



The Neighborhood

A Novella

By

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The Neighborhood

A Story Inspired by True Events

By David A. Patterson Silver Wolf (Adelv unegv Waya)

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“Now, you gotta shut up for a second and focus—god dammit.”

“OK! I’m gonna be quiet, but how the hell are you gonna get up there?”

“Just help me up . . . but hold on . . . let me take my pants off first.”

“What? No, I ain’t helping you while you’re naked . . . holy fuck—no way.”

“Stop being a big pussy, get the hell over here and help me.”

“No . . . your ball sack might touch me and I’ll puke.”

“My ball sack will not get close to you for god sakes, now help me up you monkey dick.”

“Monkey dick . . . good lord, where the hell do you get these names?”

“It’s easy. I look at your face, close my eyes, and whatever image appears I say it. Now get the hell over here and help me get the fuck up.”

Tyee laces his fingers together for Sig’s foot and lifts him into the open window. These two friends have a plan to trick the neighborhood bully, Roger. They’re in Sig’s clubhouse. It has three floors and is built totally out of wood. The ground floor is open and has a bunch of Sig’s things, mostly stolen items from the neighborhood, lying around. To get up to the second floor, you have to be strong enough to climb a rope and pull yourself up through a hole in the ceiling. The second floor is all open and has big windows on each wall. Finally, the top floor, which is more a lookout space than anything, fits only about two or three kids. Getting up there takes teamwork. Sig braces himself against the wall, and Tyee uses Sig as a ladder to climb up. Once Tyee gets to the top, he reaches down and pulls Sig up.

Being on the top floor allows the boys to look over their working-class, run-down neighborhood. They see roofs with missing shingles and lots of homes boarded up or mostly burned. The most updated structure in the whole damn place is that shitty clubhouse. It had been built by Sig’s dad using scrap wood left over from his old construction jobs. The clubhouse

attracts all of the neighborhood kids and is the staging ground for all their bad ideas. This is where the boys first started smoking cigarettes, tried marijuana, first drank alcohol, and also lost their virginities.

Sig is a few years older than Tyee, at least in years. They're both high school dropouts; Tyee got his GED about a year ago, on his ninetieth birthday. They share many things and have few secrets. Sig is a shaggy-haired, unkempt kid who wears mismatching clothes and usually red chuck Converse without socks. If his family lived by the California beach, he would be a typical surfer kid. He looks out of place in this old southern neighborhood. Tyee has a natural dusky complexion and long, dark hair. His people are Native American, but they don't speak much about it.

"Now, I'm going to sit here on the inside of this window and wait for you."

"OK, but how do I trick him into coming?"

"Yeah, good question. Well . . . OK, go over there and tell him I need to talk to him. No, wait, tell him that you need his help to play a trick on me. Grab my BB gun and have it sitting out next to the spot. Tell him I'm up in a tree and you two are gonna try to shoot me down."

"What? He'll never go for that."

"Yes . . . go over there in a hurry and tell him I'm hung up in a tree. Say he needs to come in a hurry before I get down. Say you're gonna target practice on me. That fuckin' bully will drop everything to try to shoot me out of a damn tree. Now go, and when he gets here, show him to the spot, and make sure the gun is sitting there right next to it so he stays for a second.

"Man . . . I don't know. We're gonna get our asses kicked."

"I thought you were bred to be a brave Indian warrior. Your grandfather would be very disappointed with you right now Tyee, acting like a big, nervous pussy."

Sig is the only person who can get away with talking about Tyee's grandfather or making fun of him being a Native American. Tyee's grandfather, Pappy, just passed a few months ago. Pappy was a good man and a great father and grandfather. Pappy was the only positive influence Tyee ever had in his short life. When Pappy died, Tyee lost part of himself—part of his own spirit went into the ground with his grandfather. As Tyee was watching his grandfather lowered into the grave, it was like his own good life was also descending deep into the earth.

Seeing his grandfather's box down in a hole, dirt thrown on it, Tyee wondered how they could ever be together again. All the stories and lessons Tyee learned from his grandfather, and there were many, are harder to remember now that he's in a dirt-covered hole. The thoughts of his grandfather are fading, and it saddens and scares Tyee to forget his Pappy.

“Aw man . . . fuck Roger. We'll just outrun that fucker. Now go, hurry, I can't wait much longer.”

“Don't talk that way about my Pappy, Sig, he's proud of me.”

“I'm sorry, Tyee, he was my Pappy too, man. I won't say anything else bad. Now . . . get your donkey ass over to Roger's house!”

Tyee jumps down out of the club house, gets the BB gun and leans it up against the clubhouse. Sig is looking down making sure he follows through on the plan.

“Yes, that's good, now go get him . . . hurry!”

“Alright man . . . fuck . . . I'm going.”

Tyee starts walking toward Roger's house. He lives about five or so houses down the way, but Tyee has to jump three fences and avoid two nasty dogs to get there. As he walks, he cycles through his plan and how he is to trick Roger out of his house. After that, he has to maneuver Roger so he is standing at a certain spot next to the clubhouse. Roger used to be Sig's

older brother's friend, but they'd stopped hanging out. Everybody'd stopped hanging out with Roger. He's a constant liar, he's ugly, and he never takes a bath or brushes his teeth. He looks just like his dad, who's also ugly. They both part their greasy hair right down the middle of their heads. Their noses stick out further than their pointed chins. Roger's family is poor, just like everyone in this community, but they are a different kind of poor. For some reason they think they are better than the others in the neighborhood. They have not been poor all their lives and are the newest family to the neighborhood. They're not used to being poor; know how to act poor; or know how to treat other poor people. Roger's mom and dad act like this is something that is short term, so there's no need in getting along with their neighbors or other families. They're poor with a rich-family attitude.

The one positive thing about Roger is his younger sister, Blair. She's not ugly like the rest of her family. Sig says they got the wrong baby when they left the hospital. What has remained unknown to Sig, Roger, and the entire neighborhood is that Tyee and Blair are secretly seeing each other. Blair's family would not approve of her seeing a neighborhood kid and would not approve of her being with anyone outside of her own culture. Basically, Tyee is too dark for Blair's kind. But to Blair, Tyee is beautiful. She loves his long, dark hair and eyes. The first time they saw each other, their eyes locked. It was hard to hide their mutual attraction. Their first real make-out session happened while they were sitting in an old Lincoln Town Car at the local junkyard. Neither of them had had sex before, so their awkwardness went unnoticed.

Tyee never pushes Blair to do anything she's uncomfortable with. They've grown to trust each other completely, and their first sexual experience was the result of their total confidence. In the car they moved slowly as their hands explored each other's body. Their clothes easily came off as they shifted their bodies closer. Blair helped Tyee remove her bra, and when they

were completely naked, she straddled him. Their nineteen-year-old bodies pressed together. Blair's vagina welcomed Tyee's erection as they intensely grinded together. Their mouths joined as they both quickly reached orgasm. That old car became the usual spot for their alone time together.

Tyee thinks about Blair on the way to get Roger. He finally reaches the house and knocks on Roger's front door.

"Hey, Blair, is Roger home? We're about to do something real stupid."

"What stupid thing are you doing, Tyee?"

"Well . . . I can't tell you right now, but Sig is playing a trick on Roger. I'm not sure what's really gonna happen. He just told me to find Roger and bring him to the clubhouse."

"What's going to happen to Roger when he goes to Sig's house, Tyee?"

"I'm not sure, Blair, I promise, like I said, Sig told me to just find Roger—that's all I know."

"Sig better not hurt my brother, Tyee. You know how I feel about Sig—I do not trust him—he is not right, Tyee, and you should stay away from him."

"I know, Blair, but he's the only friend I have, and he's like a brother to me. Let's not talk about him and me—let's talk about you and me."

"We can talk about you and me later, Mr. Tyee-Pee."

"Stop calling me that."

"Rogeeerr!"

Roger arrives at the door, teeth green, hair perfectly parted, and with his customary snobbish attitude.

"Yeah . . . what you want, shit box?"

“Look, man, you have to come right now to help me. Sig is stuck up in a tree, and I want to shoot that bastard with his own BB gun. Come on right now and I’ll tell you my plan on the way.”

“Yeah, let’s go get that little fucker.”

Blair gives Tyee a disapproving look as they jump from the porch and sprint toward the clubhouse. They leap the fences and make sure the dogs are inside. Just as they arrive at Sig’s fence, Tyee says, “OK, look, man, I don’t think you can see him from here, but he’s way up in that tree over there.”

“Where . . . which one?”

“Old man Taylor’s tree, the one he’s always climbing. Come on, I have the perfect spot to shoot him from. It’s right next to the clubhouse on the other side. Let’s go.”

Tyee leads right to the spot, and Roger sees the gun.

“Look, pick up that gun over there and stand right there and don’t make a sound. That’s the perfect hiding place. Once you’re there, I’ll go to the tree where Sig is and get him to climb around where you can get a good aim on him, OK?”

They both laugh as they sneak into place.

“Now don’t fuck this up, Roger, this’ll be my only chance to finally get this bastard for shooting me last week.”

“I won’t . . . you don’t fuck it up . . . I’ll be right here waiting for your signal. Now go, you little fuck.”

Tyee is glad about what’s getting ready to happen. Getting his ass kicked would be worth playing a trick on this nasty, green-teethed prick. Tyee starts toward the tree where Sig is supposed to be stuck. He keeps looking back to make sure Roger remained in the spot. As Tyee

walks and looks back, Roger waves his hand, motioning for him to continue. Roger leans against the clubhouse, trying to aim and steady the gun. Tyee gives him the thumbs up like all is going as planned.

Tyee stops about fifty yards away from Roger. He cups his hands around his mouth and yells, “Hey, monkey nuts, look up!”

Roger, confused, lowers the gun and looks closer at Tyee, trying to understand what he’s saying.

“What the fuck did you say, dip shit?” asks Roger. As he points to the window of the clubhouse, Tyee shouts, “Look up and see what’s in the window.”

Although Sig can only hear these two yelling, he knows it is time—and the timing could not have been more perfect. Just as dumbass Roger follows Tyee’s advice and looks up, Sig’s ass, which is sticking out of the window, pinches out a flawless, corn speckled-turd that heads straight down toward Roger’s long, pointed nose. Luckily for Roger, Sig’s turd is semi-hard, so it’s more like a ripe banana hitting his face. Roger throws down the gun and begins running around the yard like he’s on fire, arms flying around and screaming bloody murder.

“I swear to god I am going to fucking kill both of you mother fuckers,” he shouts as he wildly searches for something to wipe his face on.

“Stop drop and roll, shit face!” yells Tyee as he raises his arms in the air and dances in a circle.

Seeing Roger racing his way, Tyee turns and runs all the way home. He knows better than to look back and taunt Roger any further. Tyee figures he can stay away for a couple days and let Roger and the situation cool down. Heading home is a good idea anyway. It’s almost dark, and he’s been gone for two days. Tyee hates being home. His mom works most every day

and gets home late, and his dad drinks all day, only coming home when he runs out of money. Walking into his house, he's sure to walk into a fight. Behind his front door is a house of horrors. It's every man for himself, and his dad is the biggest, strongest man. Tyee doesn't talk about what happens inside his home, not even with his best friend Sig—although Sig already knows. No kids are allowed inside Tyee's house when there are no adults home, and when there are adults home, Tyee wants no one in his home.

Unlike Tyee's home, there are always adults around at Sig's house. Sig's parents and both sets of grandparents are German. The first time Tyee visited one of Sig's grandparents' homes, they were drinking big mugs of beer. The grandma could barely get out of her seat. Tyee wasn't sure if it was because she was old or drunk. The same thing could be said about her speech—Tyee wasn't sure if she drunkenly slurred, was trying to speak English, or was drunk trying to speak English. Regardless, the grandma always gives Sig drinks of her beer and offers Tyee beer every time he visits. Tyee would rather drink beer from a can because drinking from grandma's glass was gross, as he doesn't think it's been touched by soap since they fled their homeland.

Sig loves to tell stories of his home life. For instance, his dad came home the other day drunk. When his mom placed his dinner in front of him, he asked for the ketchup. When the ketchup wouldn't come out onto his hamburger after several taps, he staggered to his feet and began to sling the bottle around the dining room, spattering the red juice all over the walls, floor, furniture, and on Sig. When Sig's mom saw what was happening, she grabbed his arm, screaming, "What the hell are you doing, dumbass?"

“Well,” his dad said as he steadied his balance, “the gawd-damn ketchup did want to come out on my burger so I was just seeing if it preferred coming out somewhere else. Got any may-o-naze, it seems we are all out of ketchup!”

Sig’s dad doesn’t hit anyone when he’s drunk—well, he hits them with condiments on occasion, but that’s about it. When his dad gets mad, like when he saw our tennis shoe prints on his garage door, he uses spray paint to leave us a message—“DO NOT KICK DOOR DUMBASS.” Tyee couldn’t believe his eyes. Why would Sig’s dad deface his own garage door? There would be no way of asking this question, as Tyee has never heard Sig’s dad speak. The sloppy spray paint job was the most words he’d ever seen come from the man.

“Hey, what happened with you and Roger after I left the other day?”

They both crack up after recalling their shit-face trick.

“Oh, hell, I forgot about that. That bastard took his shirt off and cleaned the shit off his face, cussing and screaming that he was going to kick my ass.”

“Oh man . . . so what happened after he ruined his shirt?”

“That son of a bitch starts to charge the clubhouse. After I dropped my load, I had nothing to wipe my ass with. I’m looking all around clubhouse floor and suddenly I see him getting ready to climb the rope to get me. I was trapped. If I jumped out a window, he would’ve caught me. My only hope was staying on the second floor. When he started climbing the rope, I didn’t have anything to cut it with so I just started pissing down onto his head.”

“You fucking did not . . . you are the biggest liar.”

“If I’m tellin’ a lie, may my dick turn into a pie!”

“That don’t even make sense, you pie dick.”

“I swear. He started climbing that rope to kick my ass and my only defense was to piss on him, that ain’t no fucking lie. He kept trying to climb, dodging my stream, choking, eyes closed, yelling at me the whole time but trying not to get my piss in his mouth.”

They are both laughing hard, pushing and swinging at each other.

“I’m going to walk over to Roger’s house and ask him what happened; I know you are telling a fucking lie.”

“Go ahead, dick weed . . . you can ride my new bike over to ask him,” says Sig, smiling.

“Now, I know you ain’t got no fucking new bike, you big liar.”

“I do too have a bike—I got it last night over on Dawn Ave.”

“You ‘got’ it. OK, you mean you stole it. Dawn Ave, three blocks from here . . . where is the bike?”

“It’s right over there.”

“Have you lost your crazy mind, Sig? It’s sitting out in plain sight and right next to the road. I mean, why don’t you just put a for-sale sign on that fucking thing?”

“Hey, that’s a pretty good idea. How much should I put on it?” Sig asks, rubbing his chin.

“You’re brain damaged, Sig. I’m sure the people you stole it from have already called the cops. Look at it sitting right out there where the cops or the people could ride by and see it.”

Sig’s a good thief, that is, he’s good at the act of stealing, but he’s a dumbass after he gets things home. He could steal a kid’s coat at school one day, wear the coat to school the next day, and then ask that same kid who he stole it from how he likes the new coat he got. It’s like he

doesn't care or remember. Once he takes something, for some reason, it becomes his. He doesn't think about how the person feels who just had it taken from them, it belongs to Sig now.

"When the cops show up and ask how that stolen bike got into your yard, what the hell you gonna say?" asked Tyee.

"I'll tell them Roger left it here," Sig replies.

"Do you have a death wish? If shitting on Roger's face didn't get you killed, I'm sure accusing him of stealing a bike will get it done," Tyee says in a louder voice.

"What are you talking about? That's the truth," says Sig. "I saw Roger ride it over here and he left it when his mom rode past in her car and picked him up. I figured Roger would be back by now to pick up his bike."

"You are a real piece of work, Sig. It's amazing how I know you're lying, but your story and the calm way you tell it has me questioning my own self. How in the hell do you do it?"

"Do what?" asks Sig.

"Tell a lie that I know for a fact is a lie . . . and then I end up believing your lie. I lie to myself believing that you could be telling the truth. You are a fucking genius!" says Tyee with his hands raised in the air.

"Oh yeah," says Sig, "I don't even know what the hell you're talking about. How could I be a genius when I don't even understand what a dumbass—you—is saying?"

"No . . . see . . . your lie . . . well . . . the way you tell a lie makes me . . . oh, go fuck yourself!" Tyee says as he turns and walks away.

Within an hour, the cops show up at Sig's home. An unmarked police car slowly turns into Sig's driveway and stops. A large man steps out wearing a coat and tie. He flips his coat over the gun on his belt.

“Sig, get your ass over here,” says the cop.

“Over where?” asks Sig, looking around.

“Right here, numb nuts.” The cop walks over to where the stolen bike is sitting. “See this bike?” the cop asks, pointing.

“What bike?” Sig replies, looking around again.

“The bike I’m getting ready to crush your head with, that’s what fucking bike,” the cop says.

“Oh,” says Sig, “you mean Roger’s bike?”

“No, that’s not Roger’s bike,” the cop replies. “This bike belongs to a family on Dawn Ave.”

“Well, that’s something you’ll have to take up with Roger. That’s his bike, and if you take it, I’m sure he’ll be upset . . . he’s had a bad week already—I think he got shit faced the other day,” Sig says smiling over at Tyee. Tyee turns away.

“What makes you think this is Roger’s bike?” asks the cop.

“He rode it here this morning. I hid from him in the house when he came to my door. I didn’t want to hang out with him because if you get close to him, he smells bad. So as I’m waiting for him to leave, I see a car pull up and he gets in it and drives away, leaving his bike here. When I saw your car pull up, I thought you were gonna tell me that Roger had been kidnapped, raped, and murdered and that I could have his bike,” Sig says, smiling.

“What time did Roger leave this bike here?” asks the cop.

“Hey man, I don’t know. You tricked me into saying too much already. Now that I think about it . . . I’m not sure that was Roger on the bike. If that bike is stolen, I won’t be the one to snitch on Roger for stealing it. But if the seat smells like a homeless man’s foot after he stepped

in billy goat shit, that would definitely mean that Roger was the last rider of that bike, sir,” says Sig, looking serious now.

The cop looks at Tyee. “Tyee, what’s your fucking story?”

“Uh . . . I have no story, sir . . . I just got here . . . and . . . um . . . don’t . . . I don’t know . . . I’ve . . . not seen this bike before . . . um . . . I don’t know nothing, sir.”

“Was that supposed to be an answer in English? God damn, boy. Um, uh, duh, err. Speak English, you fucking Indian,” says the cop.

Tyee lowers his head.

“Well, I’m taking this bike. I’m going to check out your bullshit story, and when your bullshit story turns out to be bullshit, I’ll be back here.”

“Yes, sir,” says Sig, and he continues, “I’ll be here waiting because I want to talk with you about the terrible crime wave in this neighborhood. I’ve had my shit stolen too, detective. If my calculations are correct, sir, as soon as Roger’s family showed up in this neighborhood, a whole lot more shit has come up missing. You lock that fucker up for a while, and I’m certain the crime rate in our neighborhood will significantly decrease.”

“OK, smart guy, you made it all the way through, what, the ninth grade?” asks the cop.

“No, sir, as a matter of fact, I wrapped up my high school career early in the tenth. So education wise, we are two years apart since you finished in the twelfth grade. Are you interested in taking on a partner, by the way? It seems, as it relates to solving the great, Dawn Ave stolen bike caper, I solved that case for you. Can you give me a ride to the station so I can fill out an application to be a detective?” asks Sig, pointing toward the cop’s car.

The cop turns without replying. Sig and Tyee watch as the cop loads the bike in his car and backs out of Sig’s driveway.

“For god sakes, stop waving,” Tyee says.

“Why? I like him. He might help me get a job.”

“I cannot believe my fucking ears,” says Tyee. “Sometimes I think you came from another fucking planet.”

“What are you talking about, Tyee?”

“What am I talking about? What do you think’s gonna happen when he talks with Roger?”

“Roger who?”

“Oh my god, Sig, you are severely fucking brain damaged.”

“What? Me? I thought you were going to piss your pants when he asked you a simple question. Here’s you: um, uh, err, yes, sir, um, err. I was waiting for you to make a full confession.”

“I’m not sure why I hang around your criminal ass, Sig. You know I want to be a fireman or a cop one day. I’ll never get a chance if these things keep happening to me,” says Tyee.

“You would blame me if you don’t become a fucking cop?” asks Sig.

“You’re right, Sig, it would not be your fault, it would be all my fault for making the shitty decision to hang around you.”

“What the fuck are you talking about? We’re brothers. Pappy’s ceremony made us blood brothers. Remember what he said? Nothing could separate us now?”

“Yes, I remember. Pappy didn’t know everything about you then, and it’s too late for him to know you now . . . but I know you, and Pappy explained many more things to us. You remember what he always told us Sig? There is no right way to do wrong.”

“I ain’t done nothing wrong, Tyee.”

“What the fuck are you talking about, Sig? You ain’t done nothing right!”

Two days later . . .

Sig sees Tyee walking toward the clubhouse.

“Hey, it’s my blood brother. What’s up, Chief?” asks Sig.

“Not much, how are . . . ?”

“What the fuck happened to your face, Tyee?”

“Roger is what happened to my face.”

“Roger beat you up?”

“Yes . . . I had to go to the emergency room and get a couple stitches in the back of my head because of that cocksucker.”

“I don’t understand. Tell me what happened,” Sig says, placing his hands on Tyee’s shoulders.

“So I’m cutting through the neighborhood to get a soda at Magic Market, and while I’m around back trying to count my money, that bastard walks out and spots me. I try to be nice to him, but he just goes crazy and attacks me. It’s like he had a pipe or something he hit me with. I blacked out and woke up with a bloody shirt and black eyes. That fucker took my money too. I saw him on the way here standing by the ditch, but I ran past before he saw me.”

“Let’s go over there and talk to him, I got to ask him about my fucking bike,” says Sig, clinching his teeth.

“Your fucking bike—the one the cop took the other day?”

“Exactly, come on,” says Sig, grabbing Tyee’s shirt.

The boys start walking, and Sig is talking about his father's latest drunken behaviors. They are laughing, pushing each other as they walk.

"Look! There he is!" says Tyee, pointing.

"Hey, Roger, I want to ask you something," Sig says, walking toward Roger. "Have you seen my fucking bike?"

"What, you mean the bike that cop asked me about the other day, you little douche?" asks Roger as he approaches Sig.

"Exactly, yeah, that's the bike," replies Sig, standing his ground.

"I should kick your fucking ass for telling that cop that was my bike. The next time you try to get me in trouble, I'll stomp your head in."

"I didn't tell that fucking cop anything about you," Sig says.

"You fucking liar! You ever open your mouth about me again, and I'm gonna kick your ass like I kicked Tyee's ass the other day," Roger says, smiling.

With just a few steps separating the boys, Sig snaps a knife from his back pocket and rams it into Roger's stomach, pulls back, and plunges the knife in again. In shock and caught totally off guard, Roger collapses to his knees. Sig has him in a headlock, holding him up while he continues thrusting the knife into Roger's collapsing body. As quickly as Sig attacked, he releases Roger and jumps back away from Roger hitting the concrete. Roger tries to suck in air and groans as he pukes up deep red blood.

Tyee was standing frozen in place, until Sig grabs him by the arm and turns him.

"Come on, Tyee, he's done. Oh, wait," Sig says. Sig walks back over to Roger and leans over him. "Hey, Roger. If you happen to survive this—which seems unlikely—don't ever hit my fucking brother Tyee again. OK, man?"

“Sig, you have to get the fuck away from here,” Tyee says as he grabs his friend by the arm.

“You’re right, Tyee, let’s go.”

“I can’t believe you just fucking did that, Sig. What the hell are you thinking?”

“Our neighborhood is better off without that bastard . . . hell, the world is better off with him gone,” says Sig, slowly walking.

Sig is still holding the blood-dripping knife and tells Tyee to hold up a minute. Sig begins to wipe the blood from the knife using the bottom of Tyee’s shirt. Tyee tries to grab Sig’s arm to stop him and accidentally cuts his hand. “Oh, motherfucker, Sig, you just fucking cut me.”

“I didn’t cut you, you cut yourself. What the hell are you grabbing for?”

“I don’t want Roger’s blood on my clothes, you dumbass.”

“Well, it’s on your shirt and all over your pants and shoes.”

“Oh, fuck me. Now they’re going to think we both killed him.”

“Oh, don’t worry, my brother, I will tell them exactly what happened. See, Roger attacked you the other day and he was just about to attack me and I protected myself. This is a self-defense case, Tyee—no worries!”

“You’re going to prison, Sig.”

“Even if I did, which I’m not, that’s OK, Tyee. Everyone always said I would end up in prison. I knew I would end up there. So it seems better to go to prison for ridding our—already fucked up—neighborhood of that piece of shit rather than just for stealing bikes, don’t you think?”

“Sig, there’s no good reason to go to prison.”

“Yes there is, Tyee, you just witnessed a good reason. Now, enough of this . . . let’s talk about what we’re going to say to the cops when they ask what happened here.”

“Keep my name out this, man. I didn’t do anything but walk here with you, Sig—OK man?”

“All right . . . but you have to say that Roger attacked me and I defended myself.”

“I’m not a good liar like you, Sig. You can lie without any outward signs of lying. I can’t do that, I fall apart when I talk with the cops, man . . . you’ve seen me.”

“Look, Tyee, that fucker attacked me. Get that image in your mind and make it the truth.”

“I’ll try, man, but it’ll be hard. Why the fuck did you stab him? You didn’t have to do that.”

“It had to be done, Tyee, just like you telling the story to the cops—it has to be done, brother.”

“Hello, I am detective Miller, and this is my partner, Detective Perez. Do you know why you’re here at the police station today, Tyee?”

“You probably want to ask about what happened to Roger.”

“OK, what happened to Roger?”

“He was killed.”

“Right . . . were you there that day he was killed?”

“Yes, I was there.”

“Who else was there?”

“Sig was there.”

“So just you, Sig, and Roger were the only ones there?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tell us what happened that day.”

“Well . . . Sig and I were walking to the store and we saw Roger on the way. As we were walking over to Roger, he just starts to attack Sig for no reason. I jumped back not knowing what was happening. Roger is pounding on Sig. Before I knew it Sig protects himself and stabs Roger.”

“So let me get this straight—Roger attacks Sig, hitting him with his fists?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And in order to make Roger stop, Sig stabs Roger?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You were standing where?”

“I was standing away from where they were fighting about ten feet I guess.”

“OK . . . so let me ask you this—how bad was Roger beating up Sig?”

“Pretty damn bad . . . I thought Roger was going to kill Sig.”

“Is that right? Was Sig bleeding from this brutal beating?”

“I don’t remember, sir . . . I don’t know.”

“Well, let me help you—Sig had no marks or bruises on him. How is it that Roger is beating Sig up, punching him with his fists, and Sig has no marks?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“You have marks on *you*. Who gave you those marks on your face?”

“Um . . . Roger did, um . . . he . . . well . . . I was beaten up by Roger a couple days ago, sir.”

“Are you sure you are telling us the truth, son?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You said you were standing about ten feet away from Sig and Roger fighting. Is that correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How did you get blood on your clothes?”

“Well . . . um . . . you see . . . well . . . I guess . . . I guess when Sig and Roger stopped fighting I helped Sig stand up see . . . and . . . um . . . blood must have gotten on my clothes then, sir.”

“Can we see your hands?” asked the detective.

Tyee brings his shaking hands up and holds them out over the table.

“How did your hand get cut, Tyee?”

“Well . . . I guess . . . um . . . when I was helping Sig up, the knife . . . um . . . accidentally cut me.”

“So I want to make sure I get your story correct, Tyee . . . you say that Roger was beating up Sig, but Sig has no marks. You got Roger’s blood on your clothes from helping Sig stand up and that cut on your hand was from an accident. Is that your story, son?”

“Well . . . I . . . I guess . . . um . . . you tell it like that and it . . . it don’t sound too good.”

“We didn’t tell it like that, this is your story you told us.”

“That’s what happened, sir,” says Tyee, as he thinks about protecting Sig and keeping his word.

“The good news is that Sig tells the same story as you, Tyee. Unfortunately, the bad news is that he said you and Roger were fighting and you stabbed and killed Roger.”

“What! No, sir . . . no way, sir . . . that’s not true, sir. I did not stab anybody.”

“We already talked to Sig. He says that Roger beat you up a couple days ago because he caught you fucking his little sister Blair and that when he told you to stay away from Blair—you went crazy and started stabbing him. Sig says he tried to help Roger as you were stabbing him and that blood got all over you and Sig. Looking at everything, Tyee, the evidence seems to support Sig’s story, not yours.”

“That’s not right, sir . . . that’s not what happened at all, sir.”

“Well, at this point, Tyee, you’ll have an opportunity to discuss all of this with your attorney and the judge in a few days. We’re holding you for murder, son. Someone will be in shortly to process you, so just relax for a while.”

Tyee is in shock. He can’t believe Sig set him up. It takes all his energy to hold back crying. A jail administrator enters the room, asks him to stand, and places handcuffs around his wrists. Tyee is quickly escorted across the street into the county’s holding facility.

“This is where you will stay until you see the judge about your bail, son.”

“Do you think I will get out on bail?” asks Tyee.

“I think you will be here for a while since you are being charged with murder. Unless you have a lot of money with a high-priced lawyer, you are not going anywhere for a while.”

“Will I have a cell to myself?”

“You will for a while, but eventually you’ll go into a room with four other men,” the guard says as he delivers him to another officer.

All of Tyee's belongings and clothes are taken, and he is given an orange jumpsuit with rubber flip-flops. He is shown to his cell and the door clangs behind him. The room is small with a steel-framed bed with mattress, a combination sink, toilet, and water fountain. There are no windows other than a small opening in the door used to slide food trays through. It is cold and loud with the voices of other inmates. The entire floor stinks from body odor. Tyee sits on the hard bed and then lies in a fetal position. The stress from the long day finally subsides enough for Tyee's mind to relax and his eyes to close.

"Grandson . . . Grandson . . . listen to me."

Tyee, hearing these words, became aware of his Pappy's presence. "Is that you, Pappy?"

"Yes, my grandson, it is me."

"I am confused Pappy; am I dreaming?"

"No, my grandson, this is not a dream, our people do not have dreams, we have visions. Listen close, my grandson," the voice says gently, in a hush. "When you begin to do the right things you will be helped by your people. You will be able to see things; you will have visions of what's to come, you will be guided toward the truth—the right path."

"I'm sorry, Pappy, I don't understand," Tyee whispers, as tears fall from his eyes.

"You are a good human being who has lost your way . . . you are traveling a bad path, my grandson. When you find your way back to the good path, your spirit guides will help you."

"I want to get back on my good path, Pappy . . . I miss you, Pappy. I need your help, Grandfather. How do I get on the right path?"

“You will be protected from all things when you live your life honestly. There is no right way to do wrong.”

“I remember you saying that to me all the time, Pappy. What is the right thing for me now, Pappy?” asks Tyee.

“You must surrender yourself, Grandson. You must focus your attention on helping others—not yourself.”

“I am in big trouble, Pappy. I need help.”

“Your help comes when you help others. We will be with you then—do not forget this—I love you very much, Tyee, my grandson.”

“Pappy? . . . Pappy? Please don’t leave me. I am frightened, Pappy. I love you too, Pappy.”

The morning comes, and Tyee is unsure about his talk with his grandfather. He tries to replay their conversation, wondering if it was stress or just a wild nightmare. He doesn’t have time to think too long before breakfast arrives at his door. His stomach is too upset to eat. He washes his face and brushes his teeth in an attempt to gain some normalcy in his new situation.

“Tyee Allen?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You have a visitor. Stick your hands through the slot so I can cuff you.”

The guard leads Tyee down a long hallway until they reach a room with a glass barrier separating prisoners from visitors. The guard removes one handcuff and locks it on a steel bar

next to the chair where Tyee is seated. He looks around, trying to take in his surroundings, when he sees his visitor sit across from him.

“Blair . . . it’s you. I am so happy to see you. You have to know I did not kill Roger.”

“Do you think I would come here if I thought you killed my brother?”

“I don’t know what to think right now, Blair. Sig told the cops I killed Roger.”

“I tried to tell you Sig is no good and that you should stay away from him.”

“I wish I would have listened to you, Blair. I’m in big trouble. I don’t know how to get to the truth of what happened. Sig’s story is convincing.”

“Sig’s story is such bullshit, Tyee. Hopefully the detectives will learn the truth. When they spoke with me, they asked if I knew where the knife might be. I told them I have no idea. I let them know you would never kill anyone and that Sig is evil.”

“Thank you so much, Blair. I am so happy you believe me. I will find a way to expose the truth.”

“I know you will, Tyee.”

“Something weird happened during the night last night. Pappy came to me and spoke in my dream. He said the truth will come out if I focus on helping others—not myself.”

“That doesn’t make sense, Tyee.”

“Yeah, I know. He said when I start doing the right things that my people or my spirit guides will show me visions or something like that.”

“I hope you figure it out, Tyee. I’ll let you know what’s happening in the neighborhood, and if I get any helpful information. Please be safe in here.”

“You be safe out there.”

“Yeah . . . especially since there’s a damn rapist on the loose somewhere in the neighborhood.”

“What are you talking about?” asks Tyee.

“The other night on Dover Road an elderly lady was raped and killed.”

“Times up, ma’am,” says the guard standing in the corner of the room.

“Thank you, Blair, I look forward to seeing you back in the neighborhood soon.”

Blair kisses her hand and places it on the glass, and Tyee does the same. Knowing that Blair believes him provides a boost to his moral. However, walking back to his cell causes deep depression and anxiety. The other men who are locked up yell, curse, and blow kisses at him as he passes their cells. Tyee tries to ignore them, walking and looking straight ahead. When he gets back to his room, he spends his time thinking about what his Pappy said. The lights are finally shut off, and his eyes grow heavy as his mind drifts.

A man is walking along a dark sidewalk. It seems to be early in the morning, maybe about three o’clock or so. The man is wearing a baseball cap, black jacket, and dark gray pants. It’s difficult to make out his face under the shadowy conditions of the night. Tyee is not sure why, but he follows the man as he walks. Tyee stays far enough away from the man to go unnoticed. After several blocks, the man stops, looks around, and darts into a backyard. The high, dense bushes that surround the back of the house provide a barrier to anyone who might be out driving or walking along the street at this unusual time of night.

Tyee crouches between the bushes, watching the man. His heart races as he sees him pull out a screwdriver and pry his way into the house. Not knowing why, Tyee follows him. He steps inside the door and listens for the man's movements. He slowly walks through the dark living room, continuing to watch for any movements as he moves. He hears what seems to be some struggling upstairs. Then he hears a lady briefly scream, followed by sounds of her mouth being forced shut. He sprints up the steps and into the doorway of the bedroom. He is frozen in place by what he sees.

The mysterious man has an older lady pinned down on her bed. The knife he has against her throat has resulted in her remaining still and quiet. Tyee hears the man say, "If you say a fucking word I will slit your fucking throat."

With his gloved hands, the man ties the woman to the bedposts and places a blindfold around her. He cuts her gown up the front as she tries to muffle her voice. He unzips his pants and quickly puts a condom on. Tyee's only reaction is to stand in place, motionless, shocked at what he is witnessing. He is unable to move or help in any way as the older lady is viciously assaulted. When the man is done, he puts his penis back into his pants, with the condom still on, leans over her, and with a fast motion, slashes the old lady's throat. Tyee, watching in terror, witnesses the life fall from her. The man walks past Tyee down the stairs and continues quickly out the back door.

Gaining his composure, Tyee turns and begins following the man again down the dark street. The man's stride is much faster, but he does not run. He crosses several streets until he reaches a parked car in an empty alley. Tyee sees him look around and reach into his pants, pulling out the used condom. He releases it next to an old wooded garage close to several garbage cans. He finally gets into the car and hastily drives away.

Still not thinking clearly, Tyee turns and races back to the old lady's house to check on her. He screams for help as he runs. He sees no one on the streets as he yells, pleading for help. As he gets closer to the house, he hears a man saying his name. "Tyee Allen . . . Mr. Allen . . . shut the fuck up!"

"What?"

"Shut the fuck up—you're dreaming."

"Holy shit. That was a dream?" he thinks. "No . . . a vision."

Tyee collects himself and begins yelling for the guard.

"Sir! Excuse me, sir! I have to talk to the detective who arrested me. I don't recall his name. Please, sir, can you help me find him?"

"You're talking about Detective Miller—big, tall black dude?"

"Yes. Can you please let him know I need to talk to him, that it's very important—it's about a murder," Tyee pleads.

"Chill out for a second—I just saw him across the hall."

After thirty minutes pass, Tyee is taken back to the room where the detectives first met with him. He's pacing the small room when the two same detectives walk in and sit down.

"So, Mr. Allen, you want to talk with us about something?"

"Yes, sir. I want to talk with you about a murder."

"OK. Is this about Roger's murder?"

"No, sir, this is about a murder of an old lady that happened on Dover Road the other night. Do you know about that one?"

"Yes, we are familiar with that. Did you see it on TV or overhear another inmate discussing something?"

“No, sir, I saw the entire thing.”

The detectives look at each other, wondering what kind of game Tyee is devising. “Tyee, we’re not sure you could have seen that event from your jail cell.”

“Yes, sir, that’s exactly where I saw it from.”

“OK, Mr. Allen, what the fuck kind of game you playing here? We don’t have time for this bullshit.”

“Sir, I can assure you I am not playing a game. I want to help you.”

“I think the best thing to do is to focus on helping yourself, which is by telling us the truth about Roger.”

“The best thing for me is to help you right now, sir.”

“OK, so how are you going to help us?”

“I can tell you about the rape and murder of the older lady on Dover Road.”

“All right—I’ll ask you some questions that only we know the answers to. Are you ready?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You said that an older lady was murdered. Do you know exactly how she was killed?”

“Yes—he cut her throat.”

The detectives, trying not to seem too surprised, look at each other and then ask another question.

“Where did the murder take place—what part of the house?”

“She was killed in her own bed. The man tied her to the bedposts, cut her clothes down the middle, raped her, and then cut her throat, sir.”

The detectives are now much more attentive. They look at each other, then Miller stands, motioning to his partner to follow him.

“We’ll be right back, Mr. Allen, just wait a minute.”

The detectives leave the room.

“How does he know all of that detailed information?” Miller asks.

“The only way he would know is from being in that house the night it happened.”

“I’ve got to get that fucking jail supervisor on the phone right now,” Miller says, walking to his desk.

“Hello, this is Detective Miller. I need to check to see if an inmate was in custody during the past two days. His name is Tyee Allen . . . yes, I’ll wait.”

As they wait, they try to figure out how Tyee has details that are not public knowledge. They sit silently looking at each other, shaking their heads.

“OK . . . yes, Tyee Allen . . . so he has remained in custody and has not left your facility since we booked him? Are you sure? . . . OK . . . yes, thank you.”

“What the fuck is happening here?” asks Perez.

“I don’t know, but let’s go back in there—make sure we record everything this time and get to the bottom of his story.”

When they return to the room, Tyee is eagerly awaiting them, standing.

“OK, Mr. Allen. Please sit down. We have some more questions for you.”

“OK, sure. Ask me anything, sir.”

“So, you said that you saw the rape and murder of a lady on Dover Road the other night, is that correct?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“We just checked, and you were locked up on the night it happened.”

“Yes, sir, that’s correct.”

“OK . . . so how did you see this crime?”

“I saw it in my vision, sir.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” asks Detective Miller.

In a rushed voice, Tyee begins talking. “My people are Native Americans, and my grandfather is a wise and spiritual man. He always tried to teach me the ways of our people and how there is no right way to do wrong. He taught me many more things. Unfortunately I didn’t listen to him. He died a while back.” Tyee talks more slowly now as he looks down. “My first night locked up here, he came to me. He told me that my problems would be solved by helping others. My people would come to my aid when I stopped focusing on myself and focused on helping others. My girlfriend, Blair, told me she and others are scared because there is a rapist and killer in our neighborhood. I fell asleep with that on my mind, and I watched and followed a man from his car into her house, watched him rape and kill her, and then followed him back to his car. I am having a hard time understanding too, sir, but this is what I saw.”

“So, if you saw this man, who is it?” asks Perez.

“I’m sorry, sir, I don’t know who it is or his name.”

“OK, Tyee, you fucker . . . if this is about holding on to information in the hopes that we will cut you a better deal on your case, you can fucking forget it,” says Miller.

“No, sir . . . that’s not my intention at all, sir. I’ve never seen this man before.”

“So you know what happened but you don’t know who did it,” says Perez.

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, then you know just as much as us—you can’t help us.”

“No, sir. I can tell you the license plate number and where to find his used condom. I am sure the condom would have both of their DNA on it.”

“OK, what’s the plate number and where is that condom?” asks detective Perez.

“The number is PTY-032, and the condom is next to an old wood garage in an alleyway.” Tyee continues, “If you go west on Hillview and turn left in the first alley after Sage Ave, that garage is about the third on the left. The condom is behind the trash cans. Please hurry, because the trash haulers could destroy it.”

“There will be some folks here in a minute to take you back over to your cell. Is there anything you want to tell us about what happened to Roger?” asks Miller.

“Well, I just want to tell you that I was not honest during our first meeting. I was trying to protect my friend Sig—or who I thought was my friend.”

“So what’s the truth?”

“I have ruined my credibility with you guys, and I apologize for lying. The best thing for me to do at this point is help catch that old lady’s killer. I am going to put my faith in my grandfather’s advice. Helping others will eventually lead to the truth. Once you know the truth about who killed that poor old lady—hopefully you will know the truth about Roger, sir.”

“Allen! You have a visitor.”

Tyee was happy to hear this. He hadn’t seen Blair in several days, and he missed her. He is very lonely staying in a room twenty-three hours a day. The only moral boost he gets is seeing Blair or thinking about her. Although he worries he may never be with Blair again, he mainly

tries to keep these thoughts out of his mind. It has grown more difficult to sleep at night. Almost all his time asleep consists of dreams and visions. There are so many now that it is hard to understand what they all mean. He sees brief scenes that make no sense most of the time, and then there are other nights when he has one long, intense episode.

The detectives have not returned to ask about the old lady in several days. Maybe the visitors are the detectives, he thinks. Maybe they have more questions or unsolved cases to help with. Either way, Tyee is excited to be talking with someone about his dreams and visions. Talking helps to ensure he is not going crazy.

“Who is here to visit me?”

“Not sure . . . c’mon,” the guard says, leading him along.

Tyee enters the visiting area and sees an older Hispanic lady and what looks to be her granddaughter. They are looking at him, but he pays them little attention, thinking that his visitor has not entered yet. He looks around for Blair, but these two are the only ones in the room. He sits down in a booth away from them and waits. He sees the little girl headed his way but purposefully looks away.

“Excuse me . . . are you Tyee Allen?” asks the little girl.

“Yes, I’m Tyee.”

The little girl motions to her grandmother, and they sit in front of Tyee, facing him. “My name is Lily, and this is my grandmother, Maria Perez.”

Tyee nods to them both, unsure why they are there. The grandmother leans in, saying something in Spanish to the little girl.

“Mr. Allen, my grandmother hopes you can help us.”

“OK . . . but not sure how I could possibly help you.”

“My mother, Lisa, has been missing for about three months. She left one night saying she was going out, and she has not returned. Do you know where she is?”

“I’m sorry, Lily. I don’t know your mom and wouldn’t know where she is. Have you spoken to the police?”

“We have spoken to everyone, and we have looked everywhere, but we can’t find her. We are desperate, sir.”

“Lily . . . I’m sorry, and please tell your grandmother I’m sorry, but I don’t know your mother or where she is . . . I’m sorry.”

“We were told you might see her.”

“Who said I could help you?”

“My uncle is a detective, and he said you could help.”

“Detective Perez is your uncle?”

“Yes, sir. We have been looking for my mom, and we’re worried sick about her.”

“I’m sorry . . . I can’t help you.”

Tyee gets up and asks the guard to take him back to his cell.

“Please, Mr. Allen . . . she has long, dark hair. She was wearing a long, black and red shirt with solid red shoes the night she went out. Please help us, sir!”

Without saying anything, Tyee is escorted out of the room and back to his cell. As the guard shuts the cell door, Tyee asks the guard a question. “Can you get a message to Detective Perez and tell him I need to talk with him?”

Tyee paces his cell, growing more and more anxious. He occasionally yells at the guard about when Perez is coming. He sits on the side of his bunk, head in his hands, rocking back and forth. Tyee hears keys rattling and his door opens. Detective Perez steps in.

“Detective, what are you doing sending your mother and niece here to ask for my help. I can’t help them.”

“We’ve been looking for Lily’s mama, my baby sister, for months with no leads. We were hoping you could help us.”

“I can’t help you or your family.”

Tyee sits down again on his bed and begins to cry uncontrollably. The detective silently watches. Using his covers to wipe away his tears, Tyee says, “I can’t help . . . I’m sorry.”

“We are lost without her and just want to know what happened so we can bring some sort of peace to our family. I’m sorry we upset you, Mr. Allen . . . thank you for trying.”

As Detective Perez turns to leave, Tyee tells him to wait. Tyee is still smashing his face with his hands and bed covers, rocking and shaking his head. “Your sister . . . she . . . I’m sorry . . . she died of a drug overdose.” Tyee cries harder, trying to hold back his tears. “Her body . . . she is . . . you can find her in the woods just off of Highway 46, next to the stream. Her . . . her . . . red shoes can be seen sticking out of the pile of leaves. The people she was using with got scared and dumped her there. I’m . . . so . . . I’m sorry, sir.”

“You’ve done a good thing, Tyee,” the detective says, placing his hand on Tyee’s back.

“I could not tell this to that beautiful little girl and her grandmother, sir. I’m no good at this, sir. Please tell them I’m sorry.”

“I will, son . . . just to let you know, Tyee, it looks like you will be getting out of jail soon. There was a witness who came forward. She was sitting in her car and saw the whole thing—she saw Sig attack Roger.”

“Oh my god . . . thank you, sir.”

“You’re welcome, Tyee. Now we have to find Sig. He has disappeared, and we can’t find him anywhere around the neighborhood. Maybe you can help us.”

“Yes, sir. I will help as much as possible.”

“Another thing, Tyee. When we went to talk with your parents the other day, they were leaving the neighborhood. They said they wanted nothing to do with you after they heard what happened. After we found out the truth and we went back to talk with them, they were already gone. I’m sorry, son.”

Tyee places the covers back over his face and rocks back and forth, trying to hold back his emotions. “Things changed at home after my grandfather died,” Tyee says, as his voice cracks. “I am an adult now . . . I have to make it on my own now. It’s good they got out of this neighborhood before it consumed them like so many other people.”

Although Tyee was away from the neighborhood for only a couple months, it has seemed to change. He walks to his home. His parents have been gone a short while, but the house looks like it’s been abandoned for years. The tall grass hides a lot of the trash lying around the small yard. Most of the glass windows are knocked out now, and the front door is wide open.

Walking inside, it looks like someone made a quick exit. Cabinet doors are open with some food containers remaining. Tyee’s room still has his old posters hanging on the walls. It’s dirty, and any good feelings about his home or parents are long gone. Though he could stay in the house, it’s time for him to move on too. He has to see Blair. She’s the only good thing left in his life. The time apart from her has increased his awareness of his desire to be with her.

Tyee arrives at Blair's home just as the sun is setting. He sneaks around to her bedroom window, trying to remain out of sight. They had always had a plan that he would toss small rocks at her window. After about the third toss, her curtains part and she stands looking. Tyee shows himself and runs up as she opens her window.

"Come with me, Blair."

"I can't right now . . . my parents are still awake."

"Tell them you're going to bed and come out with me, please."

"I'm going to get into trouble, Tyee."

"Come on . . . I want to see you."

"OK. Wait for me. Go hide."

After about twenty minutes, Tyee sees Blair climbing out of her window. He helps her down and they run off holding hands toward their favorite place, the old car.

"When did you get out of jail, Tyee?"

"This morning . . . they let me out saying that there was an eyewitness to the crime."

"So where is Sig? Is he going to prison now?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen or talked to him."

"Good. Please promise you will stay away from him, Tyee. He killed my brother and my parents are furious."

"I don't plan to see him, Blair I want to change my life. I'm so sorry about Roger. I didn't want that to happen."

"I know, Tyee, but it did, and Sig has to pay for his behavior."

"Come over here, I've missed you."

"I've missed you too, Tyee . . . I need to tell you something."

“OK, what is it?” Tyee asks as he begins to hug her.

“Tyee . . . well . . . I think I’m pregnant.”

“What makes you say that?” Tyee asks as he sits up straight.

“I haven’t had my period since you were arrested.”

“Oh my gosh . . . what are you going to do?”

“You mean what are *we* going to do?”

“Yes, of course, Blair. I love you. I want us to be together. I want us to get out of this fucking neighborhood.”

“What are you saying, Tyee?”

“Let’s leave this place, Blair, and start a life somewhere different . . . somewhere better. Would you bring a kid into this hell hole of a neighborhood, Blair?”

“I don’t know, Tyee. I haven’t thought about that. I’ve been freaking out thinking about you going to prison for killing my brother, for god sakes,” Blair says, as she begins to cry.

“That’s over now, Blair. Let’s think about our future now. Let’s get the hell out of here.”

“How will we support ourselves? How will we support a baby?”

“We will make it, I promise. I will do whatever it takes to get us out of this neighborhood and start a new life together.”

They begin to kiss and quickly remove the other’s clothes. They hold each other close as their heated naked bodies begin to fog the windows in the car. Focusing only on their own sexual desires, they miss the face peering in. The car door is flung open.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” a man’s voice screams.

“Daddy . . . I’m sorry!”

“Get out of this car—now!”

“Mr. Fields . . . this is not Blair’s fault, sir,” says Tyee.

“You god damn little punk, I’m gonna fucking kill you!”

“Daddy . . . please don’t, we love each other . . . we’re going to have a baby.”

“What the fuck did you just say?”

“That’s right, sir. I just found out Blair is pregnant. We are going to be together and leave this town—we are going to start our family.”

“You ain’t gonna start nothing. I’m gonna finish it.”

Blair’s dad snatches her out of the car and begins to punch her in the belly and chest. He slaps her and throws her down, kicking her while she tries to protect herself. Blair screams as she tries to run from his attack. She gets away briefly but stumbles. He continues kicking and punching her. Tyee is begging him to stop. Blair makes it to her feet and staggers off into the darkness. Her dad gets into his car and speeds away, leaving Tyee standing alone as he yells for Blair to run and keep running.

There is a boy walking next to an older man down a hallway. The older man has his hand on the young boy’s shoulder, looking like he is leading him somewhere. They make a few turns and walk down a flight of stairs before arriving in a large office area. They walk past several people working and talking on phones, and enter a room, closing the door behind them. The boy sits on the man’s sofa just to the side of a desk. The boy’s face finally becomes visible—it is Sig. He is a second grader, and the man is the principal of the neighborhood elementary school.

“Do you know why you were sent to the principal’s office today, Sig?”

“I’ve been bad.”

“Yes . . . what were you doing bad?”

“The teacher said I was not remaining in my seat and I was talking to the other kids during class.”

“Is that what you were doing, Sig?”

“Yes, sir, I guess, but they were talking to me too.”

“Let’s not talk about the other kids and what they done . . . OK?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You were bad again today, right, Sig? You have a problem not listening during class, is that right, Sig?”

“Um . . . I guess so, sir.”

“Well . . . I think that’s true, Sig. Do you know why it’s important to stay in your seat and not talk during class?”

“Yes, sir. Because we can learn in school.”

“That’s right. It’s hard to teach and learn when kids are talking and walking around class not paying attention.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you think you should be punished for what you did, Sig?”

“I won’t do it again, sir, I promise I won’t.”

“OK, that’s good, but you already did it this time . . . do you think you should be punished for doing it this time?”

“Um . . . I don’t know,” Sig says, as tears build up in his eyes.

“If you are not punished, you will not learn. Maybe you will think about what will happen if you decide to be bad again in class.”

“Yes . . . sir.”

The principal walks over to his door and pulls the shade down and clicks the lock on the door. He walks over to the windows and closes the curtains. He grabs a large wooden paddle from behind his desk and turns up his radio to drown out any noise. The principal sits next to Sig on the sofa.

“Now stand up, Sig, bend over, and touch your knees.”

“I won’t be bad again, sir,” Sig says in a frightened little voice.

“Bend over, Sig, this has to be done.”

The principal grabs Sig’s little arm and hit Sig three hard times on his butt. Sig tries to ease the blows by jumping around. The principal clings to Sig’s arm as he swings. After the three smacks of the paddle, the principal sits the wooden stick down, still hanging on to Sig. Sig tries to catch his breath, dazed by the quick smacks.

“Let me rub your bottom for a second, Sig, to help the pain go away.” As he softly rubs Sig’s butt, he says, “See now, it’s over. Hopefully you’ll remember this if you’re ever about to be bad again. You know what else will help a lot more?” the principal asks. “Let’s slide your pants down so I can see if your bottom is OK.”

Sig stands still, allowing the principal to remove his pants and underwear. Sig is too afraid to say anything, and he is still in shock from being beaten.

“I think your butt is OK. Doesn’t it help to rub it?”

“Yes, sir,” Sig says, wiping away his tears.

“What really makes the pain go away fast is this.” The principal begins to rub Sig’s penis and testicles. Sig remains perfectly still, not knowing what to do. His mind is confused. As the principal continues, he says, “OK, Sig, you don’t want to let anyone know, especially your parents, that you have been bad in school today . . . right?”

“No, sir.”

“I won’t tell anyone about what happened, and you can’t tell anyone either, OK?”

“No, sir, I won’t.”

“Good . . . I think you’re OK now. Let’s pull these back up. Here . . . I have a nice cold drink and some chips. Would you like that?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Just sit here for a little while . . . your bus will soon be here, and I’ll help you find your bus home, OK?”

Tyee’s eyes open, looking through the limbs of a tree where he fell asleep. He thinks back to his and Sig’s time in that elementary school. He has to find Sig and talk to him. He gets up and heads to all of the usual hang-out spots. Sig is nowhere to be found, but Tyee continues searching. Tyee heads to the junkyard and walks through the rubbish, yelling for Sig as he walks.

“Over here, dick weed!” Sig’s voice rings out.

“Sig . . . man, I’ve been looking for you all day.”

“I’ve been here all day. Why didn’t you look here first? It would’ve saved you the whole day.”

“No shit!”

Tyee sits down and they remain silent for a while, until Sig speaks. “I’m sorry, Tyee. I didn’t mean to get you in trouble. I didn’t want to get anyone in trouble.”

“That’s all right, Sig . . . let’s forget about all that shit, man. I’m not mad at you.”

“Well . . . I’m mad at you,” Sig replies.

“What the hell you mad at me for, Sig?”

“You’re fucking Blair, you monkey dick. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I don’t know, man—we didn’t tell anybody.”

“We’re brothers, Tyee. You can tell me anything.”

“Can I tell you about a dream I had?”

“You had a dream. What . . . you Martin Luther fucking King now?”

“Naw, man . . . I’ve had visions lately. Ever since I was in jail. I’ve seen things in the past and in the future.”

“No shit,” Sig says, excited. “Do you ever grow a dick in the future?”

“C’mon, Sig, don’t do that right now. I want to talk about something serious.”

“We can talk about anything you like, as soon as I know if someday your dick grows out—did you see that in your future?”

“I know you don’t like talking about some things and say things to avoid certain subjects, Sig. I know things now that I didn’t know a few months ago.”

“I bet you do . . . especially after spending time in jail. Do you know now to not bend over in the jail shower to pick up the soap?”

“I know about you being in the principal’s office, Sig.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about what happened to you in the second grade by that fucking principal.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Tyee,” Sigs says, looking away.

“Look, Sig, you’ve got to get out of this neighborhood. Those detectives are looking for you, and they will find you and send you to prison.”

“Wait . . . what does the principal have to do with anything?” Sig asks.

“Man, Sig, you have been mistreated. What Principal Haring did to you is a crime, Sig. That fucks a kid up, man.”

“I’m not fucked up, Tyee. Are you saying what happened in the office is why my life is fucked up?”

“Yes . . . well, no . . . I don’t know, man, but it’s all connected.”

“Well then who jerked you off, Tyee? Here you are sitting right next to me. If I’m fucked up, that must mean you are too.”

“I might be, man,” Tyee replies, “I’m just saying you killing Roger is connected to what happened to you as a kid. I can help you in court.”

“I don’t need no fucking help, Tyee.”

“When you heard Roger harmed me, it was like Principal Haring harming you all over again. You stabbing Roger was like you stabbing that child-molesting principal. Don’t you see that, Sig?”

“I see, all right—I stabbed Roger because he was a cancer in our diseased neighborhood.”

“Our neighborhood is the cancer, Sig.”

“What’re you talking about, Tyee?”

“Let me help you, Sig. We can explain what happened to you as a kid and a lawyer can help get you treatment rather than prison, man.”

“I already have things planned out, Tyee, my brother . . . in just a few minutes, everyone’s problems will be over.”

“What’s your plan, Sig?”

“Well . . . I have an appointment I need to get to and things will be solved. You can help with something though.”

“Yeah, sure, I’ll do anything—what is it?”

“No one will see me for a while. Will you let my mom know what we talked about here?”

“Sure, man . . . which part?”

“All of it . . . tell her everything we just talked about.”

“OK, I’ll tell her everything.”

“Good . . . and please let her know when your dick finally grows out to its right size.”

“Why must you always do that?”

“Do what?”

“Just when we are talking about something serious, you make a damn joke.”

“If you think your small turtlehead dick is a joke, well, then the joke’s on you, my bro.”

“Please stop making jokes, Sig.”

“OK . . . it’s time for my appointment, Tyee, I have to go. You stay here as I walk across the field, OK?”

They both stand, and Sig gives Tyee a hug and a slap on the back. Tyee keeps his eyes on Sig as he walks out of the junkyard and down through the valley toward town. Sig stops a couple times and looks back, sometimes waving and other times giving Tyee the finger. Sig keeps walking, smiling back at Tyee. Sig gets to the railroad tracks and turns around to face Tyee again, looks at his watch, and waves. Tyee waves back, seeing a train headed toward Sig as he

stands in the middle of the tracks. Sig is standing still, giving Tyee two thumbs up, smiling. Tyee screams in horror as the speeding train reaches Sig's body.

“Have you seen Sig?” Detective Miller asks.

“Yeah . . . I've seen him. I've seen a lot of things, sir.”

“Where is he? Did you talk with him?”

“Yes, of course I talked to him, we are still blood brothers, you know.”

“I hope you told him we are looking for him.”

“He knows.”

“So where is he?”

“He's gone, sir.”

“Where'd he go?”

“He's gone . . . he's dead.”

“Really? How did he die?”

“He was killed.”

“By who?”

“The neighborhood killed him.”

“What the fuck you talking about, Tyee?”

“This fucking neighborhood killed him, sir. The neighborhood killed Roger . . . it took my parents, Blair, and everything. If you're looking for who killed Roger, it's this fucking neighborhood.”

“I understand you’ve had a hard time lately, Tyee?”

“Let me tell you a story my grandfather told me a long time ago. There was a young frog that was taught by his elders that scorpions should never be trusted and that frogs should get away from all scorpions. This young frog was told many times about the dangers of being stung and killed by scorpions. One day, while the young frog was playing by a riverbank, a scorpion appeared. The scorpion was very polite to the young frog. The young frog was also taught to be respectful to everyone, so when the scorpion spoke to the youngster, the frog politely responded.

“The older scorpion asked the frog for help. He said, ‘My young cousin, I hate to bother you, but I need help, and you are the only one who can help me.’ The scorpion continued, ‘I have to get across this river and I cannot swim. I have to get home to my own family right away and the only path is across this river. You are a very strong swimmer and can greatly help me.’ The young frog wanted to help the scorpion, but the stories his elders told about scorpions made him reluctant to help. The frog said, ‘Mr. Scorpion, I could help you across this river and get you to your family, but frogs should not trust scorpions. My grandfather told me that scorpions sting frogs and I should run off whenever I see a scorpion.’ The experienced scorpion reassured the frog. ‘My young, wise relative, if I sting you, I will not be able to cross this river and return to my family. You are my only hope.’ This reasoned statement reduced the frog’s fear. The young frog thought about these words and finally offered the scorpion to climb on the frog’s back.

“They had made it halfway across the river when the scorpion stung the young frog. In shock, the young frog asked, ‘Why did you sting me? I will die from your sting and you will drown—we will both die today.’ Just before they slipped under the water, the scorpion replied, ‘Why I sting frogs has no reason, it is in my nature to sting. Losing our lives cannot change what is my nature.’”

The detective, looking at Tyee, trying to understand his story, asks, “What are you talking about, Tyee?”

“You’re not going to change this neighborhood’s nature by locking up a few people, sir. You’re not going to change anything about this neighborhood by trying to do good things. The people who live here are just as naive as that young frog, and just as doomed.”