waved a finger to show he was ready to talk again. “That’s the literal word. ‘Planted.’ He planted a hundred-pound meteorite in the Earth. And now it’s almost ready to sprout.”

“Sprout? Into what?”

“Who knows?” Willie replied. “I’m inclined to think a demigod.”

“Well,” Annie said with smile, “at least you didn’t say it would be a bean stalk.” Charlotte and Willie laughed quietly. Then Annie went on, “But what does this mean?”

“That’s the thing, Annie. We don’t know.”

Gus asked, “Do you think you need some sort of help?” He looked quite serious about this.

Charlotte and Willie looked at each other and considered this. Charlotte was the one who spoke first, and she did so slowly. “I think we could use some help. But do you think you could safely give it?”

Annie looked amused. “I think if ever there was a person who could help with a new demigod, it would be Gus. He might be prepared to deal with such things, because he has a background in them.”

“I’m not the only one around here with a background like that.” Gus looked like he might be a little reluctant to speak, but he continued, saying, “Annie has it, too.”

Charlotte and Willie both looked completely mystified. Willie asked, “What background is that?”

“Well, thousands of years ago, in other lifetimes of our own, we were together ... ”

Annie finished the sentence when Gus paused, “Being deities.”

Willie exclaimed quietly, “Well, you learn something new every day!” And he chuckled at the thought of it.

“That was another place and time. But I think that if Gus helps, I should, too. We’re sort of equal, and we work together pretty well.”

“You might be right, Annie.” Gus nodded. And then he said to Willie and Charlotte, “And by the way, I think the two of you might have backgrounds a lot like ours.”





The Storm, 1934, Abram Molarsky, U. S. Treasury Department

Chapter 12

Birth of a Demigod

All four of them went to Willie's lodge the next day. Annie and Gus also took a covered wagon on the older route. For them, the route was a matter of remembrance. The trip took the same path they had taken in 1873, and they wanted to relive it. That year, their ride happened on the same day as the Battle of Massacre Canyon, which took place only a few miles away. That was when they started their relationship. It was a day filled with pain and concern for frightening events, but it lay firmly at the foundation of their marriage, which took place only four days later.

Charlotte and Willie both understood easily the purpose of the ride Annie and Gus were making. And so the two couples left on their separate ways. Charlotte and Willie were on horseback, which was faster than going by the wagon as the others were doing, and their route was a bit shorter. So they would arrive at the lodge first.

Willie was in a mood to speculate about Gus and Annie as they rode. “I don’t know why Annie and Gus would be particularly well suited to an encounter with the living stone,” he said. “But based on what they were saying, they must have had some unusual experiences in another lifetime.”

“Do you believe people live more than once?”

“I believe that there is more to Heaven and Earth than we can really understand. Gus and Annie believe that they have lived before, and they seem to remember those earlier lives. I don’t remember such things, myself. But I certainly don’t remember not having earlier lives. I can’t say they’re wrong. And this thing about dieties? I just don’t know.”

Charlotte thought about this for a short while, and then she said, “I have wondered for a long time why I am so good at a number of different things. I proved the Pythagorean Theorem when I was just thirteen. At that age, most people don’t even know what geometry is. I have wondered about how that happened.”

“Were you curious about geometry?”

“I was curious. But I was curious because I felt it was something inside me I had been born with, something I knew already, but needed to be reminded of.”

“Huh. ... Were you curious about anything else?”

“Yes. I was curious about perspective drawing.”

“Odd thing to be curious about.”

“I didn’t really understand that one until someone tried to teach me the formal rules. And I could see that they weren’t really rules at all. So I used what I knew about geometry to figure out a proper, formal set of rules for perspective. I can do things with perspective drawing that no one else knows how to do.”

“I find that easy to believe.”

“It’s funny. I feel like the work I did on things like that made me feel somehow alone. And that makes me feel some sympathy for the living stone.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. It has been living without any connection to anyone of its own kind, out on the prairie, for years and years. I think it must feel lonely.” She shrugged. “Well maybe it doesn’t. I mean it has been traveling around the sun for millions of years. Who did it ever talk with out there?”

“This is all something I have barely been prepared for. Though I think honestly that the Pawnee religion teaches me more that I can use about it than Christianity does.”

“How’s that?”

“Well, we learned that the stars are gods. The meteor came from what astronomers would call the realm of asteroids. But the Pawnee would call it the realm of gods. It might be a minor god, a demigod.”

“Very minor, I should imagine. It’s pretty small, compared to an asteroid. I would expect a proper asteroid to be miles across.”

“It might not be been one of the asteroids, but, but certainly, it was out there with them.”

“Do you actually know that?”

“It does make sense. Don’t you think?”

“Yes. It makes sense.”

“Of course, that doesn’t make the living stone’s *knowledge* all that extraordinary. I mean, it may have been around for millions of years, but it doesn’t seem to know anything at all about human beings.”

“Why would it?”

“Maybe, we should explain things about human beings to it.”

“Human teachers to a nascent demigod. What a notion!”

“I don’t think many people have ever thought about such a thing.”



Annie and Gus talked about their trip in 1873. Gus had been driving a wagon, when he came across Annie, injured out on the prairie. He had driven her on the same route eleven years earlier, perhaps even in the same wagon they took in the present.

They might have hoped to talk about the day they met. Instead, they talked about Willie and Charlotte. “I’d never thought I would see Uncle Willie fall in love.” Annie was ready to speculate.

“I wondered about why he never did. It is a little unusual.”

“Well, I can understand it. He seems to be guarding a stone that can drive people out of their wits. Who would want to make that part of their lives?”

“Clearly Willie has made it part of his.”

“Nearly *all* of his, it seems. But he may have been called to do that.”

“I saw you and Charlotte go together into the kitchen, and it turned out to be for a fairly long time. Did you learn much about her?”

“Actually, I did. She is from Boston. She’s an artist, commissioned to paint and draw pictures of things on the plains. The people paying her take a special interest in the railroad. I think it’s specifically the

Union Pacific. But she's not just an artist. She is really bright about a number of things. She knows a lot about architecture. Somehow, she seems to have learned to shoot fairly well. And she has a curiosity about history.

"Did you notice the dress she's wearing? It's a split dress for riding. It was made to look like a fashionable dress on a woman who was riding on a saddle ladies back east would think of as unladylike."

"Actually, I didn't notice. Such things often seem beyond me."

"Yes. I remember finding that out."

"When was that?"

"A few days after we married. I could understand that you wouldn't wear your best clothes to drive a wagon across the plains. But when we got home, I noticed that you really didn't have any clothes that could be said to be 'best.'"



When Annie and Gus arrived at Willie's lodge, Charlotte and Willie had been there for some time. Charlotte had already fixed a simple meal that they could all have for lunch. She was somewhat nervous that Annie might be critical of her. But Annie was not the sort of person who would criticize people.

Annie started the conversation with a question for Charlotte and Willie. "Do you think it might be possible to explain to the stone that its gift is frightening to many people?"

"Actually, we were thinking of trying exactly that."

Gus said, "I was thinking that I should go out and meet the stone right after lunch." He thought a moment and asked in a tone that sounded puzzled, "Or do you think I should meet it on an empty stomach?"

"Fasting?"

“Well, yes. Do you think I should fast to meet it?”

“I doubt it would do you any good.”

Charlotte added, “I met it right after lunch. That didn’t seem to have any effect me at all.”

Lunch passed without much more talk. Everyone was anticipating what the afternoon would be like. And so, after lunch, they all set out to where the stone lay.

Gus was the first to approach it. He wanted to protect Annie, in case there was some sort of problem. That was how Gus was, and Annie did not mind.

Gus was ‘introduced’ to the stone by Willie, who just brought him near and said to Gus, “Here it is, in its home under the juniper tree.”

Gus approached and knelt down. He touched the stone gently with both hands, and saw that he was surrounded by a great multitude, who all seemed to be rejoicing. He watched them for a couple of minutes, hearing what they had to say. It was something he never shared with anyone but Annie.

When he was done, he said to Annie, “I think my experience was rather like Charlotte’s. I suspect yours will be the same.”

Annie went to the stone without speaking. She knelt down, and she touched it much as Gus had. She just knelt there for a while, a bit longer than Gus had. When she returned to the others, she said, “I have never seen or heard anything so beautiful before.”

“What did you hear?”

“They were singing. It sounded almost as though each was singing a song of its own, but they all sounded wonderful together.”

Willie said, “Counterpoint.” He had learned a little about it in things he read in seminary.



The group discussed what they would say to the stone about how it interacted with people. Charlotte was the person who seemed to have the clearest idea of what to tell it. She volunteered to talk. The others in the group held back, staying about ten feet away, so she could feel free to say what she felt.

When she was done, she returned to the others and told them, “I don’t know what will come of that. I believe it is thinking about what I told it.

“I said people were made afraid by its gift, and it told me it was trying to open their eyes so they could see the sorts of things that they were attracting into their lives. I asked why that was important. It said it had been called by the God in Heaven to open people’s eyes to what they were doing. That was why He sent it to Earth.

“I suggested that it could open their eyes to other things that might benefit them as well. It said it welcomed any suggestion that I could make, because it wanted to have the best effect possible. I told it that if I had its abilities, I might show people the effects of their actions.

“It told me that it was getting ready to leave the stone behind as it ventured out into the world. It would always be attached to the stone, and it would return to it often, especially hoping to see what it called the ‘very nice’ people who had come around. It might be able to talk with them to learn more about human beings, as it knew it would need to learn.”

“The birth of a demigod,” Willie said. Others nodded.



That night, Willie and Charlotte slept in Willie’s lodge. Annie and Gus slept in the wagon, remembering how they had slept eleven years before. They did this instead of lying on the ground, because of

rain, though what rain there was would not have been enough to make them move to the wagon in the earlier days.

In the morning, Annie and August joined Charlotte and Willie for coffee. They sat in the lodge and very much enjoyed being together and chatting. Their chat went on all day, as they worked out the stresses and frustrations they had felt, going into an area of life that was unknown.

Just as dinner time was nearing, Charlotte decided to play a kind of game. She asked, "What do you think was the most impressive thing you have ever seen? I'll answer first. I think for me it was being told that Willie was coming to his lodge. That was impressive because it was the first time a prairie dog ever told me anything."

"That's a pretty unusual experience." Willie said. "But for me, it was what Chicago looked like, with entire blocks of buildings jacked up, as the city was working to raise its streets so they could be dry."

Gus went next. He said, "For me, it was the look on Mr. Buchanan's face when Annie told him we would get married."

Annie broke in, saying, "I was going to say the exact same thing. Am I allowed to say the same thing?"

The others were just saying she was allowed to do that, when they all heard someone calling from outside. "Hey! Willie! You have to see this! Are you around? Where are you?" Willie recognized the voices of both Father McGowan and Jack Whittacker.

They all hurried out of the lodge. The voices were coming from the north, not very far away. As they left the lodge, however, they were facing south. What they saw there took their interest. They were all struck by the sight of a thunder storm in front of them.

It was almost spherical, but it was very small, as thunder storms go. It could not have been more than a few hundred feet tall. It was also

very close, and Willie judged that it might have been directly over the living stone's juniper tree.

As small as it may have been, it was also extremely active. It may have glowed as often as every other second, as lightning illuminated it from within. But its thunder was like a soft murmur.

They did not see any lightning come from the base of the storm. In fact, the base seemed to be sitting directly on the prairie grass. The only lightning that emanated from it reached upward from its top. This lightning showed every five or ten seconds. It was extraordinary for a number of reasons. For one thing, it was very thin and short. For another, it was blue.

The sky was perfectly clear. In it, directly above the storm, was a young crescent moon. It seemed that the fine blue lightning was reaching up to the moon.

Annie, August, Willie, and Charlotte stood, all transfixed, watching the storm, as Father McGowan and Jack joined them. For all of them, possible ways their lives could go unfolded before them. They felt that they could see the paths they could take and where each could lead, and based on those paths, they could more clearly determine what actions to take.

After a few minutes, the storm seemed to calm down, and then it dissipated, fading into a small cloud of mist, and then into what seemed to be nothing more than a fog.

They went to the stone, and it would not talk with them. It seemed to be very ordinary, except that Willie said he thought he saw what looked like a white thread stretching from it to something far away, across the land.



The next day, Father McGowan and Jack Whittacker headed back to Cheyenne. The fact that they had left made everything seem much more relaxed to those who stayed.

At that point, Charlotte told the others something she was feeling that she had to let out. “I have known Willie for only a few weeks. I have known Annie and Gus for only a few days. And yet, I feel that you are my family, the family I belong to. It is most extraordinary. I never thought I would say that to anyone.”

They all stayed at Willie’s lodge for several days, which seemed the right thing to do. Willie was used to a rather unhurried lifestyle, so the mood of contemplation was not a problem for him. Charlotte worked, using the plants and animals of the area as models, and that was also suited to a subdued living style. Gus and Annie had come without any idea of how long they would be gone from Gorse. They had left their work there in the hands of others who they trusted. The slow pace of life was a welcome change for them.

After a couple days, Charlotte felt that she should do a drawing of the juniper tree with the living stone beneath it. When she did, she was surprised to find that the stone talked with her again.

“I have gone across the land, seeing the damage that human beings have done to the Earth. I tried to show them the effects of their actions. But they chose to continue their damage out of greed. They sacrifice the treasures they have for things they can have but will vanish when they die.”

Charlotte said, “Do you think you could move them to bring good about in some other way?”

“The Father in Heaven brought me to this place to help. So, it must be that I can help. I do not know how to bring people to avoid the chaos they create, so I must learn what to do.

“There are things I can see already. Men and women need to act for themselves to make the Earth a place where they can live in harmony with nature. They need to be worthy to inherit the Earth, or they will have nothing. Their greed will leave them with nothing.”

Charlotte told the stone, “It sounds like the gods cannot save those who live on Earth unless they save themselves.”

It said, “He has told them that the rich will not inherit the Earth, but they did not listen. Why would God save those who think they have a right to destroy His creation? The gods of the Earth and the Sky can help, but only if the people who live on Earth undertake to do their part to protect what God created for them.”

“How quickly must we act?”

“It will take a few generations of your people to come, but until the end comes, it can be avoided. The men and women who live on earth must decide by their actions whether it is the end for them or the beginning of something better. They can act to save the Earth or to ruin it. They can bring about good or evil. They must decide whether their own selfish purposes are more important to them than the Earth that God created.

